SP COMM 410


Course Description

At the present time mainstream cultural theories proclaim the end of history and knowledge and also the impossibility to represent the subject by means of discursive practices. However, film, TV Series, literature, TV commercials as well as political campaigns seem to continue to adopt certain visual and verbal communicative strategies in order to convey their messages. This course aims to explain to what extent we need to evaluate the principles by which we obtain our understanding of cultural phenomena as well as the methods and techniques used to question those. This course attempts to explore how culture is presented in this globalized era and how we can effectively acquire a communicative competence. Students will study critical concepts in order to enhance their familiarity with notions of intercultural/interpersonal communication, theory of film as well as propaganda strategies. By placing them in the context of Spanish, Catalan, European and US cultures, the disputed notions of culture and diversity as related to intercultural communication will be examined. Since students will be in Barcelona and the course carries a strong multicultural/comparative methodology it offers a unique opportunity to study intercultural communication first-hand and to apply the knowledge and skills learned in it to the students own personal and professional experiences while living in another culture.

Thematic outline

1. Languages, Culture and Communication: Introductory Concepts
   Leaving home and coming back: what can I expect?
   Definitions: cross-cultural and intercultural
   Assumptions about the nature of culture: the Imperious I
   Assumptions about the nature of communication: Must we Mean What we Say?
   Assumptions about the nature of language: the prison-house of language

2. Beginning a new journey: Cultural Adaptation and Experiential Learning
   Learning Styles Theory
   Culture Shock and Cross-Cultural Adaptation: Jack Kerouac Vs Christopher McCandless

3. Models for Intercultural Communication
   Building models and taxonomies
   Is intercultural communication different to intracultural communication?
   One self as another: seeing ourselves as strangers and communication with strangers. Breaking Bad
   or how does Mr. White sees himself as a criminal.

4. Cultural Identity and Biases in Intercultural Contact: Franco’s propaganda in Spain Vs Eisenhower’s international policies.
   The nature of identity.
   Folklore in the age of capitalism and mass media.
Cultural biases: Hollywood blockbuster Vs Spanish Comedy.

Intercultural Contact/Tourism: Can I get away from clichés? D.F Wallace’s “A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again”.

Language and Cultural Identity: The Catalan case

5. Sending and Receiving Messages: Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication in the Age of New Digital Media
Language and its role in communication: Mad Men’s use of advertising language.
Non-verbal communication.
Personal space and human communication.
Communicating with the New Media: does the culture of blogging open a new autobiographical space?

6. Intercultural Relationships: Ethical Choices
Developing relationships with people form different cultures.
Ethical issues involved in working and living in other cultures.

7. Gender roles in everyday TV: Living with difference.
How does gender theories negotiate with an heteronormative and patriarchal globalized culture?
Franco’s TV Vs La movida. Analysis of the representation of gender roles and sexuality during Spanish Dictatorship and democracy.
Discourses of the body: how does the semiotic of fashion shape how we communicate with clothes: F. Jameson’s notion of nostalgia.

Media Coverage of war and violence
How does Homeland incorporate a dualistic visual discourse on US culture?
Ethical in media practices: First Gulf War and War on Terror

9. The conflict between High and Popular Culture
Effective communicative strategies of low culture: The Simpsons and South Park
The role of comics and superheroes in our globalized culture
The Spanish Comics of the 1980’s.

10. Re-entry Reconsidered: Coming Home
Re-entry
Integrating New Learnings
Intercultural Communication: some preliminary conclusions

Method of Evaluation

Journal Entries and Activities: 20%
Analytical Essay #1: 15%
Analytical Essay #2: 15%
Mid Term and Final Exams: 20% Each
Class Participation: 10%

Sample Bibliography


