**Theory and Methodology: Media(), Technologies, Difference**

The University of Texas at El Paso

CHIC 4350/PHIL 4352 Spring, 2023

Wednesday 3:00-5:50 pm, Education Building 110

**Instructor:** Juan David Rubio Restrepo, Ph.D. (he/him)

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**Office hours:** Thursdays 2:30pm-4:30pm, FFA M231 or over Zoom

**Course description**

This course queries the relation between media, technologies, and difference. Taking these three key-words/-concepts as broad starting points, we will engage with theoretical approaches and case studies that span the emergence of mass media technologies at the turn of the 19th century to algorithmic and robotic systems nowadays. Rather than focusing on a specific medium, we will consider the avenues through which difference is represented, constructed, unsettled, and disturbed in music, films, archives, engineering, and software, among others. We will approach these matters from a variety of perspectives (making emphasis on Latin American, Chicanx, feminist, and Black radical intellectual genealogies) and academic disciplines (Science and Technology Studies, ethnic studies, ethno/musicology, media studies, cultural studies, border studies, indigenous studies, etc.). Designed as an undergraduate seminar for students in the Liberal Arts Honor Program, we will work with challenging texts through weekly discussions, regular writing assignments, short lectures, and student presentations.

As you will notice after reviewing the syllabus, this is a demanding course. I expect your full engagement. This includes going through all the assigned materials (readings, films, etc.) before we meet, bringing your completed writing assignments, coming ready to discuss, and participating. We will unpack/work through the assigned materials in class. Dr. Paul Edwards’ “How to Read a Book”, accessible on this link https://pne.people.si.umich.edu/PDF/howtoread.pdf, offers targeted strategies and time-management skills to approach academic reading. This course is partially designed to develop academic reading and writing skills, a task that can be overwhelming but that we will approach in a gradual and thoughtful manner. Respectful debate and critique are central to the academic exercise. I hope our classroom can foster this in a supportive and judgment-free environment. More guidelines regarding class etiquette and expectations are included at the bottom of the syllabus.

**Course Objectives**

At the end of this course, students will:

- Have an holistic view of how difference intersects with media technologies
- Analyze the power dynamics inherent to producing media representations
Articulate such analysis through academic forms of writing and/or multimedia formats
Generate strategies to read and navigate scholarly literature

Course materials
No text book is required for this course. We will read from different authors working from a wide range of disciplines. While texts constitute the backbone of the course materials, audiovisual content will also be assigned. All the materials are accessible online. They are posted on the “Readings” section on Blackboard or are accessible via Electronic Reserves. Hyperlinks for the latter are included on the “Class Schedule” section of this syllabus (below). In order to access these off-campus, VPN connection is required. Instructions on how to set up VPN can be found here. If you need technical assistance, email IT Service Desk. Do not email your instructor on tech-related questions.

Assessment (3 credits)
Attendance and participation 20%
Short writing assignments 15%
Response papers (6) 15% (2.5% each)
Presentation 20%
Project proposal 10%
Final project 20%

Grading scale
90-100 A
80-89 B
70-79 C
60-69 D
59-below F

Course assignments
Response papers: Each student is responsible for writing six (6) response papers. You will do so on an assigned reading of your choosing. Three (3) responses are due before the spring break, and three (3) after the midterm. The paper should be uploaded to the respective Blackboard “Assignment” before the class for which the reading was assigned to starts (i.e., if you choose a reading assigned for January 18, the response should be uploaded by January 18, 3:00pm). The response must be 700 to 1000 words, 12 font, and double-spaced. More than a summary of the reading, I expect you to engage critically with it. This may include, but is not limited to providing salient points, expanding on issues you find interesting, problematizing some of them if you wish, and putting them in dialogue with your own ideas/experiences. The prose of the paper should be fluid and cohesive. Full paragraphs must be used. Bullet points are not acceptable. Use proper formatting (Chicago or MLA are...
acceptable) and citation etiquette. All materials used in the responses (and in your writing more generally), whether quoted verbatim or paraphrased, should be properly cited. This includes class slides and past writings by yourself.

**Final Project/Paper:** The final assignment can take the form of 1) a paper, or 2) a podcast. These can be done individually or in couples. If you choose to work in groups, I expect to see this reflected in the quality and length of the final product. I will take this into consideration in the grading rubric. While the specifics of the final assignment will be discussed as the class progresses, keep in mind the basic guidelines below. Broadly, the final project will provide and analytical and critical account of a media representation of you choosing. You may focus on any media form/format (film, music, online content, literature, etc.). Regardless of the format, the final assignment is due on Blackboard May 8 by the end of the day.

_Academic Paper_ In essence, the final paper will follow the broad structure of a scholarly conference paper on a topic of your choosing (more on this below); that is, a 9 to 11 pages double-spaced argumentative essay (plus an extra one for bibliography). This literary genre takes many forms, one of the most traditional ones being: 1) introducing the main topic, followed by research question(s), and your argument, 2) presenting secondary sources that exist on the topic/issues (i.e., who has talked about this, what have they said, and how do you dialogue with them), 3) presenting original material in the form of primary sources you found on your research (interviews, personal experience [autoethnography], audio, video, photographs, etc.) and/or ideas that you have developed on the topics/issues at hand that expend, depart, or problematize “what is known” (that is, what you found on academic literature), and 4) a closing section where wrap-up your main points, rearticulate your argument, and posit further directions where you see this project going. This is certainly a reductive and “stiff” way to explain a rather rich and dynamic literary genre. There are many ways on which you can touch on these broad guidelines while exploring/developing your writing voice. As with the other writing assignments, I encourage you to experiment with different writing voicings/tactics. Furthermore, the short writing assignments could (but don’t have to) be the starting point of your final project. We will be reading from a wide array of authors working on diverse topics and with contrasting styles. I advise you to read not just for information, but for style, structure, narrative/argumentative strategies. If you really like a particular reading/author, stop to think why is that. What can I learn from this person aside the information they are presenting? The paper is due on Blackboard May 8 by the end of the day.

_Podcast:_ Audio or video formats are acceptable. The length should be 15-25 mins. if done individually and 25-40 mins. if done collaboratively. Creative liberties may be taken but the overall tone should be formal, informative, and clear. While you may use
additional audiovisual materials in the podcast (i.e. short video clips, music tracks, recordings, etc.), keep in mind that these must serve a clear purpose. “Fillers” won’t be tolerated and will impact your final grade. On top of the podcast itself, you must turn-in a script. The script doesn’t have to be a word-by-word transcription but it should clearly outline the narrative structure of the podcast (there are plenty of examples online). We will take some time in class to discuss the technical aspects of podcasting as well as how to build its content. I am also available to advise you during office hours. The podcast is due on Blackboard May 8 by the end of the day. Upload your podcast to the online platform of your choosing (YouTube, Vimeo, Spotify, SoundCloud, etc.). I advise using cloud services like OneDrive or Google Drive if your podcast includes media examples that are copyrighted (i.e., film clips, songs, etc.) since mainstream platforms tend to censor such content. Provide the hyperlink to access your podcast at the top of the script. In order to meet the deadline, keep in mind the time uploading may take. Some advice as you envision and develop your project:

- Start thinking about it early on. Write down ideas as they come to you and follow-up on them to get a sense of how fruitful they may be.
- Decide on a topic and a particular approach (or a short list) and reach out to me early on the semester so we can start developing it.
- Once you have decided on a topic, start working on a list of resources you need: academic literature, primary sources, interviews, archival work, fieldwork you may need to conduct, etc.
- Start writing by week 9 or 10 and plan to send me at least 3 pages of writing by the start of week 12. I will take the rest of that week to read them and send you some comments so you’re ready to start writing proper by or before week 13.
- Reach out to me at any point, either during office hours, after class, or another time if neither of these work for you, to bounce ideas and get feedback.

**Presentation:** In the meetings of weeks 10 to 16, students will give a 20 min. presentation. The presentation should present your final project in its early stages. This includes the subject you will be focusing on, issues that interest you and that you are planning to engage with, broad research questions, preliminary conclusions, paths where you see the project/research going, and specific materials you will be using. In general, the presentation is a developed version of your proposal. Slides are required. These should structure your talk and include audiovisual examples in the form of audios, videos, pictures, or similar materials that are illustrative of your working project. I encourage you to book an early date. The point of this assignment is to provide you with feedback from me and your peers on your working project. The sooner you do it, the more helpful it will be. We will schedule the presentations around week 7 during class. The schedule will work on a first come first serve basis.
**Paper/project proposal:** Students are required to turn-in a paper/project proposal. In 1000 to 2000 double-spaced words, outline your final project as clearly as possible following the structure of an extended abstract for an academic paper (abstracts are usually 250 to 500 words, I am asking for a lengthier version, work with any example/model you like). The proposal should summarize your main topic, what is known about it, and how do you expect to approach its analysis. Plan to assemble a bibliography and provide a working version of it that maps the scholarly areas and authors you expect to be dialoguing with and how do these relate with your main topic and argument. Provide a list of primary sources you plan to use if applicable. The proposal is due by the end of week 8.

**Course policies**

**Attendance and Participation:** Attendance and participation are key in this course. These items constitute 20% of your final grade. Our point of departure will be the assigned materials. You should read/watch/listen to these **before** the lecture. I expect you to come with questions, critiques, and insights to foster discussion.

**Academic integrity:** Academic dishonesty in the form of plagiarizing, cheating, etc. won’t be tolerated. UTEP takes these violations seriously and they could lead to academic and administrative sanctions. All suspected violations of academic integrity must be reported to the [Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution (OSCCR)](https://www.utep.edu/students-and-counseling-services/student-conduct) for possible disciplinary action. To learn more visit [HOOP: Student Conduct and Discipline](https://www.utep.edu/students-and-counseling-services/student-conduct).

**Discussion guidelines and classroom etiquette:** This course touches on sensitive issues related to race, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity, among others. Students are cautioned that some of the assigned materials may contain offensive vocabulary. We will discuss/unpack them in a productive and respectful way. Refrain from using offensive or triggering language, even when referring to specific examples. Discriminatory vocabulary/attitudes of any kind are not tolerated in my classroom. This is a safe space to discuss, debate, and disagree.

**Contact and communication:** Email and regular office hours, both included at the top of the syllabus, are our main point of one-on-one communication. Feel free to reach out to me with questions or suggestions via email, during office hours, or after class. I do my best to reply to emails in a timely fashion. Note that I don’t check my work email during non-working hours. If you email me Friday night, I won’t see it until next Monday.

**(N)Etiquette:** I use my full name (Juan David Rubio Restrepo) in UTEP documents. I understand this can be confusing for some. If you wish to address me by last name, you may do so using both of my last names (Prof./Dr. Rubio Restrepo) or just the first part (Prof./Dr. Rubio).

**Late assignments:** Assignments should be handed-in on time. 5% of the grade will be deducted for each day late.
Student resources

**Academic materials:** UTEP’s Library is your primary source of information. Get familiar with its website and search engine. The website has several tutorial videos on how to find materials as well as contact information for staff that can advise/help you. You can access a wide range of databases through the library site. Be sure to be connected via VPN if you are doing so off-campus. [This link](#) offers a good introduction to using the MinerQuest search engine.

**Writing Center:** The University Writing Center is a great resource. Students can submit papers here for assistance with writing style and formatting, ask a tutor for help, and explore writing strategies.

**Students with disabilities:** Students requesting an accommodation based on a disability must register with the UTEP Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS). Contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services at 915-747-5148, email them at cass@utep.edu, or apply for accommodations online via the CASS portal. Students are advised to take care of this as soon as possible.

**UTEP Food Pantry:** [Click here.](#)

**UTEP Counseling and Psychological Services:** [Click here.](#)

**UTEP Technology Support:** [Click here.](#)

**COVID-19 precautions**

Please stay home if you have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms. If you are feeling unwell, let me know as soon as possible so that we can work on appropriate accommodations. If you have tested positive for COVID-19, you are encouraged to report your results to covidaction@utep.edu so that the Dean of Students Office can provide you with support and help with communication with your professors. The Student Health Center is equipped to provide COVID-19 testing.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that people in areas of substantial or high COVID-19 transmission wear face masks when indoors in groups of people. The best way to take care of each other is to get the vaccine. If you still need the vaccine, it is widely available in the El Paso area. For more information about the current rates, testing, and vaccinations, please visit [epstrong.org](http://epstrong.org)
CLASS SCHEDULE
(subject to change)

January 18, Greetings and introduction to the course

I Media technologies, hegemony, and the modern sensorium

January 25, Mass media and the matter of hegemony
Read:

February 1, Early media technologies: Machines of modernity
Read:

February 8, Format standardization and the algorithmic revolution
Read:

Watch:
“The Internet’s Own Boy” (Dir. Brian Knappenberger). Watch it on YouTube (under Creative Commons 3.0 License).
February 15, Noise and the neoliberal sensorium

Read:


II Media, alterity, and counter/hegemony

February 22, The power of/in media

Read:


March 1, Blackness and the phonographic machine

Read:


Listen:

The Vanishing of Harry Pace: Episode 1: [https://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/radiolab/articles/vanishing-harry-pace-episode-1](https://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/radiolab/articles/vanishing-harry-pace-episode-1)

March 8, Voicings and subject formation in the postcolonial state

Read:


March 13-17, SPRING BREAK
March 22, **Reframing indigenous musics**

*Read:*


*Watch:*

“Sleeping Objects” (Dir. Ingrid Kummels): [https://vimeo.com/474203931](https://vimeo.com/474203931)

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III  **Latin American and border mediations**

March 29, **Imaginaries of race, gender, and nation in the Pan-American media industry**

*Read:*


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April 5, **Sonideros, migration, and audiotopias**

*Read:*


*Watch:*

“I’m Not Longer Here / Ya No Estoy Aquí” (Dir. Fernando Frías). Available on Netflix (clips will be shown in class)
April 12, Mediations of the norteño subject
Read:

April 19, Border musics and representations of the Chicana body
Read:

Watch:
*Chulas Fronteras (Dir. Les Blank)*.

IV Race and/as technology

April 26, Technologies of border policing
Read:

Watch:
“Sleep Dealer” (Dir. Alex Rivera). Available at UTEP’s library (clips will be shown in class)

May 3, Race, gender, and technological surrogacy
Read:

ANNEXES

What you will do in class every week

**Participate in class discussions:** You should come ready to discuss the assigned materials and your writing. The best way to do this is to prepare some notes/points. These may include, but are not limited to: the texts’ main arguments, critiques you may have, dense passages you wish to unpack collectively, extrapolations that may help you (and us) better grasp some of the content, ways to dialogue with the texts’ ideas from your point of view/work, etc.

**Collective and individual analysis:** Either in your projects, writing assignments, or during class discussions, we will consider case studies in the form of videos, recordings, archives, and other media forms. These will be a way to “ground” and “deploy” some of the theoretical concepts we will study. As you work through the readings and your own writing/thinking, I encourage you to consider the concepts we will encounter as analytical devices you may use to generate critical thought. This implies engaging in relation of dialogue (instead of just intaking information) with the ideas and authors we will study.

**Write:** You will have semi-weekly writing assignments. This is an opportunity to develop your writing skills, articulate ideas, and experiment with your writing style. While most literature we will be reading is academic, I encourage you to explore with your writing voice as much as you desire to.

**Other expectations**
(taken from Dr. Amy Cimini)

**Full and complete attendance, attention, participation, listening and reading (of required texts).** The easiest way to succeed in this course is to take note of questions that arise as you engage with course materials and bring those concerns to class meetings. I expect the very best you can give.

**Good faith and good humor toward your colleagues in the classroom.** Disagreements are expected and encouraged, but please keep nitpicking to a minimum; personal attacks and intimidation are not acceptable under any circumstances. Follow the Golden Rule. Encourage basic questions as well as advanced ones.
**Listen actively to what others have to say and advance the discussion.** If you are a confident contributor, use it for the forces of good. Bring others into discussion, refer to your classmates by name, and be positive about the contributions of those who do not say as much.

**Awkward silences and hesitation are okay.** Don’t feel you need to rush to speak and don’t worry if you need a little time to articulate something. Contributing to class discussion is more than the frequency of the times your hand goes up and the number of words you say. If you are struggling to articulate something, that’s probably a sign that you are saying something that is new and not obvious.