

Course Outline

CMNS 2140 - 3 Credits
Media, Representation and Society
Fall 2026
Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:30-12:45
Old Main 2632

The campuses of Thompson Rivers University are located on the traditional and unceded territory of the Secwepemc Nation within Secwepemcul'ecw. As we share knowledge, teaching, learning and research within this university, we recognize that this territory has always been a place of teaching, learning and research.

Instructor: Christine Adam

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Office: 1841 Old Main

Office Hours: Wednesday afternoons, or by appointment

Calendar Description

Students explore theories of representations through the lens of cultural studies, to consider how media representation is interrelated with the construction of social identities and cultures. Through consideration of case studies drawn from diverse media environments, students analyze how questions of power, inequality and social issues are connected to the construction of knowledge in representation. In the process, students explore how we construct and negotiate our identities and meaning through acts of media representation.

Course Description

CMNS 2140 is an open elective, available to Communications students and students from other faculties, with no prior Communications coursework required. The course moves through four progressive units: Seeing, Naming, Questioning, and Positioning.

Educational Objectives/Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- (1) Identify and explain key theories of representation and critical concepts and methods associated with communication studies.
- (2) Critically assess examples and case studies of media representation through the concepts and methods of the theory.
- (3) Analyze the construction of social identities and meanings through media representation, with consideration of questions of power.
- (4) Apply strong critical thinking and academic writing skills.

Prerequisites

None. This course is a standalone entry point; no prior Communications coursework is required.

Texts/Materials

All readings will be available on the course website, organized by week.

Student Evaluation

Assessment in this course is a collaborative, ungrading process.

There are three major assignments:

- a media audit (Unit 1),
- an annotated media analysis (Unit 2), and
- a comparative media analysis (Unit 3).

Each receives substantive feedback and is marked “complete” or “redo,” with as many redo opportunities as you need to complete the assignment.

The final submission (Unit 4) is a self-assessment, in a format of the your choice, in which you will propose a final grade based on the evidence of your work, class engagement, and my feedback, documenting competency, excellence, growth, and risk taking.

Course Topics

- Unit 1 - Seeing (Weeks 1-3): What is media doing, and how do we look at it critically? Representation as construction, not reflection.
 - Key concepts: representation, discourse, sign, denotation/connotation.
 - Submission: Media audit.
- Unit 2 - Naming (Weeks 4-7): What systems of meaning are at work? Race, gender, class, and Indigeneity as representational categories; how advertising interpellates audiences.
 - Key concepts: ideology, interpellation, othering, stereotyping, erasure.
 - Submission: Annotated media analysis.
- Unit 3 - Questioning (Weeks 8-10): Whose discourse is this, produced by whom, for whom? Production context, institutional power, and platform logic. Indigenous media sovereignty as a case study.
 - Key concepts: media ownership, production context, counter-narrative, sovereignty.
 - Submission: Comparative media analysis.
- Unit 4 - Positioning (Weeks 11-13): Where am I in all of this?
 - Key concepts: positionality, critical reflexivity, media literacy as practice.
 - Submission: Final self-assessment and grade documentation.

Methods for Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition

Students with relevant prior learning in critical media analysis may contact the instructor to discuss assessment options consistent with TRU policy.

Use of Technology

This course draws on a wide range of digital and print media, including advertising, games, podcasts, social media, and film, and is delivered in an in-person format using Moodle for submissions and a course website for materials. Students are expected to engage critically with AI's role in media and representation as an object of study; use of AI for assessed work must be disclosed and aligned with course policy, which will be discussed in the first week of class.

Class Cancellations

Note that I do not anticipate any class cancellations. If something unforeseen occurs and I need to cancel class, I will place an announcement in Moodle as soon as possible.

Accessibility Services

TRU's Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities Policy (BRD 10-0) outlines the university's responsibilities to provide accommodations for students with disabilities. Accessibility Services at TRU provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact Accessibility Services at 250-828-5023 or as@tru.ca for support. Students and faculty now have access to a user-friendly student services portal. After students are approved for academic accommodations for the upcoming semester, they can log into the student services portal with their TRU credentials and send their accommodation letter directly to their instructor(s). See Accessibility Services for more information.

Academic Honesty and Attendance

Students must be familiar with and follow the following TRU policies:

- Academic Integrity, Policy ED-5-0. Resources for compliance with this policy can be found at the Academic Integrity Centre website.
- Student Attendance, Policy ED 3-1

Students should expect these policies to be enforced in this course. All policies can be found online at <https://www.tru.ca/policy.html>