MMC 6660: Mass Comm & Society
Fall 2015
Section: 2985; Mondays 12:50 a.m. to 3:50 p.m.

Dr. Wayne Wanta
wwanta@ufl.edu
3061 Weimer Hall
Office hours: 10-11 Mondays, 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. Tuesdays or by appointment.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
The purpose of this course is to give students in journalism, advertising, public relations, telecommunications, and other mass communications fields the opportunity to explore issues in the interaction between mass media/mass communication institutions and society. The course is aimed at helping students to develop a critical perspective on mass media as they consider different ways in which media institutions and media content affect — and are affected by — individuals and society. In particular, students are expected to engage in evaluation and discussion of the responsibilities media practitioners and media organizations have toward the larger society and how those responsibilities should be translated into individual behavior and organizational (or governmental) policies. Because the focus of the course is on contemporary issues and problems involving mass media institutions and professions, readings tend to be drawn from recent works rather than classic or seminal ones, although the classic works certainly may sometimes inform the debate.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:
Readings:
No texts are required (you’re welcome…). However, there will be several readings each week. Details of how to access the readings will be distributed in class.

While no text is required, a number of academic journals are also excellent sources of theory-based research. Among the more useful ones are:
Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly
Journal of Communication
Communication Research
Public Opinion Quarterly
Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media
Newspaper Research Journal
Mass Communication & Society
Journal of Advertising Research
Public Relations Review
Critical Studies in Mass Communication
Journal of Communication Inquiry
Grading:
Grades will be determined in the following way:
Final papers ................................................................. 50%
Discussion leaders ......................................................... 20%
Reactions to readings ...................................................... 20%
Participation ................................................................. 10%

Final papers:
Students will produce a research paper that will be of sufficient quality for submission to
the annual convention of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass
Communication or the International Communication Association. The paper will be
written in sections. The due dates for individual sections are listed on the tentative
schedule. The paper can deal with any topic we will discuss this term and involve any
appropriate methodology. It also is preferable for students to work in teams.

Discussion leader presentations: Each student will serve as a discussion leader for one
class during the semester. Discussion leaders will need to do additional readings on their
topics and prepare materials for the class to discuss. Creativity will be rewarded here.
While the instructor will contribute to the discussion, students should be prepared to
extend student interaction for much of the period. Discussion leaders will be needed from
week 5 through week 12. A sign-up sheet will be brought to class next Monday. Topics
will be selected on a first-come, first-served basis. Students will also write a two to three
page paper discussing the topic.

Reactions to readings:
Students will be required to turn in brief reactions and questions dealing with the
assigned topic of the week. The papers should be no longer than 1 or 2 pages. In these
papers, students should critically evaluate the readings and include points made in the
readings that were not clear. Papers are due Monday at noon and should be sent via
email to me. Students doing presentations will not be required to do reaction papers for
that week.

Participation:
Students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the readings for that day.
Students should not feel shy or intimidated. There are no dumb questions or comments.
Ask lots of questions if you don’t understand something. Comment if you think
something is stupid. All students should offer their thoughts in class.

Expectations:
Students are expected to attend each class session and will be graded on class participation. Assignments must be turned in on time on the date they are due. One full letter grade will be deducted for each day an assignment is late. Your written work should be of professional quality; spelling, grammar, and punctuation count. Please make sure that all work is your own and that the sources of information are accurately quoted and represented.

**Plagiarism; Cheating or other Academic Misconduct:** The Academic Integrity Statement for the College of Journalism and Communications can be found here: [http://www.jou.ufl.edu/grad/forms/Plagiarism-Guideline.pdf](http://www.jou.ufl.edu/grad/forms/Plagiarism-Guideline.pdf)

In addition, all students are bound by the university’s Honor Code Policy at [http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/honorcode.php](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/honorcode.php). Anyone who violates these policies in this course will receive a failing grade in this course and face further sanctions from the college and university.

**Special needs:** Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting an accommodation. This course conforms to all requirements of the ADA and handles with sensitivity all matters related to gender, race, sexual orientation, age, religion or disability. Please alert the instructor if any issues arise.

**Syllabus Changes:** The instructor reserves the right to alter the syllabus or course schedule as the need arises. This includes the possibility of guest speakers and special presentations, some of which may be scheduled outside of class time. Note: Some of the content for this syllabus was taken from syllabi from previous classes.

**Final tips on getting good grades:**
Come to class on time. Contact me before class if you cannot attend. Come to class prepared to discuss topics by completing all of the assigned readings ahead of time. TURN OFF your cell phones. Laugh at my jokes.

**Tentative schedule**

**August 24, Week 1: Getting started**
Class introductions, expectations

**August 31, Week 2: Developing research designs/Writing research papers**
Picking topics, study designs, forming groups
September 7, Week 3: Labor Day, no class

September 14, Week 4: Research trends/State of the media

Assignment I: Find a journal article that you feel effectively explains the purpose of a study similar to your final study. Be prepared to discuss the study in class.

September 21, Week 5: Semiotics
Signs, symbols and meaning
Discussion leader I

Introductions Due

September 28, Week 6: Media and modern society
History and the rise and fall of the newspaper industry
Discussion leader II

October 5, Week 7: Media and public opinion
The Press and the Public: Why do people hate us?
Discussion leader III

Literature reviews due

October 12, Week 8:
Catch our breath...

October 19, Week 9: Globalization
The Global news culture and the growing concept of global media ethics
Discussion leader IV

Methods sections due

October 26, Week 10: Media and Democracy
Media and civil society; An exploration of the theories of the press
Discussion leader V

November 2, Week 11: Modernity and tradition
Communicative rationality in the Public Sphere
Discussion leader VI

November 9, Week 12: Self in a mediated world
Self-image and the social construction of reality
Discussion leader VII

November 16, Week 13: Strong vs. weak ties
Networks and bridges
Discussion leader VIII

November 23, Week 14: Thanksgiving: No class

November 30, Week 15: Class Presentations
In-class final paper presentations

December 7, Week 16: Class Presentations
In-class final paper presentations

Final papers due by noon December 7