Senior Fellows Seminar: 
Media & Consumer Culture in the Lives of Children & Teens

COM370
Unique Course Number: 05410
Spring 2012
CMA A5.136
TTH 12:30 – 2:00

UNIT 1. INTRODUCTION

Tuesday, January 17
Readings: No readings

UNIT 2. WHAT IS CHILDHOOD? ADOLESCENCE?

How do children develop and become teenagers? What is the difference between children and teenagers, and between children/teens and adults? How do kids and teenagers consume? How do they process mass media messages? Are younger people a protected class of people? Do they need more protection from mass media and consumer pressures than do adults? Why do concerns about children lead to such moral panics about TV, advertising, the Internet, etc.?

Thursday, January 19: Construction of childhood; concern about media

Think about: How concerned should we be about what kind of media (and how much) young people are consuming?
What might “childhood” look like in the future?

To do: Think about your own childhood. In what ways does it conform to the modern view of childhood? In what ways does it not?

Tuesday, January 24: Theories of child development

Think about: How are children different from teenagers? How are children and teenagers different from adults? What do these readings have to say about whether a child is “competent” or “vulnerable” in everyday media exposure consumption situations?

To do: Watch an animated show (such as Spongebob Square Pants, Family Guy, The Simpsons) and think about how much a child would understand (or misunderstand).
Thursday, January 26: Causes and consequences of media consumption


Think about: Why do young people consume mass media? How does theory help us understand the effects of these mass media consumption choices? Where are the similarities and differences?

To do: In the course of your normal media consumption practices, think about how you feel when you’re watching TV, listening to music, and surfing the Web. What are the differences/similarities in your feelings?

Tuesday, January 31: Media use patterns

Think about: Where do young people consume mass media? How is this different from the past? What are the implications of these changes? How might parents mitigate or mediate the influence of mass media?

To do: Think about how many media devices you own (cell phone, TV, ipod, etc.). How many did you own when you were a teenager? A child?

Thursday, February 2: Children’s media industries; globalization
Readings: No readings

Think about: Nada

To do: What is your favorite TV show? Who is your favorite musician/band? What are your favorite magazines?

Tuesday, February 7: Children/teens as Consumers


Think about: What does children’s consumption look like? Why do the authors take issue with it? What theoretical traditions are they drawing on to make their claims? What challenges could you raise to their arguments?

To do: Next time you go to a grocery store, make note of all the packaging, in-store advertising and other marketing messages targeted at kids.
Thursday, February 9: Advertising
Think about: What is being advertised to children? How is it being advertised? What do children understand? What about teenagers?
To do: Watch kids programming on TV and pay attention to the advertising.

Tuesday, February 14: Valentine’s Day: Guest lecture by Dr. Angeline Close
Readings: Reading TBD
Think about: What are you doing this Valentine’s Day? What have you done in the past?
To do: TBD

Thursday, February 16: Movie: Consuming Kids
Readings: No readings
Think about: Popcorn
To do: Eat popcorn

UNIT 3. WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF CONSUMPTION?
How are young people influenced by the media they consume and the things they buy? What is the impact on identity? On beliefs about race, ethnicity, gender roles? How does violent content affect young people?

Tuesday, February 21: Stereotypes
Think about: How is race/ethnicity depicted in mass media? How do children process these messages? What theoretical foundations do the authors rely on to make their argument?
To do: Watch your favorite primetime TV show. Notice how ethnic and racial differences are portrayed and/or discussed. Do the same thing for advertising in magazines.

Thursday, February 23: Discussant
Readings: TBD
Think about: Up to the discussant leaders
To do: Come to class prepared to discuss the material and respond to the class discussion leaders
**Tuesday, February 28: Gender**

Think about: How are femininity and masculinity depicted in mass media? How do children process these messages? What theoretical foundations do the authors rely on to make their argument?

To do: Watch your favorite primetime TV show. Notice how men and women are depicted differently and/or discussed. Do the same thing for advertising in magazines.

**Thursday, March 1: Discussant**
Readings: TBD

Think about: Up to the discussant leaders

To do: Come to class prepared to discuss the material and respond to the class discussion leaders

**Tuesday, March 6: Academic achievement, learning**

Think about: What role does mass media play in preparing young people? What role should it play? What are the consequences, good and bad, for children’s consumption of different kinds of mass media? What is the influence of marketing and consumption on education?

To do: Check out Channel One’s web site at http://www.channelone.com/

**Thursday, March 8: Discussant**
Readings: TBD

Think about: Up to the discussant leaders

To do: Come to class prepared to discuss the material and respond to the class discussion leaders

**SPRING BREAK**

**Tuesday, March 20: Violence**
Think about: What is the conventional wisdom about violence and its effects? What theoretical arguments do critics of violent content rely on to make their arguments? What are the implicit assumptions in these arguments and what are some challenges to them?

To do: Play some video games, preferably ones that considered “violent.”

**Thursday, March 22: Discussant**
Readings: TBD
Think about: Up to the discussant leaders
To do: Come to class prepared to discuss the material and respond to the class discussion leaders

**Tuesday, March 27: Social life and friendships: Guest lecture Dr. Mark Rademacher (via Skype)**
Readings: TBD
Think about: How did different forms of mass media help you maintain your friendships when you first got to UT? What about now?
To do: TBD

**Thursday, March 29: Discussant**
Readings: TBD
Think about: Up to the discussant leaders
To do: Come to class prepared to discuss the material and respond to the class discussion leaders

**Tuesday, April 3: Sexuality and health: Guest lecture Dr. Brad Love (still to be confirmed)**
Readings: TBD
Think about:
To do: TBD

**Thursday, April 5: Discussant**
Readings: TBD
Think about: Up to the discussant leaders
To do: Come to class prepared to discuss the material and respond to the class discussion leaders

**Tuesday, April 10: Entertainment**
Think about: How has entertainment become a form of consumption? How have marketers and advertisers sold and packaged the idea of entertainment? What are the consequences – good and bad – of this trend?

To do: Go to (or think about a recent trip you’ve taken to) a theme restaurant, like Applebees, Chuck E. Cheese, Hard Rock Café. Describe the experience. What did you notice (remember most) about it?

**Thursday, April 12: Discussant**
Readings: TBD
Think about: Up to the discussant leaders
To do: Come to class prepared to discuss the material and respond to the class discussion leaders

**Tuesday, April 17: Creativity, imagination, play**
Think about: What influence do mass media have on imagination and play. How has “play” changed? How might it continue to change in the future?
To do: What were your favorite games to play as a kid? How imaginative were you?

**Thursday, April 19: Guest lecture: Susan Linn**
Think about: What questions you might ask Susan Linn.
To do: Be prepared to come listen to Susan Linn’s talk.

**UNIT 4. PRESENTATIONS**
Your opportunity to drop some knowledge on your fellow students.

**Tuesday, April 24: Presentations (3)**

**Thursday, April 26: Presentations (3)**

**Tuesday, May 1: Presentations (3)**

**Thursday, May 3: Wrap up**