

COMM 5710 Intro to Critical Media Studies

CU Denver • Spring 2019 • M 5.00pm to 7.50pm • Student Commons 3018

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Office Hours: M 2.00-3.00pm (in person) and by
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I. Course Overview

This course provides an overview of key debates, critical frameworks, concepts, methods, and theories in critical media studies (CMS). Each of the major subtopics of this course could be the subject of a full-length seminar of its own. Hence, we will map out the contours of the field using rather *broad* strokes. Our interdisciplinary inquiry will be informed by various fields, including media and cultural studies, feminist, critical race, and queer theory, as well as popular music and surveillance studies. We will consider the critiques and possibilities this work generates concerning various aspects of media production, reception, and the text themselves. Our readings and objects of study encompass a wide variety of media, including radio, film, TV, social media, and music among others. We'll start our inquiry by developing a toolbox consisting of key theories informing CMS before applying this knowledge to examine various domains of contemporary media culture, including, for example, popular feminism and the #MeToo movement, racialized algorithms, and digital surveillance. Our overall aim is to develop critical approaches for examining media as both a key part of our everyday lives and as an object of scholarly inquiry.

II. Learning Outcomes and Key Objectives

The mission of the [Department of Communication](#) is to cultivate the knowledge and ability to use communication to create a more equitable and humane world. In this course students will:

- LO 1: sharpen oral communication, close reading and writing skills (i.e., *practicing the analysis of communication*) by engaging with various theoretical and methodological approaches to critical media studies, specifically as they pertain to aspects of media production, reception, and the texts themselves.
- LO 2: critically analyze and assess how media culture is always already intertwined with sexuality and gender (identity), race, class, ability, nationality and other intersecting lines of power.
- LO 3: produce a final project (in the form of an exam essay, conference/journal paper, thesis proposal or video project) that reflects graduate-level analytical ability, research knowledge, presentation as well as writing and media production skills.

III. Course Materials

You do not need to purchase any books for this course. All required readings are **on Canvas** and/or **hyperlinked in this syllabus**.



I am flexible with the use of the term “readings.” Some days you will read difficult academic pieces, other days you will watch videos or read blogs. No matter the type of reading, you are **expected to consume it all** before you show up to class. Due to the online nature of some of the readings, it is up to you whether you want to print them out or read them on your screens. **Taking notes while you engage with the readings is highly recommended.** Please be sure to **always have the readings available in class.**

IV. Course Assignments

10 Reading Responses: 10 pts each	20%
Discussion Leader & Media Example: 100 pts	20%
Final Project: 200 pts	40%
• Proposal: 20 pts	
• Draft: 50 pts	
• Presentation: 30	
• Final: 100 pts	
Participation: 100 Pts	20%
= Total: 500 pts	100%

Grading Scale	
A	100-93.0%
A-	92.9-90.0%
B+	89.99-87.5%
B	87.49-83.0%
B-	82.99-80.0%
C+	79.99-77.5%
C	77.49-73.0%
C-	72.99-70.0%
D+	69.99-67.5%
D	67.49-63.0%
D-	62.99-60.0%
F	59.99% and below

Reading Responses

You are expected to complete 10 weekly reading responses throughout the semester. You are free to choose the weeks on which you complete them. Please note, however, that the first set of responses #1-4 are due by Week 6 (2/25/2019); responses #5-7 by Week 10 (4/1/2019); and responses #8-10 by Week 14 (4/29/2019). Your reading response must be 2 pages, double-spaced, 12pt font with one-inch margins (please note that this is a firm page count). Your reading response is due as a Word.docx on Canvas by 9pm on the day before the class period in which we are to discuss the readings. Don't forget to include proper APA citations for the readings at the end of your paper. Your response should address and engage the following questions:

1. What is the author's main argument/thesis?
2. What methodologies/theoretical frameworks do they engage?
3. What main-points and evidence are used to support this argument?
4. How does the essay build on, connect, and/or disagree with other readings?
5. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the argument(s) made in this reading? What remains potentially unclear or unconvincing?
6. Pose at least two discussion questions based on the reading(s). [LOs 1 & 2]

Discussion Leader & Media Example

Each one of you will take the role of discussion leader for one essay during the semester. I will distribute a sign-in sheet with available dates during the first week. As discussion leader you are expected to be the expert on the reading (as well as how it relates to the other readings for that week) and guide us through a productive class period. In order to do so, you should prepare at least four discussion questions that will guide our conversation for about 30min (you are welcome to prepare some PowerPoint slides etc.). Additionally, you should bring a media example to class that further illustrates a point, theory, or concept from your reading. Your media example could be a YouTube clip, news article, blog post, or excerpt from a podcast etc. Your discussion questions and media example are due on the Canvas discussion board by noon on the day of class. Assignment details will be posted on Canvas. [LOs 1 & 2]

Final Project

Your final project in this class will be geared toward a specific goal that best fits your interests. You may select from any of the options listed below. You must decide by Week 4 which option you want to pursue. You are required to set-up an appointment with me or come to my office hours on or before February 18, 2019 to discuss the best option for you. The final project is staggered and consists of four steps: 1) All options require you to submit a formal **proposal with an annotated bibliography** (~1,000 words) by Week 7; 2) A graded **draft** of your paper/project is due by Week 11; 3) you will present your final-project in a **10-minute presentation on the last day of class**; 4) a **final version** and a brief reflection statement are due on May 13 by 5pm via Canvas. Detailed assignment guidelines will be available on Canvas. [LO 3]

Option # 1: Comprehensive Exam prep

For this option, you will start creating and fine-tuning your “concept list” (for more details please consult the Graduate Student Handbook). You will specifically identify 2 theories and 2 methods used in this class to prepare a detailed Theory and Method Essay based on the template provided in the Graduate Student Handbook (4,000-5,000 words).

Option #2: Conference Paper

This option allows you to write a final paper that you can submit or present at an academic conference. You must select a conference for which you would like to submit by Week 4. Your proposal should indicate the conference’s submission guidelines, e.g., extended abstract, full paper, required references etc. Based on these guidelines you then will develop a full conference presentation paper (4,000-5,000 words).

Option #3: Journal submission

You may write a paper that you will submit to an academic journal. You must select the journal to which you would like to submit by Week 4. Your paper should adhere to the length and citation style submission requirements of the journal choose (you should indicate these in your initial proposal). (~7,000 words, count may vary pending on journal requirements).

Option #4: Thesis proposal

Closely following your department’s thesis guidelines, this option allows you to write a paper introducing your proposed thesis research, indicating your topic, focus, research questions, methodology, and projected chapter organization (4,000-5,000 words).

Option # 5: Creative project

For this option you will actively engage in the *production of communication* by crafting a compelling audio-visual critique of some aspect of contemporary media/popular culture through a video. You should draw on and apply various concepts and theories we have discussed in class to analyze this issue. Your video should demonstrate the ways in which technology allows us to read against the grain of dominant (and perhaps not-so-dominant) readings of contemporary media culture (5-7 min video).

Participation

I regard your active presence as constituting a vital part of our shared learning experience in this grad course. Because this seminar will mainly revolve around discussion, everyone’s preparation and participation is crucial. Hence, your main task this semester is to complete the reading assignments and come to our meetings prepared to engage in a productive dialogue about them. You will receive participation points based on the quality of your contributions to discussions, small-group activities, paper workshops, in-class presentations, and projecting a productive attitude. Additionally, I welcome and encourage you to frequently visit me during office hours. [LO 1 & 2]

V. Course Schedule

This schedule may be subject to change. I will give advance notice of schedule changes whenever possible.

COMM 5710 Intro to Critical Media Studies	
Week 2 What are Critical Media Studies?	<u>M 1/28</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course Introductions • Kearney, Mary Celeste. (2018). “Introduction: How to Cook an Artichoke.” In <i>The Craft of Criticism: Critical Media Studies in Practice</i>, 1-8. • Kellner, Douglas (2015). “Cultural Studies, Multiculturalism, and Media Culture.” In <i>Gender, Race, and Class in Media. A Critical Reader 4th ed.</i>, 7-19.
Week 3 Marxisms, Hegemony, and Ideology	<u>M 2/4</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Storey, John (2012). “Ch 4: Marxisms” In <i>Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction</i>, 59-72 (focus on Frankfurt School section) • Lull, James (2011). “Hegemony.” In <i>Gender, Race, and Class in Media. A Critical Reader 4th ed.</i>, 39-42. • Nealon, Jeffrey & Searls Giroux, Susan (2003). “Ideology.” In <i>The Theory Toolbox: Critical Concepts for the Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences</i>, 83-94.
Week 4 Advertising	<u>M 2/11</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jhally, Sut (1990). “Image-Based Culture: Advertising and Popular Culture.” In <i>Gender, Race, and Class in Media. A Critical Reader 4th ed.</i>, pp. 246-250.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Murray, Dara Persis (2013). “Branding ‘Real’ Social Change in Dove’s Campaign for Real Beauty.” <i>Feminist Media Studies</i>, 13(1), 83-101. • Smith, Tovia (2019). “Backlash Erupts After Gillette Launches A New #MeToo-Inspired Ad Campaign.” NPR. • Screening: <i>Advertising at the Edge of the Apocalypse</i> (2017) <p>DUE: Final Project Selections in class</p>
Week 5 Political Economy and Policy	<p><u>M 2/18</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • McChesney, Robert (2008). “Introduction.” <i>The Political Economy of the Media: Enduring Issues, Emerging Dilemmas</i>, New York: Monthly Review Press. • Hearn, Alice (2017). “Commodification.” In <i>Keywords for Media Studies</i>, 43-46. • Fuchs, Christian (2015). “Baidu, Weibo and Renren: The Global Political Economy of Social Media in China.” <i>Asian Journal of Communication</i>, 1-28. • Screening: <i>Digital Disconnect</i> (2018)
Week 6 Production	<p><u>M 2/25</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Johnson, Derek (2017). “Production.” In <i>Keywords for Media Studies</i>, 149-153. • Mayer, Vicky (2016). “The Places Where Audience Studies and Production Studies Meet.” <i>Television & New Media</i>, 17(8), 706-718. • Morgan Parmett, Helen (2018). “Site-specific television as urban renewal: Or, how Portland became <i>Portlandia</i>.” <i>International Journal of Cultural Studies</i>, 21(1) 42-56. • Solon, Olivia (2017). “Underpaid and overburdened: the life of a Facebook moderator.” <i>The Guardian</i>.
Week 7 Audiences	<p><u>M 3/4</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hills, Matt (2017). “Audience.” In <i>Keywords for Media Studies</i>, 17-21. • Hall, Stuart (1980). “Encoding/Decoding.” In <i>Media and Cultural Studies</i>, 163-173. • Hooks, bell (1992). “The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators.” <i>Black Looks: Race and Representation</i>. Boston: South End Press, 115-131. • Cavalcante, Andre (2017). “Breaking into Transgender Life: Transgender Audiences’ Experiences With ‘First of Its Kind’ Visibility in Popular Media.” <i>Communication, Culture & Critique</i>, 1-18. <p>DUE: Final Project Proposal by 5pm via Canvas</p>
Week 8 Feminism & Intersectionality	<p><u>M 3/11</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Banet-Weiser, Sarah (2018). “Introduction” and “Ch1: The Funhouse Mirror.” <i>Empowered: Popular Feminism and Popular Misogyny</i>. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1-64. • Smith, s.e. “Push(back) at the Intersections: Defining (and Critiquing) ‘Intersectionality’.” <i>Bitch Media</i>.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ohlheiser, Abby (2017). “The woman behind ‘Me Too’ knew the power of the phrase when she created it — 10 years ago.” <i>The Washington Post</i>. • Grundi, Saida (2019). “The Flawed Logic of R. Kelly’s Most Unlikely Supporters.” <i>The Atlantic</i>.
<p>Week 9</p> <p>Queer/Trans Media</p>	<p><u>M 3/18</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tongson, Karen (2017). “Queer.” In <i>Keywords for Media Studies</i>, 157-160. • Joyrich, Lynne (2014). “Queer Television Studies: Currents, Flows, and (Main)streams.” <i>Cinema Journal</i> 53(2), 133-139. • Eguchi, Shinsuke, Files-Thompson, Nicole & Calafell, Bernadette (2018). “Queer (of color) aesthetics: fleeting moments of transgression in VH1’s <i>Love & Hip-Hop: Hollywood Season 2</i>.” <i>Critical Studies in Media Communication</i>, 35(2), 180-193. • Stryker, Susan & Currah, Paisley (2014). “Introduction.” <i>TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly</i> 1(1-2), 1-18.
<p>3/25 – 3/31 Spring Break - No Class!</p>	
<p>Week 10</p> <p>Media and Race</p>	<p><u>M 4/1</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Storey, John (2012). “Ch 8: ‘Race,’ Racism, and Representation.” In <i>Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction</i>, 171-186. • Sastre, Alexandra (2014). “Hottentot in the Age of Reality TV: Sexuality, Race, and Kim Kardashian’s Visible Body.” In <i>Celebrity Studies</i> 5(1-2), pp. 123-137. • Guzmán, Isabel & Valdivia, Angharad (2012). “Brain, Brow, Booty: Latina Iconicity in U.S. Popular Culture.” In <i>The Gender and Media Reader</i>, 307-318. • Noble, Safiya Umoja (2018). “Google Has a Striking History of Bias Against Black Girls.” TIME.com • Chen, Vivienne. “The Post-Colonial Politics of ‘Game of Thrones.’” <i>Bitch Media</i>.
<p>Week 11</p> <p>Technology & Surveillance</p>	<p><u>M 4/8</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dubrofsky, Rachel and Magnet, Shoshana (2015). “Introduction: Feminist Surveillance Studies.” In <i>Feminist Surveillance Studies</i>, 1-17. • MacAulay, Maggie & Moldes, Marcos (2016). “Queen don’t Compute: Reading and Casting Shade on Facebook’s Real Names Policy.” <i>Critical Studies in Media Communication</i> 33(1), 6-22. • Owen, David (2018). “Should We Be Worried About Computerized Facial Recognition?” <i>The New Yorker</i>. <p style="text-align: center;">DUE: Final Project Draft by 5pm via Canvas</p>
<p>Week 12</p> <p>Music/Sound</p>	<p><u>M 4/15</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sterne, Jonathan (2014). “There is no Music Industry.” <i>Media Industries</i>, 1(1). • McLeod, Kembrew (2017). “Copyright.” In <i>Keywords for Media Studies</i>, 49-51.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Martin, Alfred (2017). "Queer (In)requencies: SiriusXM's OutQ and the Limits of Queer Listening Publics." <i>Feminist Media Studies</i>, 18(2), 249-263. • DeClue, Jennifer (2017). "To Visualize the Queen Diva! Toward Black Feminist Trans Inclusivity in Beyoncé's 'Formation.'" <i>Transgender Studies Quarterly</i> 4(2), 219-225.
<p>Week 13</p> <p>Globalization</p>	<p><u>M 4/22</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Punathambekar, Aswin (2017). "Globalization." In <i>Keywords for Media Studies</i>, 84-87. • Imre, Aniko (2018). "HBO's e-EUtopia." <i>Media Industries</i>, 5(2), 49-68. • Turner, Graeme (2018). "Netflix and the Reconfiguration of the Australian Television Market." <i>Media Industries</i>, 5(2), 129-142. • Wallis, Cara & Shen, Yongrong (2018). "The SK-II #changedestiny campaign and the limits of commodity activism for women's equality in neo/non-liberal China." <i>Critical Studies in Media Communication</i>, 35(4), 376-389.
<p>Week 14</p> <p>Media Activism</p>	<p><u>M 4/29</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mirzoeff, Nicholas & Halberstam, J. (eds.) (2018). "In Focus: Decolonizing Media Studies." <i>Cinema Journal</i> 57(4), 120-150. • Stephen, Bijan (2015). "Social Media helps Black Lives Matter Fight the Power." <i>Wired.com</i>. • Fischer, Mia (2016). "#Free_CeCe: The Material Convergence of Social Media Activism." <i>Feminist Media Studies</i>, 16(5), 755-771. • Witt, Emily (2018). "The March for Our Lives Presents a Radical New Model for Youth Protest." <i>The New Yorker</i>.
<p>Week 15</p> <p>Final Project Presentations</p>	<p><u>M 5/6</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Project Presentations and course-wrap up <p>Final Project and Reflection Statements are due Mo 5/13 by 10am via Canvas</p>

VI. Classroom and University Policies

For all relevant university deadlines and procedures (such as the last day to withdraw from a course) as well as a comprehensive list of academic support sites, please visit this [link](#).

Attendance

Given that this is a graduate class, I generally assume you are here because you want to be. Of course, extenuating circumstances do sometimes arise, and you may not always be able to make it. You, therefore, get **two absences** without having to provide documentation. Please note, however, that **each additional undocumented absence will result in a 5%-point reduction of your final course grade**. Attending class also means arriving to class on time and staying for the whole class. It is your responsibility to talk with a peer about what you miss during class.

Type of Absence

Official university function
Required court or jury appearance
Required military obligation
Religious observances
Severe illness or injury
Death of family member
Closed campus/inclement weather
Open campus/inclement weather
Required employment travel

Required Documentation

University official authorizing the absence
Clerk of the Court
Copy of orders, or commanding officer
Student initiated request
Physician's note
Copy of death certificate, family relationship
No verification required
Highway department closed road verification
Immediate supervisor

Late Work and Grades

You are expected to complete all assignments **on time** and submit them via Canvas. Please note that I **do not accept late work** for a grade unless we have discussed and arranged for special circumstances **in advance**. Otherwise your assignment will receive a zero, no matter if it is five minutes late or five days. I will generally provide you with **checklists and/or grading rubrics** in advance of major assignments so that you have a clear sense of key elements required to succeed, as well as to ensure fair and consistent grading practices. All of your grades will be posted and made available on Canvas, usually within one week after their due-date. Because of right-to-privacy restrictions, I do not discuss grades via email. If you feel like a grade you earned is not deserved and you want to appeal, please submit a brief typewritten memo more than 24 hours after and within seven days of earning that grade explaining why you feel a change is warranted.

Correspondence

Email will be a primary mode of communication outside of class, so **be sure to check your Canvas messages regularly**. Please also adhere to basic email etiquette. If you are unclear what this constitutes, a useful resource can be found [here](#). I generally respond to emails Mo-Fr between 9am and 5pm within 24hrs of receiving them. Please note that I do not respond to emails over the weekend.

Class Room Decorum

Diverse backgrounds, embodiments, and experiences are essential to the critical thinking endeavor at the heart of university education. Each and every voice in the classroom is important and brings with it a wealth of experiences, values and beliefs. Here at CU Denver we believe that individual differences can deepen our understanding of one another and the world around us, rather than divide us. I, therefore, expect you to be courteous and respectful with each other and maintain an open-mind when you encounter identities and perspectives that may differ from your own. Because we will, at times, talk about difficult and contested issues in this class, please come to class ready to listen as much as you are ready to talk. We are all responsible for proactively creating a positive learning environment that refrains from personal attacks and does not deploy racist, (cis)sexist, homo-/transphobic, ableist or otherwise offensive language. Unlearning problematic patterns of thinking can be hard and is a process that requires all of us to push ourselves beyond our comfort zones in an effort to pursue rigorous intellectual dialogue and debate. Please remember that you may not always agree with everything you read,

hear, or discuss in this class, but you are responsible for engaging respectfully with your classmates, your instructor, and the material.

How to do well

I encourage you to chat with me about the course materials and/or assignments if you have any concerns or are unclear about something. I am happy to look over drafts, answer questions, or provide clarification whenever possible. Please ask for clarification and/or help well in advance of a due date. This is a **grad college class – as such I expect you to submit grad-level work and take initiative in your own learning**. In addition to the three hours you spend in class each week, you should expect to devote at least eight to ten hours per week to work outside of class. This includes the time you will spend reading (~100 pages per week), studying, and working on assignments.

Tips for a great participation grade:

- Come to class prepared. This means you've done all the required readings and you've written down some points about the material that you found interesting or didn't understand.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the course material by volunteering answers to questions and seeking clarification of points in the readings.
- Ask questions that extend the thinking of the class and the instructor
- Contribute relevant examples that support and justify claims
- Interact with classmates' comments
- Maintain a positive attitude and professional courtesy
- Bring unique thought, insight and depth to the topic at hand
 - Instead of repeating what someone else has already said, respond to a comment by adding something new
- Support claims with evidence and be able to formulate counter-arguments.

The Writing Center

North Classroom Building (CU Denver), Room 4014

Auraria Library, First Floor

writing.center@ucdenver.edu

303-556-4845

* Offers all students free, individualized writing instruction, both in person and online*

Academic Honesty & Plagiarism

All work you submit for this class—whether in reading/film responses, blog posts, video projects, or in class discussion—should be your own. **Plagiarism is the representation of someone else's ideas, quotations, or research as your own. It is a form of theft.** Examples of plagiarism: buying a paper written by someone else, quoting or summarizing an author's argument without correctly citing them, using ideas found on websites for your assignments without correctly citing them, "borrowing" a classmate's ideas for your own writing without attribution, and using your own papers for more than one class without explicit consent of all

instructors (yes, you can plagiarize yourself). **Plagiarism is a violation of the [Student Code of Conduct](#) and will result in immediate failure of the assignment. If you are caught cheating/plagiarizing more than once you will fail the entire course.** At my discretion, instances of plagiarism and/or cheating will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct.

How do I properly cite sources?

- ✓ always choose APA for your citations and follow the style guide closely
- ✓ all assignments must enclose directly quoted material inside quotation marks and provide page numbers
- ✓ include in-text parenthetical citations for all material drawn from another source – this includes direct quotations, summaries, and paraphrased material
- ✓ include a complete reference list of all your sources at the end of your paper

For a more detailed explanation on proper citational practices, see this excellent guide from Purdue's Online Writing Lab: [APA formatting and style guide](#)

CLAS Incomplete Policy

Incomplete grades are not given to students because they are receiving lower grades than they would like. To be eligible for an incomplete grade, students must have completed 75% of the course assignments with passing grades and have special circumstances outside of their control that preclude completion of the course. The incomplete grade that will be given if the above conditions are met is an I, which means that if the student does not complete the work for the course within 12 months, the grade reverts to an F.

University Employee Reporting

As a faculty member, one of my responsibilities is to help create a safe learning environment on our campus, one that is free from sexual harassment. Please be aware that most University employees, including myself, are **mandatory reporters**. This means that we are legally required to share any knowledge of *specific* sexual misconduct with the Office for Equal Opportunity & Affirmative Action (EOAA) that is disclosed to us. You can access CU Denver's sexual harassment policy [here](#).

The [Phoenix Center at Auraria](#) provides free and confidential resources and assistance to survivors of interpersonal violence (relationship violence, sexual violence, and stalking), as well as their friends, families, and concerned others.

Mental Health

Adjusting to the high expectations of college life can be difficult and hard to handle. If you are experiencing stress, anxiety, and/or depression please do not hesitate to come talk to me and/or contact CU Denver's [Student and Community Counseling Center](#) (303-556-4372). Talking through your problems is an effective way to get through challenging times in your life. There is no shame or embarrassment in seeking help.

Special Needs Policy

CU Denver is committed to ensuring the full participation of all students in its programs, including students with disabilities as is required by federal law. If you have a disability or think you might have one and need accommodations to succeed in this course, I encourage you to contact [Disability Resources and Services](#) as soon as possible to arrange for equitable accommodations. I also understand that not all diverse needs for accommodation fall under the rubric of traditional “disabilities.” If you need special accommodations to help you succeed in this course, please see me so that we can determine what your needs are and how I can help you meet them. This course strives to use assistive technology, such as screen readers and closed-captioning services, whenever possible to support course-material accessibility for all students.