

Southern Connecticut State University
Media Studies Department
Program Review
April 1, 2009

- I. The department/program's mission supports the university's mission.

Media Studies Department Mission

Media Studies is a quintessential liberal arts discipline—by nature an interdisciplinary and liberal approach to critical studies. In light of the advance of media and technology and their pervasive impact on culture within the last 50 years, Media Studies embodies a natural and necessary evolution from traditional fields of study that include literary criticism, philosophy, ethics, anthropology, sociology and psychology. Media theory and research repurpose these traditional approaches to engender a dynamic exploration of media and culture which legitimizes our place within the liberal arts curriculum.

The Media Studies Department is committed to the belief that any educational institution that embraces a comprehensive approach to education must therefore also embrace a systematic and complete study of media in all its forms. We recognize the profound and irresistible relationship that exists between the nature of media and the production of meaning, the acquisition of knowledge, the construction of self and the nature of society on individual, communal, and global levels. To that end, the Media Studies Department addresses the salient components of the University's mission, which include academic excellence, lifelong learning, social justice and service for the public good.

The Media Studies Department provides student-citizens skills requisite to becoming informed consumers of mediated messages. It encourages academic excellence through a rigorous program of study requiring that students learn and apply current theoretical and critical approaches to media analysis. Such analysis includes evaluation of political, economic, and social and aesthetic messages of the US and the world. It provides a critical and cultural perspective of social justice and global citizenship, as awareness and understanding of these areas are primarily informed by (and filtered through) media channels.

As students become critically engaged with the media and its messages, there is a natural progression toward participation in media reform and, by extension, to reforms relating to social justice. With this in mind, the Media Studies Department encourages student involvement in the service of the public good through co-curricular activities that include organizational involvement, educational exhibits, lectures, and conferences. Whenever possible, these activities are made available to the university community as well as the community at large.

The department's dedication to lifelong learning begins with a commitment to frame the study of media beyond the popular and naïve perceptions perpetuated by popular

opinions and attitudes. We wish to encourage students to think beyond the familiar and trite laments often heard about the negative impact of media on society. Instead, our mission is to graduate men and women who have developed a critical consciousness with which to engage in the necessary and serious social, moral and political discourse regarding media and technology's relationship to our lives and our worlds. It is our hope that this critical engagement engenders an ongoing learning experience as students apply their acquired knowledge, their critical awareness, and their analytical skill to the evolving social global issues and the challenges we face because of them.

II. The department has clearly stated program goals and objectives.

The goals of the Media Studies Department are to:

1. Instill a foundational appreciation for critical thinking as a more contemporary and relevant application of the traditional rhetorical model thus accommodating the current mediated environment.
2. Generate the ability to think critically about contemporary topics.
3. Provide a holistic understanding of how media create meaning and knowledge.
4. Develop the ability to reposition popular culture from the perception of innocuous entertainment to its profound capacity to reflect and/or maintain ideological foundations that unconsciously structure societal norms.
5. Provide a micro and macro examination of the mediated world and its impact on daily life.
6. Produce media literate leaders in media industry, reform efforts, education and policy making.
7. Prepare students as graduate scholars in the critical study of media and culture.
8. Understand the dynamic relationship among media, culture and society.
9. Understand the profound impact of economics as a determining force on the construction of mediated meanings.
10. Understand media as an ecological system.

III a. Majors: The department/program has clearly stated program-level expected student outcomes and methods for measurement.

Learning outcomes were derived from faculty consensus following the review of similar critical media studies programs in the nation during the completion and approval of our degree granting program (2003-2005):

1. Students will demonstrate broad awareness and meaningful comprehension, application, and evaluation of the central arguments that make up the foundation of media studies.
2. Students will demonstrate the ability to read critically, write coherently and analytically by developing original, logical arguments about media.
3. Students will demonstrate an understanding of the history of media and technology.
4. Students will identify, describe and apply the major media theories and research methods.
5. Students will identify and analyze essential arguments in scholarly works and relate these arguments across disciplines and perspectives.
6. Students will demonstrate the ability to engage in full and complex critical thinking regarding media from a variety of perspectives and apply that thinking to contemporary media issues.

Methods for measurement:

Direct measures:

1. Students are expected to successfully fulfill the goals of courses within the curriculum. This includes course-specific exams, daily classroom exercises, individual papers, and individual and group projects.
2. MDS 482: Seminar in Media Studies is the capstone course that requires that senior students design and develop a proposal for an independent research project. As a capstone course it expects students to apply the full range of knowledge gained throughout their course of study.

Indirect measures:

1. Students are required to complete the SCSU student opinion surveys for each course.

2. Students are required to complete Likert-scale surveys, designed by the instructor of each course, that address the specific outcomes of each course.

III b. Minors: The department/program has clearly stated program-level expected student outcomes and methods for measurement.

1. Introduction to the critical study of media.
2. Knowledge and awareness of media's historical development.
3. Basic understanding of the media's sign systems.
4. Introduction to media's relationship to culture.
5. A general understanding of media as an ecological system.
6. Knowledge in a specific area of interest chosen from among electives in the curriculum.

Methods for measurement:

Direct measures:

Students are expected to successfully fulfill the goals of courses within the curriculum. This includes course-specific exams, daily classroom exercises, individual papers, and individual and group projects.

Indirect measures:

1. Students are required to complete the SCSU student opinion surveys for each course.
2. Students are required to complete Likert-scale surveys, designed by the instructor of each course, that address the specific outcomes of each course.