

COMM6314 – Issues in International Mass Communication

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Course Description

The graduate seminar “Issues in International Mass Communication” traces the evolution of international (or global) communication since the mid-twentieth century and presents a selection of significant contemporary phenomena. As a field of study, international (or global) communication is interested in how political, economic, cultural, social and technological developments impact and are impacted by mediated communication exchanges that transcend the nation state. To account for this, this course will offer students a multidisciplinary overview that will have its geographic center in the Global South and will be structured around four core themes: (1) the evolving structure of the global media landscape; (2) the competing voices in the production and distribution of news; (3) the international flows of entertainment and mass mediated popular culture; and, (4) the transformative potential of digital technologies.

Course Objectives

This course will provide you with a solid theoretical foundation to study, communication phenomena that transcend national borders. By the end of the semester, you should be familiar with some of the most influential authors in the field of global communication, and feel comfortable discussing pressing issues in the discipline today. By exposing you to a list of readings that showcase diverse geographical, cultural, racial, gender and ideological perspectives, you will be able to develop awareness towards issues of representativeness and inclusivity in academia. Finally, you are encouraged to use the written assignments, as well as the detailed feedback you will receive, to improve your academic writing skills.

Evaluation

Your grade for this course will come from five different types of assessments, all of which are designed to help you improve important skills for the modern graduate student: academic writing, public speaking and critical thinking. Deadlines for each assignment are posted on BlackBoard. I expect you to meet all deadlines. I will not accept late submissions (and I abide by this rule very strictly). To avoid problems, I strongly encourage you to work ahead of schedule.

Below you will find detailed descriptions of each type of assessment. Details about formats and deadline are available on BlackBoard.

Discussion leader (15%)

One student will be designated discussion leader for each week. Assignments of discussion leaders will be completed on week 1. Discussion leaders will need to (1) prepare and deliver a 10-to-12-minute presentation that critically engages with the topic and the readings for the week;

(2) put together a discussion guide; (3) take a leading role in moderating and advancing discussion in class.

The in-class presentation, for which the use of slides is optional, should begin by situating the topic for the week within the wider discipline of global communication. This should be followed by a brief summary of each of the four papers. In some instances, it might be useful to briefly introduce the authors and their work, as well as the historical context in which they wrote. This should be followed by a succinct discussion on how the different readings relate to each other. During the final part of the presentation, you can choose to draw connections between the readings and current events; or you can refer to your own experience with the topic for the week; or you can offer a personal assessment of your engagement with the readings. This should serve as a starting point for the discussion.

Discussion leaders are expected to submit a discussion guide on BlackBoard by 10am the day before our class meets, and to bring hard copies to be distributed in class. The discussion guide will include: (1) a brief summary/outline of the main ideas of each article; (2) between 2 and 3 discussion questions for each article; (3) a summary/outline of how the articles are connected to each other. Additionally, you may, if you want to, bring additional materials (videos, articles, objects) that could enrich the group discussion.

Attendance and participation (15%)

Attendance is required. I will take note of absences. Multiple absences during the semester will negatively impact your grade. Before coming to class every week, you are expected to complete **all readings** in the syllabus. Not doing so will make it difficult for you to take part in class discussion and, as a consequence, will negatively affect your grade. All students should take part in discussions. The success of this seminar rests entirely on your active participation. Leave shyness at the door and think of the classroom as a safe environment for you to ask as many questions as needed and to express your opinion freely. The more you engage with the content of the readings in class, the easier it will be for you to draw connections between them in the final exam.

By 10am on Mondays, I expect you to contribute to the weekly online discussion forum on BlackBoard. These contributions (200 to 300 words) should not be a mere summary of the readings. You can choose to focus on a single aspect and provide your personal view on the topic; you can provide a link to a non-academic source and tell us how it relates to the content of one or more readings; you can provide a critique of the research methods of one or more papers; you can discuss the contradictions between two competing perspectives reflected in the readings... There are countless options. In all cases, your contribution should be well-written, articulated and properly formatted. From time to time, I will bring some of these contributions to class and ask you to elaborate on them more extensively.

In determining your grade, I will consider how often you come to class, how regularly you contribute to discussions in class and how much work you put into the online discussion.

Reaction papers (15%)

To get you in the habit of writing regularly, you will be required to submit three reaction papers during the semester. While you are encouraged to incorporate additional academic literature, each reaction paper will address the readings from one single week. For the first reaction paper, you can choose the readings from weeks 3 to 5; for the second reaction paper, weeks 6 to 8; and, for the third reaction paper, weeks 11 to 13. None of your reaction papers can address the same readings as your discussion guide. In other words, if you guided discussion on week 4, your first reaction paper must deal with either week 3 or week 5.

A reaction paper is not a summary, but a critical reading of the ideas discussed in one or more academic papers. Start by clearly stating the argument you would like to make, then develop the logic to support your argument (if necessary, provide evidence), and finish with a short conclusion. Referencing additional academic sources is highly recommended. Each reaction paper will be two pages long (single space), excluding references. Your papers must meet all the standards of an academic paper and conform to APA style.

Book review (15%)

To expose you to different types of academic writing, in this course you will be asked to write a review of the book *Media, geopolitics, and power: a view from the Global South* by Herman Wasserman, and published in 2018 by the University of Illinois Press. Your book review will be between 1,300 and 1,500 words and should be formatted according to the APA style.

Generally speaking, the opening paragraph of an academic book review situates the work and/or author within the discipline, it highlights why it is relevant, and very briefly summarizes its main proposition or claim. The next few paragraphs synthesize and critique the contents of the book. Some book reviews offer chapter by chapter commentaries, while others group chapters that share some common characteristic. The final paragraph should address the main strengths and weaknesses of the book, as well as the reviewer's overall assessment of the book. While not required, some book reviews include references to other academic sources.

The best way to learn how to write a good book review is by reading other book reviews. For inspiration, you can check the reviews published in *Journal of Communication*, *Global Media and Communication*, and *International Journal of Communication*.

Final exam (40%)

You will write your final exam at home. On week 14, I will post exam questions on BlackBoard and you will have one week to submit your responses. Late submissions will not be graded. Exam questions will assess your ability to draw connections between the assigned readings, relevant academic literature and current affairs. Expect 3 to 5 essay questions, each to be answered in two pages of single-spaced typed text, excluding references. In formatting your document, please adhere to the APA style.

Attendance and Lateness

I expect you to come to class every week and to arrive on time. Attendance and participation are substantial components of your grade, so being absent frequently will have a negative effect on your performance.

Mobile Phone Use and Other Devices

Refrain from using your mobile phones in class, as they are a major source of distraction for me. If you have something important to tweet, an Instagram post to like, or a text message to reply to, you can do that after class or during the break. You are free to use tablets and laptops to take notes, but you are not allowed to use them in class to access social media, shop online, watch cat videos or any similar activities. If I find you using your phone, tablet or laptop for any non-class related purposes, I might ask you to leave the classroom.

Academic Honesty and Student Conduct Policies

To cultivate an environment of academic integrity, the University of Houston expects students to abide by the University's Undergraduate Academic Honesty Policy, found in the Undergraduate Catalog: <http://www.uh.edu/academic-honesty-undergraduate>. Make sure you read the provisions included in the catalog as they are important.

Students with Disabilities

The College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, in accordance with 504/ADA guidelines, is committed to providing reasonable academic accommodations to students who request them. Students seeking accommodation must register with the Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) 713-743-5400.

Counseling and Psychological Services

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) are available for students having difficulties managing stress, adjusting to college, or feeling sad and hopeless. You can reach CAPS by calling 713-743-5454 during and after business hours for routine appointments or if you or somebody you know is in crisis, the "Let's Talk" program provides a drop-in consultation service at convenient locations and hours around campus. Read more about the services provided by CAPS [on their website](#).

Schedule and Readings

The following is a tentative schedule for the semester. In the event that a class needs to be cancelled, we will use the last week to make up for the time. Any changes to the schedule will be communicated on BlackBoard. Make sure you read announcements on BlackBoard regularly.

Week 1 | 15 January | International Communication Today

We will go over the syllabus, discuss expectations and talk about the assignments in detail. We will also begin exploring some of the issues that we will cover during the semester, and discuss some matters related to terminology.

Week 2 | 22 January | Theoretical Approaches

- Thussu, D. K. (2000). "Approaches to theorizing international communication" In D. K. Thussu. *International communication: continuity and change* (pp. 53-81). London: Arnold.
- Stevenson, R. L. (1992). Defining International Communication as a Field. *Journalism Quarterly*, 69(3), 543–553.
- Curran, J., & Park, M.-J. (2000). "Beyond globalization theory" In J. Curran & M.-J. Park (Eds). *De-Westernizing media studies* (pp. 2-15). London: Routledge.
- Lee, C.-C. (2015). Local Experiences, Cosmopolitan Theories: On Cultural Relevance in International Communication Research. In C.-C. Lee (Ed.), *Internationalizing "International Communication"* (pp. 201–224). Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Week 3 | 29 January | Global Media Structure

- Arsenault, A. H., & Castells, M. (2008). The Structure and Dynamics of Global Multi-Media Business Networks. *International Journal of Communication*, 2, 43.
- Bennett, W. L. (2004). Global Media and Politics: Transnational Communication Regimes and Civic Cultures. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 7(1), 125–148.
- Wasko, J. (2012). Studying the political economy of media and information. *Comunicação e Sociedade*, 7, 25-48–48.
- Winseck, D. (2008). The State of Media Ownership and Media Markets: Competition or Concentration and Why Should We Care? *Sociology Compass*, 2(1), 34–47.

Week 4 | 5 February | International News Flows

- Masmoudi, M. (1979). The New World Information Order. *Journal of Communication*, 29(2), 172–179.
- Boyd-Barrett, O. (2000). Constructing the Global, Constructing the Local: News Agencies Re-Present the World. In A. Malek & A. P. Kavoori (Eds.), *The global dynamics of news: studies in international news coverage and news agenda* (pp. 299–322). Stamford, Conn: Ablex Pub.
- Figenschou, T. U. (2013). Introduction: The Al Jazeera Moment. In T.U. Figenschou, *Al Jazeera and the global media landscape: the south is talking back* (pp. 1-25). London: Routledge.
- Curran, J., Esser, F., Hallin, D. C., Hayashi, K., & Lee, C.-C. (2017). International News and Global Integration. *Journalism Studies*, 18(2), 118–134.

Week 5 | 12 February | Public Diplomacy: States as Messengers

- Nye, J. S. (2008). Public Diplomacy and Soft Power. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 616(1), 94–109.
- Xie, S., & Boyd-Barrett, O. (2015). External-National TV News Networks' Way to America: Is the United States Losing the Global "Information War"? *International Journal of Communication*, 9, 66–83.

- Rawnsley, G. D. (2015). Chinese International Broadcasting, Public Diplomacy and Soft Power. In G. D. Rawnsley & M.-Y. T. Rawnsley (Eds.), *Routledge handbook of Chinese media*. London: Routledge.
- Yablokov, I. (2015). Conspiracy Theories as a Russian Public Diplomacy Tool: The Case of Russia Today (RT). *Politics*, 301–315.

Week 6 | 19 February | Non-State Actors as Messengers

- Powers, M. (2016). The new boots on the ground: NGOs in the changing landscape of international news. *Journalism*, 17(4), 401–416.
- Scott, M., Bunce, M., & Wright, K. (2019). Foundation Funding and the Boundaries of Journalism. *Journalism Studies*, 1–19.
- Wall, M., & Zahed, S. el. (2015). Syrian Citizen Journalism. *Digital Journalism*, 3(5), 720–736.
- Klausen, J. (2015). Tweeting the Jihad: Social Media Networks of Western Foreign Fighters in Syria and Iraq. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 38(1), 1–22.

Week 7 | 26 February | Digital Media Activism

- Castells, M. (2007). Communication, Power and Counter-power in the Network Society. *International Journal of Communication*, 1(1), 29.
- Aouragh, M., & Chakravarty, P. (2016). Infrastructures of empire: towards a critical geopolitics of media and information studies. *Media, Culture & Society*, 38(4), 559–575.
- Bosch, T. (2017). Twitter activism and youth in South Africa: the case of #RhodesMustFall. *Information, Communication & Society*, 20(2), 221–232.
- Yang, G. (2018). (Un)civil Society in Digital China| Demobilizing the Emotions of Online Activism in China: A Civilizing Process. *International Journal of Communication*, 12(0), 21.

Week 8 | 5 March | Cultural flows and contra-flows

- Thussu, D. K. (2007). Mapping global media flow and contra-flow. In D. K. Thussu (Ed.), *Media on the move: global flow and contra-flow* (pp. 11-32). London: Routledge.
- Straubhaar, J. D. (1991). Beyond media imperialism: Assymetrical interdependence and cultural proximity. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 8(1), 39–59.
- Appadurai, A. (1990). Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 7(2–3), 295–310.
- Mato, D. (2005). The Transnationalization of the Telenovela Industry, Territorial References, and the Production of Markets and Representations of Transnational Identities. *Television & New Media*, 6(4), 423–444.

Week 9 | 12 March | Spring Break (no class)

Week 10 | 19 March | A View from the South

We will spend most time this week discussing the contents of the book you need to review (*Media, geopolitics, and power: a view from the Global South*) and how they relate to what you have learnt so far. During the second half of the class, we will talk about some of the cultural artefacts that will be occupying us during the latter part of the semester.

Week 11 | 26 March | Globalization, Media, Culture

- Sparks, C. (2007). Globalization and the Media. In C. Sparks, *Globalization, development and the mass media* (pp. 126-148). Los Angeles; London: SAGE.
- Mattelart, T. (2009). Globalization theories and media internationalization: a critical appraisal. In D. K. Thussu (Ed.), *Internationalizing media studies* (pp. 48–60). London: Routledge.
- Iwabuchi, K. (2002). Taking “Japanization” seriously: Cultural globalization reconsidered. In K. Iwabuchi, *Recentering Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism* (pp. 23-50). Durham: Duke University Press.
- Shim, D. (2006). Hybridity and the rise of Korean popular culture in Asia. *Media, Culture & Society*, 28(1), 25–44.

Week 12 | 2 April | Global Audiences

- Ang, I. (1990). Culture and Communication: Towards an Ethnographic Critique of Media Consumption in the Transnational Media System. *European Journal of Communication*, 5(2), 239–260.
- Katz, E., & Liebes, T. (1990). Interacting with “Dallas”: Cross Cultural Readings of American TV. *Canadian Journal of Communication*, 15(1).
- Kraidy, M. (2009). Reality Television, Gender, and Authenticity in Saudi Arabia. *Journal of Communication*, 59(2), 345–366.
- Jacobs, S. (2007). Big Brother, Africa is watching. *Media, Culture & Society*, 29(6), 851–868.

Week 13 | 9 April | Transnational Digital Networks

- Valdivia, A. N. (2011). The Gendered Face of Latinidad: Global Circulation of Hybridity. In R. S. Hegde (Ed.), *Circuits of visibility: gender and transnational media cultures* (pp. 53–67). New York: New York University Press.
- Heyd, T., & Honkanen, M. (2015). From Naija to Chitown: The New African Diaspora and digital representations of place. *Discourse, Context & Media*, 9, 14–23.
- Lee, H.-K. (2011). Participatory media fandom: A case study of anime fansubbing. *Media, Culture & Society*, 33(8), 1131–1147.
- Lobato, R. (2018). Rethinking International TV Flows Research in the Age of Netflix. *Television & New Media*, 19(3), 241–256.

Week 14 | 16 April | Reading the Visual

This week we will work as a group in analyzing two global visual cultural artefacts. Details about the session will be shared on BlackBoard, including what/where to watch, and any readings to be done before the session.

Week 15 | 23 April | Final Exam

The questions for your take home final exam will be posted on BlackBoard at 530pm. You will have one week to complete the exam. Unless there are unexpected changes to the schedule, there is no need for you to come to class this week. Focus on preparing for your exam.