

**COMM 306**  
**The Communication Revolution, Entertainment & The Arts**  
**Spring 2008**

Professor Jonathan Taplin  
Office Hours: Monday 3:45-5:30 PM  
Office: ASC 301 B  
Phone: 213-821-5611  
Email: jtaplin@usc.edu

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

The revolution in communication technology brought about by the rise of digital networks is only 25 years old, but it has already changed every facet of the entertainment business. This course will attempt to take a fresh look at the rise of the Age of Entertainment from 1980 to the present. It focuses on the global strategies of companies across a variety of industry sectors: broadcasting, film, telecommunications, the Internet, video games, and the music industry. Employing film, music, art as well as texts from authors ranging from Thomas Frank to Robert McChesney, this course will examine how the communications revolution is affecting the interaction of entertainment and culture. The focus will be on the American entertainment and communications industries. However, given the historical and continuing cross-fertilization of cultures in this country, and accelerating trends toward globalization, conglomeration, convergence, and synergy, international aspects will be an important part of the course. We will use both written texts and various films viewed in class as reference points.

**CAREER RELEVANCE**

As the revolution in communication technologies creates truly global markets, the ability to understand both the domestic and international dimension of the commercial decisions with which organizations are confronted has become a critical managerial skill. The success of the American knowledge economy rests on the confluence of entertainment, technology and artistic merit. An understanding of how these three forces interact is a prerequisite to a deep knowledge of the contemporary culture. The course should be of relevance to both those interested in a cultural critique of modern entertainment as well as those interested in where the entertainment business of the future is going.

**REQUIRED TEXTS/READINGS:**

**The course reading material is posted on Blackboard**

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

There are three requirements for the course:

1. **Class participation.** Students are expected to make informed contributions to class discussions and in-class activities. Students are expected to attend every lecture and

screening. Attendance will be taken and missing more than three classes will result in an automatic reduction of a full point from your grade. Missing more than six classes will result in an incomplete grade.

2. **Take-home mid-term.** There will be a take-home mid-term exam. It will be handed out on Wednesday, Feb. 20 and will be due on Wednesday, Feb. 27. No late mid-terms will be accepted.
3. **Take-home Final Exam** –There will be a take-home final exam handed out on Wednesday April 30. It will be due one week later at **Noon on Wednesday May 7**. No Late finals will be accepted.

### EVALUATION:

Midterm Exam: 45%

Final Exam: 45%

Class Participation: 10%

A brief announcement from the Office of Civil Rights: Students requesting academic accommodations based on a disability are required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from the DSP when adequate documentation is filed. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DPS is open Monday-Friday, 8:30-5:00. The office is in Student Union 301 and their phone number is (213) 740-0776.

The School of Communication is committed to the highest standards of academic excellence and ethical support. It endorses and acts on the SCampus policies and procedures detailed in the section titled "University Sanction Guidelines." These policies, procedures, and guidelines will be assiduously upheld. They protect your rights, as well as those of the faculty. It is particularly important that you are aware of and avoid plagiarism, cheating on exams, fabricating data for a project, submitting a paper to more than one professor, or submitting a paper authored by anyone but yourself. Violations of this policy will result in a failing grade in the course and be reported to the Office of Student Conduct. If you have doubts about any of these policies, you must confer with the professor.

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### SCHEDULE AND AGENDA

(Some lectures will include screenings of films)

#### WEEK 1

Jan. 14-**Introduction to the Course**

Jan. 16- **America 3.0**

**Reading: *The Media Divide***

**WEEK 2**

**Jan. 21-Martin Luther King Day- No Class**

**Jan. 23-The Digital Revolution**

**Reading: *Guided By Voices***

**WEEK 3**

**Jan. 28- Communications Technology & The Entertainment Business**

**Jan.30- Screening: *The Century of The Self***

**Reading: *The Hacker Work Ethic***

**WEEK 4**

**Feb. 4-The U.S. Movie Business**

**Feb. 6-Screening: *Easy Riders & Raging Bulls***

**Reading: *What is An American Movie Now***

**WEEK 5**

**Feb. 11-The International Movie Business**

**Feb. 13- Screening: *Babel***

**Reading: *Crouching Tigers***

**WEEK 6**

**Feb. 18-President's Day-No Class**

**Feb. 20-The Music Business, Part 1**

**Reading: *The DJ Auteur***

**WEEK 7**

**Feb. 25- Music Business, Part 2**

**Feb.27- Screening: *Rock and Roll Movies***

**Reading: *The Long Tail***

**Mid-term exam handed out**

**WEEK 8**

**Mar. 3- Broadcasting**

**Mar. 5-Screening: *Goodnight & Good Luck***

**Reading: *Giving Them What They Want***

**Mid-term due**

**WEEK 9**

**Mar. 10- The Future of Television**

**Mar. 12-Screening: *The Persuaders***

**Reading: *Life Hackers***

**Spring Break- March 17-21**

**WEEK 10**

**Mar. 24- Marketing & Entertainment**

**Mar. 26-Screening:** *Unzipped*  
**Reading:** *Shorter, Faster, Cruder*

**WEEK 11**

**Mar. 31- Entertainment, Art & Fashion**  
**April 2-Screening:** *The Power of Nightmares, pt 1*  
**Reading:** *Brand Underground*

**WEEK 12**

**April 7- Communication & Politics**  
**April 9-Screening:** *The Power of Nightmares, Pt. 2*  
**Reading:** *Minds Destroyed By Google*

**WEEK 13**

**April 14-Web 2.0**  
**April 16-Screening-** *The Power of Nightmares, Pt. 3*  
**Reading:** *Amateur Hour, danah boyd*

**WEEK 14**

**April 21- Video Games-Guest Lecture**  
**April 23-Screening:** *My Second Life*  
**Reading:** *One Video Game At a Time*

**WEEK 15**

**April 28- Where the Jobs Will Be**  
**April 30- Art, Genius & Progress**  
**Final Exam handed out**

**Week 16**

**Final Exam Due May 7 at Noon**