ANTH 421
ANTHROPOLOGY AND THE MASS MEDIA
F’08
Andrew Arno
Saund 307
956-5277, aarno@hawaii.edu

Course Purpose and Objectives

Anthropology is only beginning to come to grips with the various forms of modern mass media, which include the electronic media, the print media, and the emerging hybrid media created by the Internet. These interrelated communication media constitute the dominant institutions of symbolic exchange in modern societies. They are heavily implicated in the processes of globalization that are reshaping political, social, and cultural boundaries around the world, and they extend their influence into even the most intimate social relationships. This course will examine exploratory anthropological approaches to mass media in context of the established, intertwined research traditions of sociology, cultural studies, and communication studies. Essentially, the course is an anthropological critique of mass communication research. The question posed by the course is what do anthropological perspectives bring to our understanding of the mass media and their roles in social change?

Course Organization

Requirements and Evaluation:

Evaluation will be based on attendance, participation, four take-home essays, and a final paper. The essay questions will be assigned at the beginning and will be due at two or three week intervals throughout the course. The class will be conducted in lecture/seminar style, and the focus of each segment of the course will be preparation of the specific essay due at the end of that segment. The basic policy vision of the class—that is, the class as a constructed community—involves a specific ideal identity to be adopted and creatively enacted by the participants. We will see ourselves and one another as writers and as scholars working together throughout the semester on a series of related problems. As a writer/scholar, you will be expected to think through the issues, drawing creatively on the readings, lectures, and class discussions while contributing your own interpretations and examples based on your specific experience and background. You will then produce a reasoned and well-crafted written response to each question. You can think of the essay assignments as take home exam questions rather than papers. But unlike other exam situations, you will have every opportunity to give each question your very best shot, with plenty of time to think about it, research it, and polish your answer so that it expresses your thoughts as clearly and effectively as possible. The final writing assignment will be to edit your essays into a coherent paper, providing appropriate cuts, expansions, and transitions between segments.
Readings:


Tentative Class Schedule:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I. Introduction and Historical Perspective</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 &amp; 2</td>
<td>Historical development of the mass media</td>
<td>Thompson Chpt. 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>An anthropological look at media history</td>
<td>Shreeve, Chpt 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>II. Media Power and Consciousness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 &amp; 4</td>
<td>Psychological effects</td>
<td>McLuhan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social interaction effects</td>
<td>Thompson Chpt. 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(September 18: Writing Assignment 1 due)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>III. Identity and Ideology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 &amp; 6</td>
<td>Discourse and social life</td>
<td>Foucault, Castells</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Soaps and melodrama on TV</td>
<td>Mankekar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Audience ethnography</td>
<td>Morley, Jhala, Hahn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Virtual culture and ethnography</td>
<td>Boellstorff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(October 14: Writing Assignment 2 due)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IV. News Media and Conflict Communication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 to 12</td>
<td>News and ideology</td>
<td>Gouldner, Baudrillard, Marx &amp; Engels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>conflict discourse analysis</td>
<td>Bignell, Fiske, Henry &amp; Tator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(November 11: Writing Assignment 3 due)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
V.
Media Anthropology

13 & 14  representation issues  Ginsburg, Wilson & Peterson
15 & 16  media and intangible property issues  Feld

(December 9: Writing Assignment 4 due)

Writing Assignments:

Instructions:
Essays should be concise, at least six or eight pages, and clearly written. Be sure to proofread carefully to avoid spelling and grammar mistakes. Citations to sources are required, and please use parentheses enclosing the author’s name and the date of the work cited in the text of your essay. Include the page number if appropriate (e.g. Thompson 1995:27). Provide the full reference to the work cited at the end of the paper.

Essay Topics:

1. (Due: 09/18/08)
Briefly describe the history of mass communication in terms of technology and social impact. Discuss the relative weight that technology and culture should be given in explaining human history.

2. (Due: 10/14/08)
Discuss the ways that mass media influence and provide resources for the construction of personal identities.

3. (Due: 11/11/08)
Discuss the U.S. news media, print or broadcast, in terms of conflict management at the public policy level. Follow a particular issue in the news and analyze the coverage.

4. (Due: 12/09/08)
Discuss the major problems related to mass media representation of cultural communities. Provide examples from news, cinema, or the Internet.

Online Reserve Readings:

1. Baudrillard “Simulacra and Simulations: Disneyland”
2. Bignell “Media Semiotics: An Introduction” Chpt. 1
3. Boellstorff Coming of Age in Second Life, Chpt. 1
5. Castells “Social Movements against the New Global Order”
6. Feld “A Sweet Lullaby for World Music”
7. Fiske “Media Matters” Chpt. 3
8. Foucault “The Order of Discourse”
9. Foucault “Power as Knowledge”
10. Foucault “Genealogy and Social Criticism”
11. Gouldner “The Dialectic of Ideology and Technology” Chpts. 1 & 4
12. Hahn “The Tongan Tradition of Going to the Movies”
14. Jahala “The Unintended Audience”
15. Mankekar “National Texts and Gendered Lives: An Ethnography of Television Viewers in a North Indian City”
16. Marx & Engels selections from The German Ideology and Comments on Feuerbach.
17. McLuhan “Understanding Media” Intros, Chpts. 1, 2, & 31
19. Shreeve The Neanderthal Enigma:Chpt. 11
20. Wilson & Peterson “Anthropology of Online Communities” (review)