HU5012: COMMUNICATION THEORY

Michigan Technological University, Spring 2013
T: 7:05 - 9:35 Walker Arts 329

Dr. Sue Collins
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COURSE DESCRIPTION:
This course surveys some major theoretical approaches to the study of communication. Because the notion of communication itself spans an enormously wide range of ideas within its scope, the study of “communication theory” confronts the student with a vast body of literature drawing from a multitude of disciplines making up what has become the field of communication inquiry. In this course, we will narrow our focus to include some of the theories and intellectual legacies intersecting with humanistic perspectives on communication in relation to 1) social change and geopolitics, 2) the individual as part of the crowd, mass, and public, 3) the inextricability among language, the self, the other, and society, 4) mass media and propaganda, 5) interpersonal interaction and the everyday, 6) culture and representation. By way of its intellectual history, the course will engage social scientific influences on communication theory, but our exploration will be situated in a critical and normative framework concerned with understanding communication’s uses and abuses as a form of social power in human relations.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:
• to familiarize you with a conceptual vocabulary fundamental to communication theory at the graduate level.
• to overview some of the methodological assumptions and concerns that undergird various approaches to communication.
• to give you an opportunity to read some of the primary generative writings that are drawn upon by scholars in communication studies.
• In short, to begin to build a conceptual toolbox to aid you in the pursuit of your advanced degree in the RTC program.

REQUIRED READING:

EVALUATION:
20% --Attendance and Participation

10%--Canvas Postings

70% Short papers (2)
SCHEDULE:

1/15 Intro

1/22 Communication media and social change
   Innis: *Empire & Communications*

1/29 Trades and flows
   Mattelart: *The Invention of Communication* (parts I & II)

2/5 Geopolitics, strategic symbolism, and measurement
   Mattelart: *The Invention of Communication* (parts III & IV)

2/12 Pragmatism, progressives, and the public
   Simonson: “Varieties of Pragmatism”
   Carey: “Mass Media: The Critical View”
   Lippmann: “Stereotypes”

2/19 Symbolic interactionism
   Mead: *Mind, Self & Society*

2/26 Mass communication, effects, and systems theory
   Lasswell: The Structure and Function of Communication in Society
   Hardt: “On Ignoring History: Mass Communication Research and the Critique of Society”
   Gitlin: “Media Sociology: The Dominant Paradigm”
   Sproule: “Progressive Propaganda Critics and the Magic Bullet Myth”

3/4 Propaganda
   Ellul: *Propaganda: The Social Formation of Men’s Attitudes*

*************** SPRING BREAK ***************

3/19 PAPER ONE DUE
   Guest lecture: Dr. Patty Sotirin

3/26 Ritual, interaction, and everyday
   Goffman: *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*

4/2 Sociology of knowledge
   Berger & Luckmann: *The Social Construction of Reality*

4/9 Communication and cultural studies
   Carey: “A Cultural Approach to Communication
   Hall: “Encoding/Decoding”
   Hall: “Cultural Studies: Two Paradigms”
4/16  The problem of communication
Peters: Speaking Into the Air (part I: Intro - chpt 3)

4/23  The dance of communication
Peters: Speaking Into the Air (part II: chpt 4 - end)