

Crime and Media CRIM6610.2
Winter 2007 – W10–1230 MM210A

Instructor: Dr. Michele. Byers.

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Texts:

1. Brown, Sheila. *Crime and Law in Media Culture*. Buckingham and Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2003.
2. Valverde, Mariana. *Law & Order: Images, Meanings, Myths*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2006.

Plus readings to be provided by the professor during the semester

Objectives of this Course:

This is a graduate level look at the way that crime and criminality are constituted in and through mediated discourses. As you will see in the readings, it is counter-intuitive—although this has almost always been the case—to think of crime and media as separate entities. In many ways, they are interdependent and mutually constitutive. No matter what aspect of crime, justice, identity, behavior, you may be interested in... you will find it articulated across a broad spectrum of the popular public sphere. I encourage you to use this opportunity to consider your thesis topic through the lens of the mass media. This doesn't mean you need to incorporate the media or representation into your thesis; rather, I would suggest that thinking about your thesis topic in this way may offer you new insights and point you down new roads of inquiry as you move into your second (or more) year of study.

We are going to be a very small group. As such, we have quite a lot of flexibility vis-à-vis how the class is run. For instance, as this is a media studies course, we may decide to

meet outside of school one week, to attend a show for example, and then discuss that work in relation to the week's readings.

Requirements of this Course:

The two primary requirements of this course are that you do the assigned readings – on time so that you are prepared when you come to class – and that you attend classes. We have a very small group and your prepared presence is essential to its success.

Assignments:

Major paper	
* proposal and bibliography	15
* final paper	30
Journal	40
Attendance/Participation	15

There will be two major assignments in this course. The first is a **major paper**, which is broken into two parts:

1. Proposal and bibliography: on Feb. 13th you will send me (via email) a proposal for your final paper. It should be approximately 5 pages long plus a preliminary bibliography. The proposal should outline your topic and its importance and relevance to this course. You will want to provide a discussion of the relevant literature you have examined so far, and to point to the main issues/questions you plan to address in the final paper.

2. The paper itself will be due one week after the last class (April 9th). It should be between 20 and 30 pages in length plus bibliography.

* NOTE: Anyone who wants to discuss doing a non-traditional or creative assignment rather than the formal paper should see me to discuss this well before the proposal is due.

The second major assignment is a **Journal**. However, given the weight accorded to this assignment you can probably guess that this is somewhat different from a traditional, readings-related journal. This journal will be a space to reflect on your weekly readings, as well as a space to reflect on your ongoing contact and changing (or not) experiences of popular culture and media during the term. I will give you some specific “tasks” to tackle in your journals, but often you will be left to make them creative expressions of your learning experience. I especially encourage you to use this as a place to gather information relevant to your research topic, from a media perspective.

We will discuss what these might look like in more detail on the first day of classes.

15% of your grade will be accorded to **attendance and participation** as designated through seminar leadership. Of course your attendance and participation are always important, especially in such a small class. But once and possibly twice during the term you will be asked to lead the group. I encourage you to think creatively about how to engage your peers.

CONVERSION TABLE FOR GRADES

As per Saint Mary's University regulations

Grade	Grade Points	Percentage Equivalent	Description
A+	4.3	90-100	
A	4.0	85-89.99	Excellent
A-	3.7	80-84.99	
B+	3.3	77-79.99	
B	3.0	73-76.99	Good
B-	2.7	70-72.99	
C+	2.3	67-69.99	
C	2.0	63-66.99	Satisfactory
C-	1.7	60-62.99	
D	1.0	50-59.99	Marginal Pass
F	0	00-49.99	Failure

COURSE POLICIES

In case of bad weather, my classes will be cancelled if the Halifax Regional School Board has closed the schools on the Halifax peninsula.

Notes and Introduction to this Course:

* All assignments must be handed in on time, to me, in class. If you are having problems, let me know so that we can work something out. If you are ill, bring a note. Deductions for late papers will be as follows: one letter grade point per day late.

* To receive a passing grade in this course you must complete (and pass) all assignments.

* Violent behavior and language that can be considered sexist, racist, homophobic, anti-Semitic, etc. will not be tolerated.

* A lot of things happen during the semester, and many of them cannot be foreseen. If you know that you are going to be away, or will not be available to take a test or hand in an assignment, tell me a.s.a.p. If something is going on in your life and it is making it hard for you to do your work or to make it to class, let me know. I am pretty flexible and am usually able to help students find a way to make things work. However, if you do not

do your work, or do not show up for tests, and then tell me why at the very end of the semester, I will not be able to help you. I do not know what is going on in your life.

PLAGIARISM is the uncited use of other peoples' work in you own. This includes copying passages from books, articles, or Internet sites and putting them in your work without properly indicating where they come from. Changing a few words is not the same as saying something in your own words. Quoting is fine as long as you are very clear what you are quoting and where it is from. If you paraphrase someone else's work, you must indicate who they are and the piece of work you are paraphrasing from. That is, you must attribute the work to the person who actually did it.

If you are quoting another author directly, you must make sure the quote appears in “ “. You must also include the author's last name, the year of publication, and the page number of the quote: “bla bla bla” (Byers 2003, 5). If you are paraphrasing a specific idea from someone else's work, you should cite it in the same way that you would cite a direct quote (only without the quotation marks). If you are drawing on someone's work in a general way, for instance, alluding to an article someone wrote but not to its specific content, or to a idea they are famous for, then you only need to include their name and the year of publication: Several articles say that *Degrassi Junior High* is an excellent example of a Canadian television drama (Byers 2000, 2001).

Ideas do not need to be cited if they are part of YOUR general knowledge. There are things that I may not need to cite because my knowledge of a certain area is extensive. However, if you were writing about the same topic, you might have little knowledge of it. You would need to cite references for it. When in doubt and using other people's work as the basis for your own, it is better not to be sorry.

The University takes plagiarism very seriously. Plagiarized papers will be given a grade of 0 and will be forwarded to the Registrar where they will be kept in your permanent file. A second instance of plagiarism will result in a meeting with the Dean, and can result in a failing grade in the course or expulsion from the University.

Not knowing the rules of citation is not an excuse for plagiarism.

Syllabus

This is the basic guide to this course and if you have any questions about the whens and whats of this course you should refer to it. Any deviations will be announced with plenty of time for you to prepare.

January 9—Introduction

Media, projects, thesis topics.

16—How we Read: Media Studies V. Criminology

Brown Ch. 1, Valverde Chs. 1, 2

23—The “Effects” Debate

Brown Ch. 4, Valverde Chs. 3, 9,

Parks, Lisa. “Brave New *Buffy*.” In *Quality Popular Television*, edited by Mark Jancovich and James Lyons. London: Bfi Publishing, 2003: 118–133.

30/February 6—Identity and Deviance

Valverde Ch. 4

Stabile, Carol. *White Victims: Black Villains: Gender, race, and crime news in US Culture*. New York and London: Routledge, 2006. Chapters 6, 7, 8

Hartman, Mary S. *Victorian Murderesses*. NY: Schocken Books, 1977. Introduction and Ch. 1.

13 **Guest Lecture? (I will be away this week).**

20 **WINTER BREAK – NO CLASSES**

27—The “Real”

Brown Ch. 2

Black, Joel. *The Reality Effect: Film Culture and the Graphic Imperative*. New York and London: Routledge, 2002. Chapter 1 + selections.

March 5—Fiction, Film...

Brown Ch. 3, valverde Ch. 5

Davis, Mike. *Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 1998. Ch. 6.

Bonnycastle, Kevin. "Not the usual Suspects." Forthcoming in a volume from Lexington, edited by Michele Byers and Val Johnson.

12—Justice and the State

Valverde Chs. 6, 7

Mirzoeff, Nicholas. "Invisible Empire." *Radical History Review* 95, Spring 2006: 21–44.

19—Space

Valverde Ch. 8

Lewis, Tyson. "The Surveillance Economy of Post-Columbine Schools." *The Review of Education, Pedagogy and Cultural Studies* 25. 2003: 335–55.

Bauman, Zygmunt. "Living (Occasionally Dying) Together in an Urban World." In *Cities, War and Terrorism: Towards an Urban Geopolitics*, edited by Stephen Graham. Malden Mass: Blackwell, 2004: 100–19.

26—Virtuality and Victimhood

Brown Ch. 5

Rentschler, Carrie. "Victim's Rights and The Struggle over Crime in the Media." *Canadian Journal of Communications* 32(2). 2007.

April 2—The future

Brown Ch. 6 and wrap up.