

Critical Media Practice and the Production of Everyday Spaces

CHID 250C, Winter 2012

Monday/Wednesday, 11:30-1:20, MEB 242

Instructor: Naraelle (Nara) Hohensee [naraelle@gmail.com]

Office hours: After class, or by appointment

Course Website: <https://faculty.washington.edu/naraelle/chid250/>

Course description:

The goal of this course is to use media practice as a way to critically and self-reflexively examine the physical and social construction of the local spaces we inhabit. We will consider the ways that our physical surroundings act as a form of media that can influence and respond to users and contain coded messages, problematizing the notion of space as a blank canvas onto which human actions are simply projected. At the same time, we will contemplate the ways that the presence of media technologies in our local environment can augment or shift our experience of place.

Our guiding questions for the course will be: What kinds of agency do spaces have? What sorts of identity, community formation and interaction do our everyday spaces encourage? Who has power within these spaces? How do various media function within physical space? How might we become critical spatial participants and media practitioners in the environments in which we dwell?

Required texts:

Book: Suzanne Collins, *The Hunger Games* – you should buy this and begin reading it now. We'll discuss it later in the quarter. It is available at any bookstore, or online.

The rest of the course readings will be posted in pdf format on the course website. **You are responsible for printing off and doing the readings for each week. All readings are REQUIRED.**

Websites: You'll be required to look at several websites and online films. Each is listed in the syllabus and linked online on the course website.

DVD: My copy of *Attack the Block* will be on reserve in the Odegaard Media Center.

Course Activities, Assignments and Learning Objectives:

At the end of this course, you will have gained or polished your media and blogging skills. You will have become familiar with the basics of doing a media ethnography and incorporating qualitative research into your academic work, as well as seminal readings on space and media theory.

Reading/viewing, attendance and participation in seminar discussions (10%):

In class, you will participate in seminar-style discussions around the assigned texts, websites, images and films. You will be required to have the readings and viewing completed by Monday of each week; we will discuss them in class on both days. In addition to demonstrating your familiarity with the texts in class, you'll be required to reference them in your blog entries (see below).

Critical papers (10% each):

You will complete two short (3-4 page) critical papers, using ideas discussed in the readings. The papers should be double-spaced, with one-inch margins, using Times New Roman, 12-point font.

- In your **critical spatial analysis paper**, you will choose a space other than the one you are observing for your site study as the object of analysis. Drawing on our readings concerning space, think about how the site functions to influence human behavior, and how human behavior, interaction and experience affects how the space is interpreted and utilized.

- In your **critical media analysis paper**, you will choose a media piece (print, web, audio or video) to analyze, using the ideas we have read about and discussed in class. What is the intended audience for the piece? What does it communicate, and how does it represent this material? What are the underlying intentions of the piece? How might it influence peoples' behavior? Do you see anything wrong with the way that it does so?

Site study, field diary and blog (50%):

For this assignment, you'll pick a local, familiar space as the subject of a site study, which you will spend a minimum of three hours observing per week (you may do this once a week, all at once, or spread over the week). Two products will result from this:

1. During your observation, you will keep a handwritten or typed **field diary**, which you will turn in at the end of the quarter. We will discuss what goes into the field diary in class.

2. Each week, you will post a summary of your findings from your site study on your **blog**. In addition, the blog will function as your weekly written response to the course readings.

Each entry on the blog must include:

- your written observations from that week, utilizing the ethnographic techniques we discussed in class
- at least one media object (visual or audio) embodying your experience of, or response to, the space
- references to each of the weekly readings (including websites and films) for the upcoming week (you can either structure this as a separate response on the blog, or work it into your observations).

I expect your entries on the blog to be well thought-out and written, the same way you would draft a normal paper.

Final project, paper and presentation (20%):

The culminating project for the course will be a carefully selected set of media pieces drawn from your blog, and an 7-10 page paper that combines at least three of the texts from class discussion into a summary and analysis of your media-based research. You may format these as a cohesive unit (in either paper or online format), or as separate pieces. You will present a working version of your project and paper to the class during the final week.

Projects will be graded on conceptual rigor rather than artistic merit, but I expect you to make an effort to create a polished project.

Course Expectations

- I expect you to be on time and both physically and mentally present in class. If you can't make it to class because of illness or an emergency, please let me know as soon as possible. Unexcused absences will negatively affect your participation grade.
- I expect you to turn your assignments in on time. If there is some reason you can't turn your work in on the due date, please let me know so we can discuss it.
- I expect you to consult the syllabus before asking me a question about the class.
- I expect you to check the course website regularly and keep yourself informed of any changes in assignments, readings or activities.
- I expect you to communicate with me promptly about any problems, questions or issues you might have. I'm available to talk after class, or by appointment. I check my email frequently.
- I expect you to SPELL CHECK YOUR WORK. If I receive something that obviously hasn't been spell-checked, you will have to redo the paper/blog entry in order to get credit.
- I expect that you will not plagiarize your work. The University Code of Academic Conduct is posted on the course website. Plagiarism will be met with a zero-tolerance policy and lead to possible disciplinary action.

Course Schedule & Reading List

This list is subject to change. You are responsible for checking the website regularly and keeping abreast of all reading and viewing assignments.

Note: unless it says NO CLASS, class will always be held, even if nothing is listed under a particular date on the syllabus.

Week 1: Introduction to the course

Wednesday, January 4:

Discussion of the syllabus and course expectations
Introduction to media ethnography

Week 2: What is media ethnography?

Monday, January 9

Site study selections due

Introduction to blogging and posting sound, videos and photos online

Required reading:

Brian Hoey, "What is Ethnography?"

Jay Ruby, "Visual Anthropology"

Sarah Pink, *Doing Visual Ethnography*, Chs. 1 & 2

Mark Curran, "The Breathing Factory"

Required web viewing:

"One Below the Queen" [<http://vimeo.com/15161364>]

Wednesday, January 11

Discussion and finalization of study sites
Formation of focus groups

Week 3: What is space?

Monday, January 16: NO CLASS

Wednesday, January 18

Blog entry due by 11:30am

Required reading:

Christian Norberg-Schultz, "The Phenomenon of Place"

Doreen Massey, "Philosophy and the Politics of Spatiality"

Required web viewing:

The Places We Live [www.theplaceswelive.com]

The Highrise Project [<http://highrise.nfb.ca/>] – look especially at the piece "Out My Window"

Week 4: Do spaces have agency?

Monday, January 23

Blog entry due by 11:30am

Required reading:

Michel Foucault, "Panopticism"

Bruno Latour, "Where are the Missing Masses? The Sociology of a Few Mundane Artifacts"

Required viewing: *Attack the Block* – on reserve at Odegaard Media Center

Wednesday, January 25

TBD

Week 5: What are media?

Monday, January 30

Blog entry due by 11:30am

Required reading:

Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, introduction

Stuart Hall, "Encoding/Decoding"

Marshall McLuhan, interview in *Playboy* magazine, 1969

Required web viewing:

"Welcome to Pine Point" [<http://interactive.nfb.ca/#/pinpoint>]

Wednesday, February 1

TBD

Week 6: Do media have agency?

Monday, February 6

Blog entry due by 11:30am

Required reading:

John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, Chs. 3 & 7

Stuart Hall, *The Spectacle of the Other*, Intro and Ch. 5.1

Required web viewing:

Life in a Day [<http://www.youtube.com/LifeinaDay>]

Wednesday, February 8

Critical spatial analysis paper due

Week 7: The Politics of Space and Media

Monday, February 13

Blog entry due by 11:30am

Required reading:

Daniel Kerr, "We Know What the Problem Is"

Paul Virilio, "The Overexposed City"

Suzanne Collins, *The Hunger Games*

Required web viewing:

"23rd and Union" [<http://kuow.org/23rdandunion/>]

Wednesday, February 15

Assign presentation schedule

Discuss ethnographic analysis methods

Week 8: Interventions

Monday, February 20: NO CLASS

Wednesday, February 22

Blog entry due by 11:30am

Critical media analysis paper due

Required reading:

Michel De Certeau, "Walking in the City"

The Situationist Manifesto (excerpt)

Robert Smithson, "A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey"

Required web viewing:

"Crack the Surface, Episode I" [<http://vimeo.com/26200018>] - you can also see the Placehacking website [<http://placehacking.co.uk>]

"Place In Place Of: Alexandria" [<http://alexandria.placeinplaceof.net/>] - you can also see Jeremy Beaudry's site [<http://meaning.boxwith.com/>]

Week 9: Student presentations

Monday, February 27

Student presentations

Please present your field diary to me during your presentation. You'll get it back at the end of class. If it's in digital format, email it to me by the day you do your presentation.

Wednesday, February 29

Student presentations

Week 10: Student presentations

Monday, March 5

Student presentations

Wednesday, March 7

Student presentations

Wednesday, March 14: NO CLASS

Final papers due

You may either email me your paper/project, or leave it in my mailbox in the CHID office.