

Alternative & Activist Media
Fall 2015
RTF 384C (#08975) & J 395 (#08125)
T 9:30-12:30 p.m., CMA 6.172

Course Packet

Dr. Laura Stein

Alternative and Activist Media

Fall 2015

RTF 384C (08975) & J 395 (08125)

Class Hours/Location: T 9:30-12:30 p.m., CMA 6.172

Professor: Dr. Laura Stein, Lstein@utexas.edu, 471-4071

Office Availability: TTH 3:30-5:00 p.m. or by appointment, CMA 6.122B

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course surveys scholarship on the theory, history, politics, aesthetics, and practice of alternative and activist media, including subcultural, radical, tactical, social movement, community, participatory, ethnic minority, indigenous and transnational media. The class will draw on a number of theoretical approaches to analyze these media, including communication, public sphere, social movement, political economy, and critical cultural theory. The course provides an overview of this growing subfield within media studies and addresses questions of: what constitutes alternative and activist media; what historical, contextual and technological factors shape its practices; who are its audiences; and how can we study its meaning and influence.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Define and recognize alternative/activist media artifacts and practices
Understand the political and cultural dimensions of alternative/activist media
Review/evaluate a broad range of alternative/activist media materials and practices
Contribute to a peer-based, collaborative definition of “alternative media” on Wikipedia
Conduct original research on alternative/activist media

READINGS & SCREENINGS

REQUIRED

The course packet is available at Jenn’s Copy (2200 Guadalupe, 473-8669).

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

Downing, J. (2001) *Radical Media*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
Lievrouw, L. (2011) *Alternative and Activist Media*. Cambridge, MA: Polity Press.
Rodriguez, C. (2001). *Fissures in the Mediascape*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.
Roth, L. (2005). *Something New in the Air: The Story of First Peoples Television Broadcasting in Canada*. Ithaca, NY: McGill-Queen’s University Press.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

1. Contribute to the Wikipedia page on “Alternative Media.” Class members will edit this page in order to improve its comprehensiveness, lead sections, subsections, style, and/or substantive content. Contributions should be made directly to Wikipedia *and* saved in a separate word processing file. Individuals should contribute a minimum of 300 words that are informative, concise & conform to Wikipedia policy.
2. Research Paper. Students will choose the paper topic to reflect a substantive and/or analytical issue addressed by the course. A one-page paper proposal is due on week 9 of the semester. The paper should be publication length, approximately 20 pages.
3. Class Participation/Attendance. This grade will reflect both your attendance and your contributions to class discussions. Please notify me regarding any class absences.

COURSE EVALUATION

Your final grade will be a calculated sum of the points earned on the assignments, as well as a grade for participation. Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

Alternative media wiki	20%
Term Paper	60%
Participation	20%

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The University defines academic dishonesty as cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, falsifying academic records, and any act designed to avoid participating honestly in the learning process. I define plagiarism as the quoting of 5 or more words in a sequence without attribution. Scholastic dishonesty also includes, but is not limited to, providing false or misleading information to receive a postponement or an extension on a test, quiz, or other assignment, and submission of essentially the same written assignment for two courses without the prior permission of the instructor. By accepting this syllabus, you have agreed to these guidelines and must adhere to them. Scholastic dishonesty damages both the student's learning experience and readiness for the future demands of a work-career. Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. If you are at all unclear as to the meaning of scholastic dishonesty, please visit this website: http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint_student.php. Any student who violates the scholastic dishonesty policy will receive an automatic “F” in the course without the possibility of a grade change. See <http://catalog.utexas.edu/general-information/the-university/#universitycodeofconduct> for further information.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact the Office of the Dean of Students at 471-6259, 471-4641 TTY, <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS

According to UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

EMERGENCY EVACUATIONS

Occupants of buildings on The University of Texas at Austin campus are required to evacuate buildings when a fire alarm is activated. Alarm activation or announcement requires exiting and assembling outside. Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of each classroom and building you may occupy. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building. Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructor in writing during the first week of class. In the event of an evacuation, follow the instruction of faculty or class instructors. Do not re-enter a building unless given instructions by the following: Austin Fire Department, The University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office. Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL): 512-232-5050. Link to information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures can be found at: www.utexas.edu/emergency. For more information see: Office of Campus Safety and Security, 512-471-5767, <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/>

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 (9/1)

COURSE INTRODUCTION

Week 2 (9/8)

DEFINING ALTERNATIVE MEDIA

Downing, "Preface"

Atton, "Approaching Alternative Media: Theory and Methodology"

Rodriguez, "From Alternative Media to 'Citizens' Media"

Fuchs, "Alternative Media as Critical Media"

Week 3 (9/15)

COUNTER PUBLICS AND POWER

Downing, "Power, Hegemony, Resistance," "Social Movements, the Public Sphere, Networks," & "Community, Democracy, Dialogue, and Radical Media"

Gramsci, "From the Prison Notebooks"

Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy"

Castells, "Power in the Network Society"

Week 4 (9/22)

NEW MEDIA ACTIVISM

Lievrouw, "Introduction" and "Getting People on the 'Street'"

Earl & Kimport, "Introduction"

Bennett & Segerberg, "The Logic of Connective Action: Digital Media and the Personalization of Contentious Politics"

Rodriguez, Ferron & Shamas, "Four Challenges in the Field of Alternative, Radical and Citizen's Media"

Week 5 (9/29)

PARTICIPATORY CULTURE

Carpentier, “Defining Participation”
Benkler, “Peer Production and Sharing”
Burgess & Green, “YouTube’s Cultural Politics”

Week 6 (10/6)

ALTERNATIVE AESTHETICS

Downing, “Art, Aesthetics, Radical Media, and Communication”
Wettergren, “Like Moths to a Flame: Culture Jamming and the Global Spectacle”
Hesmondhalgh, “Indie: The Aesthetics and Institutional Politics of Popular Music Genre”
Reed, “Revolutionary Walls”

Week 7 (10/13)

WIKIPEDIA EDIT SESSION

Stein, “Policy and Participation on Social Media: The cases of YouTube, Facebook and Wikipedia”

Wikipedia: About: Section 3 “Contributing to Wikipedia.” Available at:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:About>

Wikipedia: Contributing to Wikipedia. Available at:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia>

Wikipedia: Starting an Article. Available at:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Starting_an_article

Help: Editing. Available at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:How_to_edit_a_page

Wikipedia: Policies and guidelines. Available at:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Policies_and_guidelines

Help: reverting. Available at: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:Reverting>

Wikipedia: Featured article criteria. Available at:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Featured_article_criteria

Wikipedia edits due.

Week 8 (10/20)

RADICAL & DISSIDENT MEDIA

Downing, “The Press”
Benson, “Commercialism and Critique: California’s Alternative Weeklies”

Rodriguez, "The Rise and Fall of the Movement of Popular Correspondents in Revolutionary Nicaragua: 1982-1990"
Lievrouw, "Breaking Through the Information Blockade"

Week 9 (10/27)

INDEGENOUS & ETHNIC ALTERNATIVE MEDIA

Huspek, "Black Press, White Press, and Their Opposition: The Case of the Police Killing of Tyisha Miller"

Mislan, "From Latin America to Africa: Defining the 'World Revolution' in *The Black Panther*"

Shi, "Re-evaluating the 'alternative' role of ethnic media in the US: the case of Chinese-language press and working-class women readers"

1 page paper proposal due.

Week 10 (11/3)

INDIGENOUS & ETHNIC ALTERNATIVE MEDIA

Roth, "Introduction," "Towards the (De)Romancing of First People's and Their Territories: The Policy-Makers' Imaginary," "Television Northern Canada," & "Conclusion"

Week 11 (11/10)

SOCIAL MOVEMENT MEDIA

Eyerman & Jamison, "On Social Movements and Culture," "Taking Traditions Seriously," "Making an Alternative Popular Culture: From Populism to the Popular Front"

Stein, "Social Movement Web Use in Theory and Practice: A Content Analysis of US Movement Websites"

Week 12 (11/17)

SOCIAL MOVEMENT MEDIA

Reed, "ACTing UP against AIDS"

Gillett, "The Challenges of Institutionalization for AIDS media activism"

Gross, "The Gay Global Village in Cyberspace"

Week 13 (11/24)

COMMUNITY MEDIA

Downing, "KPFA, Berkeley, and Free Radio Berkeley"

Rodriguez, "A Process of Identity Deconstruction: Colombian Women Producing Video Stories"

Barlow, "Conceptions of Access and Participation in Australian Community Radio Stations"

Meadows et al, "Making Spaces: Community Media and the Formation of the Democratic Public Sphere in Australia"

Week 14 (12/1)

STUDENT PRESENTATIONS

Final papers due.