

MMC 6660: Mass Comm & Society

Fall 2015

Section: 2985; Mondays 12:50 a.m. to 3:50 p.m.

Dr. Wayne Wanta

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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>

In addition, all students are bound by the university's Honor Code Policy at <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

The State of the Media Today. Basis for this discussion is the Pew Project for Excellence in Journalism's "The State of the News Media 2015: An Annual Report on American Journalism." <http://stateofthemedias.org/>

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