Media and Meaning

Part B: Course Detail

Status: Published  Version 1

Teaching Period        Sem 2 2006
Course Code            COMM2110
Course Title           Media and Meaning
School                 335H Applied Communication
Career                 Undergraduate
Campus                 City Campus
Learning Mode          Face-to-Face

Primary Learning Mode

1x1hr Lecture and 1x2hr Tutorial.
Lecture: Wednesday 2.30-3.20, rm 10.4.27
Tutorial A: Wednesday 3.30-5.20, rm 24.1.03 (Tutor - Allan James Thomas)
Tutorial B: Thursday 9.30-11.20, rm 24.1.03 (Tutor - Allan James Thomas)
Tutorial C: Thursday 11.30-1.20, rm 24.1.03 (Tutor - Allan James Thomas)
Tutorial D: Friday 12.30-2.20, rm 24.1.01 (Tutor - Rebecca Hill)
Tutorial E: Friday 2.30-4.20, rm 24.1.01 (Tutor - Rebecca Hill)

Credit Points          12
Teacher Guided Hours   39 per semester
Learner Directed Hours 78 per semester

Course Coordinator     Allan James THOMAS
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Course Coordinator Location 6.6.09

Offering Coordinator   Allan James Thomas
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Offering Coordinator Availability Consultations Mondays 2-3pm until Week 14, or by appointment.

Additional Staff Contact Details

Allan James Thomas (course co-ordinator, and tutor for tutorials A, B and C (Wed. 3.30-2.20, Thurs. 9.30-11.20, and 11.30-1.20)
rm 6.6.09
ph 9925 3125
allan.thomas@rmit.edu.au
Consultations Mondays 2-3pm until Week 14, or by appointment.
Allan will not be available on Tuesdays and Fridays.

Rebecca Hill (tutor for seminars D & E (Friday 12.30-2.20 & Friday 2.30-4.20)
Room 6.6.5
Phone: 9925 3273
rebecca.a.hill@rmit.edu.au
Consultations: Mondays 10:30-11:20 or by appointment

Pre-requisite Courses and Assumed Knowledge and Capabilities
COMM-2072 Reading Media Texts OR permission of the lecturer.

Course Description
Media and Meaning is a course about research, where research is understood as the process whereby information is transformed into knowledge. That is to say, research is much more than simply ‘finding’ static information, facts, arguments etc.; it is the creation and exploration of problems. It is an active and
dynamic process which organises, synthesises and responds productively to many different sources and influences (textual, visual, aural, experiential, personal etc.) Research expresses itself in many different
ways; not only essays, but also art works, designs, project proposals, scripts, reports, interviews, and
many other things besides. Research is therefore an active, creative and ongoing process; every
research outcome is a starting point for new research (either your own, or someone elses.)

Recent research suggests that if you work in the ‘creative economy’ (which includes, but isn’t limited to,
all of the professional strands within the B.Com.), you can expect to spend up to a day or more a week –
unpaid – researching new areas, in order to merely stay employable. That’s a fifth of your time spent
doing research of various kinds – not just finding out what you need to know, and how to do it, but
understanding, relating and reflecting upon changes in the media industries and how they connect to you
own practice and career direction/s. This course therefore aims to introduce students to a range of
research practices and processes that are relevant not only to academic work, but to a variety of
practical, professional, and creative contexts as well.

Objectives/Learning Outcomes/Capability Development
Students are to develop an applied and critical understanding of a range of research practices and
processes. That is, you will learn about research by doing it, and by reflecting upon that doing. The
emphasis is on research as a reflective and creative process that may be expressed in different ways
and in different contexts, including, but not limited to, academic ones.

This course aims to:

- introduce students to the idea of research as an integral aspect of professional media practices (not
  just something you do when you write essays).
- introduce students to a variety of research practices and outcomes.
- develop and enhance student’s research skills, as applied in both academic and non-academic
  contexts, including
- introduce students to reflective research practice as an ongoing professional activity linked to their own
  goals.
- develop students’ understanding of the role of research in the expression and creation of knowledge.

Capabilities
By the end of this course, students should have:

- an understanding of the function and uses of a bibliography, including citation practices and
  requirements.
- know how to locate, evaluate and use a variety research resources appropriately in relation to different
  research contexts and outcomes.
- the ability to successfully complete a variety of directed research tasks, and to be able to articulate how
  these task might relate to and differ from each other.
- a basic understanding of the significance of a variety of different research contexts, and their impact
  upon research processes and outcomes.
- begun to reflect upon and express connections, difference, and relations between the different tasks
  and areas examined in this course, and how they might relate to other aspects of their own program of
  study, and their professional goals.
Overview of Learning Activities

This course emphasises a process and problem based approach to teaching, rather than a content based approach. That is, it emphasizes learning by doing, the how as much as the what. Each year, this course focuses on a different research problem. Previous examples of research problems are 'Reality TV' and 'Mobile Phones as Media form.'

Lectures will introduce ideas about different research practices, processes, contexts and outcomes, as well as providing perspectives upon the significance of mobile phones in different aspects of the media.

The seminar program will begin by asking students to consider what they might need to find out to build up an understanding of the issues involved in the topic being explored, and to then be able to apply that knowledge in some way. Each week throughout the semester, students will put into practice different ways of researching and refining these questions, and bring the results into the seminars to form the basis of further exploration – both in terms of what they have found, what that might lead them to next, how they found this material, and how they might express it in different contexts and for different audiences. This process will be linked to the set assignments, but not limited to them.

The research tasks set will include some traditional academic outcomes, but will emphasize the expression of research in less conventionally academic contexts (i.e., journalistic, public forums, creative projects). Please note, however, that the same expectations of rigor and critical analysis will be expected throughout.

The process based nature of this course means that students will find it very difficult to complete this course successfully without consistent and regular attendance and participation in both lectures and seminars.

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Lectures will introduce ideas about different research practices, processes, contexts and outcomes, as well as providing perspectives upon some of the factors that are shaping the development and mutation of TV in terms of its production, distribution and reception.

The tutorial activities will begin by asking students to consider what they might need to know to propose possible answers to the question 'what is the future of TV?'. Clearly there is no 'right' answer to this question (no one knows for sure) - your aim will be to identify and analyse the factors that are shaping the possible futures of T.V., and to propose hypotheses about those possible futures. Each week throughout the semester, students will put into practice different ways of researching and refining these questions, and bring the results into the seminars to form the basis of further exploration – both in terms of what they have found, what that might lead them to next, how they found this material, and how they might express it in different contexts and for different audiences. This process will be linked to the set assignments, but not limited to them.

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Teaching Schedule

Lecture Series
26/7/6 Week 1: Introduction (ajt)

2/8/6 Week 2: Big R little r (ajt)

9/8/6 Week 3: Idiot Box (ajt)
Note: All tutorials for this week only will take place in one of the RMIT library computer labs - room number TBC.

16/8/6 Week 4: Broadcasts and Networks (ajt)
Assessment: the first participation self-assessment will take place in tutorials this week.

23/8/6 Week 5: Adrian Miles (guest lecturer)

30/8/6 Week 6: Paul Ritchard (guest lecturer)
Assessment: Annotated Research Bibliographies due in Tuesday August 29th.

6/9/6 Week 7: Jon Burton (guest lecturer)
Assessment: the second participation self-assessment will take place in tutorials this week.

13/9/6 Week 8: TBC

20/9/6 Week 9: Creative Research (ajt)*
Note: Rebecca Hill will be at an international conference this week. All tutorials will be taken by Allan James Thomas.

Mid Semester Break 25th September – 1st October

4/10/6 Week 10: Jenny Weight (guest lecturer)
Assessment: the third participation self-assessment will take place in tutorials this week.

11/10/6 Week 11: Jeremy Yuille (guest lecturer)

18/10/6 Week 12: Diane Cook (guest lecturer)

25/10/6 Week 13: What was that? (ajt)
Assessment: The fourth and final participation self-assessment will take place in tutorials this week.

Week 14:
Assessment: Future TV proposal due in Friday 3rd November.

Overview of Learning Resources
Students will need to access a wide variety of research resources, including, but not limited to: libraries, on-line academic databases, the internet and world wide web, email, newspapers, radio and T.V., and public forums. Much of this material will be sourced and shared by students themselves in the course of their research, and in seminars.

An extensive Referencing Guide for courses in Media is available as a PDF on-line, from the 'Students’ page of the RMIT Media webside. You are expected to read it thoroughly, and put it into practice.

Learning Resources
Prescribed Texts

There is no prescribed text, and no reading dossier for this course; the reading for the course will be found by you as one aspect of your practical research within the course.
Other Resources
You will be using a broad range of resources in your researchs throughout the course. This will of course include library and web based resources of various kinds, but will also go beyond these. Because the primary principle of this course is that you learn about research through the process of doing it, a significant part of the tutorial work will involve the discussion of the ‘why, how and where’ of different approaches to research, and of your own experiences (both successful and unsuccessful) of putting these into practice.

Overview of Assessment
The assessment in this course emphasizes the process of research, and therefore requires you to demonstrate a continuous engagement throughout semester, in several key ways. These include an annotated bibliography, some form of ongoing self-assessment of participation, and a final project which will vary from year to year depending on the nature of the chosen research problem. The final project will not be an essay, although it will include various forms of written critical analysis which express and reflect your research.

Assessment Tasks
The assessment in this course emphasizes the process of research, and therefore requires you to demonstrate a continuous engagement throughout semester, in several key ways.
- an Annotated Bibliography, to be handed in at the beginning of Week 6
- guided self assessment of participation (to be discussed in tutorials in Week 1; it will involve keeping a participation and reflection journal.)
- a proposal for a media production that explores a possible TV Future you have investigated in your research throughout the course.

TASKS AND VALUE
Detailed Task Sheets for the Annotated Research Bibliography will be handed out in Week 1. The task sheet for your Self Assessed Participation will be handed out in Tutorials in Week 2. The task sheet for your Future TV proposal will be handed out no later than Week 7.

Annotated Research Bibliography: 35% - see task sheet for details (this will be discussed in class.)
Due: Tuesday 29th August, no later than 5pm

Participation and Reflection Journal: 25% Self Assessed in tutorials in weeks 4, 7, 10 and 13 (to be discussed in seminars in Week 1; the formal task sheet for this assessment will be handed out in Week 2.)

Future TV proposal: 40%
A proposal for some kind of media production that explores and expresses some aspect of the future of TV, based on the research you have done throughout the course. The format and requirements for this proposal are specified in detail in the task sheet for the assignment, which you will receive no later than Week 7.
Due: Friday November 3rd, no later than 5pm

CRITERIA
A task sheet will be handed out for each assessment task, with assessment criteria tailored to each task. Please read this carefully when you receive the task sheet, as it is important that you understand precisely what criteria your work will be assessed against. In general, however, the framework will be along the lines of the grading criteria detailed below, under ‘Grades Available’.

SUBMISSION OF ASSESSMENT TASKS
All assessment tasks, other than the Self Assessed Participation component, are to be submitted on the due date via Level 3, Building 6.

All work must have a completed and signed cover sheet attached to the front of the essay (at the time of writing, these were available from Level 3, Building 6) – they will not be accepted without one.
Students must retain a copy of all work submitted (please note that this requirement is listed on the cover sheet, so by signing this you are stating that you do have a copy of the work you are submitting).

RETURN OF ASSESSMENT TASKS
Assignments will be available from your tutor for pickup three weeks after submission (it’s best to contact your tutor via email to arrange a time before you come in.)

GRADES AVAILABLE
The following are a general guide to the quality of work required for each available grade. Detailed assessment matrices will be provided with the task sheet for each individual assessment task.

High Distinction (80% and above) - Indicative of outstanding work. Distinguished by original thought, independent research, depth and clarity of argument and structure, and an intelligent critical engagement with the issues covered in the course.

Distinction (70-79%) - Excellent work, containing original thought and research, well structured arguments and a comprehensive grasp of the issues covered in the course, but marred by one or two minor problems.

Credit (60-69%) - Good to very good work, displaying some original thought and research, but undermined by gaps in reasoning and argumentation, insufficient critical engagement with the issues covered in the course, or weaknesses in the overall structure of the essay.

Pass (50-59%) - Average work, displaying a basic grasp of the set material, but with a range of more or less serious flaws, such as poor referencing, lack of evidence of independent reading and research, poor reasoning, padding, lack of argument, poor structure, and so on.

Fail (0-49%) - Fail, or NN grades are given to inadequate work. Some reasons for failing include where there is no evidence of any attempt to engage with the issues covered in the course or do any research. Plagiarism can also be grounds for failure. DNS indicates that no work was submitted for the assessment task.

Other Relevant Information
ADMINISTRATION PROCEDURES
Late Work - Unless prior arrangements have been made with your tutor, late work will be penalized at the rate of 2% per calendar day.

No extensions will be given after the due date, except where an application for special consideration is applied for and granted. It is up to you to contact your tutor about any difficulties you may be having before the work falls due, preferably 48 hours before.

If you wish to apply for an extension of more than one week, you must apply for special consideration and provide appropriate documentation (i.e., medical certificate or equivalent).

Work submitted more than two calendar weeks late without an agreed extension or special consideration will not be marked (i.e., you will get 0% for it).

EVALUATION AND FEEDBACK
Students are encouraged to give feedback on the course at all times. This can include speaking to your tutor or course coordinator and raising issues through the Staff/Student Consultative Committee. A formal course evaluation will be conducted at the conclusion of the course, where students will be given the opportunity to give feedback anonymously and in writing. This information will be summarized and analyzed, and presented to the Media teaching staff for review and proposed/suggested responses to any issues raised.
ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

Students are reminded that cheating, whether by fabrication, falsification of data, or plagiarism, is an offence subject to University disciplinary procedures. Plagiarism in oral, written or visual presentations is the presentation of the work, idea or creation of another person, without appropriate referencing, as though it is one’s own. Plagiarism is not acceptable. The use of another person’s work or ideas must be acknowledged. Failure to do so may result in charges of academic misconduct which carry a range of penalties including cancellation of results and exclusion from your course.

Students are responsible for ensuring that their work is kept in a secure place. It is also a disciplinary offence for students to allow their work to be plagiarised by another student. Students should be aware of their rights and responsibilities regarding the use of copyright material.

University Plagiarism Statement

Plagiarism: the presentation of the work, idea or creation of another person as though it is your own. It is a form of cheating and is a very serious academic offence that may lead to expulsion from the University. Plagiarised material can be drawn from, and presented in, written, graphic and visual form, including electronic data, and oral presentations. Plagiarism occurs when the origin of the material used is not appropriately cited.

Examples of plagiarism include:

- Copying sentences or paragraphs word-for-word from one or more sources, whether published or unpublished, which could include but is not limited to books, journals, reports, theses, websites, conference papers, course notes, etc. without proper citation;
- Closely paraphrasing sentences, paragraphs, ideas or themes without proper citation;
- Piecing together text from one or more sources and adding only linking sentences;
- Copying or submitting whole or parts of computer files without acknowledging their source;
- Copying designs or works of art and submitting them as your original work;
- Copying a whole or any part of another student’s work; and
- Submitting work as your own that someone else has done for you.

Enabling Plagiarism: the act of assisting or allowing another person to plagiarise or to copy your own work.

Advice and activities are available to help you cite and quote your sources correctly, and avoid plagiarism. If you have not already done so, we suggest you work through the activities on the RMIT Learning Skills Unit website, http://aps.eu.rmit.edu.au/lsu/resources/projects/plagiarism/index.html.