SOCA3081 - Media and Society
Course Outline
Semester 1 - 2008

Course Co-ordinator: Terry Leahy
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Consultation hours: Tues 9-11; Thurs 2-3

Unit Weighting
10

Teaching Methods
Lecture
Tutorial

Brief Course Description
Looks at popular media within a sociological and cultural studies framework. The key question examined is whether popular media is a form of dominant ideology. Does the media serve the interests of ruling social classes in society? Does the media serve the interests of men as a ruling group and disadvantaged women? Considers a wide variety of media forms, such as advertising, popular TV dramas and popular films, romance novels and fashion. This course may be taken as part of the interdisciplinary Cultural Studies Major as well as an elective or within the Sociology and Anthropology major.

Contact Hours
Tutorial for 1 Hour per Week for the Full Term
Lecture for 1 Hour per Week for the Full Term

Learning Materials/Texts
The book of readings is essential for this course. Students are required to do the reading every week and bring the reading to the tutorial group for discussion. Copies can be purchased from UPrint in the Shortland Building (under Godfrey Tanner Bar) at Callaghan.

Course Outline Issued and Correct as at: Week 1, Semester 1 - 2008

CTS Download Date: 1.2.2008
Course Objectives
On successful completion of this course students will be able to demonstrate:

1. An understanding of a sociological and cultural studies approach to media and society.
2. Ability to analyse a piece of popular media within the frameworks offered within sociology and cultural studies.
3. Ability to deal critically with social analyses of popular media.
4. Skills in writing an academic essay, in reading critically and in doing research.

Course Content
1. Does the media serve the interests of ruling social classes in society?
2. Does the media serve the interests of men as a ruling group and disadvantage women?
3. Recognition of the key methodological approaches of media analysis within sociology and cultural studies - semiotic, ethnographic and psychoanalytic.
4. What is meant by claims that the media today embodies various aspects of postmodern culture?
5. Analysis of a wide variety of media forms - such as advertising, popular TV dramas and popular films, romance novels, fashion and pornography.

Assessment Items

| Essays / Written Assignments | Minor essay - about 1000 words, 20% - week 5 |
| Essays / Written Assignments | Major essay - 2500 words, 40% - week 8 |
| Examination: Formal          | End of semester, 40% |

Assumed Knowledge
40 units of study at 1000 level

Callaghan Campus Timetable
SOCA3081
MEDIA AND SOCIETY
Enquiries: School of Humanities and Social Science
Semester 1 - 2008
and Tutorial Thursday 13:00 - 14:00 [V103]
or Thursday 15:00 - 16:00 [V01]
or Thursday 10:00 - 11:00 [V108]

Plagiarism

University policy prohibits students plagiarising any material under any circumstances. A student plagiarises if he or she presents the thoughts or works of another as one's own. Without limiting the generality of this definition, it may include:

- copying or paraphrasing material from any source without due acknowledgment;
- using another's ideas without due acknowledgment;
- working with others without permission and presenting the resulting work as though it was completed independently.

Plagiarism is not only related to written works, but also to material such as data, images, music, formulae, websites and computer programs.

Aiding another student to plagiarise is also a violation of the Plagiarism Policy and may invoke a penalty.

For further information on the University policy on plagiarism, please refer to the Policy on Student Academic Integrity at the following link -
The University has established a software plagiarism detection system called Turnitin. When you submit assessment items please be aware that for the purpose of assessing any assessment item the University may -

- Reproduce this assessment item and provide a copy to another member of the University; and/or
- Communicate a copy of this assessment item to a plagiarism checking service (which may then retain a copy of the item on its database for the purpose of future plagiarism checking).
- Submit the assessment item to other forms of plagiarism checking

Written Assessment Items

Students may be required to provide written assessment items in electronic form as well as hard copy.

Extension of Time for Assessment Items, Deferred Assessment and Special Consideration for Assessment Items or Formal Written Examinations

Students are required to submit assessment items by the due date, as advised in the Course Outline, unless the Course Coordinator approves an extension of time for submission of the item. University policy is that an assessment item submitted after the due date, without an approved extension, will be penalised.

Any student:

1. who is applying for an extension of time for submission of an assessment item on the basis of medical, compassionate, hardship/trauma or unavoidable commitment; or
2. whose attendance at or performance in an assessment item or formal written examination has been or will be affected by medical, compassionate, hardship/trauma or unavoidable commitment;

must report the circumstances, with supporting documentation, to the appropriate officer following the instructions provided in the Special Circumstances Affecting Assessment Procedure - Policy 000641.

Note: different procedures apply for minor and major assessment tasks.

Please go to the Policy at [http://www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary/000641.html](http://www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary/000641.html) for further information, particularly for information on the options available to you.

Students should be aware of the following important deadlines:

- **Requests for Special Consideration** must be lodged no later than 3 working days after the due date of submission or examination.
- **Requests for Extensions of Time on Assessment Items** must be lodged no later than the due date of the item.
- **Requests for Rescheduling Exams** must be received in the Student Hub no later than ten working days prior the first date of the examination period

Your application may not be accepted if it is received after the deadline. Students who are unable to meet the above deadlines due to extenuating circumstances should speak to their Program Officer in the first instance.
Changing your Enrolment

The last dates to withdraw without financial or academic penalty (called the HECS Census Dates) are:

For semester 1 courses: 31 March 2008

Students may withdraw from a course without academic penalty on or before the last day of semester. Any withdrawal from a course after the last day of semester will result in a fail grade.

Students cannot enrol in a new course after the second week of semester/trimester, except under exceptional circumstances. Any application to add a course after the second week of semester/trimester must be on the appropriate form, and should be discussed with staff in the Student Hubs.

To check or change your enrolment online, please refer to myHub - Self Service for Students

https://myhub.newcastle.edu.au

Faculty Information

The Student Hubs are a one-stop shop for the delivery of student related services and are the first point of contact for students on campus.

The four Student Hubs are located at:

Callaghan campus
- Shortland Hub: Level 3, Shortland Union Building
- Hunter Hub: Student Services Centre, Hunter side of campus

City Precinct
- City Hub & Information Common: University House, ground floor in combination with an Information Common for the City Precinct

Ourimbah campus
- Ourimbah Hub: Administration Building

Faculty websites

Faculty of Education and Arts
http://www.newcastle.edu.au/faculty/education-arts/

Contact details

Callaghan, City and Port Macquarie
Phone: 02 4921 5000
Email: EnquiryCentre@newcastle.edu.au

The Dean of Students
Resolution Precinct
Phone: 02 4921 5806
Fax: 02 4921 7151
Email: resolutionprecinct@newcastle.edu.au

Various services are offered by the University Student Support Unit:
Please go to the university student support unit to get help in writing essays if you get anything less than 63% in the first essay in this course!!!

Alteration of this Course Outline

No change to this course outline will be permitted after the end of the second week of the term except in exceptional circumstances and with Head of School approval. Students will be notified in advance of any approved changes to this outline.

Web Address for Rules Governing Undergraduate Academic Awards

STUDENTS WITH A DISABILITY OR CHRONIC ILLNESS

The University is committed to providing a range of support services for students with a disability or chronic illness.

If you have a disability or chronic illness which you feel may impact on your studies, please feel free to discuss your support needs with your lecturer or course coordinator.

Disability Support may also be provided by the Student Support Service (Disability). Students must be registered to receive this type of support. To register please contact the Disability Liaison Officer on 02 4921 5766, or via email at: student-disability@newcastle.edu.au

As some forms of support can take a few weeks to implement it is extremely important that you discuss your needs with your lecturer, course coordinator or Student Support Service staff at the beginning of each semester.

For more information related to confidentiality and documentation please visit the Student Support Service (Disability) website at: www.newcastle.edu.au/services/disability

Online Tutorial Registration:

Students are required to enrol in the Lecture and a specific Tutorial time for this course via the Online Registration system. Refer - http://studinfo1.newcastle.edu.au/rego/stud_choose_login.cfm

NB: Registrations close at the end of week 2 of semester.

Studentmail and Blackboard: Refer - www.blackboard.newcastle.edu.au/

This course uses Blackboard and studentmail to contact students, so you are advised to keep your email accounts within the quota to ensure you receive essential messages. To receive an expedited response to queries, post questions on the Blackboard discussion forum if there is one, or if emailing staff directly use the course code in the subject line of your email. Students are advised to check their studentmail and the course Blackboard site on a weekly basis.
Important Additional Information

Written Assignment Presentation and Submission Details

Students are required to submit assessment items by the due date. When a student has not received an extension or special consideration and an assignment is late the course coordinator may decide not to include that assignment as part of the total assessment for the course. Ensure that if you need an extension or special consideration you make an application before the due date for the assignment.

Hard copy submission:

- **Type your assignments**: All work must be typewritten in 11 or 12 point black font. Leave a wide margin for marker’s comments, use 1.5 or double spacing, and include page numbers.
- **Word length**: The word limit of all assessment items should not be below that stipulated in the course guide – 10% below is acceptable, otherwise a fail mark is likely. Work up to 50% longer than the word limit can be acceptable if it is well written; otherwise the marker will not read past the word limit to make an assessment.
- **Proof read your work** because spelling, grammatical and referencing mistakes will be penalised.
- **Staple the pages** of your assignment together (do not use pins or paper clips).
- **University Assessment Item Coversheet**: All assignments must be submitted with the University coversheet available at: [http://www.newcastle.edu.au/study/forms/](http://www.newcastle.edu.au/study/forms/)
- **By arrangement with the relevant lecturer, assignments may be submitted at any Student Hub located at**:
  - Level 3, Shortland Union, Callaghan
  - Level 2, Student Services Centre, Callaghan
  - Ground Floor, University House, City
  - Opposite Café Central, Ourimbah
- **Date-stamping assignments**: All students must date-stamp their own assignments using the machine provided at each Student Hub. If mailing an assignment, this should be address to the relevant School. Mailed assignments are accepted from the date posted, confirmed by a Post Office date-stamp; they are also date-stamped upon receipt by Schools.

**NB: Not all of these services may apply to the Port Macquarie Campus.**

- **Do not fax or email assignments**: Only hard copies of assignments will be considered for assessment. Inability to physically submit a hard copy of an assignment by the deadline due to other commitments or distance from campus is an unacceptable excuse.
- **Keep a copy of all assignments**: It is the student’s responsibility to produce a copy of their work if the assignment goes astray after submission. Students are advised to keep updated back-ups in electronic and hard copy formats.

Online copy submission to Turnitin

In addition to hard copy submission, students are required to submit an electronic version of the following assignments to Turnitin via the course Blackboard website:
- Minor Essay
- Major Essay

Students are not required to submit to Turnitin any pictorial work that accompanies an assignment (for example a magazine clipping).

Prior to final submission, all students have the opportunity to submit one draft of their assignment to Turnitin to self-check their referencing. Assignments will not be marked until both hard copy and online versions have been submitted. Marks may be deducted for late submission of either version.

Special Circumstances

Students wishing to apply for Special Circumstances or Extension of Time should apply online. Refer - ‘Special Circumstances Affecting Assessment Items - Procedure 000641’ available @ [http://www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary/000641.html](http://www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary/000641.html)

Assignment Re-submission

Students who have failed an assignment may be permitted to revise and resubmit it in this course. A mark higher than a pass cannot be granted in the case of a re-submission. Students are also welcome to contact
their Tutor, Lecturer or Course Coordinator to make a consultation time to receive individual feedback on their assignments.

**Re-marks & Moderations**

A student may only request a re-mark of an assessment item before the final result - in the course to which the assessment item contributes - has been posted. If a final result in the course has been posted, the student must apply under ‘Procedures for Appeal Against a Final Result’ (Refer - http://www.newcastle.edu.au/study/forms/).

Students concerned at the mark given for an assessment item should first discuss the matter with the Course Coordinator. If subsequently requesting a re-mark, students should be aware that as a result of a re-mark the original mark may be increased or reduced. The case for a re-mark should be outlined in writing and submitted to the Course Coordinator, who determines whether a re-mark should be granted, taking into consideration all of the following:

1. whether the student had discussed the matter with the Course Coordinator
2. the case put forward by the student for a re-mark
3. the weighting of the assessment item and its potential impact on the student’s final mark or grade
4. the time required to undertake the re-mark
5. the number of original markers, that is,
   a) whether there was a single marker, or
   b) if there was more than one marker whether there was agreement or disagreement on the marks awarded.

A re-mark may also be initiated at the request of the Course Coordinator, the Head of School, the School Assessment Committee, the Faculty Progress and Appeals Committee or the Pro Vice-Chancellor. Re-marks may be undertaken by:

1. the original marker; or
2. an alternate internal marker; or
3. an alternate external marker (usually as a consequence of a grievance procedure).

Moderation may be applied when there is a major discrepancy (or perceived discrepancy) between:

1. the content of the course as against the content or nature of the assessment item(s)
2. the content or nature of the assessment item(s) as against those set out in the Course Outline
3. the marks given by a particular examiner and those given by another in the same course
4. the results in a particular course and the results in other courses undertaken by the same students.

For further detail on this University policy refer - ‘Re-marks and Moderations - Procedure 000769’ available @ http://www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary/000769.html

**Return of Assignments**

Students can collect assignments from a nominated Student Hub during office hours. Students will be informed during class which Hub to go to and the earliest date that assignments will be available for collection. Students must present their student identification card to collect their assignment.


**Preferred Referencing Style**

*Note: Revise/replace with a statement on your preferred style.*

In this course, it is recommended that you use the Harvard in-text referencing system (similar to the APA system) for referencing sources of information used in assignments. Inadequate or incorrect reference to the work of others may be viewed as plagiarism and result in reduced marks or failure.

An in-text citation names the author of the source, gives the date of publication, and for a direct quote includes a page number, in parentheses. At the end of the paper, a list of references provides publication
information about the source; the list is alphabetised by authors' last names (or by titles for works without authors). For further information on referencing and general study skills refer - ‘Infoskills’ available @ www.newcastle.edu.au/services/library/tutorials/infoskills/index.html

**Student Representatives**

Student Representatives are a major channel of communication between students and the School. Contact details of Student Representatives can be found on School websites.

Refer - ‘Information for Student Representatives on Committees’ available @ http://www.newcastle.edu.au/service/committees/student_reps/index.html

**Student Communication**

Students should discuss any course related matters with their Tutor, Lecturer, or Course Coordinator in the first instance and then the relevant Discipline or Program Convenor. If this proves unsatisfactory, they should then contact the Head of School if required. Contact details can be found on the School website.

**Essential Online Information for Students**

Information on Class and Exam Timetables, Tutorial Online Registration, Learning Support, Campus Maps, Careers information, Counselling, the Health Service and a range of free Student Support Services is available @ http://www.newcastle.edu.au/currentstudents/index.html
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<tr>
<th>Grading guide</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>49% or less</td>
<td>Fail</td>
<td>(FF) An unacceptable effort, including non-completion. The student has not understood the basic principles of the subject matter and/or has been unable to express their understanding in a comprehensible way. Deficient in terms of answering the question, research, referencing and correct presentation (spelling, grammar etc.). May include extensive plagiarism.</td>
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<td>50% to 64%</td>
<td>Pass</td>
<td>(P) The work demonstrates a reasonable attempt to answer the question, shows some grasp of the basic principles of the subject matter and a basic knowledge of the required readings, is comprehensible, accurate and adequately referenced.</td>
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<td>65% to 74%</td>
<td>Credit</td>
<td>(C) The work demonstrates a clear understanding of the question, a capacity to integrate research into the discussion, and a critical appreciation of a range of different theoretical perspectives. A deficiency in any of the above may be compensated by evidence of independent thought. The work is coherent and accurate.</td>
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<td>75% to 84%</td>
<td>Distinction</td>
<td>(D) Evidence of substantial additional reading and/or research, and evidence of the ability to generalise from the theoretical content to develop an argument in an informed and original manner. The work is well organised, clearly expressed and shows a capacity for critical analysis.</td>
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<td>85% upwards</td>
<td>High Distinction</td>
<td>(HD) All of the above, plus a thorough understanding of the subject matter based on substantial additional reading and/or research. The work shows a high level of independent thought, presents informed and insightful discussion of the topic, particularly the theoretical issues involved, and demonstrates a well-developed capacity for critical analysis.</td>
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<td>Lecture and tuts</td>
<td>Lecture Topic &amp; Assessment at a Glance</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>February 21</td>
<td>Theoretical Debates and Methodological Issues</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>February 28</td>
<td>Patriarchal Plot Structures – Red Riding Hood</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>March 6</td>
<td>Buffy and other Women Fighting Back</td>
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<td>March 13</td>
<td>Desperate Housewives</td>
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<td>EASTER BREAK</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>March 27</td>
<td>Sex and the City – Romantic Comedies <strong>Minor essay due 28th</strong></td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>April 3</td>
<td>War and Action - Dramas and News Reporting</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>April 10</td>
<td>Conspiracy, Apocalypse and Wacky Critique</td>
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<td>MIDSEMESTER RECESS</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>May 1</td>
<td>TV Crime Drama <strong>Major essay due 2nd</strong></td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>May 8</td>
<td>Horror Movies and Violence</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<td>Fashion, Clothing and Presentation</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>June 5</td>
<td>Romance Novels</td>
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How to Write Essays for This Course:

For a pass or credit standard essay, students should read, use and put in their reference list at least 5 references from this course guide (see readings for each topic) relevant to their topic - this can and should include the readings for that week. For additional references if you want to write a more thorough essay, its probably safest to use other items from this topic list which are mostly from academic or at least well informed sources. Everything that is in the reading lists for these essays should be in short loans - on the shelves or on the library net for short loans. Be a bit careful with internet sources, which may include journalistic or community input as well as academic sociological treatments of topics. John Germov - How to Get Great Marks in Essays - is an excellent guide for essay writing and explains correct referencing format.

The set of essays listed for the major essay have a format in which you are invited to explain a point of view that is often expressed in the academic literature. This is the first half of the essay. In other words, this is where you can summarize and present the reading you have done for the essay. Do not hesitate to talk about the examples that they use in order to explain the perspective you are writing about here.

In the second half of the essay you are meant to give your own analysis of a media item that can be analyzed using the approach that you have discussed in the first part of the essay. This is meant to be your own analysis of a film or tv episode that you have yourself chosen. In other words do not go on the net and find an analysis of the film or tv episode in question. This would be very obvious, would not be original, would be plagiarism if you did not give the reference, and probably would not fit the essay question you are looking at anyway.

There is no right or wrong analysis of a media item – it is up to you to come up with something that makes sense and seems to fit the item and to explain and justify your approach with examples of the plot, scenes, characters etc.

Minor Essay
1000 words: Due Date March 28th 5 pm
Please read: How to Write Essays for This Course (above)

Choose one of the following topics:

1. Explain the view that popular media is most likely to support the interests of the dominant powerful groups in current society – for example - the capitalist class /or men /or white people. Opposing this, other writers argue that popular media is quite likely to present the opinions and values of the majority - or of dominated groups in society – in other words the views and values of ordinary people, the working classes, women, ethnic minorities. How could this happen if capitalists own the media? What kinds of arguments and evidence do these other writers use? (See readings for week one - available in short loans and in the book of readings).

OR

2. Choose on of the topics listed for the major essay (below) and present a 1000 word essay on that topic – you will have to do a different topic for the major essay.
Choose one of the following topics:

1. There are certainly many fictional dramas in film or TV that represent a patriarchal perspective. Explain this point of view and show how a TV episode or film illustrates this perspective. (See readings for week 2) The chosen media item must be your own choice and you must give it your own analysis.

2. While we might expect a male dominated media industry to turn out a patriarchal product, the reality is that many shows are aimed at a female audience. In consequence they often represent various kinds of resistance to patriarchal power or at least some kind of critique of aspects of patriarchal society. Explain this point of view and show how a TV episode or film illustrates this perspective. (See readings for one of the following weeks – 3, 4, 5) The chosen media item must be your own choice and you must give it your own analysis.

3. The reporting of wars, as well as popular fictional media such as war movies, action dramas, spy thrillers and the like is very often set up to support the foreign policy of the United States government and persuade ordinary people to support the interests of dominant economic and political forces in that country. Explain this perspective and show how a TV episode, news report or movie seems to fit this analysis. (See readings for week 6). The chosen media item must be your own choice and you must give it your own analysis.

4. Despite the apparent consensus that capitalism is the best system, there is a great deal of popular media that suggests people’s distrust of authorities, their disillusion with modern life and their cynicism about their leaders. Show how popular media can tap into these feelings through conspiracy movies, science fiction thrillers, apocalypse movies and anime or cynical and wacky humour. (See readings for week 7) Choose an example of a movie or TV episode that can be used to show how this kind of analysis can work. The chosen media item must be your own choice and you must give it your own analysis.

5. While much popular social analysis and psychological research tends to be disturbed by violence on TV and film, sociological and cultural studies writings are much more interested in who is doing the violence and who is the victim - and the puzzle of who the audience is identifying with. Academics wonder how these displays of violence in the media support or undermine dominant structures of power in society. Explain these conundrums and show how these issues can be raised in relation to an example of a violent TV or movie fiction or computer game. (See readings for one or more of the following weeks - 3, 6, 7, 8, 9) The chosen media item must be your own choice and you must give it your own analysis.
Formal Exam

This will be a seen exam. It will be held in the exam period following week 14 (Tuesday 10 June to Friday 27th June). The questions for the exam will be given to students in week 9 and will cover the topics for lectures and tutorials from weeks 10 to 13:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chat, Reality, Game and Quiz Shows</th>
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<td>Advertising</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fashion, Clothing and Presentation</td>
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<td>Romance Novels</td>
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Students will be permitted to bring magazine pages to illustrate questions on ads and fashion. Bring a stapler so you can add these to your written pages.

Week One - Theoretical Debates and Methodological Issues


Collins, Jim, Radner, Hilary, & Collins, Ava Preacher (eds) 1993, *Film Theory Goes to the Movies*, Routledge, London. 37 - 55 (wk 7); 56-76 (wk 13); 129-141 (wk 3); 182-195 (wk 2).


Leahy, Terry 1988, "Hegemonic and Post-Modernist Analysis; The Case of Rambo". *(Available in Library)*


Week Two – Patriarchal Plot Structures – Red Riding Hood


Week Three – Buffy and other Women Fighting Back


South, James. B. (ed) *Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Philosophy*, Open Court, Chicago.


Week Four – Desperate Housewives


Week Five – Sex and the City – Romantic Comedies


Royal, Cindy 2005, *Narrative Structure in Sex and the City: "I Couldn't Help But Wonder"*  
*http://www.cindyroyal.com/royal_sex_paper.pdf*

Week Six – War and Action - Dramas and News Reporting


Rockler, Naomi, “Race, Hierarchy, and Hyenaphobia in the Lion King”. (short loans)


**Week Seven – Conspiracy, Apocalypse and Wacky Critique**


Irvine, Simon and Beattie, Natasha 1998, “Conspiracy Theory, Pre-Millenium Tension and the X-Files: Power and Belief in the 1990s, Social Alternatives, 17/4, pp. 31-34.


Sharrett, Christopher (ed) 1999, Mythologies of violence in postmodern media, Detroit, MI : Wayne State University Press.

**Week Eight – TV Crime Drama**


Sparks, Richard 1992, Television and the Drama of Crime, Open University, Buckingham.

Week Nine – Horror Movies and Media Violence


Week Ten – Chat, Reality, Game and Quiz Shows


Week Eleven – Advertising


**Week Twelve – Fashion, Clothing and Presentation**


**Week Thirteen – Romance Novels**


