

**Conceptual Issues in Communication and Culture
CS203A**

Assignment Questions

Due: ~~March 21, 2016~~ **EXTENSION: March 28, 2016 by 2 pm**

Length: Five to Seven Pages,

Format: Typed, Double-Spaced, 12-point font, with 1 inch margins

Value: 25% of Overall Grade

Late Penalty: 5% of paper grade per day.

Write a five (5) to seven (7) page, typed, double-spaced essay on one of the topics below. The objective of this assignment is to give you an opportunity to practice applying the theory from this course. This paper may require outside research as it is important to survey the ideas of others on the theorist or the topic you have chosen to discuss. However, you must also be sure to include the primary theoretical materials from this course in very clear ways in your work. We want to know how you have made sense of the theoretical materials and the question on which you have chosen to write, and, of course, your ideas and opinions, albeit your ideas and opinions as informed by a critical and theoretical perspective. Remember that you must maintain your focus on your chosen topic throughout your assignment.

Papers or projects may be as creative as you wish, provided they explicitly answer the question and fulfill the requirements of this assignment and the question on which you have chosen to write. Be sure to be clear in your writing, to use proper citation practices, and to proof read your work carefully before you submit it.

Read each question carefully. Be sure you know what the question you have chosen to answer has asked of you.

Your grade will reflect presentation (including spelling, etc.), coherence and focus, clarity of exposition, your thoughts and ideas, as well as your selection of materials to discuss, your critical/theoretical reading, and your understanding of the theorist(s) with which you are working. In the formal paper questions, we will be also looking at your thesis statement and your ability to sustain an argument throughout the paper, along with your ability to introduce and conclude your argument. You need to have a clear line of critical thinking and be able to illustrate how you understand the materials. Be sure not to lose the theoretical focus of this course in writing your paper or producing your project. Doing so will be reflected in your grade.

Remember that you are writing this paper for *CS203*, which means that the theory and material we are discussing in this course should be central to your assignment.

NB. This assignment, like the mid-term examination, cannot be completed quickly. It will require time and thought as well as a review of the theoretical materials around which you will be writing your paper. Three of the questions allow for creativity, which must be properly thought through and executed. This will also take time to plan.

You are required to submit your project to the MyLearningSpace dropbox. If you have elected to submit a creative project and you need to submit a portion of the assignment in a form that is not electronic, please bring it to lecture on the day it is due as well as submitting the written portion to the dropbox.

If you elect to produce a digital or online project, be careful about what you make "live" for other people to see.

There will be a 5% penalty per day on all overdue assignments, so don't delay getting started!

You must be sure to use correct citation practices throughout your paper. You may use whatever citation system you like, provided you do so consistently throughout your paper. MLA or APA are both good. Consult the following resources for citation style guidelines: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/> or <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>.

Questions:

1. Write an essay applying the work of Foucault to a critical analysis of the selfie as a technology of the self. Your paper should address issues of visibility, Panopticism, and modes of surveillance and self-surveillance (or what has been called self[ie]-surveillance). If the selfie is a mode of self-representation, who or what is the "you" that is produced in it? In what way does this "you" participate in the reproduction of social norms and the ideologies on which these are based?
2. Write an essay applying the work of Habermas to the Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement. Be careful to outline not only what the movement is about, but also its procedures and objectives. Be sure to research its (recent) history, how it has been perceived and how it has responded to its detractors. Do not assume that your reader has the same understanding of what the movement is. To this end, provide a brief paragraph near the beginning of your paper outlining what the OCCUPY movement is. What do you think Habermas would say about this movement and its relationship to the new public sphere? What (new) means of communication did it utilize? Did it constitute a "new public sphere"? Was it able to create the conditions Habermas outlined for the formation of a public sphere? Feel free to include a discussion of Nancy Fraser's critique of Habermas in your essay. What did the example of OCCUPY tell us about "actually existing democracy" and counter-publics?
3. This question has two interrelated components. First, develop a creative educational or promotional campaign to explain the key concepts and ideas of one of the following theorists to a Grade 12 audience: Adorno and Horkheimer, Habermas, Foucault, Butler, Gill, Hall (from the Social Difference module in the second half of the class), Said, or hooks. You can produce your campaign digitally, post it to Youtube, blog it, or sing it. The format is up to you. The objective is to capture the attention of your audience while providing them with a solid understanding of the key ideas from your theorist, why the work of your theorist is relevant to them in understanding their lives, and how they can

use the work of the theorist to understand the taken-for-granted aspects of their daily lives. Your campaign must not only be descriptive. It should be pedagogical (ie. teach your audience about the theorist) and also persuasive (ie. attempt to persuade your chosen audience of either the merits or short-comings of his/her theoretical perspective for their understandings of the worlds of their experience). If you elect to produce a digital or online project, be careful about what you make "live" for other people to see.

Second, along with submitting the campaign materials you have developed (either in the course dropbox or in hardcopy at the *start* of the lecture on the day the assignment is due), you must submit a short paper (minimum three pages, to be submitted to the dropbox) explaining how you developed or designed the campaign, how you conceived its pedagogical/persuasive elements, how you conceptualized how you would get and keep the attention of your audience as you teach them about your theorist, and how the campaign illustrates the central ideas/arguments/concepts of your chosen theorist.

Remember that it is imperative that your campaign and accompanying paper demonstrate the depth of your understanding of the theorist around whom you have built your campaign and should not be a simple gloss of the reading by the theorist or the lecture on his/her work.

4. Write an analysis of either *Max Max: Fury Road* (2015) or *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* (2015) from either a Marxist, Foucauldian, or feminist perspective. Be sure to reference the theoretical materials from your theoretical perspective directly in your discussion. Your paper/review should demonstrate your understanding of the work of the theorist(s) as covered in class readings and lectures, a general knowledge of the theoretical perspective of the theorist(s), as well as a thorough and critical reading of the film. Do not assume that your reader is familiar with the film about which you are writing.

5. Write a magazine review of the pop music/performances of one of (1) of **Taylor Swift**, **One Direction**, or **Lady Gaga** from the perspective of and using the language of one (1) of the following theorists: Adorno and Horkheimer, Foucault, Dean, or Gill. Your paper/review should demonstrate your understanding of the work of the theorist as covered in class readings and lectures, a general knowledge of the theoretical perspective of the theorist, as well as a thorough and critical reading of *One Direction* as a text (ie. you should address the music, videos, and popular cultural presence as well as the history of the group). Do not assume that your reader is familiar in any way with the artist you are discussing. You must connect your discussion to a theoretical reading of the text. Look to examples of music reviews online to see what a music review (*Rolling Stone Magazine* is a good place to start) should look like and then adapt or develop this model for a theoretical reading.

6. There is a tension between claims that we now live in a post-racial society and realities on the ground that show that racism, both overt and covert, is still a problematic reality of the world in which we currently live. Utilizing the critical race theory perspectives from this class, write a paper on the ways that this contradiction -- the assumptions of "post-

racism" and the continuing realities of racism -- is borne out in representations of racial difference in contemporary popular culture. Be sure to focus your discussion on particular cases or examples in your discussion and to ensure that the theoretical perspectives of Said, hooks, or Hall are central to your discussion.

7. The zombie has come to be the dominant "monster" in contemporary North American popular culture. This monster is a metaphor that speaks to the social, cultural, political, and economic anxieties of our current socio-historical conjuncture. Write a critical analysis of the figure of the zombie from a Marxist perspective. What do the zombies of films such as *World War Z*, *Zombieland*, and *Shaun of the Dead*, or television programs like *Walking Dead*, tell us about ideology and hegemony, commodification and capitalism? Be sure to balance your discussion in both the theory and a careful reading of the zombie figure. Be sure to situate your discussion in examples that concretize your analysis.