

LL 300 Research Seminar: Television and Society – Summer 2006

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Day/Time: Tuesdays, 6:30-9:30 pm, 6/13-8/15
Location: Naperville campus

Competencies offered:

L-8: Can pose questions and use methods of formal inquiry to answer questions and solve problems.
L-9: To be completed by student/faculty

Course description:

Research Seminar emphasizes scholarly inquiry—the attitudes, practices and strategies that are key to college-level contemplation and investigation of clearly specified issues and problems. The course does so by focusing on a broad special topic--"Television and Society"--and creating a learning environment in which students can explore a wide range of interests and topics subsumed under that general heading. In the process, students select some aspect of the topic as a personal focus and design a detailed Research Proposal based on it.

Regarding the special topic: Television, it seems, is everywhere. Indeed, its presence could be said to be so ubiquitous in our society that we take it for granted, rarely if ever pausing to consider (let alone systematically investigate) the medium's impact on our actions, values, lives and communities. And yet questions such as the following persistently arise:

- Does television, in depicting certain kinds of behavior (e.g., violence) make viewers more inclined to engage in such behavior?
- Can a steady diet of TV-viewing significantly impact child development?
- Has television helped to promote—or, conversely, helped to undermine—commonly held stereotypes about, say, race, class or gender?

And what of television's impact on journalism, politics and democracy? Thomas Jefferson held that democracy is only possible where there is an informed, critically aware *polis*. Can television networks owned by private interests, financed by advertising revenues, and dominated by entertainment values be relied upon to adequately inform the voters on matters of grave public concern?

We will consider viewpoints on various sides of such questions, as well as scholarly studies which have attempted to shed light on them. Along the way, we will become familiar with and practice a variety of research strategies. Students will gain experience by developing a specific research question, problem or hypothesis; finding and reviewing scholarly literature; choosing a research method; and writing a research proposal.

Faculty:

John Kimsey received his Ph.D. in English from the University of Illinois at Chicago and serves as a member of the resident faculty. He teaches and writes about modern literature and popular music and has published articles, both scholarly and mainstream, in these areas.

Required texts:

Lester, James D. and James Lester, Jr. *Writing Research Papers*. 11th ed. NY; Pearson Longman, 2005.

Numerous readings placed on Electronic Reserve at www.lib.depaul.edu

Criteria for Evaluation:

- A. Students will read and discuss assigned materials.
- B. Students will actively participate in class discussions and complete all homework assignments.
- C. Students will submit a formal Research Proposal of quality and cogency which is 20-25 pages long. The Research Proposal has four sections:
 1. An *Introduction* which describes your topic and provides an overview of a specific problem related to that topic. This section should include definitions of key terms and an explanation of a research question which you propose to investigate.
 2. A *Literature Review* which surveys closely the major themes and issues relating to the research question as well as the findings generated by major research studies pertinent to the topic.
 3. A *Research Methodology* discussion which systematically explains either the method of research you have used or the method you propose to use. This section should specify the data or information needed to research the question, the techniques necessary for data collection. It should also discuss potential strong and weak points of these techniques and describe any anticipated findings.
 4. An *Annotated Bibliography* which presents at least fifteen important scholarly sources relevant to the project.

The Research Proposal should be clear, coherent and comprehensive—rationally presented and mechanically sound. Moreover, it should reflect a solid familiarity with the topic and a critical awareness of the issues involved. In addition, it should be composed in accordance with the university's policy on Academic Integrity and that policy's guidelines concerning plagiarism.

Students will work on these sections workshop-fashion--drafting particular sections, sharing these with the instructor (and sometimes the class as well), getting close feedback and then revising. In my view, the best way to carry out a large project like this is to 1) break it into smaller segments; 2) draft, revise and polish those small segments separately; and then 3) hook them up like boxcars. Thus, it's helpful to think of the long paper with four sections described above as if it consisted of four separate, shorter papers on which we work together through a rolling process of draft and revision.

Incomplete Policy:

See attachment at end of syllabus.

Plagiarism Policy:

See attachment at end of syllabus.

Schedule of Topics and Readings:

Note: the designation (E) beside a reading stands for "Electronic Reserve" and means that it can be found at under Reserves at www.lib.depaul.edu

Week One 6/13

Introduction to course; The uses of research; Issues of television and society;
Screening of *Frontline*: "Does TV Kill?"

Week Two 6/20

Discussion of Kellner: TV's history and some value implications; Generating topics
Submit journal entry on Kellner

Readings:

Kellner, "Broadcasting and the Rise of Network Television" (E)

Van Evra, "Introduction" from *Television and Child Development*
Lester & Lester, chapter 2, "Finding A Topic"
Booth, Colomb & Williams, "From Topics to Questions" (E)

Week Three 6/27

Using the library; Different kinds of research; Debates on media bias; An example of content analysis

Submit Status Report on topic interest

Submit journal entry on Croteau & Hoynes

Submit journal entry on either Goldberg or McChesney

Readings:

Lester & Lester, chapter 4, "Gathering Data in the Library"

Goldberg, "The News Mafia"

McChesney, "The Right Wing Attack on the 'Liberal' Media"

Croteau & Hoynes, "Are You On the *Nightline* Guest List?" (E)

True, "The Research Question" (E)

Week Four 7/4

Holiday: no class meeting. Use time to go to library and begin gathering sources; Also, work on draft of Introduction

Readings:

Lester & Lester, "Writing the Introduction..." pp. 202-214

Week Five 7/11

Doing a Literature Review; Framing a hypothesis; Television and stereotypes:

Discussion of Kitch and Entman & Rojecki

Submit draft of Introduction

Readings:

Lester & Lester, chapter 7, "Reading and Evaluating the Best Sources"

Kitch, "The Advertising Connection" (E)

Entman & Rojecki, "Prime-Time Television: Whiter and Whiter (E)

Week Six 7/18

Research methodologies: Sampling; Using sources: Note-taking, paraphrase and summary; Monopoly trends in mass media: Screening of "Smoke in the Eye," part I; Drafts of Introduction returned

Readings:

True, excerpt from "The Sample and Significance" (E)

Lester & Lester, chapter 9, "Writing Notes"

Week Seven 7/25

More on research methodologies: the questionnaire; Using academic paradigms;

Screening of "Smoke in the Eye," part II

Submit draft of Literature Review

Readings:

Lester & Lester, chapter 8, "Organizing Ideas and Setting Goals"

True, excerpt on questionnaires (E)

Week Eight 8/1

Citation format and bibliography; MLA and APA styles; What is an annotated bibliography?; Drafts of Literature review returned

Readings:

Lester & Lester, chapter 11, "Blending Reference Material Into Your Writing..."

Week Nine 8/8

Brief presentations on projects

Submit draft of Methodology section

Week Ten 8/15

Brief presentations on projects; Drafts of Methodology section returned

Submit complete Research Proposal to Naperville front desk by Friday 8/18