SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION
CMNS 240-3

Chris Bodnar                                                                             Fall 2006
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POLITICAL ECONOMY OF COMMUNICATION

Prerequisites: CMNS 110 and 130.

Overview:
This course provides an introduction to the political economy of communication as a framework for the study of media and communication. The first half of the course explores the nature of modern society, the rise of capitalism and the roles of media in such contexts. Readings explore theories of modernity and capitalism, foundational thinkers in political economic theory, and the use of political economy as a framework of analysis in the study of communication and media. The second half of the course uses the political economic framework to critique contemporary communication and media practices and structures. Readings deal with contemporary change in communication systems and the manner in which such changes are present in social relations. The course thus highlights the ongoing tension that exists between structure and agency; institutions such as the state, capital and civil society; and social justice concepts of gender, race, ecology and class. Through the readings, lectures and discussions, these concepts will be contextualized within the local, national and transnational experiences of everyday life in the contemporary market-based society.

Course Requirements:

Tutorial Attendance and Participation   10%
Short Writing Assignment   10% (Due 4 October)
Short Research Assignment   15% (Due 1 November)
Research Paper   35% (Due 22 November)
Final Exam   30% (on 8 December)

Handouts with specific requirements for the three writing assignments will be distributed during the first two weeks of class.

The School expects that the grades awarded in this course will bear some reasonable relation to established university-wide practices with respect to both levels and distribution of grades. In addition, the School will follow policy T10.02 with respect to “Intellectual Honesty,” and “Academic Discipline” (see current calendar, General Regulations Section).

Required Readings:

Students are asked to purchase a courseware package from the SFU Bookstore. Alternatively, courseware from the Spring 2006 semester may be purchased second-hand from previous students.

All readings are also held on reserve at the Bennett Library, Burnaby Campus.
Lecture Schedule and Reading List:

6 September: Course Introduction

13 September: Transitions from Traditional to Modern Society and the Rise of Capitalism


20 September: Moral Philosophical Foundations in Modern Political Economic Thought


Adam Smith. (1759). “Of the Amiable and Respectable Virtues”, The Theory of Moral Sentiments. Part 1, Section 1, Chapter V.

27 September: Communication, Production and Capitalism in the 20th Century


4 October: Political Economy as a Framework for Analysis

Short writing assignment due


11 October: The Idea of the “Information Society” and its Critics


18 October: The State’s Relationship to Media


25 October: Media Industries, Concentration and Globalization


1 November: Information and the Commercialization of Space, Relations and Institutions Short research assignment due


15 November: Gender, Race and Sexualities


22 November: Political Ecology and Communication Industries

*Research Paper Due*


29 November: Resistance and the Quest for Participatory Media


**Final Exam:** Fri 8 Dec/06
15:30-18:30
Room TBA