About Your Professor

Dr. Gutsche has been a journalist since 1996, having written for The Washington Post, Chicago Tribune, the Wisconsin State Journal, and other regional and local publications. His scholarship surrounds cultural and social meanings of news, particularly in terms of how news media demarcate space and characterize place. He is the author and editor of five books and more than a dozen journal articles, an affiliated faculty member with Florida International University’s African and African Diaspora Studies Program, and a Research Scholar at the Donald W. Reynolds Journalism Institute at the University of Missouri.

Course Overview

Digital Theories is an interdisciplinary and international approach to applying critical/cultural theory to digital media and communities. Because the world of digital communication is constantly in flux, this class is designed to keep pace with the rapidly shifting digital media landscape. At the same time, however, this course approaches communication as a cultural function of power-making used to maintain dominant social and cultural positions within society. Therefore, this course relies on canonical readings in mass communication, scholarship focused on emerging technologies, and
cutting-edge material, likely to be supplied by current journal articles that can be updated as the course develops.

This course is part of a larger major to prepare students for future careers as communicators in digital environments with content that is relevant for multiple professional academic and institutional settings. From graduate preparatory education to large firms and small businesses, social media start-ups to traditional media outlets seeking to leverage new digital strategies, as well as non-profit managers and community organizers, approaching media production, messages, and its audience through a critical lens helps us to identify issues of power within media and examine avenues for resistance.

Students should be able to demonstrate an understanding of concepts and theories of mass communication as they are influenced and remade by the digital era, the hallmarks of which are increased audience autonomy, segmentation and specialization, interactivity, media convergence and conglomeration, and democratization. Specifically, students should be able to identify and apply the following concepts to digital news, advertising, and social products: hegemony, agency, social control, technological determinism, culture, and ideology, as well as others listed throughout the course material.

1. To express a wide and deep understanding of possible influence of media on society.

2. To interpret media representations in terms of historical, cultural, and critical means of explanation.

3. To conduct media critique through a conceptual lens.

4. To express the role and function of media in characterizing social issues, geographies, and people through a lens of power and technological determinism.

5. To produce public media representations to reify or resist dominant ideological interpretations of daily explanations.

Accreditation Objectives

The FIU School of Journalism and Mass Communication is nationally accredited by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC), which requires that 12 core values, competencies and abilities be addressed in a program’s overall curriculum. The following are ACEJMC student learning outcomes, all of which will be targeted in this course:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping global communication strategies in a wide range of organizational settings.

2. Demonstrate an understanding of professional and ethical practices and principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity.
3. Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society.

4. Think critically, creatively, and independently.

5. Critically evaluate your own work and that of others.

6. Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions and audiences and the purposes they serve.

7. Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

**Applying Learning Objectives**

Students can see in the schedule below how these objectives are applied through a written “purpose” for that course period, assignments, readings, and discussion topics.

**Required Readings**

Gutsche, 9781628922967

Save about $50 for a required poster to be produced at end of semester, in lieu of another book

Other Readings, as assigned and provided via Dropbox

**Assessments**

**Midterm Exam 1: 20 percent**
Students will take a short answer exam at midterm related to the concepts (and definitions) and the application of those concepts to the readings and course discussions.

**Midterm Exam 2: 20 percent**
Students will take a short answer exam at midterm related to the concepts (and definitions) and the application of those concepts to the readings and course discussions.

**Research Paper**
All students will write a research paper for this class. This is not a group exercise. For this paper, you must select a topic presented in class, preferably a concept or controversy/case and the theories used to identify issues of power within your readings. The paper must be 8,000 words, including references. You must follow APA style, have at least 20 scholarly citations, and produce an original argument about how the concepts and controversies/cases interact. This should be viewed as original research, which we will be reading in class. Therefore, you must follow a structure that
will be presented in lecture – including an introduction, a thesis, a problem, relevant scholarship on the topic, and then your analysis (the latter being the majority of the paper).

**Paper Draft: 10 percent**
The paper draft will consist of a narrative including the following elements,

1. Statement of Purpose: What the focus of this paper? What concept is it furthering? What case will be used to illustrate the paper? What methods are you proposing?

2. Research Questions: What are the two major research questions that address the problem/purpose from above?

3. Annotated Literature Review / Conceptual Framework: List at least 20 academic studies (no more than two can have been published from before 2008) that you will use to construct the conceptual section of the paper? An annotated list is one that not only lists the journal/article information, but provides three or four sentences that explains the citation’s overarching arguments, methods, and contribution to your proposed paper.

Using each of the components above, altered and edited from professor and class feedback, this should be a completed first draft, not merely an extended outline, but an actual paper that provides the best work possible for further feedback that will be applied during revision.

**Final Paper: 20 percent**
Papers should be between 12 and 18 pages, not including references.

**Final Project**
Includes a paper and poster.

**Poster Draft: 10 percent**

**Final Project: 20 percent**

**Assessment**
The following grade scale will be used as a guideline for determining final grades:

A = 93-100  
A- = 90-92  
B+ = 87-89  
B = 83-86  
B- = 80-82  
C = 70-79  
F = 71 or below
**Attendance Policy**

Traffic and rain are not appropriate explanations for lateness or absences. We live in Miami. Therefore, students are allowed two unexcused absences. Every absence after that reduces the student’s final grade by half a grade. In other words, an A would become an A-. Additionally, two tardies will equal an absence; attendance is taken immediately at the beginning of class.

Students should not arrive late to class. Students late to exams will not be admitted and must wait for the professor outside of the classroom before entering. Students late or absent for quizzes or other in-class work will not be able to complete the work, unless it comports with the late work policy, below.

**Makeup/Late Work**

Excused absences involve true emergencies (i.e. illness or death in the family, or otherwise according to FIU policy). In order to receive consideration for an excused absence, you must do several things:

1. It is your responsibility to get in touch with me within one business day in the event you qualify for a makeup exam or quiz in order to be considered for makeup or to have a late assignment graded. Otherwise, all missed work will receive a zero.

2. You must provide appropriate documentation. In the case of a medical emergency, you need a doctor or hospital note that says you could not attend class on that date. In the case of a death (family emergency), you need to provide something documenting the dates and your relationship to the deceased, such as an obituary or funeral program. Examples of unacceptable documentation include a note saying you were seen by a doctor or health center, airline tickets to a family event, etc. Other absences that will not count as excused include family events (wedding, family trip, etc.), conflicts with other classes or school related activities (such as grammar exams or reviews), car trouble, a work conflict or an internship obligation. Failure to provide appropriate documentation means the absence will not be excused.

**Attitude**

It’s everything. We all have bad days, but we don’t need to make our own issues known to the world. If you are having troubles that you think would make their way into the classroom, please let me know. In this class, let’s support each other – and that means showing respect. In fact, if you have something going on that may put you out of commission for the class period, just tell me that (I don’t need to know details). Students who fail to do this will be asked to leave during that class period. Give respect. Get it.

**SJMC Diversity Statement**

The School of Journalism and Mass Communication (SJMC) fosters an environment of inclusivity and respect for diversity and multiculturalism. The SJMC educates students
to embrace diversity and understand the root causes of discrimination, as well as social, ethnic, sexual, disability and gender-based exclusion.

**Discussion of Sensitive Topics and Policy Related to Student Concerns**

At times, conversation in the course, and in journalism, advertising and public relations, may have offensive (or uncomfortable) tones. Covering such topics is a necessary part of the journalist’s role in society and dealing with these topics is an element every communication professional will face at one time or another. Discussing these topics also is important to being a critical media user and member of society. However, this freedom to discuss issues of a sensitive nature does not allow for sexual harassment, racism and other forms of discrimination. If you have concerns about conversations in the classroom or the content shared, please discuss them with me.

If you have issues or concerns, I encourage you discuss them with me. Per Academic Affairs, “If a student has a complaint against a faculty member, the student should attempt to resolve the complaint by an informal meeting with the faculty member involved. If the student believes that he or she cannot discuss the complaint with the instructor, the student should submit a written letter of complaint specifying the details of the grievance and the actions he or she is requesting to the chair of the department within which the faculty member is located. The student should file this complaint in as timely a manner as possible, but in no case can the complaint be filed later than the limits prescribed above.”

Lastly, and just to let you know, **in all facets of this course, you are responsible for your own education and knowledge-base.** I am here to help lead you in the “right direction(s).” That means, stopping by during workshop hours (or making appointments outside of those hours).

**Academic Honesty**

Florida International University is a community dedicated to generating and imparting knowledge through excellent teaching and research, the rigorous and respectful exchange of ideas and community service. All students should respect the right of others to have an equitable opportunity to learn and honestly to demonstrate the quality of their learning.

Therefore, all students are expected to adhere to a standard of academic conduct, which demonstrates respect for themselves, their fellow students, and the educational mission of the University. All students are deemed by the University to understand that if they are found responsible for academic misconduct, they will be subject to the Academic Misconduct procedures and sanctions, as outlined in the Student Handbook.

Misconduct includes: Cheating – The unauthorized use of books, notes, aids, electronic sources; or assistance from another person with respect to examinations, course assignments, field service reports, class recitations; or the unauthorized possession of examination papers or course materials, whether originally authorized or not. Plagiarism – The use and appropriation of another’s work without any indication of the source and the representation of such work as the student’s own. Any student who fails
to give credit for ideas, expressions or materials taken from another source, including internet sources, is responsible for plagiarism.

Any student who fails to meet these expectations will not only fail the course, but will also be reported to the Chair of the Department of Journalism & Broadcasting and to the Dean of SJMC.

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

The Disability Resource Center collaborates with students, faculty, staff, and community members to create diverse learning environments that are usable, equitable, inclusive and sustainable. The DRC provides FIU students with disabilities the necessary support to successfully complete their education and participate in activities available to all students. If you have a diagnosed disability and plan to utilize academic accommodations, please contact the Center at 305-348-3532 or visit them at the Graham Center GC 190. Students are encouraged to register with Student Disability Services to verify their eligibility for appropriate accommodations. **Requests for academic accommodations need to be made to me during the first week of class. Accommodations made mid-semester are not retro-active.**
Course Schedule and Assignment Dates

Week 1: Introduction
Purpose: Learning Outcome 1

1/12
Course Introduction

1/14
Article: Locating Whiteness in journalism pedagogy, Alemán
Article: Leaning in: A student’s guide to engaging constructively with social justice content, DiAngelo and Sensoy
In Class: Assign Groups

Week 2: Identifying Cultural Power
Purpose: Learning Outcomes 1, 2

Term: Culture: The manifestation of collective, salient meaning

1/19
Andrejevic, “Critical Media Studies 2.0”
Article, Gramsci, “Hegemony, Relations of Force, Historical Bloc”
Group 1

1/21
Foucault, Preface
Group 2

Week 3: Preparing us to Believe
Purpose: Learning Outcomes 3, 4

Term: Ideology: Explanations of and meanings assigned to everyday life that serve the powerful and are evidenced by socially acceptable and unquestioned data.

1/26
Foucault, Chapter 1 and 2
Group 3

1/28
Foucault, Chapter 2 and 3
Group 4
Week 4: Hacking Hegemony
Purpose: Learning Outcomes 3, 5

Term: Hegemony: The process of maintaining class systems

2/2
Chomsky, in-class
Due: Scholarly Reading TBA (This will help prepare you for how to write your own):

2/4
Chomsky, in-class
Due: Scholarly Reading TBA (This will help prepare you for how to write your own):

Week 5: Applying Elite Power
Purpose: Learning Outcomes 1, 3

Term: Power Elite: A collective of individuals and institutions that control a society’s economy, political order, and military with interests of maintaining order.

2/9
Foucault, Chapter 3
Due: Scholarly Reading TBA (This will help prepare you for how to write your own):
Group 1

2/11
Foucault, Chapter 4 through 6
Group 2

Week 6: Expressing Elite Power
Purpose: Learning Outcomes 4, 5

Term: Social Control: The overt and covert means by which a collective is guided

2/16
Foucault, Chapter 7 through Conclusion
Group 3
Study Session

2/18
Due: MIDTERM
Week 7: Approaching Media Power
Purpose: Learning Outcomes 1, 2, 3

Term: Agency: The ability to act otherwise to evoke social change

2/23
Gutsche, Introduction
Group 4
In class: How to do research Part 1

2/25
Gutsche, Chapter 1
Group 1
In class: How to do research Part II

Week 8: Making Media Messages
Purpose: Learning Outcomes 1, 2, 4

Term: Technological Determinism: The notion that technology drives society

3/1
Gutsche, Chapter 2
Group 2

3/3
NO CLASS

Week 9: Applying Media Control
Purpose: Learning Outcomes 1, 4

Term: Collective Memory: A hegemonic function designed to maintain dominant interpretations of everyday life

3/8
Gutsche, Chapter 3
Group 3
Due: Paper Draft

3/10
Gutsche, Chapter 4

Week 10
NO CLASSES – SPRING BREAK
Week 11: Control via Surveillance and Watching  
Purpose: Learning Outcomes 2, 4

Term: Imperialism: The extension of a nation’s influence through “diplomatic” and military power, culture, and commerce

3/22  
Gutsche, Chapter 5  
Group 4

3/24  
Gutsche, Chapter 6  
Group 1

Week 12: The Problems of Media Education and Preparation  
Purpose: Learning Outcomes: 3, 5

Term: Othering: The separation of a dominant group from subordinates through mythical attribution

3/29  
Gutsche, Conclusion  
Group 2

3/31  
NO CLASS

Week 13:  
Purpose: Learning Outcomes 2, 3

Term: Ideograph: Words or phrases that represent ideological positions

4/5  
Group 3  
Study Session

4/7  
Due: MIDTERM
Week 14
Purpose: Learning Outcomes 1, 3, 5

Term: Incorporation: The process of adopting alternative, subordinate ideologies into dominant ideology as a means of pacification and normalization.

4/12


Group 4
Due: Poster Draft

4/14


Group 1

Week 15
Purpose: Learning Outcomes 4, 5

4/19
WORKSHOP PAPER AND POSTER

4/21
NO CLASS (WORKSHOP)

Week 16
Purpose: Learning Outcomes: 3, 4, 5

4/26
WORKSHOP PAPER AND POSTER

4/29
STUDY SESSION AND PREP
Due: Final paper and poster

Finals Week

5/5
Final Exam Presentation, Marine Science 150, 12:00 to 2 p.m. (TENTATIVE LOCATION)
Midterm and Final Exam Rubric

(20 points possible in each section; each assignment valued at 100 points)

Compliance & Presentation
Does this assignment follow the requirements?
Is the assignment correct in format?
Is the assignment presented in a clean fashion?
Are concepts from the course applied?

Research Quality & Sources
What is the academic rigor of this assignment?
Does the assignment have adequate sources?
Are concepts from the course applied correctly?

Writing Quality
Does this assignment use proper grammar & punctuation?
Is the writing strong, active, and interesting?
Are sentences concise and clear?
Does the assignment flow through proper transitions?

Argument
Are the arguments clearly stated?
Are the arguments sound and focused?
Does the evidence provided support the arguments?
Are the arguments conceptually based?

Analysis
Is the analysis analytical rather than descriptive?
Does the analysis utilize appropriate scholarship?
How well does the analysis capture the literature?
Does the analysis contribute to future research?
Are concepts from the course explicated throughout?

General Comments: