
MEDIA, PANIC & SCANDAL in Spring 2021 (CM4015)

Course Code	CM4015	Professor(s)	Robert Payne
Prerequisites	None	Office Number	Grenelle level 4
Class Schedule	M: 15:20-16:40 in C-103 R: 10:35-11:55 in C-103	Office Hours	Thurs 12.00-14.00
Credits	4	Email	rpayne@aup.edu
Semester	Spring 2021	Office Tel. Ext.	

Course Description

Panic is a bodily response to threat, loss of control, or insecurity. It is communicative; it moves from body to body. Because panic is also experienced collectively, it is a register of how threats are perceived and constructed by the social and political bodies that organise identity, feelings, and relationships. In this course, we will investigate the role media play in communicating and amplifying panic and in reporting on and generating scandals. We will examine the form and institutional contexts of selected news media, film, television, and digital media, and engage critically with debates around the effects and distribution of media and the politics of representation and regulation. Case studies will be analysed for evidence of how normative discourses of sex and sexuality, gender, class, ethnicity, nationality, and health are deployed in the media to construct, magnify, and respond to threats to social order and forms of deviance and transgression.

Course Learning Outcomes

A solid understanding of critical theories and debates in media, communication and cultural studies relating to panic and scandal
An improved ability to critically analyse a range of media forms, their production, circulation and reception
An improved ability to evaluate and compare examples of media, culture and communications across different contexts
Improved skills in independent research in media, culture and communications.

General Education

Course Outline

Week 1: Introduction	Monday 18 January Course introduction	
Week 2: Moral Panic What is moral panic and how does it function? How and why are “folk devils” constructed as a threat to social order? How do panics escalate and converge?	Monday 25 January <u>Required reading:</u> Goode and Ben-Yehuda, <i>Moral Panics</i> : Chps 2 & <u>Further reading:</u> Cohen, <i>Folk Devils and Moral Panics</i> , Chp 1 Hall et al., “The Changing Shape of ‘Panics’”	
Week 3: Sex Panic How is sex regulated discursively? How are different sexual cultures subject to fear and panic? How and why are sexual ‘deviants’ constructed?	Monday 1 February <u>Required reading:</u> Lancaster, <i>Sex Panic and the Punitive State</i> : Intro Rubin, “Thinking Sex”	

Week 4: The AIDS crisis How was the HIV/AIDS epidemic framed discursively as a moral crisis? Who and what were the “folk devils” of the AIDS crisis?	Monday 8 February No class: Mini-break 1	
Week 5: Representing the AIDS crisis How and why has the AIDS crisis been represented in major films? How do representations differ by context?	Monday 15 February <u>Required viewing before class:</u> <i>Philadelphia</i> (dir. Demme, 1993)	
Weeks 6-7: Contagion and virality Are media networks spaces of contagion? How have media adopted models of viral transmission? What spreads contagiously through media networks?	Monday 22 February <u>Required reading:</u> Lupton, “Panic Computing” Monday 1 March <u>Required viewing before class:</u> <i>Contagion</i> , dir. Soderbergh, 2011.	
Week 8: Midterm	Monday 8 March Midterm exam (in class)	

Week 9: Scandals and Politics How are privacy and publicity constructed? How do scandals relate to social and political institutions? What kind of media events are scandals?	Monday 15 March <u>Required reading:</u> Thompson, "Shifting Boundaries of Public and Private Life"	
Weeks 10-11: Sex scandals What makes sex scandals scandalous? How do sex scandals function narratively? What do sex scandals reveal about gender norms? How have digital media changed how scandals play out?	Monday 22 March <u>Required reading:</u> Apostolidis and Williams, <i>Public Affairs</i>, 1-25. Gamson, "Normal Sins: Sex Scandal Narratives and Institutional Morality Tales"	
	Monday 29 March The DSK scandal <u>Viewing in class:</u> <i>Room 2806</i> (Netflix, 2020)	
Weeks 12-13: Media, affect and emotion What role do affect and emotion play in shaping and connecting audiences?	Monday 5 April No class: Easter	

Why have fear and outrage become so prevalent in networked media?		
Where does “cancel culture” come from?	Monday 12 April <u>Required reading:</u> Berry and Soberiaj, <i>The Outrage Industry</i> : Chp 1 Mishan, “The Long and Tortured History of Cancel Culture”	
Week 14: Social media regulation How are social media platforms moderated and regulated? What are the assumptions behind these activities and politics?	Monday 19 April <u>Viewing in class:</u> <i>The Cleaners</i> (dir. Riesewieck and Block, 2018)	
Week 15: Review	Monday 26 April Semester review	
Final exam	Monday 3 May, 15.30-18.00	

Textbooks

This course doesn't have any textbook.

Attendance Policy

Students studying at The American University of Paris are expected to attend ALL scheduled classes, and in case of absence, should contact their professors to explain the situation. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of any specific attendance policy that a faculty member might have set in the course syllabus. The French Department, for example, has its own attendance policy, and students are responsible for compliance. Academic Affairs will excuse an absence for students' participation in study trips related to their courses.

Attendance at all exams is mandatory.

IN ALL CASES OF MISSED COURSE MEETINGS, THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR COMMUNICATION WITH THE PROFESSOR, AND FOR ARRANGING TO MAKE UP MISSED WORK, RESTS SOLELY WITH THE STUDENT.

Whether an absence is excused or not is ALWAYS up to the discretion of the professor or the department. Unexcused absences can result in a low or failing participation grade. In the case of excessive absences, it is up to the professor or the department to decide if the student will receive an "F" for the course. An instructor may recommend that a student withdraw, if absences have made it impossible to continue in the course at a satisfactory level.

Students must be mindful of this policy when making their travel arrangements, and especially during the Drop/Add and Exam Periods.

Grading Policy

Final grades will be calculated from the following assignments:

1. Reading Responses: 15%

To show your capacity for critical engagement with ideas and arguments, you will submit four critical responses to class readings. Each response (400 words) corresponds to one section of class content: choose any one or two required readings set for the corresponding section. Format and submission information will be distributed. Due 4 February, 4 March, 1 April, 15 April.

2. Mid-term Exam: 25%

Based on material from the first half of semester. In class 8 March.

3. Final Project: 40%

This project will be a creative and critical exploration of a topic of your choice. Possible formats for production may include communications plan, website, podcast, video, etc. The project will show a significant amount of independent research beyond class readings. Guidelines will be distributed. Due 26 April.

4. Final Exam: 10%

Based on material from the last section of semester. 3 May at 3.30pm.

5. Class participation: 10%

This grade is based on: (1) attendance at all classes (each absence will bring your grade down) and (2) constructive participation in class discussions and showing evidence of your preparation.

Other
