

POLITICAL ECONOMY OF COMMUNICATIONS
COMMUNICATIONS 514

Bettig129 Carnegie

Fall 2008 Office Hours: Tues: 9-10:45; 12:30-1:30 & by appt.

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Course Description and Objectives: This course designed to introduce students to the theory, method and practice of the political economy of communications. We begin with an introduction to theoretical approaches to the political economy of national and international communications systems. We will then examine how these approaches have been applied to the study of the culture industries, intellectual property, and the Internet. We conclude with an assessment of the political economy approach within the broader context of mass communications theory and research, including feminism, cultural studies and policy studies. The intent of the course is for you to become conversant with this important body of research and to be able to incorporate the political economy approach into your various research programs.

Organization and Structure of Course: This will be a reading course that depends heavily on student preparation for and participation in class discussions. The written work for the course is a term paper that engages or utilizes the political economic approach to communications in your chosen area of specialization. You will be asked for a term paper proposal and bibliography, literature review and rough draft as the semester progresses (dates to be determined). The papers will be presented during the last two class sessions. Final drafts are due at the end of the semester. Additional written work includes five 2-3 page reaction papers that link the course readings to events and developments within the economic, political or communications systems. These can be generated from your own sources but should somehow be integrated into course materials. The purpose of these reaction papers is to foster applications of the political economy framework to ongoing phenomena. We will also have weekly sharing at the beginning of class regarding current media and communications developments (these also make good material for reaction papers). The overall evaluation of your performance in the class will be based on attendance, participation, reaction papers, and the quality of the term paper

Course Texts: Assigned

Ronald Bettig, *Copyrighting Culture: The Political Economy of Intellectual Property*, Boulder, CO: Westview, 1996.

Vincent Mosco, *The Political Economy of Communication: Rethinking and Renewal*, London: Sage, 1996.

Robert McChesney, *The Political Economy of Media*, NY: Monthly Review, 2008

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Leon Trotsky, *Literature and Revolution*, Ann Arbor: Ann Arbor Paperbacks, 1975 (excerpts).

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Edward Herman, "The Propaganda Model Revisited," pp. 191-205, in *Capitalism and the Information Age: The Political Economy of the Global Communication Revolution*,

Sut Jhally, Ch. 5: "The Political Economy of Culture," in I. Angus & S. Jhally (eds.), *Cultural Politics in Contemporary America*, New York: Routledge, 1989.

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III. Applications of the Political Economy of Communications

A. International Political Economy

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Peter Golding, "Global Village or Cultural Pillage?: The Unequal Inheritance of the Communications Revolution," *Capitalism and the Information Age: The Political Economy of the Global Communication Revolution*, Robert W. McChesney, *et al* (eds.), New York: Monthly Review Press, 1998, pp. 69-86

Cees J. Hamelink, Ch. 17: "World Communication: Business as Usual?", *Democratizing Communication?*, in M. Bailie & D. Winseck (eds.) Creskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 1997, pp. 407-425

David Harvey, "Flexibility: Threat or Opportunity?" *Socialist Review*, vol. 21, no. 1, Jan-Mar 1991, pp. 65-77

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John Weeks, Ch. 16: "Globalize, Globalize, Global Lies: Myths of the World Economy in the 1990s," in *Phases of Capitalist Development*, pp. 263-282

B. The Political Economy of Culture Industry

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Ronald Bettig, "Who Owns Prime Time?: Institutional and Industrial Conflict Over Program and Broadcast Rights," in *Framing Friction: Perspectives on Media and Social Conflict*, Mary Mander (ed.), Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1998, pp. 123-160

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D. The New Media Environment

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