CMN 5030: Methods of Critical Inquiry Fall 2013

Dr. Marita Gronnvoll

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Office: Coleman 1753

Office Hours: Tuesday, 1:00-2:00; Wednesday, 1:00-3:00; Thursday, 9:30-10:30, and by

appointment

Course Description/Objectives

This course introduces students to key methods of critical inquiry in communication studies. We will cover the main intellectual traditions and philosophical background of critical research, and we will investigate how different authors have translated critical theory into research projects. At the end of this course, students should be able to (1) identify key perspectives in critical research; (2) understand how critical research is conducted; (3) evaluate critical research projects; (4) apply their knowledge of critical research in different contexts; (5) create/conduct new critical research projects.

Readings

The readings for this course vary in length, difficulty, and origination. In addition to primary texts upon which the intellectual tradition is based, many readings are theoretical in nature and are drawn from journals and books in the fields of critical and cultural studies. Due to the diverse nature of our texts, there will be some week-to-week variation in terms of your reading load. Most of the essays are complex and will challenge you. Realize that this challenge, and often the accompanying frustration, is a part of graduate school life. These texts invite you to think through nuanced and sophisticated concepts that may challenge the most seasoned scholar. With this in mind, you should plan to give yourself plenty of time to read carefully, take notes appropriately, and be prepared to ask questions as necessary.

There is no expectation that you will come to this class with a strong background in critical studies. However, this is a requirement that everyone come to this course with a willingness to engage the readings at a graduate level. While some readings will challenge you, don't give up on them. Read everything you are assigned and come to class with questions prepared. No one in the room will have all the answers (including me!), and often the question you are hesitant to ask is on the mind of several of your colleagues. Ask questions and be prepared to grapple with the possible answers as a collective group.

Required Readings:

- Reading packet available at Copy X 219 Lincoln Ave.
- Tony Thwaites, Lloyd Davis, and Warwick Mules, *Introducing Cultural and Media Studies: A Semiotic Approach*
- Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison
- Additional readings uploaded to D2L

Accountability

You've probably already heard this, but here it is again, and probably not for the last time: This is graduate school, and graduate school is a world away from being an undergrad! It is expected that you are here because you want to be here, that you want to learn, and that you are here to contribute to the learning environment of your peers. We will spend the bulk of our time discussing the ideas raised in the readings and in class and presenting arguments to one another. Having an audience in active attendance is essential to the success of this class. I will act primarily as facilitator and each of you will bear responsibility for the educational experience of the entire class. I expect graduate students to contribute in a meaningful way to *every class discussion*. Therefore, if you are not here, you will not gain as much from or contribute as much to the class. Your experiences are important to our collective learning experience.

I expect that you will be present for *every class meeting*. If an extraordinary circumstance arises requiring you to miss a class, it is expected that you will contact me in advance and make arrangements with one of your colleagues to get the notes from the missed class period. If you miss more than one class, your final grade will reflect a full letter grade deduction for each class missed.

Academic Integrity

It is expected that all students have read and understood the University Student Conduct Code. If you have misplaced your copy, please go to www.eiu.edu/~judicial/code.html. It is of utmost importance that you understand what is meant by cheating, facilitating academic dishonesty, fabrication, plagiarism, etc. It is also important for you to understand your rights should I, or any other instructor, accuse you of academic dishonesty. Every graded assignment, unless otherwise indicated, requires you to do original, independent, and creative work. In addition to copying someone else's words or ideas, reusing your own work (from other courses) is considered academic dishonesty—you might be permitted to extend research from other classes, but you must clear this with your professors before proceeding with such research. Violation of the Code will result in swift and severe consequences (typically, failure for both the assignment and the course).

Electronic Devices

Electronic devices such as cell phones, laptops, and iPods have made our lives much easier and more enjoyable. But they have also become a scourge in the classroom. Texting, surfing the Internet (e.g., Facebook, downloading music, etc.), and "discreetly" listening to iPods shows great disrespect for me and for your fellow students who are distracted by this conduct. In keeping with this climate of respect, please turn off all phones and iPods (or clones) before class begins. If you take notes on a laptop, I expect you to show respect for me and your classmates by not surfing the internet during class. If you absolutely must make a call or send a text, please leave the room. Please do not think you can discreetly text in class and that I won't notice. I do notice.

Disability Concerns

If you have a documented disability and wish to discuss academic accommodations, please contact the Office of Disability Services at 581-6583.

E-mail Policy

Students are expected to check their EIU e-mail on a frequent and consistent basis in order to stay current with departmental and course communications. I send e-mail reminders and announcements from time to time; please check your e-mail daily. Students have the responsibility to recognize that certain communications may be time-critical. "I didn't check my e-mail," errors in foreign mail accounts, or e-mail that is returned to me with "mailbox full" or "user unknown" are not acceptable excuses for missing course/department communications sent via e-mail.

Deadlines

Please pay close attention to deadlines as you will be held to them. Assignments will be due at the beginning of class on the days listed. Late work slipped under my door or in my mailbox will not be accepted. This policy is in place to assist you in your life. Deadlines are important and reflect on your credibility and professionalism. We all depend upon machines to get our work done. We all know that machines break down. When they do, it does not constitute an emergency. It is expected that you will prepare your assignments far enough in advance so that when your computer or printer malfunctions (as they inevitably will) you will still have time to rectify the problem and turn in the assignment on time.

Grading/Quality of Work

All grades will be in the form of points that correspond to a letter grade and are weighted according to the demands of the assignment.

- **A: Exemplary** work or performance that goes well beyond the basic expectations of the assignment to the point of providing a model of excellence to others.
- **B:** Commendable work or performance that not only meets all requirements but exceeds them, demonstrating depth, originality, and other makes of quality that give the work distinction.
- **C: Satisfactory** work or performance that minimally meets all requirements competently and shows the ability to function as a graduate student.
- **D:** Marginal work or performance that either (1) fails to meet all requirements though what is done is considered competent, or (2) meets all requirements but not at a basic level of competence or (3) both of the above but not poor enough to be considered failing.
- **F:** Failing work or performance that falls significantly short of requirements or basic competence or both. And, of course, work that is not done or is plagiarized.

<u>Grade Disputes</u>: This is rarely an issue in graduate level classes, but I am certainly willing to discuss graded materials with you. It is expected that you approach a grade dispute being completely aware of the requirements for the assignment, and having read my argument for why you received the grade in the first place. I also expect you to have a well-articulated argument for why you believe the grade you received was unfair. We will abide by the "24-hour rule." This means that after you've received the grade, you must reflect upon it for 24 hours before you attempt to e-mail me or talk to me about your grade. After one week, all grades are final.

Please note: I will not discuss grades over e-mail, and I will not discuss your grades in reference to anyone else in the class. You are not graded against others, and everyone is evaluated based on their

individual contributions to the learning environment. If you are concerned about your progress for any reason, please come talk to me so we can determine how best to augment your learning.

Assignments

Please note: All assignments are mandatory. Failure to turn in any assignment, regardless of where you stand in the class, will result in a failing grade for the entire course.

Active Participation (100 points) First of all, you must attend class to participate. Merely attending class is not the same as actively participating in the course. If you attend every day but rarely engage in the materials in a way that is responsive to others in the class, you will earn a poor participation grade by the end of the semester. Likewise, if you are not in class, you certainly cannot engage our discussions fully. A seminar is meant to call forth the critic in each of us so that we may engage in dialogue. Although we all possess various backgrounds in critical theory, each one of you is expected to raise questions of interest or uncertainty on a weekly basis. We will, inevitably, disagree, but disagreement is not a problem from a critical perspective. Rather, it suggests the opportunity for further dialogue and engagement. Instead of aiming to achieve the "right" answers, we will attempt to grapple with which ones are better and worse. Thus, your comments should be constructive and aim for specificity (noting specific passage, a particular comment made in class, an example of a current event, etc.). I expect students in a graduate class to speak substantively I every class session.

<u>Facilitation</u> (100 points) Each member of the seminar will be responsible for facilitating class discussion for one evening of class. You are free to conduct this assignment with a partner. As part of this assignment, you will be expected to complete several preparatory steps. First, one week prior to your facilitation, you need to submit discussion questions to the appropriate D2L discussion thread aimed at guiding the reading of your colleagues. Second, by the class session prior to your facilitation, you need to submit an outline/lesson plan to me detailing how you plan to guide the discussion of the night. For the evening of your facilitation, it is expected that you will have a thorough grasp on the readings and an ability to guide discussions, respond to the questions from your peers, and help other seminar participants glean more from the readings.

<u>Unit Papers</u> (4 @ 75 points each) These 5-6 page papers are due for each unit of reading and will react to the readings and class discussions for that unit. "A" quality papers engage in higher level thinking, making connections between the readings for the unit, and between readings and class discussions, are mindful of the evolution of the critical "conversations" that are unfolding, and make applications to issues in the world (NOT your personal life). Please note: Simply writing one paragraph and filling the rest of the page with "packing peanuts" (e.g., big heading, lots of white space) will ear a zero for the assignment, not matter how insightful that paragraph is.

<u>Faculty Research</u> (150 points) In order to get to know the critical research faculty in the department, and understand how their work fits into to the intellectual traditions we will be discussing this semester, you will research, interview, and write about the work of one member of the critical faculty. Since there are more students in this class than there are critical faculty members, there will necessarily be some overlap. In order to avoid one or two faculty members being saturated by student interviews, we will limit the number of each faculty member to no more than two students. A list of eligible faculty members and their research areas will be provided in class.

In preparation for your interview, you will need to conduct research on the faculty member, including reading select publications (if any) AND at least one seminal reading that discusses the faculty member's research perspective. Your research should yield key questions that you will ask the faculty member during your interview. Once you have done your background research, you will contact the faculty member and make an appointment for an interview. The interview should be professional, respectful, and not take up too much of the faculty member's time. I will be soliciting feedback from the faculty regarding their experiences with the interviews.

After you have done the groundwork and conducted the interview, you will write a 7-8 page paper where you will **discuss** the theoretical perspective, **integrate** the faculty member's work into it, and **respond** in a meaningful way.

Critical Reflection 1 & 2 (2 @ 50 points each) At the beginning of the semester you will write a short (2-3 page) paper that situates you where you are right now in your research agenda. It's understood that not everyone will be pursuing a critical perspective with their thesis, or even will know at this point what they want to study. However, the purpose of this paper is to get you thinking about what kinds of things you might want to study. At the end of the semester, you will revisit your research agenda, with the entire semester under your belt, and situate yourself again in a short paper. At this point, even if you're still not inclined to pursue a critical project, you should be able to see clearly how asking critical questions would benefit your research agenda.

<u>Final Exam</u> (150 points) In the spirit of best preparing you for your comprehensive exams, there will be an in-class exam during finals week. The exam will be comprised of two essay questions that will gage your comprehension of the theories/theorists learned throughout the semester. It is important that you keep up with the readings throughout the semester, take thorough notes on your readings and in class, and ask questions as necessary to ensure your preparedness for this exam.

All written assignments need to follow these basic guidelines:

- Formatted with 1" margins, 12-point font, and double-spacing
- Use quotations meaningfully. While I strongly encourage you to incorporate helpful quotations and passages, they do not substitute for your analysis of the materials
- Proofread your paper carefully for language choices, grammar, and spelling
- Include a bibliography that follows APA, MLA, or Chicago properly

Reading Schedule

Note: It is expected that you will read the texts BEFORE coming to class for the day, that you will take notes on your readings, and that you will bring the readings with you to class so we can discuss them fully. We may alter some of the readings as the semester progresses depending on the needs of the class.

Unless otherwise noted, the readings are from your reading packet.

T,D, & M: Thwaites, David, & Mules D&P: Discipline & Punish D2L: Desire2Learn

8/20 Introductions and General Course Overview

- Lindlof & Taylor, "Critical Theory"
- Lather, "Troubling Clarity"

Questions to consider:

- ➤ What is critical theory?
- ➤ What is "postmodern"?
- ➤ Critical scholars often hear complaints that their writing and speaking is too dense and complicated and they should be more accessible. How does Lather trouble the "innocence" of plain-spokenness?

8/22 **Ideology**

- T,D,&M: Chapter 8
- McGee, "The 'Ideograph"

Ouestions to consider:

- ➤ What is ideology? Interpellation? Hegemony?
- > Can one examine ideology from the "outside"?
- ➤ What is the difference between materialism and symbolism?

UNIT 1: THE ENLIGHTENMENT & RESPONSES

8/27 Early influences

Critical Reflection #1 due

- Condit, "Beyond Rhetorical Relativism"
- Plato, Book 7 from The Republic
- Descartes, "Meditations on First Philosophy"

Ouestions to consider:

- ➤ Condit describes two schools of thought and tries to forge a middle ground. What is that middle ground?
- ➤ How does Condit differentiate between "truth" and "reality"?
- ➤ What does the allegory of the cave mean?
- According to Plato, who is the ideal leader, and why?
- ➤ Does it seem that there are several assumptions that Descartes does not "raze to the ground" even though he claims that this is his project?
- ➤ How does Descartes demonstrate a Platonic distrust of the physical world?

8/29 Enlightenment and beyond

- Porter, "What was the Enlightenment?"
- Kant, "What is Enlightenment?"
- Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?"

Questions to consider:

- ➤ What is this thing called "the Enlightenment"?
- ➤ What connections to Platonic thought do you notice in Kant's essay?
- ➤ How does Kant define freedom?
- ➤ How does Foucault interpret Kant's characterization that the Enlightenment releases us from "immaturity"?
- ➤ What is the "blackmail" of the Enlightenment that Foucault argues that we need to avoid?

9/3 Marxism

- Ollman, "What is Marxism? A Bird's Eye View"
- Marx & Engels, "The Communist Manifesto"

Questions to consider:

- ➤ How does capitalism create new wants?
- ➤ What are the results of compelling people to sell their labor?
- ➤ Why does private property need to be abolished? The family?

9/5 Frankfurt School

- Held, "Introduction" and "The Frankfurt School"
- Bottomore, "The Frankfurt School," from A Dictionary of Marxist Thought
- Marcuse, "One-dimensional Man"

Questions to consider:

- ➤ What historical developments contributed to the rise of the Frankfurt School?
- ➤ In what ways did the thinkers of the Frankfurt School depart from Marxism?
- ➤ What did Marcuse have to say about the ability of capitalism to accommodate rebellion?
- According to Marcuse, what are "true needs" and how does a person determine those needs?

9/10 **Building on Marxism**

• Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses"

Ouestions to consider:

- ➤ What is the difference between ISAs and RSAs?
- ➤ How do ISAs function to reproduce workers?
- According to Althusser, what is the most influential ISA?
- ➤ What does Althusser mean when he argues that ideology has no history?

9/12 Contemporary Marxism

• Cloud, "The Matrix and Critical Theory's Desertion of the Real"

UNIT 2: ...AND ALONG COMES FOUCAULT!

9/17 Foucault, Archaeology/Geneaology

Unit #1 paper due

D&P

Questions to consider as you read Discipline and Punish

- ➤ How does Foucault describe the changing focus of punishment? Why did the focus change?
- Foucault's thesis is that we are controlled as never before, and we consent to it. How are we disciplined in various societal structures (e.g., school, work, public life)?

- ➤ What is the panopticon?
- ➤ How does the metaphor of the panopticon translate into our daily lives?

9/19 **Foucault (cont.)**

D&P

9/24 Foucault (cont.)

D&P

9/26 Foucauldian methods applied

• Fenske, "Movement and Resistance"

UNIT 3: POST-STRUCTURALISM

10/1 **Post-structuralism overview**

Unit #2 paper due

- Butler, "Contingent Foundations"
- Baudrillard, "Simulacra and Simulations"

Questions to consider:

- According to Butler, if "I" don't exist as a discrete, bounded, centered subject, then how can politics be possible?
- ➤ What are "contingent foundations" and how are they a political solution?
- According to Baudrillard, what has replaced the "real"?
- ➤ What is simulacra?

10/3 Post-structuralism applied

- St. Pierre, "Poststructural Feminism in Education"
- Jenkins, "Seeing Katrina"

10/8 Feminism

- Butler, "excerpt from Gender Trouble
- Campbell, "The Rhetoric of Women's Liberation: An Oxymoron"

Questions to consider:

- ➤ What does Butler mean that gender is a "performance"?
- Explain the oxymoron that is the subject of Campbell's essay.
- Explain: "It's hard to fight an enemy who has outposts in your head."
- ➤ What happened in consciousness raising and how was that antithetical to traditional Western rhetoric?

10/10 Feminism applied

- Blair, Brown, and Baxter, "Disciplining the Feminine"
- Holland, "The Dangers of Playing Dress-up"

10/15 Gender

- Hawkesworth, "Confounding Gender"
- Connell, "The Social Organization of Masculinity"

Questions to consider:

- ➤ Why do gender scholars tend to study gender AND its connections to race, class, sexuality, etc.?
- ➤ How does gender function as a "regulatory fiction"?
- ➤ What does it mean that masculinity is defined "in the negative," or "by lack"? What does this say about conceptions of masculinity?
- ➤ How does violence inevitably become a part of maintaining rigid definitions of masculinity?

10/17 Gender applied

- Sloop, "Disciplining the Trans-Gendered"
- Gronnvoll, "Gender (In)Visibility at Abu Ghraib"

10/22 Queer theory

- Jagose, "Queer"
- Yep, "The Violence of Heteronormativity in Communication Studies"

Questions to consider:

- ➤ Why is queer theory so difficult to define?
- ➤ Does queer theory only denaturalize heterosexuality?
- ➤ What are some of the ways in which heteronormativity does violence (e.g., to women, to men, to LGBTQ soul murder, etc.)?
- ➤ How is heterosexuality a relatively recent invention? How is it fragile?

10/24 Queer theory applied

- Grindstaff, "The Fist and the Corpse"
- Chavez, "Beyond Complicity"

10/29 **Race**

- Ono, "Critical: A Finer Edge"
- Ono & Sloop, Introduction & Chapter 1 of *Shifting Borders*
- Hasian & Delgado, "The Trials and Tribulations of Racialized Critical Rhetorical Theory"

Ouestions to consider:

- ➤ How does Ono suggest that the term "critical" needs to be redefined and why?
- ➤ How do Ono & Sloop use rhetorical theory and criticism to problematize the notion that we live in a "post-racial" society?
- ➤ How do Hasian & Delgado describe some the weaknesses and strengths of CRT?
- ➤ How would the melding of CRT and critical rhetoric solve some the weaknesses of CRT alone?

10/31 Race applied

- Nakayama & Kriek, "Whiteness: A Strategic Rhetoric"
- Bailey, "Coming Out as Homophobic"

UNIT 4: OTHER CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES

11/5 **Post-colonialism**

Unit #3 paper due

• Childs, "Introduction"

- Said, "Orientalism"
- Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?"
- Shome & Hegde, "Postcolonial Approaches to Communication"

Questions to consider:

- What, when, and who is the postcolonial?
- ➤ What is orientalism? How does the west define the east?
- ➤ What is the subaltern and what obstacles prevent the subaltern from speaking?
- ➤ According to Shome and Hegde, why do postcolonial theorists have to remain reflexive about method?
- ➤ How can communication theory benefit by embracing postcolonial theory?

11/7 **Post-colonialism applied**

- Shome, "Post-Colonial Still Matters"
- Kavoori, "Getting Past the Latest 'Post'"
- Ewalt, "A Colonialist Celebration of National <Heritage>"

11/12 Critical rhetoric

- McKerrow, "Critical Rhetoric: Theory and Praxis"
- McGee: "Text, Context, and the Fragmentation of Contemporary Culture"

Questions to consider:

- Explain McKerrow's critique of domination and critique of freedom.
- ➤ Why does McKerrow resist labeling critical rhetoric a method?
- ➤ One of the principles of critical rhetoric is that absence is as important as presence when evaluating a text. Explain.
- According to McGee, what is the difference between being a critic of literature and a rhetorical critic?
- Explain the notion of fragmentation and the "apparently finished" text.

11/14 Critical rhetoric applied

Faculty Research paper due

- Hurt, "Disciplining through Depression"
- Hammers, "Talking about 'Down There'"

11/19 & 11/21 NO CLASS, National Communication Association Conference

11/25-11/29 NO CLASS, THANKSGIVING BREAK

12/3 **Deconstruction**

Critical Reflection #2 due

- Derrida, "Difference"
- Film, Derrida

12/5 Finish watching *Derrida*

Unit #4 paper due

Final Exam, Tuesday, December 10th, 5:15-7:15