

**DEPARTMENT OF MODERN LANGUAGES  
AND CULTURAL STUDIES**  
<https://uofa.ualberta.ca/modern-languages-and-cultural-studies>

**2018-2019 MLCS 640-A1: Media and Cultural Studies Methodology  
(Fall Term)**

Instructor: Dr. Andreas Stuhlmann  
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Time: W 2 – 4.30pm  
Place: HC 1 3  
Office Hours: M, W, F 1-2pm,  
or by appointment

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**Course Prerequisite:** consent of department

It is your responsibility as a student to ensure that you have the appropriate prerequisites for the course.

**Course-based Ethics Approval** in place regarding all research projects that involve human testing, questionnaires, etc.?

- Yes       No, not needed, no such projects approved.

**Community Service Learning** component

- Required     Optional     None

**Past or Representative Evaluative Course Material Available**

- Exam registry – Students’ Union  
<http://www.su.ualberta.ca/services/infolink/exam/>  
 See explanations below  
 Document distributed in class  
 Other (please specify)  
 NA

**Additional mandatory Instructional fees (approved by Board of Governors)**

- Yes       No

**Course Description and Objectives:**

In finding and designing a MA or a PhD project, methods are often the “elephant in the room,” the topic we are reluctant to discuss. Methods are not only fundamental to the design of every academic project, they are crucial for its success. Often, an innovative method or the combination of different methods, sets an exceptional thesis, article or book apart from the pack.

In this seminar, we will focus on identifying and selecting those methods from the plethora of methods within cultural and media studies that are relevant for the projects of the participants. We will start by bringing clarity of the confusing usage of terms like “method”, “methodology”, and “approach” and uncover epistemological

presuppositions, before we embark on an overview of selected methods from text-based hermeneutics and semiotics to methods of folklore and ethnographic research, to discourse analysis, and deconstruction. Special emphasis will be given to the interplay and integration of different theories and methods within individual approaches. Students will build their own archive of materials, case studies and theoretical texts relevant to their own research projects, present on case studies in class, and develop a corpus of methods.

**Texts:**

Required:

Michael Kackman, Mary Celeste Kearney (eds.): *The Craft of Criticism. Critical Media Studies in Practice*. New York: Routledge 2018 (eBook)

Additional:

Michael Pickering (ed.): *Research Methods for Cultural Studies*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP 2008 (eBook, eClass)

All other required reading will be distributed through eClass

Individual recommended reading will be assigned

**Grade Distribution (see “Explanatory Notes”):**

Attendance, Participation, Preparation, Reading Introductions	10%
Rhizomatic Response Projects (blog) (due Dec 8)	30%
Roundtable Statement and Debate (TBA)	10%
Leading a Session	10%
Final Essay (due Dec 15)	40%

**Explanatory Notes on Assignments:**

***Attendance, Participation, Preparation, Reading Introductions:*** Regular attendance is essential for optimal performance in any course. Students are expected to participate fully in all aspects of class work and assignments – that means: coming to class prepared, reading all texts carefully in advance, doing written or oral homework diligently, participating in group work, and contributing meaningfully to class discussions. Throughout the course, students are expected to prepare very brief (7-10 minutes) introductions to an assigned text to be discussed, including relevant background facts and three questions for discussion.

***Rhizomatic Response Projects (blog):*** Rhizomatic Response Projects (RRP) are creative multimedia reactions to the assigned readings, which are documented online. They aim to provide a broader understanding of the text as a cultural artifact that communicates with other discourses. The RRP functions like a journal, a collection of materials (texts, images, videos, links) that are connected to the student’s research projects and of reflections on these materials. The RRP must always include an interdisciplinary aspect. Another crucial aspect of the RRP is the reflection on the cultural artifact’s “political potential”. Although it might not

be ‘political’ at first glance, according to Jacques Rancière every literary text or piece of art has a deep impact on the human apprehension-apparatus, the social order, and ultimately, on the behavior of human beings. Aesthetics as a mode of world-perception is intrinsically linked to politics by its capacity to divide the visible from the invisible, the permitted from the prohibited, and the people embedded in a society from those who are excluded. The final versions of the RRP’s are due Dec 8, we will discuss progress regularly during term.

***Roundtable Statement and Debate:*** Each student is expected to participate in a roundtable discussion on a specific topic by preparing a 7-10 minute statement and by actively engaging in the debate following the short presentations. The statement should give an introduction to and overview of the topic including important facts and dates; it should then focus on a specific aspect and introduce an assumption or opinion, and finally articulate related questions that will be discussed during the debate. Dates will be announced in class.

***Leading a Session:*** Each student will take on the responsibility for setting up one class this term, from the pedagogical design and the definition of the concrete learning outcomes to leading the classroom discussion. Students will present an outline to me two weeks in advance of the date they are responsible for.

***Final Essay:*** The final essay of approximately 30 pages is a reflection on the learning outcomes of the course, it summarizes the results from the Rhizomatic Response Projects and details the approach chosen for the student’s research project. The essays are due Dec 14.

### **Required Notes:**

“Policy about course outlines can be found in the [Evaluation Procedures and Grading System](#) of the University Calendar.”

### **Student Responsibilities:**

#### ***Academic Integrity:***

“The University of Alberta is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the Code of Student Behaviour (online at [www.governance.ualberta.ca](http://www.governance.ualberta.ca)) and avoid any behaviour that could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the University.”

All students should consult [the Academic Integrity website](#). If you have any questions, ask your instructor.

An instructor or coordinator who is convinced that a student has handed in work that he or she could not possibly reproduce without outside assistance is obliged, out of consideration of fairness to other students, to report the case to the Associate Dean of the Faculty. See the [Academic Discipline Process](#).

***Learning and Working Environment:***

The Faculty of Arts is committed to ensuring all students; faculty and staff are able to study and work in an environment that is safe and free from discrimination and harassment. It does not tolerate behaviour that undermines that environment. The Department urges anyone who feels that this policy is being violated to:

- Discuss the matter with the person whose behaviour is causing concern; or
- If that discussion is unsatisfactory, or there is concern that direct discussion is inappropriate or threatening, discuss it with the Chair of the Department.

For additional advice or assistance regarding this policy you may contact the [Office of the Student Ombuds](#). Information about the [University of Alberta Discrimination and Harassment Policy and Procedures](#) is described in [UAPPOL](#).

***Territorial Statement:***

“The University of Alberta acknowledges that we are located on Treaty 6 territory, and respects the histories, languages, and cultures of the First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and all First Peoples of Canada, whose presence continues to enrich our vibrant community.” (*from the beginning of the Calendar*).

***University of Alberta Sexual Violence Policy:***

The Sexual Violence Policy was approved by GFC in June 2017. It plays a vital role in ensuring a safe and respectful learning and working environment.

As defined in the policy, **sexual violence** is any sexual act or act of a sexual nature, or act targeting sexuality, whether physical or psychological, committed without consent. **Sexual violence** is a complex and serious problem in society and on university campuses. Sexual violence can affect individuals of all gender identities, gender expressions, and sexual orientations, as well as those from all ages, abilities, racial, cultural and economic backgrounds. Through this policy, the University of Alberta recognizes its responsibility to reduce sexual violence in the University community. The university aims to do so by fostering a culture of **consent** and support through education, training and policy. The University recognizes the possible effects of trauma on those who have experienced sexual violence and supports the efforts of individuals to seek support and recover.

To read the policy in more detail, please visit:

<https://policiesonline.ualberta.ca/PoliciesProcedures/Policies/Sexual-Violence-Policy.pdf>

***Recording of Lectures:***

Audio or video recording, digital or otherwise, of lectures, labs, seminars or any other teaching environment by students is allowed only with the prior written consent of the instructor or as a part of an approved accommodation plan.

Student or instructor content, digital or otherwise, created and/or used within the context of the course is to be used solely for personal study, and is not to be used or distributed for any other purpose without prior written consent from the content author(s).

***Attendance, Absences, and Missed Grade Components:***

Regular attendance is essential for optimal performance in any course. In cases of potentially excusable absences due to illness or domestic affliction, notify your instructor by e-mail within two days. Regarding absences that may be excusable and procedures for addressing course components missed as a result, consult sections [Attendance](#) and [Examinations](#) of the University Calendar. Be aware that unexcused absences will result in partial or total loss of the grade for the “attendance and participation” component(s) of a course, as well as for any assignments that are not handed-in or completed as a result.

Deferral of term work is a privilege and not a right; there is no guarantee that a deferral will be granted. Misrepresentation of facts to gain a deferral is a serious breach of the Code of Student Behaviour.

**In this course**, attendance, preparation, and regular participation go hand in hand; students will not only be expected to attend each session, but they are expected to come prepared for the day’s lesson and participate in that day’s lesson. As the course will be run in seminar-style, the success of the course is dependent on informed and lively discussions driven by student engagement. It is therefore vital that each student completes the required readings, film screenings, or written exercises assigned for the scheduled class. Attendance, preparation, and regular participation will count for 10% of the overall grade for the course.

***Policy for Late Assignments:*** Students who consult in advance with the instructor regarding contingencies preventing the timely completion of an assignment may, at the discretion of the instructor, be granted an extension. Otherwise, late assignments with no prior arrangement will receive a 5%-per-class-day penalty for each subsequent class-day of lateness.

***Disclaimer:***

Any typographical errors in this syllabus are subject to change and will be announced in class and posted on eClass. The date of the final examination is set by the Registrar and takes precedence over the final examination date reported in this syllabus.

**Student Resources:**

The best all-purpose website for student services is: <https://www.ualberta.ca/current-students>.

**Accessibility Resources: (1 – 80 SUB)**

The University of Alberta is committed to creating work and learning communities that inspire and enable all people to reach their full potential. Accessibility Resources

promotes an accessible, inclusive, and universally designed environment. For general information to register for services visit the [Accessibility Resources](#) webpage.

**The Academic Success Centre:** (1-80 SUB)

[The Academic Success Centre](#) offers a variety of workshops on effective study and exam strategies. There are in-person and online sessions available for a modest fee.

**The Centre for Writers:** (1-42 Assiniboia Hall)

The [Centre for Writers](#) offers free one-on-one writing support to students, faculty, and staff. Students can request consultation for a writing project at any stage of development. Instructors can request class visits and presentations.

**Health and Wellness Support:** There are many health and community services available to current students. For more information visit the [Health and Wellness Support](#) webpage.

**Office of the Student Ombuds:**

The [Office of the Student Ombuds](#) offers confidential interviews, advice and support to students facing academic, discipline, interpersonal and financial difficulties.

**Grading:**

Assessment of the individual course components may be in the form of numerical marks or letter grades. The final letter grade will be based on "a combination of absolute achievement and relative performance in a class" (University Calendar, [Evaluation Procedures and Grading System](#)). The University Grading Procedure mandates that "a student's level of achievement of the goals/outcomes of a course, their grade, and the descriptor of that grade must be aligned" (<https://policiesonline.ualberta.ca/>). The following guidelines have been adopted by the Department of Modern Languages and Cultural Studies:

**“MLCS Graduate Grading Scale”**

A+	97-100	Excellent
A	93-96	Excellent
A-	90-92	Excellent
B+	87-89	Good
B	79-86	Good
B-	74-78	Satisfactory
C+	68-73	Satisfactory
C	63-67	Failure
C-	58-62	Failure
D+	54-57	Failure
D-	50-53	Failure
F	00-49	Failure