

SPCM 792C: Media and the Economy

Colorado State University, Fall 2021

3:00-5:40 Fridays, Remote

Kit Hughes

kit.hughes@colostate.edu

Virtual Office Hours: Mon/Fri 1-2 & by appointment. Send me an email heads-up at least a couple of hours prior to when you want to meet so I can be sure I'm not already booked. If you prefer phone, include a good number to reach you by and I'll give you a call. If you prefer Zoom, I will send a link.

Description

How and where do ideas about the economy circulate? How do media enable and limit economic practices? Can we identify aesthetic forms and genres common to particular economic systems and ideologies? Methodologically, how might we use economic media to trace the relationship between productive forces (roughly, the base) and social and cultural practices (superstructure)? How might we use economic media—whether they perform base or superstructural functions—to create a more equitable and just world? Focusing primarily, though not exclusively, on American media cultures since the beginning of the 20th century, this course is a broad-based introduction to these questions, addressing a wide range of texts (industrial film, institutional advertising, reality television, music, bureaucratic documents, public affairs programs, news, commercials, telethons, novels, educational programs, pop economy literature, cryptocurrency, websites, NFTs, feature film entertainment) and economic practices (investment, speculation, insurance, real estate, sales, consumption, advertising, management, lobbying, goods manufacture).

Objectives

In this class students will

- Identify and define economic media in cases that extend beyond financial news, investor information, economic education, and other genres that declare themselves explicitly interested in the economy
- Analyze how economic media texts, aesthetics, and practices promote certain modes of economic thought
- Explain major historical shifts in 20th and 21st century economic thought and practice, as well as how these shifts disproportionately benefit and harm particular groups, populations, and/or classes
- Research and write a detailed case study of economic media from a media and cultural studies perspective that accounts for historical context, medium specificity, production practices, audiences, and/or use

Required Materials

Books listed in the schedule. It's up to you how you want to access these. There may be some you want to purchase, others you want to get from the library or share. For books you want to purchase, I recommend <https://www.oldfirehousebooks.com/>. They take special orders – just be sure to give them some lead time (same for ILL). To my knowledge, unlike Amazon, Old Firehouse Books has not been responsible for the death, injury, or routine dehumanization of any of its employees.

Additional readings and other materials, as necessary, will be posted to Canvas or reserves (Canvas->Files->Readings). You will find materials organized by week; read materials before the week on the folder. You are also responsible for media texts listed on the syllabus and assigned by your colleagues as part of their curation projects.

In addition to readings, on Canvas you will also find 1) the syllabus and 2) the discussion questions you and your colleagues write. Beyond this, we will not be using the LMS extensively. If you ever want to discuss how you're doing in the class—at any point—please don't hesitate to reach out to me. If you are in danger of failing any given assignment, I will reach out to you.

Policies

- **Attendance:** is not graded. There are only a handful of us in this class. In order to make sure you and your colleagues get the most out of discussion and other activities, please do your absolute best to attend every single meeting. I realize extenuating circumstances may sometimes make this impossible.
- **Communication:** I try not to check my work email after 5:00pm or on the weekends. I will, however, do my best to respond to all workweek emails within 24 hours. Occasionally, I distribute information via email; please check these applications every 24 hours during the workweek.
- **Accessibility:** Please let me know as soon as possible (in the first two weeks of class) if you require special accommodations for a learning disability. Visit the Student Disability Center (<https://disabilitycenter.colostate.edu/>) for more information on academic accommodations.
- **Preferred address:** I use she/her/hers and Kit. Professor is also fine.
- **Academic integrity:** This course adheres to the CSU Academic Integrity Policy found in the CSU General Catalog and in the Student Conduct Code.
- **Videoconferencing technology:** It is difficult to be on Zoom for hours. At the same time, being able to see each other is important for building classroom community. I also realize the home context can be more complicated to navigate than the classroom. As such, it is fine if you need to mute your camera now and then, but I ask that you keep the camera on for 95%(ish) of each class session, including labs. You may also consider using a background for privacy reasons. You may not record or reuse sessions without the express permission of everyone included in the call.

Student Resources

Undocumented Student Support: Any CSU student who faces challenges or hardships due to their legal status in the United States and believes that it may impact their academic performance in this course is encouraged to visit [Student Support Services for Undocumented, DACA & ASSET \(Links to an external site.\)](#) for resources and support.

Food Insecurity: Any CSU student (along with faculty and staff) who is experiencing food insecurity can receive support from the [Rams Against Hunger \(Links to an external site.\)](#) program. Services include a food pantry, a meal-swipe program, pocket pantries, and in-person assistance with navigating federal aid eligibility. The RAH page includes numerous resources as well as county, state and federal programs which are described and linked.

Title IX/Interpersonal Violence: For the full statement regarding role and responsibilities about reporting harassment, sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, and the retaliation policy please go to: [Title IX - Sexual Assault, Sexual Violence, Sexual Harassment \(Links to an external site.\)](#).

If you feel that your rights have been compromised at CSU, several resources are available to assist:

- Student Resolution Center, 200 Lory Student Center, 491-7165
- Office of Equal Opportunity, 101 Student Services, 491-5836
- A note about interpersonal violence: If you or someone you know has experienced sexual assault, relationship violence and/or stalking, know that you are not alone. As instructors, we are required by law to notify university officials about disclosures related to interpersonal violence. Confidential victim advocates are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to provide support related to the emotional, physical, physiological and legal aftermath of interpersonal violence. Contact the Victim Assistance Team at: 970-492-4242.

Mental Health and Wellness: Your student fees provide access to a wide range of support services. Call Counseling Services at (970) 491-6053, and they will work together with you to find out which services are right for you. Visit <https://health.colostate.edu/about-counseling-services> to learn more and <https://health.colostate.edu/mental-health-resources/> for additional student mental health and well-being resources.

If you are concerned about a friend or peer, use **Tell Someone** by calling (970) 491-1350 or visiting <https://supportandsafety.colostate.edu/tell-someone/> to share your concerns with a professional who can discreetly connect the distressed individual with the proper resources.

COVID - Important information for students: All students are expected and required to report any COVID-19 symptoms to the university immediately, as well as exposures or positive tests from a non-CSU testing location. If you suspect you have symptoms, please fill out the COVID Reporter (<https://covid.colostate.edu/reporter/>). If you know or believe you have been exposed, including living with someone known to be COVID positive, or have symptoms of COVID, it is important for the health of yourself and others that you complete the online COVID Reporter.

Do not ask your instructor to report for you. If you do not have internet access to fill out the online COVID-19 Reporter, please call (970) 491-4600. You will not be penalized in any way for reporting. If you report symptoms or a positive test, you will receive immediate instructions on what to do, and CSU's Public Health Office will be notified. Once notified, that office will contact you and most likely conduct contact tracing, initiate any necessary public health requirements and/or recommendations and notify you if you need to take any steps. For the latest information about the University's COVID resources and information, please visit the CSU COVID-19 site: <https://covid.colostate.edu>

Basic Needs Statement - At CSU, Rams take care of Rams—period. If you are experiencing food, housing, and/or transportation insecurity, please contact lsc_basicneedsinfo@colostate.edu.

Student Disability Center Accommodations - Students who have federally supported disabilities will find information about processes and supports available at this site: <https://disabilitycenter.colostate.edu/accommodations-process/>

Assignments

Weekly discussion questions	15%
Participation	15%
Media Curation Project	10%
Final Paper Proposal	10%
Final Paper	50%

Scale:

A: 93-100 | A-: 90-92.9 | B+: 87-89.9 | B: 83-86.9 | B-: 80-82.9 | C+: 77-79.9 | C: 70-76.9 | D: 60-69.9 | F: <60

Weekly reading/discussion questions

Forming questions is one of the major intellectual tasks of the scholar. This assignment provides you the opportunity to hone those skills while simultaneously preparing for our weekly discussions. Each week, you must post 3 questions to Canvas by midnight (11:59pm) on Thursday. This deadline balances giving you time to sit with the week's reading with the need for me and your colleagues to consider your questions prior to class. I have limited the number of required questions per person to 3, because I would rather you focus your energy on developing a few really important ideas than treating an entire work more superficially in a dozen questions. You may skip 2 weeks without penalty.

What makes a good question?

- It is analytical rather than descriptive (e.g., focusing on “why”s instead of “what”s. It's fine (and often useful!) to start one of your questions with a knowledge check, e.g., “How does Hughes define logistical media?”, but your question must also push further, asking your colleagues to do evaluative work of the reading, e.g., “How does her focus on logistical uses of CCTV exclusively in the workplace—and the consequent lack of attention given to CCTV in domestic spheres—limit the claims she can make regarding the affective capacity of televisual liveness?”

- Its scope is suited to a 3-hour class (not yes or no, not focused on minutia and not so broad that it's impossible to address).
- It focuses on the stakes of arguments. Focusing on a detailed element of an author's argument is fine if it's relevant to how we understand their larger project. It can even be "about" a single word choice or a footnote (e.g., *Archive Fever's* n. 1, an absolute classic), as long as it takes us back to our major concerns and the stakes of our class.

To ensure coverage of weekly readings:

- Your questions must touch on at least two different chapters or articles. (So, for example, you could ask a broad question about method connected to the entire book, a question about the intro, and a question about C5. Or, you could pose one comparative question between two articles and your other two questions are about the same article.)
- Once one chapter/article has 2 dedicated questions, you may no longer pose a question about that chapter/article (unless all chapters, etc. already have 2 questions). For this reason, you want to be sure to check Canvas as you're working on your questions – and as you're reading, think about ample questions that interest you.

Discussion and Workshop participation

You must come to class prepared to engage your colleagues' questions and the assigned texts. This means you need to have closely read and taken notes on both the readings and your peers' questions. Our time together is limited and our work is hard and important. While our lived experiences may sometimes be useful in helping to articulate a point or illustrate a claim, personal anecdotes should not overwhelm analytical discussions of the readings and concepts themselves. The final two weeks of the course will be comprised of peer review and writing workshops. Your grade is a measure of the quality of your preparation for and participation in all of these activities.

Media Curation Project

Some of our weeks have primary media objects assigned others do not. For this project, you will select a week without a media object and curate an example for the class that complements the week's reading(s). Your object might be a feature film (keep it under 2 hours), a short film, a television episode, a set of forms/documents, a podcast, a website or two, news reporting, a couple of social media accounts, a set of commercials, a textbook, posters, art, an album, a mobile game, and just about anything else relevant to class. If your text is on the shorter side (e.g., commercials), provide multiple examples or supplementary materials (see Wk 1 for an example). In class, you will facilitate a discussion of your object. One week prior to your discussion facilitation—on Friday *before the start of class*—send me an email with:

- A list of your text(s), cited correctly in Chicago style
https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/chicago_manual_17th_edition/cmos_formatting_and_style_guide/chicago_manual_of_style_17th_edition.html
- Guidance on how to access your texts (including the file(s) themselves, if necessary)
- A curational statement - a paragraph describing your object(s), their creator/purpose, and relevant historical/cultural context
- 4-6 questions for your colleagues to consider as they engage with your object(s).

You may assign a text you plan to analyze for your final project. If you hope to assign a feature film (or other text associated with a potential cost for your colleagues), begin working with me and the library to license the text at least 4 weeks before you're scheduled to curate.

Final Paper

Your major assignment is a 20-30pp (PhD students: 25-30pp) paper on the themes of the course appropriate for submission to a scholarly journal.

Final Paper Meeting (10/3) and Proposal (10/18)

Topic meeting – you will meet with me one-on-one to discuss possibilities for your final paper. You should come to the meeting prepared with one or two concepts that you would like to explore further, as well as potential case study objects. Before we meet, you should also do a cursory scan of secondary literature to identify how your approach to your object(s) extends current understandings of media's relationship to capital. Sometime in week 4 or 5, set an appointment to meet with me by the end of week 6 (10/3).

Your paper proposal (10/18) should run 3-4 pages (not counting the bibliography) and include:

1. Title, topic, purpose, and significance of your paper (The “so what”)
2. Research question and/or thesis statement
3. The main concepts/keywords and their significance to your project
4. Primary object(s) and method of analysis
5. Primary and secondary sources you intend to consult and their relevance to your paper
6. The intended organization of your paper.
7. Annotated bibliography of 15 sources (up to 5 may be from the syllabus) that describes each source with the following information:
 - a. What methods the author applies to what evidence
 - b. What disciplinary/intellectual tradition the author is writing from (e.g., media studies, rhetorical studies)
 - c. How the source will help you answer your question or how you intend to build on/work with the source

Schedule

Terms and Conditions

Wk 1 | 8/27

- Raymond Williams, “Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory,” *NLR* I/82 (1973), 3-16.
- Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is there no Alternative?* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2009).
- Jodi Dean and Mark Fisher, “We Can’t Afford to be Realists: A Conversation,” in *Reading Capitalist Realism*, eds Alison Shonkwiler & Leigh Claire La Berge (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2014): 26-40.

- **Media:** “Born in the USA” (Springsteen, 1984) AND selections from “Tramps Like Us, Pt 2” Hit Parade (<https://slate.com/podcasts/hit-parade>) timestamps: 5:08-8:15, 14:15-16:00, 25:30-30:00; 40:07-43:47

Wk 2 | 9/3

- Mark Blyth, “Karl Polanyi and Institutional Change” and “A Theory of Institutional Change,” in *Great Transformations: Economic Ideas and Institutional Change in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Cambridge, 2002). I highly recommend the entire book, especially if you don’t have much background in 20thc economic history. Likewise, David Harvey’s *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* offers a concise overview of the period following Blyth’s study.
- Haidee Wasson and Charles Acland, “Introduction: Utility and Cinema,” in *Useful Cinema* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 1-14.
- Haidee Wasson, “Spectacular Portability: Cinema’s Exhibitory Complex, American Industry, and the 1939 World’s Fair,” in *Everyday Movies: Portability and the Transformation of American Culture* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2021), 71-109.
- Carolyn Hardin, “Finding the ‘neo’ in neoliberalism,” *Cultural Studies* 28, no. 2 (2014): 199-221.
- Micky Lee, “A Review of Communication Scholarship on the Financial Markets and the Financial Media,” *International Journal of Communication* 8 (2014): 715-736.
- **Media:** *The Lady and the Stock Exchange*, 1962 (<https://www.sechistorical.org/museum/film-radio-television/video-player.php?vid=2695929826001&title=The%20Lady%20and%20the%20Stock%20Exchange>)

Embedding and disembedding Liberalism

Wk 3 | 9/10

- Lee Grieveson, *Cinema and the Wealth of Nations: Media, Capital, and the Liberal World System* (Oakland: UC Press, 2018).
- **Media curator: Chaz**

Wk 4 | 9/17

- Elizabeth A. Fones-Wolf, *Selling Free Enterprise: The Business Assault on Labor and Liberalism 1945-60* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994).
- **Media:** Unlocking the Airwaves
 - Allison Perlman, Labor and the NAEB: <https://www.unlockingtheairwaves.org/exhibits/labor-and-the-naeb/>
 - Kit Hughes, Economy and Business in the NAEB Collection: <https://www.unlockingtheairwaves.org/exhibits/economy-and-business-in-the-naeb-collection/>
 - Listen to a least one episode of a linked program

Wk 5 | 9/24

- Salomé Aguilera Skvirsky, *The Process Genre: Cinema and the Aesthetic of Labor* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020).
- **Media**
 - Alain Resnais for Pechiney, La chant du Styrène: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K9viGtilNkA>
 - Coors Brewery Virtual Tour: Brewing Process <https://www.visitgolden.com/places-to-go/coors-brewery-tour/>

Wk 6 | 10/1

- Forian Hoof, *Angles of Efficiency: A Media History of Consulting* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).
- **Media curator: Emma**

Wk 7 | 10/8

- Caroline Jack, "How Facts Survive: Sponsored Economic Education Media and American Social Imaginaries, 1974-1986" PhD dissertation, Cornell University, 2016
- Caroline Jack, "Producing Milton Friedman's Free to Choose: How Libertarian Ideology Became Broadcasting Balance," *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 62:3 (2018): 514-530
 - Also consider this week's readings as models (dissertation & how to develop an article from a larger project)
- **Media curator: Field**

Finance

Wk 8 | 10/15

- Randy Martin, *Financialization of Everyday Life* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002).
- Paper proposal due **MONDAY 10/18** by 11:59pm on Canvas
- **Media curator: Nicole**

Wk 9 | 10/22

- Alison Shonkwiler, *The Financial Imaginary: Economic Mystification and the Limits of Realist Fiction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017).
- Wonham, Henry B. "Genres of Valuation: Marginalist Economics and American Literary Realism," *American literature* 93, no. 1 (2021): 35-58.
- **Media curator: Miranda**

Wk 10 | 10/29

- Kennan Ferguson and Patrice Petro, eds., *After Capitalism: Horizons of Finance, Culture, and Citizenship* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2016).
- **Media curator: El**

Case Studies

Wk 11 | 11/5

- Lauren Berlant, “Affect in the Present” (1-21) and “After the Good Life: An Impasse: Time Out, Human Resources, and the Precarious Present” (191-222) in *Cruel Optimism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).
- Shawn Shimpach, “Realty Reality: HGTV and the Subprime Crisis” *American Quarterly* 64, no. 3 (2012): 515-542.
- Kara M. Kvaran, “‘You’re All Doomed!’ A Socioeconomic Analysis of Slasher Films,” *Journal of American Studies* 50, no. 4 (2016): 953–70.
- Cynthia B. Meyers, “The Best Thing on TV: 1960s US Television Commercials” in *Films that Sell: Motion Pictures and Advertising* eds., Bo Florin, Nico de Klerk and Patrick Vonderau (London: BFI, 2016): 173-193.
- **Media:** *Sorry to Bother You* (2018) on reserves

Wk 12 | 11/12

- Josh Lauer, “Running the Credit Gauntlet: Extracting, Ordering, and Communicating Consumer Information” (103-125) and “‘You Are Judged by Your Credit’: Teaching and Targeting the Consumer” (126-155) in *Creditworthy: A History of Consumer Surveillance and Financial Identity in America* (New York, Columbia University Press, 2017)
- Paul K. Longmore, “The Hidden Politics of Telethons: Where Volunteerism, Government, and Business Meet” (32-42) and “Givers and Takers: Conspicuous Contribution and a Distinctly American Moral Economy” (59-70), plus plates in *Telethons: Spectacle, Disability, and the Business of Charity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016)
- Peter Spiegler, “The Unbearable Lightness of the Economics-Made-Fun Genre.” *Journal of Economic Methodology* 19, no. 3 (2012): 283–301.
- Kevin R. Brine and Mary Poovey, Section 1.2: “The Growth of American Public Accounting” in *Finance in America: An Unfinished Story* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 36-49.
- Gordon L. Clark, Nigel Thrift and Adam Tickell, “Performing Finance: the industry, the media, and its image,” *Review of International Political Economy* 11, no. 2 (2004): 289-310.
- **Media:** Your Kickstarter Sucks (YKS) podcast, optional
- **Media curator:** Amber

Updated Terms and Conditions

Wk 13 | 11/19

- Jodi Dean, “Technology: The Promises of Communicative Capitalism,” in *Democracy and Other Neoliberal Fantasies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 19-48.
- Shoshana Zuboff, “Introduction,” *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism* (London: Profile Books, 2019), 3-26.
- Matthew Bellinger, “Introduction” (1-21) and “Constructing a Collective: Digital Metallism and the Procedural Rhetoric of Bitcoin” (61-101) in “Money, Politics, and the

Construction of Blockchain Communities,” PhD dissertation, University of Washington 2018.

- On NFTs (TBD), hopefully the forthcoming week on Non-fungible Tokens on In Media Res (scheduled for fall 2021): <http://mediacommons.org/imr/> & Andy Fischer, “Art Imitates Life, NFT Verifies Art: Walter Benjamin and Vault by CNN.” *FLOW* <http://www.flowjournal.org/2021/08/nft-for-you-and-me/> 8/10/2021.
- Guest speaker Jodi Dean (JKLOL): Watch “Communism or Neo-Feudalism” talk and Q&A given at Innis College, 2019. (Dean begins around the 7-minute mark) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A7FLMCeA8BU>
- **Media:** spend at least 30 minutes looking at 3 of the following (your choice - but try to mix it up) economy and personal finance-related subreddits:
 - r/superstonks
 - r/investing
 - r/financialindependence
 - r/CryptoCurrency
 - r/almosthomeless
 - r/povertyfinance
 - r/capitalism
 - r/socialism

Fall Break 11/22-11/26

Wk 14 | 12/3

- Workshops and peer review

Wk 15 | 12/10

- Workshops and peer review

Wk 16 | 12/13

- Hand in final paper by midnight