Introduction to Cultural Studies – UGST4186

BA Program *Culture, Politics and Society* | 1st year | 3 credits – 6 ECTS
Winter term AY 2024-25 | Tuesdays 11:50-12:50 + 13:50-14:50, Thursdays 11:50-12:50

[The course includes an EXCURSION to the WELTMUSEUM VIENNA (March 11). Please note that the time of the respective class differs from the regular schedule!]

Instructor: Ulrich Meurer
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The instructor is available for individual questions after every class.
You can also register for additional OFFICE HOUR slots via email.

Teaching Assistant: Viswesh Rammohan
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You have access to all readings, web-resources and videos via MOODLE:
https://ceulearning.ceu.edu/login/index.php

Link for selecting a topic/date for your in-class IMPULSE (register until January 11, 2025 / see below: 'assignments'):
https://nuudel.digitalcourage.de/mkL2hvQnAe7pIVKE

Link for participation via ZOOM (only from other countries and due to visa/immigration issues):
https://ceu-edu.zoom.us/j/97052332348?pwd=VTZmUjcwWE8ycjF3OW5uNzh6MWhiZz09
Meeting-ID: 970 5233 2348 / Password: 670202

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

"Culture" – claims its master theoretician Terry Eagleton – is "the second or third most complex word in the English language." Does it denote good table manners or national heritage; is it a mark of distinction or a set of everyday practices; is it the same as "Civilization" or the opposite of "Nature"? What is more, the term's complexity seems to entail a rich bouquet of study methods: Can one read a culture like a text? Can one analyze it like the psyche of an individual? Can one criticize it like an ideology? Or does one always need a new and different approach – for hegemonic Western culture, pop cultures, subcultures, queer cultures, postcolonial cultures?

Accordingly, Cultural Studies draws on numerous academic fields (including sociology, political sciences, history, anthropology, philosophy, literary and media studies) and integrates a variety of works and theories that precede the so-called "cultural turn" and official establishment of the discipline.

Considering such diversity, this introductory course wants to find the (ideal) balance between overview and detail. On the one hand, we will discuss groundbreaking texts from the pre-war period to the present to get to know many of the canonical concepts of Cultural Studies as well as its only just emerging ideas – not by adhering to the habitual theoretical categories ("Marxism", "Structuralism", "Postmodernism" …) but by exploring areas of interest such as signs and bodies, space, and race. On the other hand, we will try and test cultural theories on all kinds of material, from music videos or motel rooms to Vienna's famous Sacher cake.

Students will be introduced to ▶ seminal concepts/models in Cultural Studies. They will get insight into ▶ ongoing debates between established and contemporary perspectives of the discipline. They will ▶ review cultural theories in the light of various artifacts, source material and audiovisual works (video, installation, film, virtual environment). Participants will learn how to ▶ structure, formulate, and evaluate scholarly arguments through in-class discussions, short presentations, and written papers. They will have the opportunity to ▶ apply their knowledge in the form of audio/visual course work.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE + READINGS:

- ▶ Mandatory readings and audiovisual resources (printed in black) are prepared prior to the respective class.
- ▷ Optional readings & material (indicated by grey font) serve as additional basis for presentations, further explorations of the topic and inspiration for your final course works …
- ▶ Classes taught by the Teaching Assistant are marked with 'TA' in the left column.

Intro: What We Study When We Study Culture	
Jan.07 + Jan.09	**What are Cultural Studies?** Discussion of the Course Topic + Organization and Assignments ▷ David Oswell: "Introduction: From the Beginning", in: *Culture and Society. An Introduction to Cultural Studies*. London: Sage 2006, 1-12 (*especially pp. 1-10*) ▷ Raymond Williams: *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. Oxford: Oxford UP 2015.
Jan.14 + Jan.16 TA	**What is "Culture"?** GUIDING QUESTIONS: ○ *How does a modern concept of "culture" crystallize in the 19th and 20th centuries?* ○ *What are the traits of power and hierarchy inscribed in that concept?* ○ *Are there older understandings of "culture"? Are they still present in the term's current meaning?* ○ *What is the relation between culture and fields like art, literature, (national) politics, religion, etc.?* ▶ Matthew Arnold: "Culture and Anarchy," in: *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader*, 6-11. ▶ T. S. Eliot: *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*. London: Faber & Faber 1948, 21-34. ▷ Stephen Greenblatt: "Culture", in: Frank Lentricchia, Thomas McLaughlin (eds): *Critical Terms for Literary Studies*. Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press 1995, 225-232.

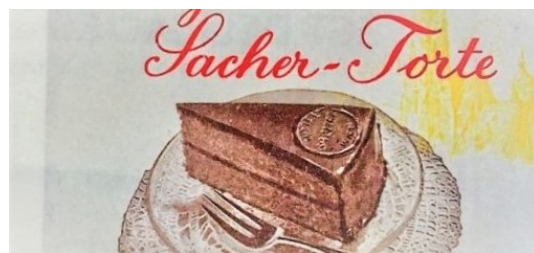| I. Culture as Sign System	
Jan.21 + Jan.23 TA	Reading/Decoding GUIDING QUESTIONS: ○ *Can culture be understood as a sign systems (like a text or media artifact)?* ○ *How does Sardar and Van Loon's illustrated book visualize the "reading" of such a sign system?* ○ *How does Stuart Hall describe TV as a site of social communication between producer and audience?* ○ *Can you apply Hall's notion of encoding/decoding to other cultural phenomena?* ▶ Ziauddin Sardar, Borin Van Loon: *Introducing Cultural Studies*. New York: Totem 1997, 3-23. ▶ Stuart Hall: "Encoding/Decoding", in: Simon During (ed.): *The Cultural Studies Reader*. London, New York: Routledge 1999, 507-517. ▷ Clifford Geertz: "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture", in: *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books 1973, 3-30.
Jan.28 + Jan.30 TA	Mythologies GUIDING QUESTIONS: ○ *What is a "mythological" reading of culture, according to Roland Barthes?* ○ *How are myths different from straightforward cultural signs (signifiers denoting a signified meaning)?* ○ *Why are myths connected to a specific political class and its interests?* ○ *Can you name examples of cultural myths in your contemporary life world?* ▶ Roland Barthes: "Saponids and Detergents" (pp. 32-34), "Steak-Frites" (83-85), "Einstein's Brain" (100-102), "The Man in the Street on Strike" (149-152), in: *Mythologies*. New York: Hill & Wang 2013. ▷ "Toys" (59-61), "Racine Is Racine" (106-108), "Striptease" (165-168), "Plastic" (193-195). ▶ Roland Barthes: "Myth Today": abridged version on MOODLE (16 pp. / from the original chapter in *Mythologies*, 217-274). ▷ John M. Gomez: *An Analysis of Roland Barthes's Mythologies*. London: Routledge 2017, 9-14; 36-55. ▷ *21st Century Mythologies – with Richard Clay* (BBC Documentary, Nov. 9, 2002): https://vimeo.com/419947320 [FULL MOVIE ALSO ACCESIIBLE ON MOODLE]
II. Mass Culture and Marxist Critique	
Feb.04 + Feb.06 TA	The Age of Reproducibility GUIDING QUESTIONS: ○ *How does the status of artworks change with their technological reproducibility?* ○ *What is the role of such new images in modern societies?* ○ *What is the special potential of cinema as a tool of fragmentation; what are its political implications?* ○ *Can we distinguish between a liberating and a fascist use of images?*

	▶ Walter Benjamin: "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility", in: *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media*. Cambridge, MA, London: Harvard UP 2008, 19-55 (*especially pp. 19-42*). ▶ *Стачка* (Strike / Sergei Eisenstein, 1925) [0:00-18:00 / 1:17:37-1:28:19]: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qwQm7R1ZHns&t=287s ▷ *Olympia* (Leni Riefenstahl, 1938) [0:00-18:00]: https://www.docsonline.tv/olympia/ ▷ Rachele Dini: *An Analysis of Walter Benjamin's The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. London, New York: Routledge 2017, 9-13; 34-43.
Feb.11 + Feb.13 TA	Late Capitalism GUIDING QUESTIONS: ○ *How does cultural signification change from modernism to postmodernism or late capitalism?* ○ *Can you describe the impact of this change on notions of depth, meaning, authenticity, history, etc.?* ○ *Is Jameson's "logic of late capitalism" still applicable today?* ○ *Do you see it reflected in Keiichi Matsuda's video Hyper-Reality?* ▶ Fredric Jameson: "Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism", in: Meenakshi Gigi Durham, Douglas M. Kellner (eds): *Media and Cultural Studies: KeyWorks*. Malden, MA, Oxford: Blackwell 2006, 482-489 / 492-494 (incl. "*Historicism Effaces History*") / 505-519. ▷ Philip Smith: "Fredric Jameson", in: *Cultural Theory: An Introduction*, Malden, MA, Oxford: Blackwell 2001, 222-224. ▷ Andrew Milner: "Postmodernism and Late Capitalism", in: *Contemporary Cultural Theory: An Introduction*. London: UCL Press 1994, 135-138. ▷ *Hyper-Reality* (Keiichi Matsuda, 2016): http://hyper-reality.co/
	IV. Cultural Space(s)
Feb.18 + Feb.20	Heterotopias and Non-Places GUIDING QUESTIONS: ○ *What is the connection between culture and its spaces(s)?* ○ *Can you define what Foucault calls "heterotopia"? Can you name its functions? Can you give examples?* ○ *Try to relate Peter Haley's installation Heterotopia I to Foucault's text – do you see similarities?* ○ *According to Marc Augé, what is a "place," and what is a "non-place"?* ▶ Michel Foucault: "Of Other Spaces", in: *Diacritics* 16/1 (Spring 1986), 22-27. ▶ Marc Augé: *Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity*. London, New York: Verso 2008: excerpts on MOODLE (13 pp.). ▶ *Heterotopia I* (Peter Halley, video by Marìa Inès Arrìllaga, 2019): https://youtu.be/rDrbzx9I2MI ▶ Peter Halley: "Heterotopia I", press release, *Academy of Fine Arts of Venice* & *Flash Art* (2019): https://www.accademiavenezia.it/upload/eventi/file/PRESS_RELEASE_PETER_HALLEY_HETEROTOPIA_3004.pdf

▷ Michael Ryan: "Place, Space, and Geography", in: *Cultural Studies: A Practical Introduction*. Malden, MA, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell 2010, 12-25.

Feb.25 TA + Feb.27 TA	**Outer Space**

Outer Space

GUIDING QUESTIONS:
○ *What are our assumptions of what constitutes 'intelligence'?*
○ *How do we distinguish between languages?*
○ *How do constructed languages connect to our reality?*
○ *What do the concepts of clarity and opacity mean in the text?*

▶ David Samuels: "Alien Tongues," in: Debbora Battaglia (ed.): *E.T. Culture: Anthropology in Outer Spaces*. Durham, London: Duke University Press 2005, 94-129.
▶ *Arrival* (Denis Villeneuve, 2016) [TRAILER / FULL MOVIE ACCESSIBLE ON MOODLE]: https://youtu.be/tFMo3UJ4B4g

▷ Ted Chiang: "Story of Your Life," in: *Stories of Your Life and Others*. Easthampton, MA: Small Beer Press 2002, 75-114.

III. Cultures of Gender and the Body

Mar.04 + Mar.06 TA	**The Fe/Male Gaze**

The Fe/Male Gaze

GUIDING QUESTIONS:
○ *How does Mulvey conceive the woman as "image" and the man as "bearer of look"?*
○ *Can you describe the psychoanalytic basis of her theory (scopophilia, voyeurism, castration complex)?*
○ *Can you think of examples of the male gaze outside cinema?*
○ *What subversive or counter-measures might invent a female (or queer) gaze?*

▶ Laura Mulvey: "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema", in: Meenakshi Gigi Durham, Douglas M. Kellner (eds): *Media and Cultural Studies: KeyWorks*. Malden, MA, Oxford: Blackwell 2006, 342-352.
▶ *Sissy Fatigue* (Olivia Norris, Oscar Oldershaw, Jackie Pratt, Joseph Campbell, Gonnerheous Reese, 2019): https://www.nowness.com/picks/sissy-fatigue

▶ Emily Manning: "The Female Gaze: How Cindy Sherman and Nan Goldin Portray Men", *i-D Magazine*, 23.06.2016: https://i-d.vice.com/en/article/bjzq4a/the-female-gaze-women-look-at-men

	▷ Claire Sisco King: "The Male Gaze in Visual Culture", in: Marnel Niles Goins, Joan Faber McAlister, Bryant Keith Alexander (eds): *The Routledge Handbook of Gender and Communication*. London, New York: Routledge 2021, 120-132. ▷ Michael Ryan: "Gender and Sexuality", in: *Cultural Studies: A Practical Introduction.* Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell 2010, 26-39.

V. Cultures of Race and Post/Colonialism

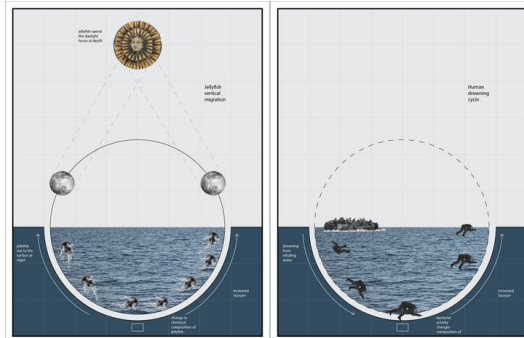|	
Mar.11 + Mar.13	Orientalism March 11: Visit to the WELTMUSEUM VIENNA, Heldenplatz, 1010 Vienna / 12:20-14:20 https://www.weltmuseumwien.at/en/ GUIDING QUESTIONS: ○ *What are the main characteristics of Said's "Orientalism"?* ○ *How does Orientalism change over time? How is it linked to geo-political shifts?* ○ *Name contemporary instances of Orientalism – do they differ from Said's original model?* ○ *Can you identify signs of (a conscious engagement with) Orientalism in the Weltmuseum's exhibition?* ▶ Edward W. Said: *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage 1979: excerpts on MOODLE (30 pp.). ▷ Riley Quinn: *An Analysis of Edward Said's Orientalism*. London, New York: Routledge 2017, 9-12 / 35-44.
Mar.18 + Mar.20 TA	Representing the Other GUIDING QUESTIONS: ○ *How does Memmi characterize the colonizer's image of the colonized? Does it resemble Said's Orientalism?* ○ *Can you describe how Trinh Minh-ha's film aesthetics act against a holistic "Othering" of the Senegal?* ○ *What does she mean by "speaking nearby"? Discuss its difference to traditional anthropological depictions.* ○ *Can stereotypes be avoided by deconstructing models of inside/outside or center/margin?* ▶ Albert Memmi: "Mythical Portrait of the Colonized", in: *The Colonizer and the Colonized*. London: Earthscan 2003, 123-133. ▶ *Reassemblage: From the Firelight to the Screen* (Trinh T. Minh-ha, 1983): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jy4BBouNPmU ▶ Nancy N. Chen: "'Speaking Nearby:' A Conversation with Trinh T. Minh-Ha", in: Visual Anthropology Review 8/1 (Spring 1992), 82-91. ▷ Trinh T. Minh-Ha: "No Master Territories", in: Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin (eds): *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*. London, New York: Routledge 1995, 215-218. ▷ Homi K. Bhabha: "The Other Question: Stereotype, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism", in: *The Location of Culture*. London, New York: Routledge 1994, 94-120.

VI. Cultures Beyond Humanism	
Mar.25 + Mar.27	Tentacles GUIDING QUESTIONS: ○ *Can you describe the constellation formed by humans, algae, and jellyfish in Tannir's project?* ○ *How do 'interspecies alliances' go beyond social or political views of migration?* ○ *Are Tannir's interspecies complexes comparable to Haraway's? What is the respective place of man?* ○ *Can you explain Haraway's main concepts (autopoiesis vs. sympoiesis / anthropocene vs. chthuluene)?* ▶ Ala Tannir: *Blood in the Water: Tracing an Interspecies Alliance between At-risk Humans and Jellyfish in the Mediterranean*. (Master Thesis, Rhode Island School of Design) Providence, Rhode Island 2017. ▶ Donna J. Haraway: *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Durham, London: Duke University Press 2016, 30-33 / 51-67. ▷ Stacy Alaimo: "Jellyfish Science, Jellyfish Aesthetics: Posthuman Reconfigurations of the Sensible", in: Cecilia Chen, Janine MacLeod, Astrida Neimanis (eds): *Thinking with Water*. Montreal, Kingston, London, Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press 2013, 139-164.

ASSIGNMENTS:

REGULAR ATTENDANCE and ACTIVE PARTICIPATION in discussions / close readings / in-class activities …

10% of the final grade

▷ Students shall ▶ TAKE PART IN THE DISCUSSIONS, comment on their peers' presentations, react to the instructor's input and questions, reflect on readings and audiovisual material … ▶ Participation is assessed with respect to the RELATIVE QUANTITY AND QUALITY of the comments (targeted engagement with arguments and readings, conclusiveness, ability for wider contextualization).

In-class IMPULSE / PRESENTATION

25% of the final grade

▷ Each participant will act as an "expert" on ONE OF THE CLASS TOPICS: they ▶ prepare the respective week's material (mandatory + optional; depending on group size) and present its MOST IMPORTANT / INTERESTING / PROBLEMATIC ASPECTS in a brief impulse (12-15 min). They ▶ engage with the topic in a CRITICAL WAY (*no mere summaries*) and give ADDITIONAL HISTORICAL OR THEORETICAL INPUT.

▷ The impulse should introduce several ▶ QUESTIONS OR ISSUES that will guide our discussion (ideally, after their presentation, the "experts" act as co-instructors for the session).

▷ Every participant ▶ selects a TOPIC/DATE from the syllabus for their impulse and enters their name in the respective POLL UNTIL SATURDAY, JANUARY 11, 2025:

https://nuudel.digitalcourage.de/mkL2hvQnAe7pIVKE

▷ Depending on the number of course participants, every topic can be ▶ presented by 1 TO MAX. 4 STUDENTS. (Group work does not only mean dividing the readings but collectively structuring and preparing the impulse and handout [see below]).

▷ *However, please do not select a topic/date already assigned to another student as long as there are unallocated slots in the poll!*

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1 concise IMPULSE HANDOUT
<mark>10% of the final grade</mark>

▷ For their short presentations, the participants create a written 1-page handout paper that shows ▶ the ORDER of the presented points, their MAIN ARGUMENTS, CONCLUSION, and further QUESTIONS.

▷ The handout ▶ should be structured in SHORT SENTENCES, KEYWORDS, BULLET POINTS – no continuous text and long paragraphs: the structure and central ideas of the presentation should be visible *at first glance*. It serves as ▶ previous INFO SHEET and, afterwards, as learning and memory aid for the other course participants.

▷ The ▶ handout will be ASSESSED with respect to its STRUCTURE, ACCURACY, AND CLARITY (*visual material and critical statements can be included*).

▷ The handout ▶ should be submitted <mark>NO LATER THAN 2 DAYS BEFORE the respective class:</mark> Please send it as .doc or .pdf document to the instructor who will upload it on MOODLE.

MIDTERM 'MYTH' (500-600 words)
<mark>20% of the final grade</mark>

▷ Participants write a brief ▶ ANALYSIS OF A CULTURAL PHENOMENON OR ARTIFACT (either a 'Viennese' myth or one from their culture of origin / 2 pages max.). The midterm paper should be guided by R. Barthes' mythological method (*detailed information in the fourth week of the course*). The ▶ SUBJECT is chosen by the student. It can also ▶ INCLUDE IMAGES / AUDIOVISUAL MATERIAL.

▷ The paper ▶ will be <mark>SUBMITTED DURING MIDTERM WEEK (FEB. 10-16).</mark> Please send a .doc or .pdf document to the instructor and Teaching Assistant who will add comments and give written feedback.

Final PAPER or AUDIOVISUAL WORK
<mark>35% of the final grade</mark>

▷ Participants can produce either a written FINAL PAPER[1] or AUDIO/VISUAL WORK.

▷ The ▶ SUBJECT OF THE FINAL PAPER OR AUDIOVISUAL WORK is chosen by the student. A discussion of the subject with the instructor is not obligatory but recommended. ▶ It can ADOPT A SUBJECT FROM THE COURSE SESSIONS; in this case, it should clearly EXPAND THE APPROACH AND SCOPE of the respective in-class discussion and presentation, e.g., by introducing new readings and additional material, focusing on

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[1] Please take note of CEU's PLAGIARISM POLICY: https://documents.ceu.edu/documents/p-1405-1. Generally, students are allowed to use generative AI (ChatGPT, Bard, Bing, etc.) for the composition of their written course work. However, the instructor advises against doing so. Students are liable to indicate any use that they have made of generative AI for the preparation of their written work, identifying the software and distinguishing whether it has served in the research, composition, or editing stage. The use of such tools will be treated as plagiarism unless it is fully specified in the paper. If generative AI was used at any moment for the composition of the text, students are obliged to submit, together with their written work, the prompt/s used as input for the AI and a digital copy (pdf) of the AI's answer or output. The document will be considered as an initial draft; the final version of the paper must show unmistakable evidence of revision, expansion and elaboration regarding its academic form, content, and intellectual engagement with the subject.

specific aspects, widening the perspective. ▶ It is, however, suggested to CHOOSE A SUBJECT THAT HAS NOT BEEN PART OF THE SYLLABUS (but is connected to the overall theme of "Culture" and "Cultural Studies").

▷ The topic should be treated in an 'academic' manner, i.e., refer to *at least* three titles of scholarly literature. ▶ In any case, students are required to DEVELOP AN EXPLICIT RESEARCH QUESTION that states their interest and goals.

▷ Searching for ▶ relevant BOOKS, ARTICLES, etc. is PART OF THE ASSIGNMENT. Students may consult the instructor but are basically responsible for compiling their work material themselves.

▷ Upon consultation, ▶ the final work CAN ALSO BE PRODUCED IN GROUPS OF TWO – in this case, you can opt for a SHARED OR INDIVIDUAL GRADE. For individual grading, you must clearly indicate who produced which part of the work.

▷ The final paper ▶ should have a LENGTH OF ~1.500–2.000 WORDS (*excl. cover sheet, list of contents, bibliography, etc.*). IMAGES should be inserted in the text (no separate part for illustrations). The STYLE FOR REFERENCING and quoting can be freely chosen but should be consistent throughout the paper. Papers should be submitted in .doc or .pdf format.

▷ Papers are ▶ submitted via E-MAIL; ▶ DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION will be APRIL 18, 2025

▷ Main CRITERIA FOR THE EVALUATION of the papers are:

   ▶ Choice of topic (connection to course subject / adequate breadth / range of source material)

   ▶ Originality of approach (regarding the subject, form of expression, combination of material and method that offer novel perspectives)

   ▶ Structural clarity (convincing order of points & use of examples / transparency of argumentation / no redundancies and repetitions)

   ▶ Conclusiveness (no broad generalizations / verification through scholarly sources)

   ▶ Development of own thoughts/interpretations (ideally, your work not only assembles thoughts from your sources but adds original aspects …)

   ▶ Clarity of style / verbal expression (this does *not* mean 'empirical', 'dry', 'academic')

   ▶ Formal correctness (compliance with the guidelines concerning word count / consistency of footnotes and bibliography)

▷ Instead of a written paper, ▶ students may also prepare an AUDIO/VISUAL WORK (PHOTO ESSAY, VIDEO, PAINTING, SCRAPBOOK, INSTALLATION, PODCAST, WEBSITE, etc.): the work can be ▶ composed from SELF-PRODUCED MATERIAL AND/OR FOUND FOOTAGE. ▶ Formal and technical issues, extent or intended length should be coordinated with the instructor.

▷ Final audio/visual works will ▶ *not* be graded according to technical criteria but based on the ORIGINALITY OF THE APPROACH AND THE POTENTIAL TO CONVEY THE MAIN ARGUMENT.

▷ Audio/visual ▶ works MAY BE COMPLEMENTED BY A WRITTEN COMMENT to elucidate their conceptual or theoretical approach.

Deadlines are the SAME FOR WRITTEN AND AUDIO/VISUAL works.