

## STS390, Media, war and peace, 2004 Recommendations for 2005

Out of 29 students in the subject, 22 were present during week 13 to fill out individual feedback forms. This is a summary of responses.

### Theories

1. Which theories would you recommend most highly for 2005?

- Backfire, 19
- Deciphering violence, 17
- Nonviolence and communication, 11
- Lying, 17

2. What other theories would you recommend instead of one or more of these?

- \* aggression, 1
- \* children and violence, 1
- \* conspiracy, 3
- \* creating social justice, 1
- \* gender, 1
- \* government-media interactions, 1
- \* groupthink, 1
- \* independent journalism, 1
- \* media bias, 2
- \* news as drama, 1
- \* political economy, 1
- \* propaganda model, 1
- \* resistance media, 1
- \* semiotics, 1
- \* terrorism in media, 1
- \* war reporting, 1

### Activities in classes

Which activities do you recommend for 2005?

- Exercises to learn other students' names, 16
- Weekly introductions, 14
- Exercises working in small groups (for learning theories, weeks 2 to 5), 18
- Class activities (run by student teams), 18
- Short reports (by students), 19
- Snack breaks, 19
- Others: brainstorming activities, 1; debates, 1

### **Short reports**

Aspects of short reports this year included: option to choose a theory or a concept; time allocations or word lengths; assessment criteria; due dates; expectation to present media items.

What worked well about short reports? Is there any aspect of the short reports that you would suggest changing for 2005?

Most students liked the short reports, with quite a few saying to keep them the same. Suggested changes:

- \* longer word length, 7
- \* time limits, 3
- \* require at least one verbal report, 3
- \* make them worth more, 2

### **Class activities**

Aspects of class activities this year included: time allocations; assessment criteria; working in groups; choosing weeks to present.

What worked well about class activities? Is there any aspect of the class activities that you would suggest changing?

Most students liked the way the class activities operated this year, with several saying it was good to work in a group. Suggested changes:

- \* Keep the times shorter, 2
- \* Have a list of potential topics, 2
- \* Have just one per week, 2
- \* Encourage greater class participation, 1
- \* Encourage use of more technology, 1
- \* Have more content to cover, 1
- \* Use diverse theories, 1

### **Project reports**

Aspects of project reports this year included: word length; assessment criteria; due date; use of a theory or a concept; expectation to use primary sources; preparation in class.

What worked well about project reports? Is there any aspect of the project reports that you would suggest changing?

Most students liked the way project reports operated this year, with a number commenting on the value of being able to choose your own topic. Suggested changes:

- \* Give more advice in class, 4
- \* Allow greater word length, 3

- \* Make worth less, 3
- \* Use more theories, 3
- \* Have an exercise on finding/using primary sources, 2
- \* Have a list of topics, 1
- \* Have a requirement for the structure of the report, 1

### **Assessment**

What is your recommended mix of assessment methods for 2005?

- essays/reports, 20
- written short reports, 13
- oral short reports, 17
- class activities (run by student teams), 16
- exam, 1
- other: excursion, 1

### **Class sizes**

In the Arts Faculty, the workloads model for staff gives an average of one contact hour for every 9 students. What would be your recommendation for next year's class size? (As this year, some classes might be shorter and some longer than the average.)

- A. 27 students in a 3-hour class each week, *1*
- B. 18 students in a 2-hour class each week, *10*
- C. 13 or 14 students in a 1.5-hour class each week, *10*
- D. 9 students in a 1-hour class each week, *3*

### **Miscellaneous**

Would you recommend any of the following?

- Small assignments each week, such as 1-minute comments on a media item, 7
- Requirement for a summary of the research project due several weeks before the report, 12
- Peer assessment (assessment by other students), 2
- More theories, 9
- More training/preparation for interviews, observations and participation, 8
- An excursion, 13
- An in-class simulation (for example of a press conference), 7

### **Brian's comments**

I was very pleased with the way the class ran, especially so many students' enthusiasm and excellent work. Here are my preliminary thoughts on changes for 2005.

- Theories. What worked best were theories that could be applied to case studies easily, with a medium level of complexity (such as Cerulo's four sequences). For 2005, I'm thinking of replacing "nonviolence and communication" with a related theory covering technology and nonviolence, linked to communication. Also, I'd like to add at least one theory: "conspiracy" seems like a good one if I can find some suitable readings.
  
- Activities in class. I don't plan any major changes.
  
- Short reports. I think it might be good to require at least one verbal report from each student, because of the benefits to others of hearing the reports.
  
- Class activities. I will be tougher on time limits and try to space the activities across more classes.
  
- Project reports. I plan to give more guidance in class about expectations and how to find/use primary sources.
  
- Assessment. I don't anticipate major changes.
  
- Class sizes. I'll aim for classes of 13 to 18 student with average duration 90-120 minutes.
  
- Miscellaneous. I'll look into a suitable excursion and introduce a requirement for a summary of the research project due before the report.