

**Journalism & Communication**  
**J646: Political Economy of Media**  
**Winter 2018, Tues. & Thurs, 2-3:50pm, Allen Hall 137**

**Instructor:** Janet Wasko, Office: Allen Hall 208, 346-4174. Email: [jwasko@uoregon.edu](mailto:jwasko@uoregon.edu). Office Hours: Thursdays, 11am-12pm, and by appointment.

**Course Description:** An introduction to the study of the political economy of media/communication, including theoretical and methodological considerations, as well as historical foundations. An overview of the issues involved in studying media as commodities, markets and industries, including questions of competition, ownership and control, labor, the role of the state, and globalization.

**Course Objectives:**

- understand the history and theories associated with the study of the political economy of media
- understand general concepts associated with the study of the political economy of media
- become familiar with resources and methods of analyzing corporations
- explore relationships between the study of political economy of the media and other approaches to studying media
- improve ability to facilitate discussions of readings

**Texts and readings**

Jonathan Hardy, *Critical Political Economy of the Media: An Introduction*. Routledge, 2014.

Janet Wasko, Graham Murdock, & Helena Sousa, eds., *The Handbook of Political Economy of Communications*. Wiley Blackwell, 2014.

Vincent Mosco, *The Political Economy of Communication*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London: Sage, 2009.

Ben Birkinbine, Rodrigo Gomez, & Janet Wasko, eds., *Global Media Giants*, Routledge, 2017.

Other readings are posted on Canvas.

**Assignments** (More details at the end of the syllabus.)

- **Class Participation/Presentations.** The course will be conducted as a seminar, thus class participation is assumed. To encourage discussion of the reading material, each student will be assigned to lead the discussion for several specific readings during the quarter. This assignment will include preparing an abstract of the reading to be distributed to other class members.
- **Reflective Essay.** An essay on studying the political economy of the media. Due **January 23**.
- **Book Critique.** A critique of a book that presents research based on a political economic perspective.
- **Corporate Profiles.** A profile of a specific media/communication corporation/organization.
- **Community Engagement Project.** An opportunity to become involved with a community organization.

**Course Schedule & Reading Assignments**

**January 9: Introduction to Course and Readings**

**January 11: Historical and Theoretical Foundations I**

Hardy, Chap. 1. What (is) Political Economy of the Media?

Chap. 2. Paradigms of Media Power: Liberal and Radical Perspectives on Media Processes

Mosco, Chap. 1. Overview of the Political Economy of Communication

Chap. 2. What is Political Economy? Definitions and Characteristics

Chap. 3. What is Political Economy? Schools of Thought

Karl Marx & Frederick Engels, *The German Ideology, Part One*. New York: International Publishers, 1972. Preface and Part I, pp. 37-96.

Janet Wasko, "Understanding the Critical Political Economy of the Media," in Cliff Christians & Kaarle Nordenstreng (eds.), *Communication Theories in a Multicultural World*, Peter Lang, 2014.

**January 16: Historical and Theoretical Foundations II**

Hardy, Chap. 3. Media Cultures, Media Economics and Media Problems

Mosco, Chap. 4. The Development of a Political Economy of Communication  
 Chap. 5. The Political Economy of Communication: Building a Foundation

Dallas Smythe, "On the Political Economy of Mass Communications," *Journalism Quarterly*, Autumn 1960.

Graham Murdock & Peter Golding, "For a Political Economy of Mass Communications," *Socialist Register*. London: Merlin Press, 1974, pp. 205-234.

Dallas Smythe, "Communications: Blindspot of Western Marxism," *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory*, 1:3, Fall 1977.

Graham Murdock, "Blindspots about Western Marxism: A Reply to Dallas Smythe," *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory*, 2:2, Spring-Summer 1978.

Edward Herman, "The Propaganda Model Revisited," in Robert W. McChesney, Ellen Meiksins Wood and John Bellamy Foster, eds., *Capitalism and the Information Age: The Political Economy of the Global Communication Revolution*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1998.

### **January 18: Historical and Theoretical Foundations III**

Mosco, Chap. 6. The Political Economy of Communication Today

Nicholas Garnham, "The Political Economy of Communication Revisited," in Wasko, et al., pp. 41-61.

Dwayne Winseck, "The Political Economies of Media and the Transformation of the Global Media Industries," in Dwayne Winseck & Dal Yong Jin, eds., *The Political Economies of Media: The Transformation of the Global Media Industries*. London: Bloomsbury, 2012, pp. 3-48.

### **January 23: Commodities and Markets**

Hardy, Chap. 4. Concentration, Conglomeration, Commercialization

Mosco, Chap. 7. Commodification: Content, Audiences, Labor

Karl Marx, "The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Thereof," from *Capital: Volume One. A Critical Analysis of Capitalist Production* (Orig. 1867). Reprinted in R. Tucker, ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader*. London: W. W. Norton & Co., 1972.

Graham Murdock, "Political Economies as Moral Economies: Commodities, Gifts, and Public Goods," in Wasko, et al., pp. 13-40.

Eileen R. Meehan and Paul J. Torre, "Markets in Theory and Markets in Television," in Wasko, et al., pp. 62-82.

Recommended:

Ben H. Bagdikian, "The Endless Chain," pp. 3-26; and "Preface to Fifth Edition: The New Communications Cartel," pp. ix-xxxvii, in *The Media Monopoly*, Boston: Beacon Press, 5th ed., 1997.

Robert W. McChesney, John Bellamy Foster, Inger L. Stole, and Hannah Holleman, "The Sales Effort and Monopoly Capital," *Monthly Review*, April 2009. Online at <http://www.monthlyreview.org/090406-mcchesney-foster-stole-holleman.php>.

Graham Murdock, "Marx on Commodities, Contradictions and Globalisations: Resources for a Critique of Marketised Culture," *Compós*, December 2006. [www.compos.com.br/e-compos](http://www.compos.com.br/e-compos).

### **January 25: Corporations and Industries**

Hardy, Chap. 5. Political Economy of the Internet and Digital Media

Chap. 6. Marketing Communications and Media

Mosco, Chap. 8. Spatialization: Space, Time and Communication

Maurice Zeitlin, "Corporate Ownership and Control: The Large Corporation and the Capitalist Class," *American Journal of Sociology*, March 1974.

Graham Murdock, "Large Corporations and Communication," in *Culture, Media & Society*, Michael Gurevitch, Tony Bennett, James Curran and Janet Woollacott, eds., London: Methuen, 1982.

John D. H. Downing, "Media Ownership Concentration, and Control: The Evolution of Debate," in Wasko, et al., pp. 140-168.

Scott W. Fitzgerald, "Cultural Corporations and Capitalist Imperatives," in *Corporations and Cultural Industries: Time Warner, Bertelsmann, and News Corporation*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2012, pp. 23-60.

Recommended:

André Sirois and Janet Wasko, "The Political Economy of the Recorded Music Industry: Redefinitions and New Trajectories in the Digital Age," in Wasko, et al., pp. 331-357.

Christian Fuchs, "The Contemporary World Wide Web: Social Medium or New Space of Accumulation?" in Dwayne Winseck & Dal Yong Jin, eds., *The Political Economies of Media: The Transformation of the Global Media Industries*. London: Bloomsbury, 2012, pp. 201-220.

### **January 30: Methodological Issues**

John Scott, "Corporate Groups and Network Structure," in J. McCahery, S. Picciotto, and C. Scott, eds., *Corporate Control and Accountability: Changing Structures and the Dynamics of Regulation*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1993.

John Scott, *A Matter of Record*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991. Chap. 1 & 2.

Janet Wasko, "New Methods of Analyzing Concentration," in Vincent Mosco, ed., *Policy Research in Telecommunications*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1984.

Skim: "Who Rules? An Internet Guide to Power Structure Research"

<http://www.uoregon.edu/~vburriss/whorules/index.htm>

### **February 1 & 6: Globalization and International Markets**

Hardy, Chap. 7. Globalisation, Media Transnationalisation and Culture

V.I. Lenin, "The Place of Imperialism in History," in Armand Mattelart and Seth Siegelaub, eds., *Communication and Class Struggle, 1. Capitalism, Imperialism*. New York: International General, 1979.

Herbert I. Schiller, "Electronics and Economics Serving an American Century," in *Mass Communications and American Empire*. 1969, Boston: Augustus M. Kelley, pp. 1-17.

Martin Becerra and Guillermo Mastrini, "Communication Economy Paths: A Latin American Approach," in Wasko, et al., pp. 109-126.

Armand Mattelart, "New International Debates on Culture, Information, and Communication," in Wasko, et al., pp. 501-520.

Yuezhi Zhao, "The Challenge of China: Contribution to a Transcultural Political Economy of Communications for the Twenty-First Century," in WASKO, ET AL., pp. 558-582.

John Sinclair, "Cultural Globalization and American Empire," in Graham Murdock and Janet Wasko, eds., *Media in the Age of Marketization*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 2007.

Recommended:

Jan Ekecrantz, "Media and Communication Studies: Going Global," in WASKO, ET AL., pp. 485-500.

Peter Golding, "Global Village or Cultural Pillage?" in Robert W. McChesney, Ellen Meiksins Wood and John Bellamy Foster, eds., *Capitalism and the Information Age: The Political Economy of the Global Communication Revolution*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1998.

Robert W. McChesney and Dan Schiller, "The Political Economy of International Communications: Foundations for the Emerging Global Debate about Media Ownership and Regulation," United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, 2003.

### **February 8: Media Workers, Labor and Trade Unions**

Vincent Mosco, "The Political Economy of Labor," in Wasko, et al., pp. 358-380.

David Hesmondalgh and Sarah Baker, "Toward a Political Economy of Labor in the Media Industries," in Wasko, et al., pp. 381-400.

Stana Martin, "The Political Economy of Women's Employment in the Information Sector," in Ellen Riordan and Eileen R. Meehan, eds., *Sex and Money: Feminism and Political Economy in the Media*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002.

Catherine McKercher, "Hollywood Unions and the Fight for Work," in Janet Wasko and Mary Erickson (eds.), *Cross-Border Cultural Production: Economic Runaway or Globalization?* Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2008.

John Lent, "The Animation Industry and Its Offshore Factories," in Gerald Sussman and John A. Lent, eds., *Global Productions: Labor in the Making of the "Information Society"*. Hampton Press, 1998.

Dean Colby, "New Media as a New Mode of Production," in Catherine McKercher and Vincent Mosco, eds., *Knowledge Workers in the Information Age*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007.

### **February 13 & 15: Media & the State**

Hardy, Chap. 8. Media Convergence and Communication Regulation

Giuseppe Richeri, "The Media Amid Enterprises, the Public, and the State: New Challenges for Research," in Wasko, et al., pp. 129-139.

Andrew Calabrese & Colleen Mihal, "Liberal Fictions: The Public-Private Dichotomy in Media Policy," in Wasko, et al., pp. 226-263.

Dan Schiller, "The Militarization of US Communication," in WASKO, ET AL., pp. 264-282.

Helena Sousa & Joaquim Fidalgo, "Journalism Regulation: State Power and Professional Autonomy," in Wasko, et al., pp. 283-304.

Ronald Bettig, *Copyrighting Culture: The Political Economy of Intellectual Property*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997. (excerpts)

Recommended:

Ron Tabor, "The Marxist Theory of the State," online at <http://www.spunk.org/texts/pubs/lr/sp001715/marxron.html>

Dept of Justice, Antitrust Division, "An Antitrust Primer for Federal Law Enforcement Personnel," online at <http://www.justice.gov/atr/public/guidelines/209114.htm>

Johan Söderberg, "Copyleft vs. Copyright: A Marxist Critique," online at [http://131.193.153.231/www/issues/issue7\\_3/soderberg/index.html](http://131.193.153.231/www/issues/issue7_3/soderberg/index.html)

### **February 20 & 22: Political Economy and Other Approaches to Studying Media/Communication**

Hardy, Chap. 9. Media Power, Challenges and Alternatives

Mosco, Chap. 9. "Structuration: Class, Gender, Race, Social Movements, Hegemony"

Chap. 10. "Challenges on the Borders...and Beyond"

Daniel Biltereyst and Philippe Meers, "The Political Economy of Audiences," in Wasko, et al., pp. 415-435.

Leslie Steeves and Janet Wasko, "Feminist Theories and Political Economy: Toward a Friendly Alliance," in Ellen Riordan and Eileen R. Meehan, eds., *Sex and Money: Feminism and Political Economy in the Media*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Jennifer Holt and Alisa Perren, "Introduction: Does the World Really Need One More Field of Study?" in Jennifer Holt and Alisa Perren, eds., *Media Industries: History, Theory, and Method*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.

Eileen R. Meehan and Janet Wasko, "In Defence of a Political Economy of the Media," *Javnost-Public*, Vol. 20, No. 1, 2013.

Doug Kellner, "Media Industries, Political Economy, and Media/Cultural Studies: An Articulation," in Holt and Perren.

David Hesmondalgh, "Politics, Theory, and Method in Media Industries Research," in Holt and Perren.

### **February 27: Library resource presentation**

### **March 1: Research Opportunity**

### **March 6: Political Economy, Media and Environmental Issues**

Graham Murdock, "Introduction," Benedetta Brevini and Graham Murdock, eds., *Carbon, Capitalism and Communication: Confronting Climate Crisis*, Palgrave, 2017.

Richard Maxwell and Toby Miller, "Digital Technology and the Environment: Challenges for Green Citizenship and Environmental Organizations," in Brevini and Murdock.

Justin Lewis, "Digital Desires: Mediated Consumerism and Climate Crisis," in Brevini and Murdock.

### **March 8: Brief Reports: Corporate profiles/Book critiques**

### **March 13 & 15: Community Engagement Project Presentations**

## **Assignments**

### **Reflective Essay**

After surveying the reading material for the first two weeks of the course, write an essay that presents your understanding of studying the political economy of the media/communications (PE/M). You should include specific references to the readings, although you don't need to include complete citations or a bibliography. You don't need to add additional readings, but if you do, include complete bibliographic citations.

Your essay might address questions such as: How has PE/M been defined? What is the most compelling definition/discussion of the approach from the readings? What differences are there between various approaches to PE/M? What are the strengths and/or weaknesses of this approach? How has PE/M been critiqued? How does PE/M compare to other approaches to studying media/communication? (Note: these are only suggestions; answers to all of these questions are not required.)

Your essay should be around 6-7 pages and is due in class on **January 23**. A suggestion: reread (and possibly rewrite?) your essay (as well as your other papers!) before submitting, as writing will be taken into account in assessing your paper.

### **Book Critique**

The goal is to critique a book that is an example of research that exemplifies the study of the political economy of media/communication. Choose a book that is included on the list to be distributed in class or another book that fits this description. (good idea to check with the instructor about a book not on the list). Present a 4-5 page critique of the book, including a brief description and discussing the strengths and weaknesses of the book. You might also discuss how the author uses theories of political economy, what methodologies are used, and the significance of the study. You can refer to class material in your discussion

and do not need to include bibliographic information. Other references should include complete bibliographic citations. **Your critique should be submitted by the last week of class.**

### Corporate Profile

Each student will be responsible for researching a corporation, company, trade association, trade union or guild, or other organization associated with the communications, media or information industries.

The aim of the project is to gather as much information as possible about an organization/ company and to analyze it in light of the material presented in the course readings and discussions. Your written report should include (where applicable and information is available):

- brief history or background information
- discussion of organization, operations, policies
- basic financial information (revenues, assets, income, number of stockholders, stockholder equity, etc.)
- diversification, integration, internationalization
- information on employees, labor relations, management and owners

Different types of organizations will require different treatments and information. For example, reports on trade unions/guilds should include membership information, jurisdictional problems, and relationships with other unions. You should use the most recent material available and include data from the most current fiscal year.

Your written paper must follow a research paper format, including a consistent reference style. DO NOT use only material produced by the corporation (such as an annual report), but use a variety of sources. DO NOT rely only on on-line sources. DO NOT merely present a public relations document for the company. With most companies, there is enough material to present a thoughtful, critical and intelligent analysis, as well as referring to some of the concepts covered in the readings/class discussion.

The minimum length of your report should be around 7-8 pages (maximum, around 15 pages), typed, double-spaced. But please remember that length is less important than the quality of your report. In other words, your paper will be evaluated according to how much thought and effort has gone into gathering information, synthesizing and analyzing it, and presenting a well-organized, well-written report. Please don't bother with fancy covers or other unnecessary embellishments. **Your paper should be submitted by the last week of class.**

### Community Engagement Project

The goal of this assignment is to connect with a community organization that may benefit from your expertise and participation. Some of what you have learned in this class should be appropriate, but your individual experiences, skills, and background will also be useful.

1. Choose a local non-profit organization such as: A good source for ideas and information is <http://getinvolvedineugene.com/>
  - media/communication outlet (newspaper/radio or television station/cable or film company/advertising or PR agency)
  - museum/cultural center
  - government office/organization/political group
  - educational organization/library/youth group/technology group
  - public service/activist/human rights/peace/social justice organization
  - labor union/workers organization
  - music, art, cultural or literature group
  - neighborhood association
  - recreational group
  - support/health group
  - fair/exhibit/community event/festival
2. Contact the organization and arrange a meeting with an appropriate person.
3. Find out about the organization's history, operations, financial status (if possible), environmental policies, etc. Such information may be available by doing online research and/or from the organization.
4. Work with the organization/group to find a way to contribute to their media/communication needs, especially related to environmental/ecological issues. This could involve helping to...
  - prepare promotional material
  - critique their messaging about environmental policies
  - assist with gathering information/data about a topic

- identify an intended audience to help shape a message
  - other activities that may emerge from your contact with the organization/group
5. Prepare a 15-minute multimedia presentation of your findings and activities for the last week of the term.