Visual Culture and Visual Literacy
Television and American Culture
PWR 3020.069/070
Spring 2005

Dr. Nona Olivia

Syllabus and Course Schedule

3020-69 Tuesday/Thursday Chem 133
3020-70 Tuesday/Thursday Ramy N1B31

Contact Information and Office Hours
Office: TB1 4
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Course Overview
The course focuses on helping you develop the tools of analysis and argument. I
conceive of analysis and argument broadly, as the making and defending of inferences
persuasive to various audiences. To this end we will focus on television and popular
culture. The layers of meaning and influence conferred by the programs on television are
not always so easy to decode, even though these images both reflect and shape our
culture. Visual images inform popular culture and convey meaning to and about issues
such as power, gender, race and class. In this class you will be reading articles on,
watching, analyzing and writing about TV and popular culture.

Objectives and Goals
In this class you will:
• Cultivate skills in summarizing and analyzing critical essays and articles
• Gain confidence in your ability to write clearly and effectively for diverse
audiences
• Develop the ability to recognize and utilize the nuances of argumentation
• Learn how to use the latest library resources and computer databases to
conduct research
• Use media texts (television, magazines, newspapers) as springboard to
read critically
• Review basic skills in grammar, punctuation and organization for
successful paper writing

Required Texts:
There are no required books for this class.
You will be reading from online sources and articles that I will distribute.
Many of the online articles will be found at the library reading themes site:
1. http://ucblibraries.colorado.edu/pwr/themes/themes.htm

The following articles will be assigned by number over the semester:
15. 

You will do extensive reading of each other's drafts in workshop groups
(NB: expect to pay about $25.00 for photocopying your drafts for workshops throughout
the semester)

Recommended Texts
The Everyday Writer, Lunsford & Mortimer (or some other up-to-date grammar
book)

Required Equipment: Buy, and use, a small stapler

Course Work
1. Short writing assignments in multiple drafts
2. Television critique journal
3. Critical reading of articles
4. Summary writing assignments
5. Final Paper in multiple drafts
6. Oral presentation
7. Occasional quizzes at my discretion

Requirements:

1. **Turn in Drafts and Final Papers On Time.**
   Although ungraded, these preliminary drafts are necessary for class discussion (if you don’t bring drafts to class, we can’t critique them) and necessary to the process of your own writing. These ungraded drafts count toward your grade as a whole.

   **Warning:** Plan ahead. Write and revise each draft in all stages, as each stage is required and counts towards your final grade.

   Have alternate strategies for word processor/ print-out/ delivery emergencies. Use your nearest Kinkos (28th and Pearl or the Basemar Shopping Center) – for both word processing and copying failures elsewhere. **Always keep a backup copy of your papers on disk**

   ➢ I do not accept papers sent through email.
   ➢ I do not accept late papers.

2. **Use the following format:**
   All work must be typed
   Number the pages of your draft.
   Staple pages (before class)
   Place identifying information (name, course section, **current** date) in the upper right-hand corner.
   Turn in two final copies of each final paper assignment and include previous drafts with my comments to the back of one of these copies.

2. **Attend** (I am a stickler about punctual attendance.)

Because this is a workshop class, attendance is mandatory. You are allowed three “free” absences, **including for illness and emergencies**, with no explanation required. Four absences will lower your final grade by 1/3 point each (for example, a final grade of B− plus four absences will be lowered to a C++; after five, a C−; after six absences, it converts to an automatic F for the course (unless you provide me with a well-documented excuse).

4. **Be Punctual**
   If you arrive late, you miss important announcements and you disrupt the workshop. I will take roll at the beginning of every class; if you arrive late, it is
your responsibility to explain why, after class, in order for me to mark you tardy. Three tardy arrivals constitute an absence.

5. **Participate**
   A workshop is collaborative. Your written and spoken participation is as important as your attendance. You will be graded on your willingness and ability to expand beyond your personal strengths and weaknesses in writing; that is, on your maturing ability to attend to the writing of your classmates as if it was your own.

   **You are all responsible for the following type of participation:**
   Read and mark your colleagues’ drafts **during work-shopping:** be ready to comment on their *occasion, thesis, major supporting reasons, line of argument, and development by analysis of supporting evidence.* Guidelines will be presented and reviewed: you and your peers are expected to thereby equip yourselves to contribute insightfully to each draft in progress. As a student in this class, you have made a commitment to serve as an active critic in class workshops. Your comments are supposed to help others improve their work, just as theirs (and mine) are intended to help improve yours. You will find that as you analyze the writing of others, your own abilities will sharpen.

6. **Stay in touch**
   You are expected to act upon written comments for all drafts. If clarification is needed, it is your responsibility to e-mail me: misunderstanding is no excuse.

7. **Check e-mail**
   From time to time, you will receive class update announcements via e-mail. You are expected to check daily for such updates.

**Plagiarism:** If you submit the ideas of others as your own through failure to document exact words or a paraphrased sequence of ideas or by any means whatsoever -- at any stage, including drafts -- your work will receive an automatic F for the assignment and/or for the course, and the matter will be reported to the Dean. Ignorance is no excuse.

**Grading**
Your participation is crucial not only to the workshop but to your own growth as a writer, as a result it will count as 15% of your final grade.

Also remember that attendance and tardiness can affect your grade. No incompletes – and no drops after September 8 – will be granted except in cases of documented personal/medical emergency.

**Grading Scale for Papers**
- **A** Exceptional in content, organization, style, and mechanics; really illuminates the topic through its depth of analysis or argument
B Well above average (B+ is very good) both in development of the thesis and in style; command of mechanics (grammar, punctuation, spelling).

C Merely does the job without major mistakes; mixture of strengths and weaknesses, basically follows form (C+ is a decent grade; C- suggests major areas for improvement)

D Fails to include all the elements of the form or doesn’t develop them adequately; poorly organized; contains too many distracting mechanical errors

F Incoherent, disastrously flawed, or not turned in when due

Grading Scale for Class Participation

Based on the quality of attention you give your classmates’ draft during work-shopping.

We all start at the same point: you can, and are expected to, contribute according to the concepts and standards you build as the course progresses.

A Always prepared before class; discussion of other student drafts shows insightful, close reading; offers thoughtful suggestions

B Generally prepared before class; discussion of other student drafts demonstrates mastery of the course goals; comments generally clear and helpful

C Prepared before class; mastery of the course goals evident, but discussion of other student drafts, although somewhat helpful, demonstrates a cursory reading of the draft

D Less than adequately prepared; Discussion of other student drafts demonstrates a casual reading at best; comments demonstrate a failure to master the course goals

F Disruptive or inattentive in class (reading newspaper, talking, continual tardiness, etc.); unprepared when called on

(Note: those who are uncomfortable speaking in class can still contribute significantly by (1) submitting drafts which demonstrate commitment to the course goals and (2) submitting thoughtful comments on your peers’ written drafts.)

Percentages (includes all drafts, not just the final grade)

- Various short assignments 25%
- Paper project in its progressive stages 50%
- Work-shopping and class participation 15%
- Oral Presentation 10%

Prospectus (subject to tweaking):

Week 1 (Jan 11-14)
Introduction to course and overview of the debates regarding television and popular culture Diagnostic grammar quiz and short written work

(No class January 17—Martin Luther King, Jr. Day)

Weeks 2-4 (Jan 18-28)
Work-shopping of short written assignments

Weeks 5-8 (Feb 2-25)
Summary writing

Weeks 9 – 10 (Mar 1-11)
Constructing Arguments

Weeks 11-12 (Mar 15-25)
Work-shopping Argument Paper
Spring Break March 21st-25th

Week 13
First Draft Due Friday April 1st

Weeks 14-15 (April 5-15)
Work-shopping expanded Argument Paper

Week 15-17 (April 12-29)
Oral presentations
Final Draft due Friday, April 29th

Special Note to Students with Special Needs: Any student eligible for and needing academic adjustments because of a disability should notify both me and the Disability Services Office in Willard Hall during the first week of class. I will make every effort to make appropriate accommodations for you.

If you speak English as a second language, please contact me before the third class meeting so that I can better assist you in the course, advise you about special ESL sections of courses, and/or refer you to appropriate services on campus.

Please feel free to visit during my office hours or to set up appointments with me at other times.

Final Thoughts: This is a skills class. It takes consistent practice, over time, to realize results.