THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

FOSS0011 Researching Media and Culture

2005-6 First semester
Monday 2-3:50pm KK Leung Building LG103

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Aims

Issues of media and culture have moved to the center of social scientific inquiries in the past two decades. In that time we saw the rise of a new global media landscape spearheaded by the rapid growth of electronic technology of communication. We also witnessed the coming of a new cultural economy where new modes of production and consumption surrounding symbolic goods replaced age-old habits of work and pleasure. These have major repercussions on the way modern people live and connect, and how they make sense of their bodies, selves and positions in society.

These are immensely important issues, which demand careful thinking and patient study. This course aims to encourage students to understand modern media and culture by learning and practicing the ways to carry out solid social scientific studies on the related issues. Students will be exposed to a range of current exemplary studies in the field, absorbing the main analytical and methodological lessons in the process. Students will then learn the various methods and methodologies for doing media and cultural studies in a hands-on manner. Finally they will make use of the knowledge and experience gained to conduct a small-scaled project of their own.

Issues on media and culture originate from and impact on the global, institutional, group and personal levels. As a result
there are a **plurality of methods and approaches** for studying them. Different social scientific disciplines also make various and complementary contributions. This course aims to equip students with a broad range of research skills and perspectives on media and culture across the disciplines. Students who have taken courses in culture and media will obviously be able to draw on their prior knowledge in grasping the issues and methods. Those who are new to the field can also learn as much from the **inclusive** and **practical** approach of the course, which relies heavily on small group discussion and hands-on project work.

### Content

One notable feature of the course is that it simultaneously adopts the two prevailing pedagogical approaches in media and cultural studies today. One is a **rigorous and systematic approach** to uncover the workings of media and cultural phenomena. The other is a more **creative and social approach** to unite research with production, or critique with creation in matters of media and culture. We encourage students to acquire hands-on knowledge of both to develop a comprehensive and contextual understanding of the related issues. At the end of the course, students will be able to produce a rigorous research report, together with a piece of "creative/production" work (e.g. a video) which illuminates the operation of media and culture in a different but equally important way. The content of the lectures and tutorials reflects this twin concern.

A. Lectures:

1. **The circuit of media and culture: landmarks, concepts and methods**

   This brief introductory section outlines the field of media and cultural studies as it evolved over the past several decades. The major theoretical traditions and research landmarks will be described. We shall in particular introduce the concept "circuit of media and culture", first introduced in British Cultural Studies and now favourably adopted in local studies as well. We shall see how the concept provides a useful map to locate the significance of the projects we shall engage in for the rest of the course.
1.1 research traditions and exemplary studies - American communication studies, the Birmingham School of Cultural Studies, American and European cultural sociology;

1.2 the ‘circuit of media and culture’;

1.3 making use of perspectives and methods across the social scientific disciplines.

2. Researching media and culture: Hong Kong style

In this section we shall introduce students to certain prominent themes and a range of commonly used methods for conducting media and culture research. We shall focus in particular on a selection of notable recent research projects in Hong Kong. Various active researchers working on those projects will come to the class and discuss with us the life and times of their projects, the theoretical issues they tackle, the major concepts used, why certain methods were adopted, what field problems they encounter and their advice for future projects along similar lines.

The research projects we shall discuss in lectures includes:
- Gender images and Slimming culture in HK: Representation, reception & adaptation
- Dreaming and resisting HK Disneyland: dynamics of glocalization
- Buying, naming, drinking and living: desire and hierarchy in consumption
- Re-negotiating the Chinese-Hong Kong imaginary border: space and identity
- Understanding cultural and creative industries: the production of culture
- surfing the Internet: new selves and alternative communities
- Retrieving marginal voices: women, men and oral history
- Re-locating everyday culture: Building a community museum
- Re-producing culture: alternative media intervention

Along the way we shall learn the following:

2.1 researching media institutions and cultural industries: documentary studies, interview, and participant observation;

2.2 analyzing media and cultural texts: content analysis, semiotics and ideological analysis; discourse analysis;

2.3 studying audiences and consumers: survey, focus group and ethnography;

2.4 charting and changing culture: oral history and action research.

3. Researching Media and Culture: presenting the works
In the last section, we shall view and discuss the creative/production works of the class and reflect on the experience of researching media and culture in Hong Kong today.

**B. Tutorials**

Tutorials will follow closely the issues raised in lectures and provide a context for small-scaled hands-on exercises and in-depth group discussions.

Students are to initiate a research project of their own and discuss the concepts, methods and conduct of research in the tutorials. The teachers will provide detailed guidance for the individual projects throughout the term.

A workshop on video shooting and production will be held. Equipment for such purposes will be available on loan. Details will be announced in due course.

**Assessment and workload**

100% continuous assessment, which consists in:

a. Class participation including exercises and tutorial discussions (20%);

b. A small-scale research project on one self-selected topic of media and culture utilizing the methods learnt in the course, with a report of not less than 5,000 words (50%);

c. A ‘creative/production’ work which can take the shape of a video, a webpage, an artifact and so on, to accompany the research project report (30%).

**Texts:**


吳俊雄、呂大樂、馬傑偉（編）（2005）《香港、文化、研究》香港：香港大學出版社（將出版）。

**References:**


University.


吳俊雄、張志偉（編） (2002)《閱讀香港普及文化 1970-2000》香港：牛津大學出版社。