

SPECIAL TOPIC

POSTMILLENNIAL CULTURE AND THE MEDIA



The Clock of the Long Now (aka The Millennium Clock)

COURSE SUMMARY

The year 2000 was once symbolic of “the future” — the world of tomorrow filled with utopian possibilities for art, media, technology, and human culture. Yet, eight years into the millennium, we see a postmillennial culture shaped by a strange mix of globalization and tribalization, information and entertainment, celebrity and simulation, conspiracy and catastrophe, and, of course, September 11 and its aftermath.

This course will decode this mediated culture via theory and research on mass media artifacts and their socialization functions, focusing on the *content, technologies, and consequences* of mass media in the new millennium. This course includes an introduction to relevant critical theory, addresses the theories and myths of media influence, and provides an overview of the social and psychological function of various media artifacts, from film and television, advertising and publicity, digital media and the internet. Readings will include variety of theories and sources, drawing from classic readings in critical media theory and recent works dealing with current cultural conditions.

GOALS AND OUTCOMES

The essential goal of this course is for students to understand the deep and complex relationships between postmillennial culture and the global media systems. At the end of this course, students will:

- understand the dominant cultural and media trends of the new millennium.
- be well-versed in critical media theory as a guide for decoding the messages and meanings of media.
- be able to synthesize critical theory with their own specialized interests in theory and research.
- grasp the ever-expanding social and cultural roles of media, in terms of content and technology.
- produce a paper for submission to a conference/publication.

INSTRUCTOR

Dr. Barry Vacker
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Office Hours: 11:00 – 12:15 MW;

4:00 – 4:30 M, TUCC 305; 4:00 – 4:30 W, TUCC 314 (or by appointment)

Preferred methods of contact — interpersonal: 1) come up to me before or after class; 2) drop by during office hours
electronic: 1) send an email; 2) call on the office telephone

REQUIRED READINGS

Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* (The University of Michigan Press 1994). ISBN: 0-472-06521-1

Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, *The Postmodern Turn* (The Guilford Press 1997). ISBN: 1-57230-221-6

Douglas Kellner, *Media Spectacle* (Routledge 2003). ISBN: 0-415-26829-X

Gilles Lipovetsky, *Hypermodern Times* (Polity 2005) ISBN: 0-7456-3421-4

Other readings and handouts will be available online or provided by your professor over the course of the semester.

GRADING, PAPERS, PRESENTATIONS

Students must complete the following list of projects to successfully complete and pass this course. The grades for this course will be determined according to the following breakdown:

Weekly "Reaction Critique"	= 30% (due dates throughout semester)
Class Presentations/Discussions	= 20% (due dates to be determined)
Final Paper	= 30% (May 11)
Final Class Presentation	= 10% (May 11)
<u>Attendance</u>	= <u>10%</u>
TOTAL	= 100%

The due dates for Class Presentations/Discussions will be set once the class enrollment is finalized. Once the dates are set, they cannot be changed. The due dates for the Final Paper cannot be changed. No reasons are acceptable. This is only fair to those fellow students who turn in papers as scheduled. Grades will be assigned according to the criteria of:

100-93 = A	89-86 = B+	79-76 = C+	69-66 = D+	59-0 = F
92-90 = A-	85-83 = B	75-73 = C	65-63 = D	
	82-80 = B-	72-70 = C-	62-60 = D-	

What these grades mean

- An "A" means your work is outstanding. "A" work goes above and beyond expectations and shows an astute intellect.
- "B" work is better than average and demonstrates excellent effort and satisfactory understanding of coursework. "B-" work meets expectations and demonstrates a general understanding of material and an average effort.
- A "C" represents seriously flawed work, according to graduate school standards. This might mean a misunderstanding of fundamental concepts, presenting them unacceptably in writing, and/or a lack of constructive participation in class discussion.
- A "D" cannot be assigned in graduate course.
- An "F" illustrates a failure to adhere to policies of academic honesty

Reaction Critiques

These critiques function to help you gather your thoughts for the week's discussion. They should be typed in essay format, but should not to exceed one page, single-spaced. You will receive a handout that provides the necessary details. All reaction critiques are due at the beginning of class; no late critiques will be accepted. You will complete ten reaction critiques; each one will be worth 3% of your grade for a total of 30%.

Weekly Presentations

Each week, one student will be responsible for initiating the class discussion on that week's readings. The presentation should be no longer than 15 minutes. Students are expected to introduce the major themes of that week's readings and pose a few questions for further discussion by the entire class. You will receive a handout that provides the necessary details. Presentations and class discussions are worth 20% of your grade.

Class Discussion

Your attendance and participation in class discussions is essential and expected. This is a graduate seminar, meant to inform you on this topic but to also teach you to articulate your own opinions with confidence. All readings should be completed before the assigned date, and you should come to class prepared to talk.

Final Paper and Presentation

For your final paper, you can produce an essay based in critical analysis or a work that summarizes research you conducted over the semester. You will receive a handout that provides the necessary details. The final paper should be 20 pages, double-spaced, including tables, charts, endnotes, reference list. The paper should in some significant way relate, in depth, to one or more of the theories and themes that we discuss in the seminar. The final paper is worth 30% of your final grade, accompanying Powerpoint presentation 10%. Your final paper and presentation are due May 11.

Academic Dishonesty

Regarding academic dishonesty, this class will abide by the rules of Temple University. Cheating on exams will get you dropped from the class — NO EXCEPTIONS. The Temple Student Handbook states:

Temple University strongly believes in academic honesty and integrity. Plagiarism and academic cheating are, therefore, prohibited.

There is nothing wrong with citing the works of others, just make sure you give them credit. In return, you get credit for doing so, and citing them can enhance your learning. If you are not certain that you are using or citing materials properly, then please check with Dr. Vacker.

Academic honesty and plagiarism

Adapted from the Temple University policy statement on academic integrity, passed by the Academic Senate on April 19, 1989.

Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of another person's labor: another person's ideas, words, or assistance.

There are many forms of plagiarism: repeating another person's sentence as your own, adopting a particularly apt phrase as your own, paraphrasing someone else's argument as your own, or even presenting someone else's line of thinking in the development of an idea as though it were your own. Academic writing is built upon the use of other people's ideas and words — this is how ideas are developed — but appropriate credit must always be given to the originator.

In general, all sources must be identified as clearly, accurately, and thoroughly as possible. When in doubt about whether to identify a source, either cite the source or consult your instructor. Here are some specific guidelines to follow:

a. Quotations. Whenever you use a phrase, sentence, or longer passage written (or spoken) by someone else, you must enclose the words in quotation marks and indicate the exact source of the material, including the page number of written sources.

b. Paraphrasing. Avoid closely paraphrasing another's words. Substituting an occasional synonym, leaving out or adding an occasional modifier, rearranging the grammar slightly, or changing the tenses of verbs simply looks like sloppy copying. Good paraphrasing indicates that you have absorbed the material and are restating it in a way that contributes to your overall argument. It is best to either quote material directly, using quotation marks, or put ideas completely in your own words. In either case, acknowledgment is necessary. Remember: expressing someone else's ideas in your own way does not make them yours.

c. Facts. In a paper, you will often use facts that you have gotten from a lecture, a written work, or some other source. If the facts are well known, it is usually not necessary to provide a source. (In a paper on American history, for example, it would not ordinarily be necessary to give a source for the statement that the Civil War began in 1861 after the inauguration of Abraham Lincoln.) But if the facts are not widely known or if the facts were developed or presented by a specific source, then you should identify that source.

d. Ideas. If you use an idea or ideas that you learned from a lecture, written work, or some other source, then you should identify the source. You should identify the source for an idea whether or not you agree with the idea. It does not become your original idea just because you agree with it.

Penalties for violation of Temple University's academic honesty policies can range from a failing grade for the assignment or the entire course to referral to the university disciplinary committee.

Your professor stands by this policy.

Attendance

In graduate seminars, an active and vibrant class discussion is essential. Such discussion requires your physical presence (since this is not a virtual seminar). To encourage attendance, I have established an attendance policy. Simply put: the more classes you attend, the more points you earn toward your final grade. There will be a total of 14 class meetings.

Classes Attended	Points Earned	Classes Attended	Points Earned
14	10	11	2
13	8	10 or less	0
12	5		

Note: It is your responsibility to ensure you sign your name on the attendance sheet; otherwise you will be counted absent. If you need to miss class for a religious holiday, please let the professor know in writing and verbally (before or after class, or in office hours). If you miss class, it is your responsibility to get notes from a classmate and watch any film clips on your own time. Video clips will not be loaned out for private viewing. Anything said in class will be assumed to have been heard by everyone.

How to do well in this class

The best way to do well in this class is simple: come to class, stay up on the readings, study hard, and have an open mind. Also, let your professor know if you have any questions!

SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS

Any student who has a need for accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact Professor Vacker privately to discuss the specific situation as soon as possible. Contact Disability Resources and Services at 215.204.1280 in 100 Ritter Annex to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

ACADEMIC FREEDOM

Temple University has requested that the following information be included on all course syllabi: *Freedom to teach and freedom to learn are inseparable facets of academic freedom. The University has a policy on Student and Faculty and Academic Rights and Responsibilities (Policy #03.70.02) which can be accessed through the following link: http://policies.temple.edu/getdoc.asp?policy_no=03.70.02.*

CLASS PROTOCOL

In general, your professor is an easy-going guy who prefers his classes to be open forums for ideas and opinions relevant to class topics. However, a few rules are needed:

- please arrive to class on time; lectures, discussion, and films will begin promptly.
- turn off all cell phones and PDAs.
- please show respect and courtesy to fellow students at all times.
- feel free to ask questions during discussions or at appropriate moments during class lecture.
- I want all of you to do well in this class, so feel free to approach me with questions before or after class, or during office hours.

DATE TOPICS AND READINGS

- Week 1** *Martin Luther King Holiday*
- Week 2** **The Year 2000 and the Millennium, As We Once Knew It**
Jan 26 review syllabus; overview of class themes.
the Twentieth Century: from machine age to space age to information age.
Stewart Brand, three chapters from *The Clock of the Long Now* (Basic Books 1999); handout
- Week 3** **The Modern to Postmodern, Industrial to Postindustrial**
Feb 2 entering the "twilight zone"; the Sixties and "future shock."
Best and Kellner, "The Time of the Posts," *The Postmodern Turn*
Carl Sagan, "The Great Demotions," *Pale Blue Dot* (Ballantine 1994); reserve/handout
- Week 4** **Spectacle and Simulation**
Feb 9 television to theme park; artifacts of media.
Baudrillard, "The Precession of Simulacra," "Simulacra and Science-Fiction," *Simulacra and Simulation*
Best and Kellner, "From the Society of the Spectacle to the Realm of Simulation," *The Postmodern Turn*
- Week 5** **Postmodern to Postmillennial**
Feb 16 media/technological globalization and the end of the century.
Baudrillard, two essays from *The Illusion of the End* (Stanford Univ Press 1994); reserve/handout
Baudrillard, two essays from *The Vital Illusion* (Columbia Univ Press 2000); reserve/handout
- Week 6** **Catastrophe Culture in the Media**
Feb 23 why are there so many movies and television programs about the end of the world?
Baudrillard, "Catastrophe Management" (*The Illusion of the End*); reserve/handout
Mike Davis, "The Literary Destruction of Los Angeles," *The Ecology of Fear* (Vintage 1999); reserve/handout
- Week 7** **Media and Science**
Mar 2 media representations of the big bang, chaos theory, and the science wars.
Best and Kellner, "Postmodern Science," *The Postmodern Turn*
- SPRING BREAK: March 9 – March 16*
- Week 8** **Information and Entertainment, Popular Culture and Celebrity Culture**
Mar 16 all media, all the time
Baudrillard, "The Implosion of Meaning in the Media," *Simulacra and Simulation*
Kellner, "Media Culture and the Triumph of the Spectacle," *Media Spectacle*
- Week 9** **Advertising, Publicity, Marketing**
Mar 23 Marlboro Man to Big Macs, Coke Zero to Google ads; brands and global advertising
Baudrillard, "Absolute Advertising, Ground Zero Advertising," *Simulacra and Simulation*
Kim Sawchuck, "Semiotics, Cybernetics, and the Ecstasy of Marketing Communications," *Baudrillard: A Critical Reader* (Blackwell 1994); reserve/handout
- Week 10** **Violence and Terrorism in the Media**
Mar 30 September 11 and its aftermath.
readings to be determined
- Week 11** **Conspiracy Culture and The News**
Apr 6 media, trust, and truth: what to believe?
Kellner, "Television Spectacle: Conspiracies in *The X-Files*," *Media Spectacle*
Peter Knight, two chapters in *Conspiracy Culture* (Routledge 2000); reserve/handout
- Week 12** **Network Culture: Digital Media, Cyberspace, and the Internet**
Apr 13 the globalization of all media.
Mark Taylor, "From Grid to Network" (*The Moment of Complexity*, Univ of Chicago 2000); reserve/handout
Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto" *Cyber_Reader* (Phaidon 2002); reserve/handout
Manuel Castells, two chapters from *The Internet Galaxy* (Oxford Press 2001); reserve/handout
- Week 13** **Hypermodernism**
April 20 fashion and the future; consumption, cloning, and individualism
Lipovetsky: *Hypermodern Times*, Ch 1 and 2; Baudrillard, "The Final Solution," *The Vital Illusion*; reserve
- Week 14** **Media and the Millennium: Optimism, Skepticism, Fundamentalism, Nihilism**
April 27 globalization and tribalization; autonomy and individuality, acceleration and deceleration.
Best and Kellner, "Challenges for the Third Millennium," *The Postmodern Adventure* (Guilford 2001); reserve
Baudrillard, "On Nihilism," *Simulacra and Simulation*;
Stewart Brand, two chapters from *The Clock of the Long Now* (Basic Books 1999); reserve/handout
- Week 14** **Research/Paper Day**
May 4 meet individually with professor to discuss your final papers.
- Finals Week** **Final Papers and Presentations, May 11**