

**COMM ST- 455**  
**CURRENT ISSUES IN AUDIENCE STUDIES**

Fall, 2012  
Monday, 2-4:50 pm  
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**Description:** This course offers a survey of different traditions in audience studies, including literature in communication, sociology, political science, economics and cultural studies. Particular emphasis is placed on understanding digital media use and how audience formation affects the operation of the popular culture and the public sphere.

**Readings:** The texts for the course are listed below. The first two are available at the Norris bookstore. Several articles and chapters are assigned throughout the term. These are on the Course Management System (Blackboard) at <http://www.it.northwestern.edu/education/course-management/>.

- Butsch, R. (2008). *The citizen audience: Crowds, publics, and individuals*. New York: Routledge.
- Napoli, P. (2011). *Audience evolution: New technologies and the transformation of media audiences*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Webster, J. G. (in progress). *The marketplace of attention: How audiences take shape in an age of digital media*. Draft chapters 1, 2 & 6.

**Grades:** Your course grade is based on a final paper and the presentation associated with that paper. The paper should, at a minimum, offer a thoughtful review of some body of audience studies literature that is of particular interest to you. A proposal for your paper is due October 29. Its final scope and substance will be determined in consultation with the professor.

**SCHEDULE OF CLASSES**

**Oct 1 / Introduction**

Webster, J. G. (1998). The audience. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 42 (2), 190-207.

Webster, J. G. (2011). The duality of media: A structural theory of public attention. *Communication Theory*, 21, 43-66.

Webster, J. G. (in progress) Chapter 1: The Marketplace of Attention.

### **Oct 8 / Traditions: Audiences as Outcomes**

- Butsch, R. (2008). *The citizen audience: Crowds, publics, and individuals*. New York: Routledge. (esp. chapters 2, 4-7)
- Lazarsfeld, P., & Merton, R. (1948). Mass Communication, Popular Taste, and Organized Social Action. In L. Bryson (Ed.) *The Communication of Ideas*. New York: Cooper Square, pp. 95-118.
- Klapper, J. T. (1960). *The effects of mass communication*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press, pp.15-52.
- Katz, E. (1987). Communication research since Lazarsfeld. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 51, S25-S45.
- Mutz, D. C., & Young, L. (2011). Communication and public opinion. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 75(5), 1018-1044. doi: 10.1093/poq/nfr052

### **Oct 15 / Traditions: Audiences as Agents**

- Katz, E., Blumler, J., & Gurevitch, M. (1974). Utilization of mass communication by the individual. In J. G. Blumler & E. Katz (Eds.). *The uses of mass communications: Current perspectives on gratifications research*. Beverly Hills: Sage, pp. 19-32.
- Hall, S. (1980). Encoding/decoding. In Hall, et al. (Eds.) *Culture, Media , Language*. London: Hutchinson, pp. 128-138
- Abercrombie, N., & Longhurst, B. (1998). *Audiences: A sociological theory of performance and imagination*, pp. 3-37. London: Sage.
- Owen, B. M., & Wildman, S. S. (1992). *Video economics*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, pp. 64-75.
- Peterson, R. A. (1992). Understanding audience segmentation: From elite and mass to omnivore and univore. *Poetics*, 21(4), 243-258. doi: 10.1016/0304-422x(92)90008-q
- Vorderer, P., Klimmt, C., & Ritterfeld, U. (2004). Enjoyment: At the heart of media entertainment. *Communication Theory*, 14(4), 388-408.
- Webster, J. G. (in progress). Chapter 2: Media Users.

### **Oct 22 / Traditions: Audiences as Masses**

- Webster, J. & Phalen, P. (1997). *The mass audience: rediscovering the dominant model*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, pp. 1-22.

- Ball, P. (2003). The law of large numbers: Regularities from randomness. In *Critical mass: How one thing leads to another*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, pp. 48-79.
- McPhee, W. (1963). Natural exposure and the theory of popularity. In *Formal theories of mass behavior*. New York: Free Press, pp. 104-152.
- Lazar, D. et. al. (2009). Computational social science. *Science*, 323, 721-723.
- Granovetter, M. S. (1973). The strength of weak ties. *American Journal of Sociology*, 78(6), 1360-1380.
- Centola, D., & Macy, M. (2007). Complex contagions and the weakness of long ties. *The American Journal of Sociology*, 113(3), 702-734.
- Watts, D. J. (2011). *Everything Is Obvious: Once You Know the Answer: How Common Sense Fails*: Penguin Group, pp. 54-81.
- Wu, S., Hofman, J. M., Mason, W. A., & Watts, D. J. (2011). *Who says what to whom on twitter*. Paper presented at the International World Wide Web Conference, Hyderabad, India.

***Paper Proposals Due October 22***

**Oct 29 / Individual Meetings / Audience Analytics Panel**

**Nov 5 / Media Measures**

- Napoli, P. (2011). *Audience evolution: New technologies and the transformation of media audiences*. New York: Columbia University Press.

**Nov 12 / Processes & Patterns: Fragmentation**

- Anderson, C. (2004, October). The Long Tail. *Wired*.
- Elberse, A. (2008). Should you invest in the long tail? *Harvard Business Review*, 86 (7/8), 88-96.
- Salganik, M. J., Dodds, P. S., & Watts, D. J. (2006, February 10). Experimental study of inequality and unpredictability in an artificial cultural market. *Science*, 311, 854-856.
- Benkler, Y. (2006). Political freedom part 2: Emergence of the networked public sphere. In *The wealth of networks: How social production transforms markets and freedom*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 212-272.
- Hindman, M. (2008). What is the online public sphere good for? In J. Turow & L. Tsui (Eds.). *The hyperlinked society*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, pp. 268-288.

### **Nov 19 / Processes & Patterns: Polarization**

Prior, M. (2005). News vs. entertainment: How increasing media choice widens gaps in political knowledge and turnout. *American Journal of Political Science*, 49(3), 577-592. doi: 10.1111/j.1540-5907.2005.00143.x

Stroud, N. J. (2010). Polarization and partisan selective exposure. *Journal of Communication*, 60, 556-576.

Gentzkow, M., & Shapiro, J. M. (2011). Ideological Segregation Online and Offline. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 126(4), 1799-1839. doi: 10.1093/qje/qjr044

LaCour, M. J. (2012). *A balanced news diet, not selective exposure: evidence from a real world measure of media exposure*. Paper presented at the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago.

Webster, J. G., & Ksiazek, T. B. (2012). The dynamics of audience fragmentation: Public attention in an age of digital media. *Journal of Communication*, 62, 39-56.

### **Nov 26 / Work in Progress / Presentations**

Webster, J. G. (in progress). Chapter 6: Public attention in the marketplace of ideas.

### **Dec 3 / Presentations**

*Papers Due Dec 11*