

Critical Media Theory

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**Department of
Communication Studies**

Southwestern University

COM 75-604-01/02

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Closeup still from the documentary *We Live in Public* (2009)

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OFFICE HOURS: Tu-Th 12:10-12:50 and 4:00-4:40pm or appointment on Google schedule
CLASS MEETINGS: Section 1: 1:00-2:15 TTh FWO 324
Section 2: 2:30-3:45 TTh FWO 324

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This Communication Studies Core Course examines the diverse functions that media perform in constructing, negotiating, and resisting individual, social, national, and transnational cultures, spaces, and identities. Students will analyze how the interdependent relations among media technologies, media production, media texts, and media users are embedded in cultural discourses and dynamics of ideology, power, and agency, and will develop an ability to use theories and methodologies prevalent in cultural studies and critical media studies to research, analyze, interpret, and build effective arguments about the interrelationships between media and culture. The main purpose is to help you think for yourself about the interrelationship between media and culture using critical/cultural media theories as a set of conceptual tools to think with and through. COM Core Course (required of all CommStudies majors). Prerequisite: COM 75-134.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Brian L. Ott & Robert L. Mack, *Critical Media Studies: An Introduction* 3rd Edition (2021)
Plus a number of PDF readings linked from our Course Resource Webpage, located at:
<http://people.southwestern.edu/~bednarb/critical-media-theory>

Please note that I do not use Moodle; I use the Course Webpage instead.

GRADING:

I design my classes with a number of different kinds of low stakes and high stakes assignments focusing on different communicative forms and assignment formats to make sure that each student has maximum potential to demonstrate existing skills and knowledge while

developing new ones. I go into every class, every assignment, and every student encounter with a growth mindset--the belief that every student is capable of both succeeding and improving--and see that my responsibility is to give you the tools you need to succeed and improve while also being clear about my expectations and evaluations.

Grades are given a lot of power in dominant culture, but it is important to remember that grades are not a reflection of your worth as a person but a reflection of your performance under a certain set of defined constraints. To level the playing field and fight against a scarcity model of grading, which reinforces unearned advantages and inherited cultural power, I do not grade on a bell curve to place your graded assignments or final grade into a pre-determined grade distribution, where only a certain number of students can get an A, B, C, D, or F. The grades I assign reflect my evaluation of your performance within the constraints outlined in the syllabus and in assignment handout rubrics. Grades for particular assignments thus measure your performance on that assignment relative to the requirements of the assignment, not relative to other students, and final course grades measure your performance in the class overall.

Based on my goal to both minimize grade focus/anxiety while also teaching you to be independent thinkers and self-advocates, I do not post grades that are calculated in real-time throughout the semester. Increasingly, students are being trained to expect real-time grades computed as courses unfold, which creates an unbalanced extrapolation of a snapshot of your performance, treating your current performance as a predictor of your final grade. I myself do not compute your grades until the very end of the semester unless I see a major concern emerge or a student requests it. Because the work we do continues to build to higher and higher stakes over the course of the semester, I see grades on smaller assignments along the way as signals about what to do in the future, not an accurate prediction of what your final grade will be. The only way they become predictive is if you ignore the feedback you are getting along the way or do not take it as a stimulus for growth.

If you ever want to compute your emerging overall grade average yourself at any point during the semester, here is what you need to know to compute grades yourself in this class. Final course grades are assigned a final letter grade based on a range of averages for individual assignments based on a 100-point scale. For example, a final average of 88-89% would be recorded as a B+; a final average of 83-87% would be recorded as a B; and 80-82% would be recorded as a B- (extrapolate from there if it is higher or lower than a B). For the purposes of averaging individual project letter grades into a final grade, I use the following system to assign a numerical grade based on a letter grade on an assignment: B+=88%; B=85%, and B-=82% (and so on). For example, if you got a B- on an assignment that was weighted 25% of the final grade, you would receive 20.5 points for that assignment (*or lose the possibility of getting 4.5 points overall*). The only exception for that is if you achieve an A+ on an individual assignment, where it will score as a 100% of the available points, where in this example you would receive the full 25 points.

At any point along the way, if you are curious, you can see how your grade is tracking: multiply the score of an individual assignment grade by the percentage it is weighted and that will reveal the total points you have earned for that assignment grade; add it to other determined grades; and then divide it by the highest potential scores for all the completed assignments combined. For grades that are composite, such as graded Classwork, you can

calculate it the same way to track your ongoing composite score. If Classwork is determined by completion grades instead of scoring, you can average that score based on the number of assignments you have completed divided by the ones you have not. Please note that I do not compute cumulative class participation grades until the very end of the semester, so if you want to get a sense of where this score is tracking before that, you will need to discuss it with me. Finally, if you have absences in excess of the stated policy or a pattern of late submissions, you will need to factor them in as well. If you have questions about this grading system at any time, please consult me.

Here is how each assignment or set of assignments is weighted in this class:

“My Media” Project	5%
Comprehensive Exam	20%
Media Analysis Project	20%
Final Research Project	25%
Everyday Classwork	20%
Class Engagement	10%

PROCEDURES AND POLICIES:

We will discuss more specific guidelines for the class assignments as the course progresses, but here is a short outline to help orient you at the outset:

- **“MY MEDIA” PROJECT:** This project will give you an early introduction into exploring and analyzing connections between the communications media you use in everyday life and larger cultural processes, structures, discourses, and problematics. The project focuses on a 3-minute presentation of your project to the class and a 1-page document representing your work. This assignment will be preceded by a handout and will be evaluated on a 5-point numerical system.
- **COMPREHENSIVE EXAM:** The Comprehensive Exam is designed to test your foundation in critical media studies theory and methodology before you complete your own research projects, so it will cover all of our class readings and discussions up to that point. The in-class Exam will be comprised of large-scale “big picture” essay questions as well as more specific short-answer questions, and will be evaluated on a 100-point numerical system. We will do a review and you will receive a study guide for the Exam.
- **MEDIA ANALYSIS PROJECT:** This hands-on project is designed to develop and strengthen your skills at critical/cultural media analysis. It produces a 5-7 pp. critical/interpretive essay that analyzes the relationship between a print advertisement and the consumer culture magazine in which it is discursively situated. This assignment will be preceded by an in-class workshop and a handout; it will be evaluated on a letter-grade plus/minus system.

- **FINAL RESEARCH PROJECT:** This project is designed to give you experience taking the framework of the class and using it to guide you as you critically engage existing scholarship in critical media studies and begin to articulate your own perspective as well. The project focuses on developing a detailed Prospectus for a research study that is similar to the scope and scale of the kinds of projects CommStudies majors produce in the Capstone Research Seminar. The Project will include the description and contextualization of a precisely defined research object, a literature review of existing scholarship, and a detailed description of your methodology for the project (basically everything but the actual analysis and conclusions/argument). The Project is comprised of two parts: an 8-10 page Prospectus **and** a 5-minute presentation of your research to the class. Before the Research Project is completed, you must first submit a formal Research Project Proposal that outlines the project you intend to perform. This assignment will be preceded by an in-class workshop and a handout; it will be evaluated on a letter-grade plus/minus system.

- **CLASSWORK:** Your Classwork grade will be determined by your performance on the Discussion Questions and Take-Home Critical Engagement Assignments, which are designed not only to confirm for me that you are reading and comprehending the readings but also to help you sharpen your ability to *critically engage* the readings (which is essential training not only for participating fully and doing well in the course, but also for understanding, evaluating, and conducting research in critical media studies). You will have one of these Classwork assignments due with each reading assignment we do for the class. After the first few weeks, which demand more reading and timed writing than later weeks, our general practice will be to alternate having Discussion Questions due and Take-Home Critical Engagement Assignment due (see Planned Schedule for a list of these assignments).

For the **Take-Homes**, I will circulate a prompt by email for a timed take-home critical engagement writing assignment two days before it is due. These essays can be typed or handwritten, whichever is a more efficient writing medium for you, but must be double-spaced, regardless of medium. The main constraints of the assignment are the prompt and the time limit: these essays must address the prompt as fully as possible within the time constraint of a single 40-minute period and include the time started and finished in your Honor Code statement.

When **Discussion Questions** (DQs) are due, each student will generate at least two of their own questions based on carefully reading the assigned texts for the class. Each DQ document will include at least two discussion questions, including at least one question that addresses a specific question focused on a particular reading for the day and one question that brings together issues across and in between multiple readings. The DQs can be typed or handwritten, and to save paper, they can be on a piece of paper no smaller than a standard index card. The best DQs are *anchored in the readings*, *interpretive*, and *open-ended* (e.g., with no pre-determined yes/no answers). More specifically, good DQs start with particular passages from the readings and then either seek to *clarify*, *extend*, and/or *challenge* the ideas, analysis, and/or interpretive arguments in them. On days when they are due, you will prepare these daily DQs in advance, show them to me at the beginning of class, work from them in class, and submit them to me at the end of class for evaluation.

Each Discussion Question assignment is evaluated as a completion grade, but each Take-Home Critical Engagement assignment will be evaluated on a 10-point numerical system. If you complete all of the Take-Home Critical Engagement Assignments, you will be allowed to drop the lowest individual Take-Home grade. Note that because all the Classwork assignments are designed to help prepare you to better participate in class discussions and because our discussions will thus work through the material in class, you cannot receive full credit for missed Classwork made up after the absence. Thus *make-ups after the fact for missed Discussion Questions will be marked as incomplete, and late Take-Homes will count for no more than half of the original assignment grade, meaning that you would be able to score at most 5 out of 10 points instead of 10 out of 10.*

- **CLASS ENGAGEMENT:** This is not a lecture class, where you come to class every day expecting the teacher to deliver knowledge to you. This is a seminar, where we all will work together to produce knowledge in active and critically engaged dialogue. I will lead the discussion and do everything I can to make our classroom an inclusive space welcoming of diverse perspectives, but the class depends on and rewards your active engagement every day. One way I will evaluate your Engagement is with the Classwork writing assignments outlined above; the other is through your everyday participation in daily class discussions and activities. Good Class Engagement means more than merely attending class, which to me is a given. Minimally, it means reading the assigned course materials and coming to class ready to critically engage them with me and your colleagues—and actively contributing to the class discussions by speaking *and* listening not only to me, but to your classmates as well. More substantially, it means working to make our class a space of open, respectful, responsible, and challenging engagement with ideas, perspectives, voices, and embodied experiences both similar to and different from your own. The bottom line is that we all share the responsibility for making this class work, and your role in this will determine your Class Engagement grade.

- **ATTENDANCE:** Because this is a discussion seminar, it is important that you be prepared and in class every day. Remember that attending class is not just about you and me but about your relationship to your colleagues in the class. Put simply: we can't work together if we are not present together. If you will be absent, for whatever reason--because you are observing a religious or cultural holiday not recognized by the normative University schedule, because you participating in an intercollegiate sport or another activity where you are representing Southwestern, or "just because"--you still are responsible for completing all your assignments by the deadline. More specifically, you are responsible for notifying me of the absence in advance and are responsible for arranging the means of making up and turning in applicable work in advance of the absence. I do not enforce a pre-determined penalty for absences as absences, but if you end up missing more than a couple of days throughout the semester, your Class Engagement grade will suffer significantly.

- **READING ASSIGNMENTS:** All reading assignments must be completed before class on the day scheduled for discussion of the readings.

- **WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:** Except for the Take-Home Writing Assignments and DQs, which can be either typed or hand-written, all other major writing assignments for this class must be produced and revised using a word processor and printed out in a hard copy. The page limits for these assignments assume standard 1" margins, double-spacing, and the default of Times 12-point font (though I am open to other fonts). Citations should be rendered in Chicago, MLA, or Harvard format, with in-text citations in the essay and full source citations in a separate "Works Cited" section at the end of the paper. To save paper, two-sided printing is OK, and there is no need to put the Works Cited on its own separate page.

- **LATE PAPERS:** Papers are due at the beginning of class on the days indicated in the schedule. As with my attendance policy, I do not have a standard late penalty for papers other than the Take-Homes, but we are on a fairly tight schedule of assignments, so getting behind in one will start to put pressure on everything else, so it is important that you make every effort to stay with the schedule, and work with me if you get off track.

- **INCLUSIVITY:** I work hard to create a classroom space that is dynamic, engaging, and inclusive for all students, where we work together from diverse perspectives within clearly-defined expectations for student engagement and performance. If at any time you sense a dynamic emerging in our class that makes you feel unsafe or unwilling to participate fully, please reach out to me by email or after class so that I can address your concerns. I value direct communication and want your feedback about how things are working for you. Also, as part of my commitment to inclusivity, I make regular accommodations for students with documented learning differences that challenge their ability to have equal access to engage and perform in the course. To arrange documentation for these accommodations, contact the Assistant Director of Academic Success within the Center for Academic Success (Prothro Center room 120; phone 863-1286; e-mail success@southwestern.edu). Students seeking accommodations should notify their office at least two weeks before any services are needed. It is your responsibility to discuss any necessary accommodations with me as well.

- **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:** It is your responsibility to understand and live by the Honor System, so it will be a good idea to review the policies and procedures outlined in the *SU Student Handbook*. All in-class and out-of-class assignments are subject to the Honor Code. Therefore, with the exception of DQs, where space is a premium, I will assume that every assignment you turn in that is not accompanied by a full statement of the Pledge ("I have acted with honesty and integrity in producing this work and am unaware of anyone who has not.") and your signature will indicate that you have committed or witnessed an Honor Code violation and wish to pursue it. Students who violate University policies on Academic Dishonesty by representing another's work as their own are subject to review by the Honor Code Council, which includes the possibility of significant disciplinary penalties.

- **LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:** At Southwestern, we collectively acknowledge that Southwestern University is located within the traditional, ancestral, and contemporary lands of Native peoples. The University resides on land that was cared for and called home by the sovereign nations of the Tonkawa, Comanche and Jumano people. It was also a site of trade,

travel, gathering and healing for the Sana, Wichita, Kickapoo and Lipan Apache, among other Native peoples, from time immemorial. This land still holds great historical, spiritual, and personal significance for its original stewards. As part of our commitment to diversity, inclusion, belonging and equity, we as a University commit to work towards building stronger relationships with Native communities, increasing visibility in the curriculum and investing in Native student success.

• **COURSE STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:** Critical Media Theory is a CommStudies Core Course required of all CommStudies majors. The course is designed to teach theories and methodologies central to critical media studies, and is paired with Rhetorical Theory to provide majors with a strong foundation for Methods and the CommStudies Research Capstone Seminar. The Learning Outcomes for this course focus on developing proficiency with dominant and emergent critical/cultural media theories and research methods as well as effective modes of qualitative analysis and argumentation. By the end of the course, students will demonstrate:

- Proficiency in understanding and critically engaging culturally oriented critical media **theories**; particularly theories rooted in media ecology, Marxism, political economy, rhetoric, cultural studies, psychoanalysis, feminism, queer theory, reception, and affect theory.
- Proficiency in understanding and critically engaging culturally oriented qualitative critical media studies **research methods**, particularly those rooted in media ecology, Marxism, political economy, rhetoric, semiotics, cultural studies, feminism, queer theory, reception, and affect theory.
- Ability to critically engage critical media theories in framing arguments that **analyze and interpret** particular media texts, practices, and technologies.
- Proficiency in developing effective **research** strategies for identifying primary and secondary sources pertinent to the analysis and interpretation of media texts, practices, and technologies.

PLANNED SCHEDULE

- Aug 27: Mapping the Course and “Bob’s Dead Media Show”
29: Introduction to Critical Media Theory
Read: Ott/Mack, Ch. 1
Course Webpage: Gottfried; Graff & Birkenstein
Due: Discussion Questions
- Sep 3: Media/Culture Interfaces I: What do media do?
Read: Ott/Mack, Ch. 13
Course Webpage: McLuhan; Towns
Due: Take-Home Critical Engagement Assignment 1
- Sep 5: Media/Culture Interfaces II: What do we do with media?
Read: Ott/Mack, Ch. 11
Course Webpage: Schrock; de Souza e Silva & Frith
Due: Take-Home Critical Engagement Assignment 2
- Sep 10: Media/Culture Key Issues I: Publics and Counterpublics
Read: Course Webpage: Althusser; Warner; Baym & boyd
Due: Take-Home Critical Engagement Assignment 3
- Sep 12: Media/Culture Key Issues II: Living on Platforms
Read: Course Webpage: Khamis et al.; Sweeney-Romero; Griffin
Due: Take-Home Critical Engagement Assignment 4
- Sep 17: “My Media” Project Presentations
Due: My Media Presentation and 1-page printed outline/bibliography
- Sep 19: Marxist Media Analysis
Read: Ott/Mack, Ch. 2
Course Webpage: Adorno & Horkheimer
Due: Discussion Questions
- Sep 24: Media Framing; Workshop on Media Analysis Project
Read: Ott/Mack, Ch. 3
Due: Discussion Questions
- Sep 26: Media Framing
Read: Course Webpage: Jenkins; Mourão et al.; Edrington & Gallagher
Due: Take-Home Critical Engagement Assignment 5
- Oct 1: Rhetorical Media Analysis
Read: Ott/Mack, Ch. 5
Due: Discussion Questions
- Oct 3: Cultural Media Analysis
Read: Ott/Mack, Ch. 6
Due: Discussion Questions
- Oct 8: Cultural Analysis
Read: Course Webpage: Cramer; Asante & Pindi; Johnson
Due: Take-Home Critical Engagement Assignment 6

- Oct 10: Psychoanalytic Media Analysis; Workshop on Research Project
Read: Ott/Mack, Ch. 7
Due: Discussion Questions
- Oct 15: >>Fall Break-- No Class<<
 Oct 17: Feminist Media Analysis
Read: Ott/Mack, Ch. 8
Due: Discussion Questions
- Oct 22: <<Research/Analysis Consultations>>
 Oct 24: <<Research Consultations>>
Due: Media Analysis Project
- Oct 29: >>No Class—SUnity Day<<
 Oct 31: Feminist Media Analysis
Read: Course Webpage: Moro et al.; Izadi & Dryden; Muller et al.
Due: Take-Home Writing Critical Engagement Assignment 7
- Nov 5: Queer Media Analysis
Read: Ott/Mack, Ch. 9
Due: Discussion Questions
Research Project Proposal
- Nov 7: Queer Media Analysis
Read: Course Webpage: Butler; Eguchi & Asante; Cayari
Due: Take-Home Critical Engagement Assignment 8
- Nov 12: Reception Analysis
Read: Ott/Mack, Ch. 10
 Course Webpage: Hall
Due: Discussion Questions
- Nov 14: Reception Analysis
Read: Course Webpage: Utley; Cavalcante et al.; Kozinets, Patterson & Ashman
Due: Take-Home Critical Engagement Assignment 9
- Nov 19: Review
Read: Ott/Mack, Ch. 14
Due: Discussion Questions
- Nov 21: >>**COMPREHENSIVE IN-CLASS EXAM**<<
- Nov 26: <<Research Consultations>>
 Nov 28: >>No Class—Thanksgiving Break<<
- Dec 3: Final Research Project Presentations
 Dec 5: Final Research Project Presentations/Course Evaluations
- >>Thursday, Dec 12 <<
Due: Final Research Project Paper
 [Electronic submission, no later than 9:00 PM]

COM 75-604: Critical Media Theory
PDF Readings linked on the Course Webpage

- Althusser, Louis. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses." In *The Visual Culture Reader*, 2nd Edition, edited by Nicholas Mirzoeff, 139-141. London: Routledge, 2002.
- Asante, Godfried A., and Pindi, Gloria Nziba, "(Re)imagining African Futures: Wakanda and the Politics of Transnational Blackness," *Review of Communication* 20/3 (2020): 220-228.
- Baym, Nancy, and boyd, danah, "Socially Mediated Publicness: An Introduction," *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* 56/3 (2012): 320-329.
- Butler, Judith, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay on Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal* 40/4 (1988): 519-531.
- Cavalcante, Andre, Press, Andrea, & Sender, Katherine, "Feminist Reception Studies in a Post-Audience Age: Returning to Audiences and Everyday Life," *Feminist Media Studies*, 17/1 (2017): 1-13,
- Cayari, Christopher, "Becoming a 'Trans Synth Queen': YouTube, Electronic Music Composition, and Coming Out," *Music Education Research*, 25/1 (2023): 60-73.
- Cramer, Lindsay, "Cam Newton and Russell Westbrook's Symbolic Resistance to Whiteness in the NFL and NBA," *Howard Journal of Communications* 30/1 (2019): 57-75.
- de Souza e Silva, Adriana, and Frith, Jordan. *Mobile Interfaces in Public Spaces: Locational Privacy, Control, and Urban Sociality* (New York: Routledge, 2012), pp. 50-77.
- Edrington, Candice L., and Gallagher, Victoria J., "Race and Visibility: How and Why Visual Images of Black Lives Matter," *Visual Communication Quarterly* 26 (2019): 195-207.
- Enguchi, Shinsuke, and Asante, Godfried, "Disidentifications Revisited: Queer(y)ing Intercultural Communication Theory," *Communication Theory* 26 (2016): 171-189.
- Gottfried, Jeffrey, "Americans' Social Media Use," *Pew Research Center*, January 2024, 1-29.
- Graff, Gerald, and Birkenstein, Cathy, "As He Himself Puts It: The Art of Quoting," in Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein, *They Say, I Say: The Moves That Matter in Persuasive Writing* (New York: Norton, 2007), pp. 39-47.
- Griffin, Hollis, "Sexual Diversity and Streaming Television: Toward a Platform Studies Approach to Analyzing LGBTQ+ TV," *Convergence* 30/3 (2024): 1-15.
- Hall, Stuart. "Encoding/Decoding." In *Media & Cultural Studies: Keywords*, edited by Meenakshi Gigi Durham and Douglas M. Kellner, 166-176. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001.
- Izadi, Dariush, and Dryden, Stephanie, "Woman/Life/Freedom: The Social Semiotics Behind the 2022 Iranian Protest Movement," *Discourse, Context, & Media* 60 (2024): 1-11.
- Horkheimer, Max, and Adorno, Theodor. "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception." In *The Media Studies Reader*, edited by Laurie Ouellette, 13-30. New York: Routledge, 2013.
- Jenkins, Eric, "Seeing Katrina: Perspectives of Judgement in a Cultural/Natural Disaster," *Visual Communication Quarterly* 14 (2007): 90-107.
- Johnson, Imani Kai, "Black Culture Without Black Bodies: Hip-Hop Dance Beyond Appropriation Discourse." In *Are You Entertained? Black Popular Culture in the Twenty-first Century*, edited by Simone C. Drake and Dwan K. Henderson, 191-206. Durham: Duke University Press, 2020.
- Khamis, Susie, Ang, Lawrence, and Welling, Raymond, "Self-branding, 'Micro-celebrity' and the Rise of Social Media Influencers," *Celebrity Studies* 8/2 (2017): 191-208.
- Kozinets, Robert, Patterson, Anthony, and Ashman, Rachel, "Networks of Desire: How Technology Increases Our Passion to Consume," *Journal of Consumer Research* 43 (2017): 659-682.

- McLuhan, Marshall. "The Medium is the Message." In *Media & Cultural Studies: Keywords*, edited by Meenakshi Gigi Durham and Douglas M. Kellner, 129-138. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001.
- Moro, Sabrina, Sapio, Guiseppina, Buisson, Charlotte, Trovato, Noémie, & Duchamp, Zoé, "To Be Heard Through the #MeToo Backlash," *Soundings: A Journal of Politics and Culture* 83 (2023): 90-101
- Mourão, Rachel, Kilgo, Danielle K., and Sylvie, George, "Framing Ferguson: The Interplay of Advocacy and Journalistic Frames in Local and National Newspaper Coverage of Michael Brown," *Journalism* 22/2 (2021): 320-340.
- Muller, S. Marek, Rooney, David, and Cerja, Cecilia, "Long Live the Liver King: Right Wing Carnivorism and the Digital Dissemination of Primal Rhetoric," *Frontiers in Communication* 9 (2024): 1-14.
- Schrock, Andrew Richard, "Communicative Affordances of Mobile Media: Portability, Availability, Locatability, and Multimediality," *International Journal of Communication*, 9 (2015): 1229-1246.
- Sweeney-Romero, Katlin Marisol, "Social Mediated Latinas in the Online Beauty Community: Creating and Critiquing Latina Beauty Gurus through YouTube," in *The Meanings of Dress*, 5th Edition, edited by Kimberly A Miller-Spillman, Andrew Reilly, & José Blanco, pp. 205-213. New York: Bloomsbury/Fairchild, 2024.
- Towns, Armond R., *On Black Media Philosophy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2022), pp. 1-10.
- Utley, Ebony A., "What Does Beyoncé Mean to Young Girls," *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 29 (2017): 1-12.
- Warner, Michael, "Publics and Counterpublics (Abbreviated Version)," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 88/4 (2002): 413-425.

Pronouns and Possessives:

its = possessive pronoun

e.g. the essay's point of view => its point of view

it's = contraction of it + is

e.g. It is a fine day => It's a fine day

their = possessive pronoun

e.g. Hondo and Jo Jo's dog roams the neighborhood => Their dog roams the neighborhood

there = adverb indicating place

e.g. Their dog usually leaves its mark on that tree over there.

they're = contraction of they + are

e.g. Hondo and Jo Jo are looking for their dog => They're looking for their dog.

Punctuation/Sentence Structure Problems:

fragment (frag)

A fragment is an incomplete sentence that lacks a subject, a verb, or both.

e.g. Washing the car. (no subject, incomplete verb, and incomplete thought)

comma splice (cs)

A comma cannot, on its own, join two independent clauses.

e.g. Jo Jo likes barbecue, Hondo prefers tofu => Jo Jo likes barbecue; Hondo prefers tofu.
=> Jo Jo likes barbecue, but Hondo prefers tofu.
=> Jo Jo likes barbecue. Hondo prefers tofu.

fused sentence (fs)

A fused sentence lacks the punctuation necessary to separate two independent clauses.

e.g. Jo Jo likes barbecue Hondo prefers tofu => see comma splice corrections above

semicolon errors

A semicolon can only be used in an extensive series or to separate two independent clauses.

e.g. Hondo stumbled; washing the car => Hondo stumbled; he was washing the car.
=> While he was washing the car, Hondo stumbled.

run-on

A run-on sentence proliferates verbs and subjects and objects without attention to grammatical structure.

awkward (AWK)

An awkward sentence stumbles over itself as it tries to communicate its point, rendering the writing confused/confusing. Often the fix is to "write to the point" more directly.

using the word "however"

The word "however" is not an interchangeable synonym for the word "but" or "although." It cannot be used to indicate contradiction unless you use punctuation to interrupt the flow of the sentence. If a sentence begins with the word, it must be followed by a comma; if a sentence ends with the word, it must be preceded with a comma. If it is used in the middle of a sentence, it must be set apart either with a set of commas before and after it or with a semicolon and a comma (see also **fs**, **cs**, and **run-ons**).

e.g. Winefred says she does not know how their dog gets out; however, I know that she does.
e.g. Winefred says she does not know how their dog gets out. However, I know that she does.
e.g. Winefred says she does not know how their dog gets out. I know, however, that she does.

Apostrophes:

A singular noun that does not end in "s" takes "'s" to indicate possession.

e.g. the woman's dog (the dog belongs to one woman)

A plural noun that already ends in "s" takes an "'" only to indicate possession.

e.g. the boys' dog (the dog belongs to more than one boy)
e.g. the ladies' house (the house belongs to more than one lady)

A plural noun that does not end in "s" takes "'s" to indicate possession.

e.g. the children's dog (the dog belongs to all the children)
e.g. the women's house (the house belong to the women)

A singular noun that ends in "s" takes either "'" or "'s" to indicate possession.

e.g. Charles' spaniel or Charles's spaniel (the spaniel belongs to Charles)

Punctuating quotes and citations:

I expect you to critically engage other writers as you develop your own arguments. Document all citations (including direct quotations, paraphrases, and "general indebtedness") using MLA, Harvard, Chicago, or some other standard in-text citation format within the essay and then list all of your cited sources in a Works Cited section at the end of the paper. Notice that the standard format for documenting a quote ends the quote, includes the citation, and only then provides the sentence's end punctuation, as in the following example: As Patrick Phillips argues, "There is a fine line between determining and overdetermining the meaning of a film text" (Phillips, 157).