

Selfies, Social Movements, and Fake News

Media Anthropology Today

Anthropology 390-0-26

Dr. Nell Haynes

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Seminar-T & Th, 9:30-10:50

Office Hours-M & W, 11:00-12:30

or by appointment

Course Description

This course uses media anthropology to explore current social issues—selfies and internet photography, social movements from #blacklivesmatter to Standing Rock, politics on SNL, and “fake news.” We will examine social and cultural practices of media production, circulation, and consumption through the analytic frameworks and theoretical debates including ideology, propaganda, culture industry, and the public sphere. Using ethnographic examples, we will look at both instantiations of “traditional” media, like radio, television, and film, as well as “new” digital media. We will consider how media achieve effects of truth in its depiction of reality, paying close attention to the materiality and the performativity of different media forms and examine genres of truth-telling, including parody and fiction. Throughout the quarter students will learn about and actively engage with photography, video, audio, and social media platforms. The course is not designed to provide training in media production skills but will provide a platform for students to experiment with media practices and stretch their existing skill sets.

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to

1. recall the historical study of media and connect it to contemporary study
2. understand key topics and methodological approaches in media anthropology
3. understand the foundational concepts for different forms of textual, visual, and audience analysis
4. enhance their creative, critical, and informed thinking about media
5. understand of the interdisciplinary nature of research in media anthropology
6. conduct analysis using a variety of styles
7. engage with the significance of theoretical debates regarding media and culture

Requirements

Participation	20%
Write-Ups	25%
Research Proposal	15%
Final Project Proposal	15%
Final Project	25%

* Students are responsible for all material in the readings, lectures, and audiovisual presentations in class. Readings should be completed before the day for which they are assigned. It is crucial to link the ideas in readings to those in lectures and discussions. Students are encouraged to participate in lectures and sections.

* No late papers will be excepted without medical documentation.

* In the case of any major medical or other type of attendance issue, please speak with the professor during office hours if at all possible. If not possible, please communicate by email. Be advised that doing so early is key to creating a workable solution to problems. Last-minute emails will not be met with sympathy.

About Attendance and Participation

Anthropology is a discipline that is constantly in motion, building off of old ideas and incorporating new ones, so questions, discussion, and critique is welcome. We will practice applying the ideas of the authors we read to new situations and contexts. The class will be expected to offer opinions and examples, and pose challenges to some of what we discuss. Stereotypes and prejudices often exist in reference to material that is new, unusual, and foreign. Our challenge is to become aware of these stereotypes and to question our assumptions so that our ability to analyze and understand new material is not impaired by our biases. This is an important time to explore ideas and learn new ways of understanding the world. Therefore participation is not only part of the final grade, but will also be necessary to building the kind of understanding required to successfully complete other assignments. To make sure you are in the best possible position to get a good participation grade:

1. Complete the required reading. You do not need to worry that you understand absolutely everything you read, but take notes about parts that strike you as especially intriguing, important, or disconnected. Think about how it relates to things you have experienced in different contexts. Think about when it was written and by whom. Think about whether you agree or disagree and why.

2. Be prepared to ask questions. Whether they are about something you don't understand in the reading, or are simply about how other people reacted to a specific detail, questions help move class discussion along.

3. Be open to new ideas. Anthropology often challenges our assumptions about the world. Newer readings in anthropology often challenge older ideas that were common in anthropology. And hopefully, you will even challenge some of the readings that you think miss the point. You don't have to agree with everything that you read or hear, but take the time to think about it carefully before you decide. Or allow yourself to not decide. But most importantly, be respectful to all the opinions offered in class, and think about why someone might agree or disagree with them.

4. Participate in ways that are productive. Please remember that you may have a funny story related to the class discussion, but unless it advances our thinking on an anthropological topic, your anecdote might not move discussion in a productive manner.

5. Be respectful. Perhaps most importantly, respecting the classroom, your fellow classmates, and the instructor will help you succeed. Paying attention to the discussion and finding thoughtful ways to contribute will make everyone's experience more pleasant.

Laptop Policy

Laptops will be useful in this course, but students are expected to refrain from using them for activities not associated with class. Doing so will significantly negatively affect the student's participation score.

Grading Standards

- A Superior: Student shows excellent critical analysis in oral contributions and writing; all assignments turned in on time. 90-100 (A+ 100, A 93-99, A- 90-92)
- B Very Good: Solid work evidenced by careful synthesis of reading, timely contributions to class discussion, and clear, logical writing; all assignments turned in on time. 80-90 (B+ 87-89, B 83-86, B- 80-82)
- C Satisfactory: Work demonstrates some understanding of materials and an average performance in written assignments and class discussion; all assignments turned in on time. 70-80 (C+ 77-79, C 73-76, C- 70-72)
- D Inconsistent: Meager performance in all assignments and class discussion; late in turning in written work. 60-70
- F Failing: Student makes minimal effort, shows little understanding of assignments, and turns in incomplete or unacceptable work. Below 60

If you have a major medical problem or family concern that requires you to miss several classes, please provide documentation and we will do our best to help you stay involved. Additionally, please make every effort to come to class on time so as not to disrupt discussion once it has begun. Leaving early is also disruptive, so please limit bathroom breaks and leave class early only when absolutely necessary, providing a reason beforehand.

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism is strictly forbidden. All work you turn in must be your own. This means no borrowing of ideas or wording from friends' work, other author's work, or the Internet. Any time another person's work is used, it absolutely **MUST** be cited properly. Suspected violations of academic integrity will be reported to the Dean's office. For more information on Northwestern's academic integrity policies see www.weinberg.northwestern.edu/handbook/integrity. Student work may also be checked using electronic databases.

Academic Accommodations

Any student requesting accommodations related to a disability or other condition is required to register with AccessibleNU (accessiblenu@northwestern.edu; 847-467-5530) and provide professors with an accommodation notification from AccessibleNU, preferably within the first two weeks of class. All information will remain confidential.

Course Schedule

Week 1

- 9 January Course Introduction
IN CLASS * Lecture on Anthropology, Ethnography, and the aims of Media Anthropology
- 11 January Foundations
READ * Spitulnik Vidali, Debra and Mark Allen Peterson. 2012. "Ethnography as Theory and Method in the Study of Political Communication" in *The SAGE Handbook of Political Communication*. pp 264-275. London: SAGE.
IN CLASS * Overview of methods and theory with practice project proposal

Week 2

- 16 January Historical Foundations
READ * Kellner, Douglas M. and Meenakshi Gigi Durham. 2012. "Culture, Ideology, Hegemony" in *Media and Cultural Studies: Keywords*. New York: Wiley-Blackwell.
* Althusser, Louis. 1971. Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus. In *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* pp. 127-186. New York: Monthly Review Press.
IN CLASS * Society of the Spectacle Podcast
* Lecture on Frankfurt School & Other Foundations
- 18 January Methods-Critical Discourse Analysis
READ * Barbara Johnstone. 2008. "Introduction" and "Discourse and World" in *Discourse Analysis*. Pp 1-75. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
* Kathryn Jill Fleuriet and Heide Castañeda. 2017. A Risky Place? Media and the Health Landscape in the (In)secure U.S.-Mexico Borderlands. *North American Dialogue* 20(2):32-46.
IN CLASS * Critical Discourse Analysis & SPEAKING Lab, bring texts related to immigration to analyze

Week 3

- 23 January Power and Truth
READ * Adam Hodges. 2017. "Playing Telephone with the Power of the Presidency: Trumped Up Words." *Anthropology News*.
* Aria Razfar. 2017. "Process the Trump: Populism Rising." *Anthropology News*.
IN CLASS * "Processing the Trump," bring to class a piece of text, video, audio, etc. to "process." It does not have to represent Donald Trump, but should be related to current politics.
DUE * Write up of critical discourse analysis and SPEAKING activity

- 25 January Fake News
 WATCH * “Putin’s Revenge,” Parts 1 and 2. PBS Frontline.
<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/>
 IN CLASS * Fake News Analysis, bring to class a piece of “fake news.” One
 place to find inaccurate statements is Politifact’s “Truth-o-
 meter.” <http://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/statements/>
 (look for something that is less than “half true”)
 DUE * Write up of “Processing” activity

Week 4

- 30 January Methods-Audience Reception Analysis
 READ * Hall, Stuart. 1993. “Encoding, decoding” in *The Cultural Studies
 Reader*. Simon During, ed. pp 90-103. New York: Routledge.
 * David Mathieu. 2015. “The Continued Relevance of Reception
 Analysis in the Age of Social Media” *Tripodos* no. 36:13-34.
 IN CLASS * Audience Reception Analysis Lab, bring to class a piece of social
 media text that involves an “audience” commentary which is
 related to current politics
 DUE * Write up of fake news analysis activity

- 1 February Confounded Fieldsites
 READ * Yarimar Bonilla and Jonathan Rosa. 2015. “#Ferguson: Digital
 protest, hashtag ethnography, and the racial politics of social
 media in the United States” *American Ethnologist* 42(1):4-17.
 * Mirca Madianou and Daniel Miller. 2013. “Polymedia: Towards
 a new theory of digital media in interpersonal communication.”
International Journal of Cultural Studies, 16:169-187.
 Supplemental * Marcus, G. 1998. Ethnography in/of the world system: The
 emergence of multi-sited ethnography. In *Ethnography through
 thick and thin*, ed. G. Marcus, 79–104. Princeton, NJ:
 Princeton University Press
 DUE * Write up of audience reception analysis activity
 • Selfies-In preparation for discussing selfies, before class, email
 me (nell.haynes@northwestern.edu) 1 selfie (either of you, a
 friend who has given permission, or something you found in a
 public online profile) that you feel is representative of your
 generation’s social norms, in terms of aesthetics and self-
 presentation. Email a second selfie (procured in one of the
 three ways listed above) which violates these social norms. No
 explanations are necessary. Just make it clear which picture is
 which, perhaps using file names such as “normative” and
 “nonnormative.”

Week 5

- 6 February Images of Resistance
READ * Aimee Villarreal and John Jota Leño. 2017. "Animating Resistance," *Anthropology News*
* Livia K. Stone. 2015. "Suffering Bodies and Scenes of Confrontation: The Art and Politics of Representing Structural Violence," *Visual Anthropology Review* 31(2):177–189.
IN CLASS * "Visualizing Resistance and Water Protectors" from *The Standing Rock Syllabus*
- 8 February Methods-Reflexive Photography Analysis: Selfies
READ * *selection from* Rachel Chaffee, April Lynn Luehmann, and Joseph Henderson. 2016. "Reflexivity Is Kicking Our Asses": Tensions in Foregrounding Photographs in a Multimodal Ethnographic Analysis of Participation," *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 47(4):421-443. *Read to middle of page 427.*
* Roland Barthes. 1977. "Rhetoric of the Image" in *Image, Music, Text*. Heath, S., ed. and trans. pp. 32-51. New York: Hill and Wang.
IN CLASS * Lecture on Selfies in Chile
* Selfie analysis

Week 6

- 13 February Parody & Comedy
READ * Geertz, Clifford. "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretative Theory of Culture." In *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books, 1973.
* Boyer, Dominic. 2013. "Simply the best: Parody and political sincerity in Iceland," *American Ethnologist* 40(2): 276–287.
* Hodges, Adam. 2017. "When the Discourse of Theater Trumps Truth," *Anthropology News*.
IN CLASS * Exploring parody
DUE * Write up of selfie analysis activity
- 15 February Intertextuality
READ * Briggs, Charles L. and Richard Bauman. 1992. "Genre, Intertextuality, and Social Power," *Linguistic Anthropology* 2(2): 131–172.
* Hill, Jane H. 2005. "Intertextuality as Source and Evidence for Indirect Indexical Meanings," *Linguistic Anthropology* 15(1): 113–124.
* Chuck Tyron. 2008. "Pop Politics: Online Parody Videos, Intertextuality, and Political Participation," *Popular Communication*, 6: 209–213.
IN CLASS * Reveal Podcast: The Pentagon Papers
DUE * Research Proposal

Week 7

20 February Beginning final projects
IN CLASS * Decide as a class on another topic for researching using the
methods we have already learned
* Discuss theory, method, and media for final projects
* Break into groups to begin project work

22 February NO CLASS-please use this time to meet with your project group

Week 8

27 February Research on Topic to be determined
DUE * Final Project Proposal (in groups)

1 March Research on Topic to be determined

Week 9

6 March Wrapping up

8 March Project Presentations (this will count toward part of the grade for the final project)

Finals Week

21 March FINAL PROJECTS DUE BY EMAIL (BY MIDNIGHT)