



Course ATCM 2321.001
Course Title Reading Media Critically
Professor Dr. Josef Nguyen (he/him/his)
Term Fall 2022
Meetings Mondays & Wednesdays, 1:00-2:15PM in ATC 2.918

Professor's Contact Information

Dr. Josef Nguyen (he/him/his)
Email Address josef.nguyen@utdallas.edu
Please format and address all emails regarding the class professionally, include the course information in the subject line, and allow up to 24 hours for responses
Office Location ATC 3.617
Office Hours By email appointment, with in-office and online options
Office Phone 972.883.7552

Teaching Assistant's Contact Information

Sunday Ayodabo
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Please format and address all emails regarding the class professionally, include the course information in the subject line, and allow up to 24 hours for responses

General Course Information

Restrictions RHET 1302 – Rhetoric, or Instructor Permission

Description This course explores how to think and write critically about media and society. Throughout the semester, we will refine conceptual tools that allow us to explore, critique, and reimagine the culture we produce and consume through media. We will discuss foundational ideas in critical theory and relate these ideas to current social issues and media productions. Theory describes the concepts we use to talk about the world and enables us to trace potential avenues for changing it. Therefore, throughout the semester we will build on the theoretical knowledge of the course to think about how media could operate otherwise and for what ends.

The assignments for this class will have you grappling with difficult ideas and honing your critical reading and writing skills. The course is writing intensive, which means you will have a major written assignment due every four to five weeks during the semester.

By the end of the course, you should be able to read a theory paper critically, summarize its main contributions and limitations, and apply the concepts to your own analyses of media texts.

- Learning Outcomes** Students will:
- Become familiar with key concepts in cultural studies and critical theory
 - Apply concepts to their own analyses of media texts
 - Read scholarly papers critically, understanding the argument's main contributions and limitations
 - Write media analyses rooted in close readings and cultural theory

Required Texts & Materials *Mean Girls* (Mark Waters, 2004) [UTD Library; Netflix]
Blackish (Season 1, Episode 1: Pilot) [Hulu or Rent]
Fresh Off the Boat (Season 1, Episode 1: Pilot) [Hulu or Rent]
Sorry to Bother You (Boots Riley, 2018) [UTD Library; Netflix]
Monsters, Inc. (Pete Docter, 2001) [UTD Library]

Additional media, course readings, assignment instructions, and assignment submissions are managed through Box. You will receive two Box invitations: one for a general folder for the course (for readings and assignment instructions) and one for an individual private folder for the course (for assignment submissions).

Course announcements are handled on eLearning and sent via email.

Optional Material There is also a Discord server to facilitate community during and outside of class, which students can join if they wish. This is not a requirement.

To join the class Discord server, please email the instructor with your Discord handle and four-digit tag (username#0000).

Course Policies

Grading Criteria

Thoughtful Class Engagement	55%
Paper 01: Film Scene Analysis	10%
Paper 02: Character Trope Analysis	15%
Paper 03: Applied Critical Theory Analysis	20%

Accommodation Students with disabilities are encouraged to utilize the on-campus resources at the Office of Student AccessAbility. You can contact the office at 972-883-6104 or by email: studentaccessability@utdallas.edu. Their office is located in the Student Service Building (SSB), suite 3.200. They can provide documentation and details for accommodations to address your individual needs. If you need any special accommodations to complete this course successfully, please provide me with this information as soon as possible, so we can make appropriate arrangements.

Classroom Conduct It is our responsibility to work together to produce a classroom environment where everyone can share, discuss, and question the materials at hand as well as contribute their own work respectfully and productively. Conflicting perspectives are unavoidable. To ensure that participants feel comfortable contributing a diverse set of thoughts, comments, and views, we will not use oppressive or harmful language, tolerate harassment, personal attacks, and other forms of actions that unduly distract from the educational mission and inflict emotional, physical, or psychological harm on those involved.

Part of the role of encouraging a diverse learning environment is acknowledging that individuals should feel safe and respected to contribute to the classroom in good faith. This involves not only allowing everyone opportunities to contribute their thoughts but to be mindful of how we recognize and address others. Do not assume things about others' identities, backgrounds, or experiences—whether that is age, race, gender, sexuality, ability, class, etc... Address people by their names, pronouns, and other identifiers that they disclose. Avoid insisting on imposing identity markers onto others. Allow people to self-identify as they feel comfortable.

What you share with and create for this class reflects not only you as both a student and a civic subject, but it also reflects on me as your instructor, the class as a learning community, and UT Dallas as an academic institution.

Please discuss with me any concerns you have regarding an unsafe or hostile classroom environment, particularly if something arises that causes distress.

Class Attendance Attend class regularly and in full. Any absences should include documentation of a valid excuse (family or medical emergency, for example). Unexcused absences may impact course grades. Discuss upcoming potential absences with me to make appropriate arrangements.

Arriving more than 30 minutes late or leaving more than 30 minutes early, without prior clearance, may be grounds for marking that day as an absence. Failure to prepare for class participation (such as not having done the necessary reading) will also be regarded as conditions for an absence.

Technology in the Classroom Laptops and computers can be used in the classroom solely for purposes directly pertinent to the activities and discussions at-hand. Excessive misuse of technology in the classroom will result in an absence for the day.

Class Materials The instructor may provide class materials that will be made available to all students registered for this class as they are intended to supplement the classroom experience. These materials may be downloaded during the course; however, these materials are for registered students' use only. Classroom materials may not be reproduced or shared with those not in class, or uploaded to other online environments except to implement an approved Office of Student AccessAbility accommodation. Failure to comply with these University requirements is a violation of the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

- Class Recordings** Unless the Office of Student AccessAbility has approved the student to record the instruction, students are expressly prohibited from recording any part of this course. Recordings may not be published, reproduced, or shared with those not in the class, or uploaded to other online environments except to implement an approved Office of Student AccessAbility accommodation. Failure to comply with these University requirements is a violation of the [Student Code of Conduct](#).
- Late Work** Late work will be penalized 10% (a full letter grade) for each 24-hour period beyond the deadline and will not receive written feedback by default. For written feedback on a late assignment, please send an email request. If you need an extension, let me know in advance so we can make arrangements.
- Academic Honesty** All work must be original for this class. Plagiarism is using the words and materials of others as if they were your own. It is a serious offense with consequences. Use proper citation to indicate the use of other people's work to strengthen your own. All suspicions of plagiarism will be investigated. Please consult [utdallas.edu/dept/graddean/gspolDishonesty.htm].
- Comet Creed** *This creed was voted on by the UT Dallas student body in 2014. It is a standard that Comets choose to live by and encourage others to do the same: "As a Comet, I pledge honesty, integrity, and service in all that I do."*
- Academic Support Resources** *The information contained in the following link lists the University's academic support resources for all students. Please go to [go.utdallas.edu/academic-support-resources].*
- UT Dallas Syllabus Policies and Procedures** *The information contained in the following link constitutes the University's policies and procedures segment of the course syllabus. Please review the sections regarding the [credit/no credit](#) grading option and withdrawal from class. Please go to [go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies] for these policies.*

Assignments & Academic Calendar

UNIT 0: BEGINNINGS

Week 01: Monday, 22 August 2022
Introductory Business IN CLASS:
Overview of Syllabus and Introductions

Wednesday, 24 August 2022
IN CLASS:
Diagnostic Writing

UNIT I: TEXTUALITY

Week 02: Monday, 29 August 2022
Text and Form BEFORE CLASS:
READ: Amy Villarejo, “The Language of Film”
WATCH: *Mean Girls* (Mark Waters, 2004) [UTD library; Netflix]
CW – body shaming (diet, clothing size, exercise), fat shaming, slut shaming, sexual content

IN CLASS:
Introduce Paper 01: Film Scene Analysis

Wednesday, 31 August 2022
IN CLASS:
Workshop

Week 03: Monday, 5 September 2022
Signs and Codes **NO CLASS MEETING IN OBSERVANCE OF LABOR DAY**

Wednesday, 7 September 2022
BEFORE CLASS:
READ: John Fiske, “Some Television, Some Topics, Some Terminology”

Week 04: Monday, 12 September 2022
Intertextuality BEFORE CLASS:
READ: Stuart Hall, “Encoding/Decoding”

Wednesday, 14 September 2022
IN CLASS:
Workshop

Week 05: Monday, 19 September 2022
Work on Paper 01 **NO CLASS MEETING**

Wednesday, 21 September 2022
NO CLASS MEETING
Paper 01: Film Scene Analysis due by 11:59PM

UNIT II: SOCIAL DIFFERENCES

Week 06: Monday, 26 September 2022

Dominant / BEFORE CLASS:
Oppositional READ: Janice Loreck, “What Does the ‘Male Gaze’ Mean, and What
Gazes about a Female Gaze?” [theconversation.com/explainer-what-does-the-male-gaze-mean-and-what-about-a-female-gaze-52486]
READ: bell hooks, “The Oppositional Gaze”

IN CLASS:

Introduce Paper 02: Character Trope Analysis

Wednesday, 28 September 2022

IN CLASS:

Workshop

Week 07: Monday, 3 October 2022

White Racial BEFORE CLASS:
Frame READ: Richard Dyer, “The Matter of Whiteness”
WATCH: *Blackish* (Season 1, Episode 1: Pilot)

Wednesday, 5 October 2022

NO CLASS MEETING

Week 08: Monday, 10 October 2022

Racial BEFORE CLASS:
Triangulation READ: Claire Jean Kim, “The Racial Triangulation of Asian
Americans”
WATCH: *Fresh Off the Boat* (Season 1, Episode 1: Pilot)

Wednesday, 12 October 2022

IN CLASS:

Workshop

Week 09: Monday, 17 October 2022

Languages and BEFORE CLASS:
Accents READ: Gloria Anzaldúa, “How to Tame a Wild Tongue”
READ: Shilpa S. Davé, “Rethinking Accents in America”

Wednesday, 19 October 2022

IN CLASS:

Workshop

Week 10: Monday, 24 October 2022

Work on Paper 02 **NO CLASS MEETING**

Wednesday, 26 October 2022

NO CLASS MEETING

Paper 02: Character Trope Analysis due by 11:59PM

UNIT III: POLITICAL ECONOMY

Week 11: Monday, 31 October 2022
Labor and Capital BEFORE CLASS:
READ: Karl Marx, “Wage Labour and Capital”
WATCH: *Sorry to Bother You* (Boots Riley, 2018) [UTD library; Netflix]
CW – violence, poverty, sexual content, body horror

IN CLASS:
Introduce Paper 03: Applied Critical Theory Analysis

Wednesday, 2 November 2022

IN CLASS:
Workshop

Week 12: Monday, 7 November 2022
Base and Superstructure BEFORE CLASS:
READ: Raymond Williams, “Base and Superstructure”
READ: James Douglas, “The Pixar Theory of Labor”
WATCH: *Monsters, Inc.* (Pete Docter, 2001)

Wednesday, 9 November 2022

IN CLASS:
Workshop

Week 13: Monday, 14 November 2022
Commodity Fetishism BEFORE CLASS:
READ: Kristen Warner, “In the Time of Plastic Representation”
WATCH: *Whatever This Is*. (Episode 1, “Reality” and Episode 2, “Westchester”), [whateverthisis.com/]
PLAY: molleindustria, *Phone Story*, [phonestory.org]
CW – child slavery, suicide, militaristic imagery, guns

Wednesday, 16 November 2022

IN CLASS:
Workshop

FALL BREAK Monday, 21 November 2022
NO CLASS MEETING

Wednesday, 23 November 2022
NO CLASS MEETING

Week 14: Monday, 28 November 2022

Fandoms BEFORE CLASS:

READ: Abigail De Kosnik, "Fandom as Free Labor"

READ: Laura Springman, "'It's ARMY versus the U.S. Army': K-Pop Fans, Activism, and #BlackLivesMatter,"

[\[flowjournal.org/2020/08/its-army-versus-the-army/\]](http://flowjournal.org/2020/08/its-army-versus-the-army/)

WATCH: *Bigger than Me: A Documentary about Fandom*

(JamesChats, 2016) [youtube.com/watch?v=fGDtTRPgfrw]

Wednesday, 30 November 2022

IN CLASS:

Workshop

Week 15: Monday, 5 December 2022

Work on Paper 03 NO CLASS MEETING

Wednesday, 7 December 2022

NO CLASS MEETING

FINALS WEEK Paper 03: Applied Critical Theory Analysis
due Friday, 16 December 2022 by 11:59PM

The descriptions and timelines contained in this syllabus are subject to change at the discretion of the Professor.