

Department of Communication
Communication 380
Media Criticism

Instructor: Timothy Gibson
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Fall 2018
Fairfax Campus
TuTh 10:30-11:45am
Room: Peterson Hall 2413

This course provides an in-depth introduction to the practice of critical media studies, with a particular focus on the analysis of visual and web culture. Drawing on the concepts of critical media studies, this course offers: (1) a review of concepts related to the practice of media criticism and textual analysis, including cultural, feminist, and rhetorical analysis, (2) an introduction to the cultural politics of digital networking and web culture, including debates over remix culture, intellectual property, commercial profiling, targeted political advertising, and government surveillance, and (3) a critical examination of the production and microsociology of celebrity. Along the way, we will discuss theories and concepts which attempt to explain the role of media and popular culture in contemporary life. Although many of course materials will focus on visual and web culture (in particular television, film, and the internet), the analytical tools students will learn can be applied to the study of texts and audiences within any medium of communication.

Course Objectives

- Provide students with the tools of textual analysis, including an intermediate-level discussion of cultural analysis, feminist analysis, queer theory, and rhetorical analysis/media semiotics.
- Provide students with an opportunity to apply these tools of analysis to a particular object/text of popular culture.
- Provide students with tools for analyzing the impact of digitization and digital networks on media production and consumption, including issues of media convergence, intellectual property, digital surveillance, and the microsociology of celebrity.
- To develop analytical and writing skills that are fundamental to a liberal education, to effective citizenship, and to professional success.

Required Readings – Available at the GMU Bookstore

Brian Ott & Robert Mack, *Critical media studies: An introduction*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014 (second edition).

DeConnick, K. (w), and DeLandro, Valentine (a). (2015). *Bitch Planet: Extraordinary Machine*. Berkeley, CA: Image Comics.

Vaidhyathan, S. (2018). *Anti-social media: How Facebook disconnects us and undermines democracy*. New York: Oxford University Press.

A series of required additional articles and book chapters will also be assigned throughout the semester (see the course schedule below). These readings can be accessed on Blackboard.

Recommended Readings

The course schedule below offers suggested readings for those moments when students feel inspired to read in more depth. These readings will not be covered in course exams, but I offer them for your information. Students should also visit *Flow*, an excellent media criticism website (www.flowtv.org). These posts offer great examples of engaged and thoughtful media criticism.

Assignments and Evaluation Breakdown

First Midterm Exam	20%
Second Midterm Exam	20%
Individual Paper	25%
Final Exam (in-class)	10%
Seminar/Class Participation	15%
Response Papers	10%

Course Schedule

Week 1 **Course Introduction: On Cultural Politics**

Tuesday, 8/28: Introductory lecture on cultural politics.

Thursday, 8/30: Workshop on cultural politics in early television.

Read: Ott & Mack, *Critical media studies: An introduction*, Ch. 1

Week 2 Cultural Media Analysis

Tuesday, 9/4: Ideology and hegemony in media

Read: Ott & Mack, *Critical media studies: An introduction*, Ch. 6

Gray, J. (2008). Chapter 4: Reality and representation. In J. Gray, *Television entertainment*. New York: Routledge. [[Available on Blackboard](#)]

Thursday, 9/6: Workshop on television, race, and representation

Read: Alsultany, E. (2013). 24: Challenging stereotypes. In E. Thompson and J. Mittel (eds.), *How to Watch Television*. New York: NYU Press. [[Available on Blackboard](#)]

Assignment Due: Response Paper #1 on Gray, Ch. 4 due on Sept. 6th

Week 3 Feminist Media Analysis

Tuesday, 9/11: Feminist media studies and intersectionality

Read: Ott & Mack, *Critical media studies: An introduction*, Chapter 8.

Gill, R. (2007). Postfeminist media culture: Elements of a sensibility. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 10, 147-166. [[Available on Blackboard](#)]

Thursday, 9/13: Discussion – Feminist Superheroes: *Wonder Woman* and *Bitch Planet*

Read: DeConnick, K. (w), and DeLandro, Valentine (a). (2015). *Bitch Planet: Extraordinary Machine*. Berkeley, CA: Image Comics.

Lorde, A. (1984). Age, race, class, and sex: Women redefining difference. In *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. New York: Crossing Press. [[Available on Blackboard](#)]

Heuchan, C. (2016). Intersectionality: A history, definition, and guide. *Sister Outsider* [blog], Available at <https://sisteroutrider.wordpress.com/2016/07/27/intersectionality-a-definition-history-and-guide/> [[Link available on Blackboard](#)]

Week 4 Queer Theory and Heteronormativity

Tuesday, 9/18: Gender and sexuality as a social and cultural construction

Read: Ott & Mack, *Critical media studies: An introduction*, Chapter 9.

Fox, R. (2013). "You are not allowed to talk about production": Narratization on (and off) the set of CBS's *Big Brother*. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 30, 189-208. [Available on Blackboard].

Thursday, 9/20: Negotiating heteronormativity on *Steven Universe*

Read: Thrum, E. (2016, January 12). Steven Universe censorship undermines Cartoon Network's LGBTQ progress. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from: <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/tvandradioblog/2016/jan/12/steven-universe-censorship-cartoon-networks-lgbtq> [Available on Blackboard]

Brown, T. (2016, May 6). Rebecca Sugar on finding that "Steven Universe feeling" and the future of the verse. *Los Angeles Times*. Retrieved from: <http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/herocomplex/la-et-hc-steven-universe-rebecca-sugar-20160512-snap-story.html> [Available on Blackboard]

Segal, C. (2016, September 4). Rebecca Sugar, Cartoon Network's first female creator, on writing LGBTQ stories for kids. *PBS Newshour*. Retrieved from: <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/art/rebecca-sugar-steven-universe-lgtbq/> [Available on Blackboard]

Romano, N. (2018, August 13). Steven Universe creator has done more for LGBTQ visibility than you might know. *Entertainment Weekly*. Retrieved from: https://ew.com/tv/2018/08/13/steven-universe-rebecca-sugar-lgbtq-cartoons/?utm_campaign=entertainmentweekly&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_medium=social [Available on Blackboard]

Recommended (but not required):

Robert Westerfelhaus & Celeste Lacroix. (2006). Seeing "straight" through *Queer Eye*: Exposing the strategic rhetoric of heteronormativity in a mediated ritual of gay rebellion. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 23(5): 426-444. [Available on Blackboard]

Assignment Due: Response Paper #2 on Fox, due in class on Sept. 20

Week 5 Rhetorical Analysis and Media Semiotics

Tuesday, 9/25: Lecture on media semiotics

Read: Ott & Mack, *Critical media studies: An introduction*, Chapter 5.

Seiter, E. (1992). Semiotics, structuralism, and television. In Robert Allen (ed.), *Channels of discourse, reassembled: Television and contemporary criticism*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press. [[Available via Blackboard](#)]

Thursday, 9/27: The semiotics of *Breaking Bad*

Recommended (but not required):

Butler, J. (2011). *Television: Critical Methods and Applications* (Chapter 5). New York: Routledge. [[Available on Blackboard](#)]

Week 6 The Rhetoric of the Camera

Tuesday, 10/2: Lecture on the rhetoric of the camera in film and television

Read: Budd, M., Craig, S., and Steinman, C. (1999). *Consuming environments: Television and Commercial Culture*, Chapter 5. [[Available on Blackboard](#)]

Butler, J. (2011) *Television: Critical methods and applications*, Chapter 9. [[Available on Blackboard](#)]

Thursday, 10/4: Decoding camerawork

Read: Smith, G. (2003). The left takes back the flag: The steadicam, the snippet, and the song in *The West Wing's* 'In Excelsis Deo'. In P. Rollins et al. (Eds.), *The West Wing: The American Presidency as TV Drama*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press. [[Available on Blackboard](#)]

Loreck, J. (2016). Explainer: What does the 'male gaze' mean, and what about a female gaze? *The Conversation* [blog], <https://theconversation.com/explainer-what-does-the-male-gaze-mean-and-what-about-a-female-gaze-52486> [[Link available on Blackboard](#)]

Recommended reading (but not required):

Ott & Mack, Chapter 7 (pp. 171-187)

Distributed in class: First midterm (take-home) distributed in class on 10/4

Week 7 Narrative Analysis

Tuesday, 10/9: No class (Fall break) – Monday classes meet on this day (10/9)

*****Take-home midterm due via email by 5pm on Tuesday, Oct. 9th*****

Thursday, 10/11: Narrative analysis and *Black Mirror*

Review: Ott & Mack, Chapter 5 (pp. 122-125).

Read: Mittel, J. (2010). Chapter 6: Telling television stories. In J. Mittel, *Television and American Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press. [Available on Blackboard: read especially pp. 213-240, then p. 258-267]

Week 8 Narrative Analysis/Introduction to Digital Culture

Tuesday, 10/16: Discussion of *Black Mirror* narrative

Tuesday, 10/18: The networked information economy and participatory culture

Watch: Yochai Benkler's *Ted Talk* - "The new open-source economics." Available online at:
http://www.ted.com/talks/yochai_benkler_on_the_new_open_source_economics
[Link also available on Blackboard]

Read: Benkler, Y. (2006). Introduction: A moment of opportunity and challenge. In *The Wealth of Networks: How Social Production Transforms Markets and Freedom*. New Haven: Yale University Press. [Available on Blackboard].

Ott & Mack, *Critical media studies: An introduction*, chapter 12 (especially pp. 285-289; pp. 294-307).

Week 9 Digital Culture I: Remix and Participatory Media

Tuesday, 10/23: As a class, we will attend the *Pathways to Your Future* event in Dewberry Hall.

Thursday, 10/25: Workshop on remix culture—students bring examples from YouTube

Read: Milner, R. (2016). Chapter 5 – Voice: Pop and populism in public commentary. In *The World Made Meme: Public Conversations and Participatory Media*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. [Available on Blackboard]. [[Available on Blackboard](#)]

Recommended (but not required):

Wu, T. (2015). Chapter 21 – Here comes everyone. In *The Attention Merchants: The Epic Scramble to Get Inside Our Heads*. New York: Penguin. [[Available on Blackboard](#)]

Week 10 Digital Culture II: Remix and Copyright

Tuesday, 10/30: Film: *Copyright Criminals*

Read: Lessig, L. (2008). *Remix: Making art and commerce thrive in the new hybrid economy*, Introduction and Part I (Introduction and Chapters 1-5). [[Available on Blackboard via Creative Commons license at:
http://ia600204.us.archive.org/13/items/LawrenceLessigRemix/Remix-o.pdf](#)]

Thursday, 11/1: Discussion of remix and copyright

Read: Aufderheide, P., & Jaszi, P. (2018). *Reclaiming fair use: How to put balance back in copyright*, Chapter 10 [[Available on Blackboard](#)]

Recommended (but not required):

Center for Social Media. (2008). *Code of Best Practices in Fair Use for Online Video*. [[Available on Blackboard](#)]

Assignment Due: Response Paper #3 on Lessig chapters due in class, Nov. 1st

Week 11 Digital Culture III: Online Surveillance and the Digital Enclosure

Tuesday, 11/6: Introduction to Andrejevic and the “digital enclosure”

Read: Andrejevic, M. (2007). Introduction. In M. Andrejevic, *iSpy: Surveillance and Power in the Interactive Era*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas. [[Available on Blackboard](#)]

Vaidhyanathan, S. (2018). *Anti-social media*, Chapter 2.

Recommended (but not required):

Gehl, R. (2014). Chapter 2: The archive and the processor: The internal hardware logic of social media. In *Reverse engineering social media: Software, culture, and political economy in new media capitalism*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. [[Available on Blackboard](#)]

Thursday, 11/8: Workshop on surveillance in commerce and politics

Read: Vaidhyanathan, S. (2018). *Anti-social media*, Chapter 6.

Assignment Due: RP #4 on Andrejevic and Vaidhyanathan chapters due in class, Nov. 8th

Week 12 Michel Foucault and The Panopticon

Tuesday, 11/13 : An Introduction to disciplinary power and the Panopticon

Read: Foucault, M. (2008/1979). “Panopticonism” from *Discipline and Punish. Race/Ethnicity – Multidisciplinary Global Contexts*, 2(1), 1-12.

Greenwald, G. (2014). Chapter 4: The harm of surveillance. In *No place to hide: Edward Snowden, the NSA, and the U.S. surveillance state*. New York: Picador.

Recommended (but not required)

Greenwald, G. (2014). Chapter 3: Collect it all. In *No place to hide: Edward Snowden, the NSA, and the U.S. surveillance state*. New York: Picador.

Thursday, 11/15: Surveillance, power, and authority

Review: Vaidhyanathan, Chapter 2, pp. 65-69

Read: Vaidhyanathan, S. (2018). *Anti-social media*, Chapter 7.

Watch in class: Frontline (2015). *The United States of Secrets, part 2*.

Distributed in class: Second midterm exam distributed in class, Nov. 15th

Week 13 Second Midterm/Introduction to Celebrity Studies/Thanksgiving

Take-home exam due via email by 11:59pm on **Monday, Nov. 19th**

Tuesday, 11/20: An Introduction to Celebrity Studies—A Ritual View

Read: Ferris, K., and Harris, S. (2011). *Stargazing: Celebrity, fame, and social interaction*, Chapter 1. New York: Routledge. [[Available on Blackboard](#)]

Recommended (not required):

Turner, G. (2014). Chapter 6 – Consuming celebrity. In *Understanding Celebrity*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Thursday, 11/22: No class – Thanksgiving

Week 14 Celebrity Studies

Tuesday, 11/27: Instafame and Microcelebrity

Read: Wu, T. (2016). *The Attention Merchants*, Chapters 24-25. [[Available on Blackboard](#)]

Marwick, A. E. (2015). Instafame: Luxury Selfies in the Attention Economy. *Public Culture*, 27, 137–160. [[Available on Blackboard](#)]

Thursday, 11/29: Workshop on the microsociology of celebrity-fan encounters

Read: Ferris, K., and Harris, S. (2011). *Stargazing*, Chapters 2-3. [[Available on Blackboard](#)]

Week 15 Individual Papers Week

Tuesday, 12/4: Work at home – writing day

Thursday, 12/6: 60-second presentations

Assignment Due: Individual papers due VIA EMAIL by 10:30am on Thursday, Dec. 6th

Tuesday, December 18th Final Exam (in class)

Final exam: 10:30am-1:15pm. Please bring a blue book.

Description of Assignments

(1) Response Papers (10 points)

To provide an opportunity for everyone in the course to reflect critically on the issues raised in readings, students will be expected to write five (5) informal, 1-2-page (typed, single-spaced) response papers that respond to specific readings assigned during the semester. Basically, students should view these response papers as an opportunity to work through some of the conceptual and substantive issues raised in these particular readings, as a means to prepare for active participation in our class discussions.

Each short paper will be worth 2 percent of your final grade and will be collected at the end of our seminar days. Note on grading: these response papers are not meant to be formal essays. When marking these, I will NOT be looking for grammar, organization, and so on. I will be looking for evidence that you are engaged with the coursepack readings in some way, and that you are taking advantage of the opportunity to reflect on the issues of the course. Papers that simply re-hash the lectures or that fail to show an explicit connection to the readings will receive reduced credit or no credit.

(2) First midterm exam (20 points)

The first midterm will be a take-home exam with multiple choice, definition, and short essay questions. The exam will evaluate students' depth of knowledge regarding the analytic perspectives and concepts covered in weeks 2 through 6.

(3) Second midterm exam (20 points)

The second midterm will be a take-home exam with multiple choice, definition, and short essay questions. The exam will evaluate students' depth of knowledge regarding the analytic perspectives and concepts covered between weeks 7 through 11.

(4) Final Exam (10 points)

The final will be an in-class exam with multiple choice, definition, and short essay questions. Students will need to bring blue books to complete this exam. The exam will address material covered between weeks 12 through 14. There may also be at least one essay question that asks you to reflect upon themes covered across the totality of the course.

(5) Individual Paper (25 points)

During the semester, students will be asked to complete one solo-authored example of media criticism, drawing on the concepts presented in the course. Students may analyze a text drawn from any form of visual media (film, television, political advertisement, computer game, web-

distributed visual text, etc.). Regardless of the choice of text or genre, however, students must draw on the theories, concepts, and analytic tools covered in class to offer their analysis of the cultural and political significance of their cultural object/text/practice. Papers will be evaluated on how accurately, and how creatively, authors apply the concepts covered in class to discuss the cultural and/or political significance of their cultural object.

These papers will be concise (1500-2000 words each, about 5-7 pages of double-spaced text). Good examples of this form of media criticism can be seen on *Flow* – an online journal maintained by the Department of Radio-TV-Film at the University of Texas, Austin. Check out their website at www.flowtv.org.

(6) Individual Seminar/Group Participation (15 points)

Students will be expected to come to class prepared to discuss and reflect upon the readings assigned that week. As a result, active participation in the lectures, discussions, and workshops—posing questions, offering opinions, engaging in dialogue and debate—is a crucial component of the course. Students will therefore be marked on the level of engagement in the seminars and lectures throughout the semester. Overall, this is what I will look for in participation:

(a) Attendance and professional classroom demeanor. You must attend class to participate. As a result, students with habitual attendance problems cannot expect to receive a favorable participation mark. In the case of personal or health emergencies, I will make exceptions on a case-by-case basis. Additionally, students will be expected to conduct themselves with professionalism. This means arriving on time, treating others with respect, and focusing on course activities. Students who browse their Facebook or Snapchat feeds or otherwise use their devices (phones, laptops, tablets) as a distraction from class should expect to receive low participation marks.

(b) Contributions to class lectures, discussions, workshops, and seminars. In lectures and discussions, I will look for contributions (i.e., speaking in class: asking questions, contributing to group discussions, asking questions in lectures) that demonstrate you are following what is going on in class and that you have completed the assigned readings. Additionally, I will reward those students who work well with their colleagues in class—for example, demonstrating a desire to help others, showing a respect for others' opinions and perspectives.

(c) Contributions to on-line discussions. Our class workshops will depend upon the contribution of all group members. Typically, I will ask groups to reflect upon the week's readings and lectures by completing a small workshop task. The task will be completed the group in class, and then written-up and posted onto our Blackboard discussion lists the following evening. Although all group members are expected to participate in the discussion during class, group members will take turns writing up and posting their group's responses to the week's workshop task. Failure to either contribute to the in-class discussion or to share equally the responsibility of posting group responses will be marked negatively. On the other hand, actively participating in the group discussions and taking your turn to write-up and post your group's response will be marked

favorably. Finally, I will also be watching for active participation on the Blackboard, including posting comments in reply to the contributions of other groups.

(d) Working well with groups—peer evaluations. A good deal of the success of the course will depend on the ability of seminar groups to prepare for discussions and to cooperate during seminars and workshops. It follows that for the groups to work effectively, all students must contribute to the success of group discussions. Therefore, at the end of the semester, I will ask that seminar group members evaluate one another's contributions to the success of the group discussions and group activities. These peer evaluations will be taken into account when we come up with each student's individual participation grade. However, I will not rely entirely on these peer evaluations when determining your performance in the seminar group. I will draw equally on our my observations of your group as well.

(e) Seminar/workshop assignments, and short quizzes. From time to time, I may ask students to complete short "workshop assignments" (for example, writing a brief "media-use" list, watching a TED talk lecture and writing up your reflections, even watching a film outside of class) as part of the larger course activities (including lectures and workshops). Finally, I may also ask students to complete short quizzes designed to evaluate students' comprehension of readings. Your performance on these extra "asks," short assignments, and/or quizzes will be factored into your overall participation grade.

General Notes and Procedure

(1) Citing Sources: APA Style

For the individual paper, you are required to use the referencing procedure spelled out in the APA style manual (see the American Psychological Association manual for publishing research). If you make use of online resources in your work, you must properly reference them. All papers must also include a reference list. Guidelines for citing on-line resources can be found here: https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/general_format.html

(2) Late Assignments

Late midterms and individual papers will be subject to a daily penalty. I will deduct up to 10 percent from your assignment for every day late (weekends equal one day). I will not accept late response papers. In the case of personal and/or medical emergencies, I may grant an extension or reduce the daily penalty, based on the particulars of the case. However, if an emergency does arise, you must contact me before the actual due date (e.g., via email day or night). I do not offer extensions to students after the due date has passed, except in the case of true family or health emergencies.

(3) Grade Disputes

If you have a question or a concern with a grade given in the course, you should follow the following procedure to ask for a re-evaluation of the grade: (1) Wait at least 24 hours to think about the grade, (2) Write a short, one-page email that describes your reasons for asking for a re-evaluation. In short, present a measured and articulate argument for why you deserve a better grade on your work. I will then re-read your work and re-consider the mark. The final decision (whether it results in an improved grade, or, potentially, a less favorable mark) will be made before the end of the semester. Further appeals of grades should follow the procedure established by the Department of Communication. Finally, should you have a concern about the grade you received on a specific assignment, you should **contact me within seven days of receiving your grade** for that assignment. I will not review grades re-submitted after this time period has elapsed.

(4) Exam "Make-ups"

Only in extreme circumstances (illness or family emergency) can exams be "made up" without prior arrangements. Exams may not be taken early, except under exceptional circumstances. Student travel plans should be made with these due dates in mind.

(5) Keep Digital Copies of all Completed Work

All students are required to keep digital copies of all their assignments until final grades are posted. Students are also expected to follow their progress on Blackboard. If you see that you are missing a grade on Blackboard, you must contact me as soon as possible. Failure to do so will put your ability to re-submit missing or lost papers in jeopardy.

(6) Honor Code

George Mason University students are expected to adhere to the Honor Code; please familiarize yourself with the Honor Code if you have not already done so. All papers, projects, and exams are to be original and prepared for this class. Papers and projects for this class may be related to a task in another class, but you must get specific permission from both instructors. While hired typists and proofreaders are permitted, your exams, papers, and projects must be your own work. Plagiarism of any kind (see the honor code for a definition) will not be tolerated, and papers may be checked using anti-plagiarism software systems.

(7) Disability Support Services

If you are student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Resources at 703-993-2474 or ods@gmu.edu. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

(8) Correspondence via email

Mason uses only Mason e-mail accounts to communicate with enrolled students. Students must activate their Mason e-mail account, use it to communicate with their department and other administrative units, and check it regularly for important university information including messages related to this class. I check my Mason email regularly, but it still may take me 1-2 days to respond.

(9) Changes to the syllabus

As the instructor, I reserve the right to make changes to the above syllabus, in the interest of furthering student learning and/or ensuring a safe and respectful learning environment for all students. Students will be given the opportunity to provide input regarding any major changes to the course plan.

(10) Add/Drop deadlines

Last day to add (full-semester course): Sept. 4

Last day to drop (no tuition penalty): Sept. 9

Selective withdrawal period (100% tuition liability): Oct. 1 – Oct. 28

Further Notes on Grading Expectations

As you can see below, the grading scale goes from A to F. What this means in practical terms is that not everyone earns an "A" or "B". These marks are reserved for good or excellent work--i.e. work which demonstrates not only an acceptable grasp of the material, but which also shows a high degree of complexity, originality and independence of thought. So, in this course, as in other Communication courses, the average grade will most likely be a "C" – a grade which signals an acceptable but not impressive, critical, and/or creative grasp of the subject matter. What this also means is that assignments that demonstrate only a rudimentary or one-dimensional grasp of the material, or that show serious weaknesses in both the complexity of the analysis and the ability to present ideas, will receive a below-average ("D" or "F") mark.

COMM 380 Grading Scale

97-100%	A+
93-96%	A
90-92%	A-
87-89%	B+
83-86%	B
80-82%	B-
77-79%	C+
70-76%	C
60-69%	D
0-59%	F

Description of Grades

"A(+/-)" indicates excellent performance with clear evidence of
--a comprehensive knowledge of the subject matter and principles treated in the course
--a high degree of originality and independence of thought
--a superior ability to organize and analyze ideas
--an outstanding ability to communicate these ideas (orally or through composition)

"B(+/-)" indicates good performance with evidence of
--a substantial knowledge of the subject matter
--a moderate degree of originality and independence of thought
--a good ability to organize and analyze ideas
--an ability to communicate or compose clearly.

"C+ or C" indicates satisfactory performance with evidence of
--an acceptable grasp of the subject matter
--an acceptable ability to organize and analyze ideas
--an ability to communicate or compose adequately.

"D" indicates minimally acceptable performance with evidence of
--rudimentary knowledge of the subject matter
--some evidence that organizational and analytical skills have been developed, but with significant weaknesses in some areas.
--significant weakness in the ability to compose or communicate ideas.

"F" indicates failing performance with evidence of
--an inadequate knowledge of the subject matter
--failure to complete required work, and an inability to compose or communicate ideas.