

FINAL EXAM

Instructions and Deadline

- Include your full name and PERM number on the first page of your exam.
- Review the section on the syllabus about responsible scholarship. Do not use any online or outside resources for any reason—course materials only. Do not consult with anyone else. The work you turn in must be 100% yours and yours alone. Instructors will not be available to answer substantive questions about course material during the exam period.
- The exam is worth 30% of your course grade.
- You must upload your exam to GauchoSpace in PDF or Word format no later than Wednesday, March 17, at 12:00 noon.
- This deadline is firm: no late exams will be accepted or accredited. Make-up exams will be given only in cases of legitimate, properly documented medical emergencies—no exceptions. Do not wait until the last minute to upload.
- There are two pages and two parts to this exam, each with its own set of instructions.

Part 1: Essay Questions (worth 30 points each)

- For this part of the exam, choose two (2) sets of essay questions below.
- Provide plenty of detail, answer every question as thoroughly as possible, and make sure to refer frequently and explicitly to course readings, lectures, and screenings. Engagement with the readings is particularly important.
- This is an exam, not a paper, so there is no need to articulate a thesis or worry about adhering to an introduction-body-conclusion structure. Nor is there reason to repeat the questions in your answers. On the other hand, do not produce a disorganized mess. The various questions relate to each other, and this should be clear in how you organize your answers.
- If you feel you must use direct quotations, use them sparingly—no more than two or three per essay. Keep quotes short and pointed, and include a citation. To demonstrate your knowledge of the material, it is much better to describe with paraphrase and to explain and analyze in your own words.
- Each essay should be 700–900 words in length.

1.) How does Barthes (“Rhetoric of the Image,” “The Kitchen of Meaning,” “Myth Today”) formulate the distinction between denotation and connotation? What does he mean by the term “myth”? Drawing on the documentary *Advertising at the Edge of the Apocalypse*, explain how advertising mobilizes various myths (e.g., love, happiness, material abundance) to sell consumable products. What does myth have to do with the reproduction of social ideologies? How does reader-response criticism—and the notion of “active audience” more generally—suggest that the process of ideological reproduction via the circulation of myths is not simple, uniform, or absolute in its effects? In “Encoding/Decoding,” Hall distinguishes between “dominant-hegemonic,” “negotiated,” and “oppositional” positions. Explain what he means by each of these. How does Conquergood’s ethnographic research (“Is It Real?”) show that media audiences matter in their particularity? How does it suggest the insufficiency of Hall’s analytical categories?

2.) In “Fandom as Pathology,” Jensen states that “the concept of the fan involves images of social and psychological pathology.” What does she mean by this? What are the two types of pathological fan? What are the characteristics and the historical conditions of each? What ideological prejudices help explain the fact that scholars and connoisseurs of high culture are often thought worthy of respect, whereas fans of popular culture are often thought worthy of ridicule or contempt? How does Chatman’s “Black Twitter and the Politics of Viewing *Scandal*” offer a decidedly “non-pathological”—indeed, more elevated and affirmative—account of fandom? Why does she insist that, for certain viewers of *Scandal*, fan-tweeting constitutes a form of political engagement? Does it follow that the online activities of the show’s “anti-fans” also constitute a form of political engagement? Why or why not?

3.) For this essay, think about—and across—the following texts: Bridle, “Complicity,” Zuboff, “Home or Exile in the Digital Future,” Tufekci “Platforms and Algorithms,” and Seymour, “We Are All Addicts” and “We Are All Celebrities.” How does each of these authors assess the promise and possibilities of digital media as well as their problems and dangers? How do the technologies and practices they discuss confuse or complicate traditional distinctions between publicness and privacy? Between labor/production and leisure/consumption? Between community, interactivity, and the logic of celebrity? Between civic participation and corporate-capitalist exploitation? Between individual freedom and social control? How do the documentaries *Nothing to Hide* and *The Social Dilemma* illustrate, extend, or challenge some of the key ideas and arguments advanced by these authors? What contemporary social-media myths do the short films *Aspirational* and *Boomerang* satirize? What aspects of social-media culture and economy do these films perhaps fail to adequately consider or critique?

Part 2: Term Identifications (worth 10 points each)

- For this part of the exam, choose four (4) terms from the list below.
- For each identification, fully define and explain the significance of the term as it pertains to this course. Provide plenty of detail and make sure to refer explicitly to course readings, lectures, and screenings. Engagement with the readings is particularly important.
- Each identification should be 200–300 words in length.

- 1.) signifier, signified, and sign
- 2.) culture jamming as counterhegemonic practice
- 3.) remixes and mashups
- 4.) memeability and *RuPaul's Drag Race*
- 5.) filter bubbles, echo chambers, and confirmation bias
- 6.) mimetic desire and the sacrificial logic of social media