

MMC 6660 Mass Comm & Society Syllabus

Instructor: Ronald R. Rodgers

Email: rrodgers@jou.ufl.edu (But for this class, use the Sakai system only.) I will respond as soon as possible within 24 hours Monday through Friday

Email Policy

Use the Sakai e-learning email system **only** to ensure your email does not get lost in the spam folder or among other non-class emails. The email should be as specific as possible. You should also note that I check my email **once** in the morning and **once** in the evening Monday through Friday.

Meeting Times: Monday: Periods 6, 7 & 8 (12:50-3:50 p.m.)

Classroom: Weimer G030

Office: 3058 Weimer Hall **Office phone:** 392-8847

Office Hours: See [Link to my schedule](#)

Course Description

The purpose of this course is to give students in journalism, advertising, public relations, telecommunications, other mass communications fields, and anyone else interested in mass communications – and that should be everyone – 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 will 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 are largely drawn from recent works rather than classic or seminal ones, although we will read some of the classic works because they still inform the debate.

Requirements for Class

Tools

- A laptop computer with a fully charged battery – bring to every class.
- A [WordPress](#) blog for **MMC 6660 Mass Media & Society** class using the [Journalist v1.9](#) theme. Post the url for your blog as a comment to [this post](#). Be sure to activate the link. In settings require all comments to be moderated before they become public. **Deadline:** By end of first class.
- Here is an excellent WordPress worksheet from Prof. Mindy McAdams on the basics of setting up a blog: http://www.jtoolkit.com/blogging/wp_tips.html

Books

Media/Society: Industries, Images and Audiences, 4th Edition, by David Croteau and William Hoynes, 2012 (Pine Forge, Thousand Oaks, CA). [Link to Google Books](#)

Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business by Neil Postman, 2005 (New York, N.Y. [u.a.]: Penguin Books). [Link to Google Books](#) And as a preface to this book, read this short essay to kick start your thinking: [The Zuckerberg Revolution](#)

Here are some links to cheap books: abebooks <http://www.abebooks.com/> & half.com by ebay <http://www.half.ebay.com/>

Communications-Related Headlines from the Benton

Foundation: <http://benton.org/help/subscriptions> Subscribe to either e-mail or RSS feed to your reader and review each day. This offers you a view of breaking media issues. I will often refer to this in our discussions.

Log in to the Sakai at <http://lss.at.ufl.edu> If you are unfamiliar with Sakai or have any questions, check out the [e-Learning FAQs](#). If you encounter a problem while using e-Learning, you should immediately contact the Help Desk to get assistance.

Bookmark this Mass Comm & Society Blog (<http://mmc6660.wordpress.com/syllabus-2/>): This includes resources I will add to on occasion. You might want to link RSS feed to your [reader](#).
Stylebook

You are required to follow APA style for all your citations and reference lists in this course. Thus, you will need a stylebook. Either:

Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association. [Link to Google Books](#)
Or

A Pocket Style Manual by Diana Hacker. [Link to Google Books.](#)

Some Recommended Books & Websites:

Communication Research: Strategies and Sources by Rebecca B. Rubin, Alan M. Rubin, Linda J. Piele, and Paul M. Haridakis, 2010. (Wadsworth Cengage Learning). (If you are a new master's student, this book will help you develop your research skills to meet the expectations of the Graduate Faculty.) [Link to Google Books](#)

Mass Communication and American Social Thought: Key Texts, 1919-1968 by John Durham Peters and Peter Simonson, 2004 (Rowman & Littlefield). [Link to Google Books](#)

Purdue Online Writing Lab's Research and Citation Resources<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/>

Course Objectives

By the time you complete this course, you should have:

- the ability to critically evaluate competing perspectives on the many issues surrounding mass communication and its relation to society;
- the ability to analyze research literature and media products relevant to the impact of mass communication on culture and society – especially as it relates to the sustenance of democracy and the construction of reality;
- completed a research paper introduction, literature review, and method section that is connected to your own research interests that critically examines a critical mass communication method, issue or trend affecting media, culture and society.

Course Structure

Format: The class will rely on this blog and UF's Sakai e-learning site (<https://lss.at.ufl.edu/>) and e-mail through the Sakai system only for course assignments, discussions, assignment submission, assessments, etc. You MUST have regular access to a computer and the Internet in order to function successfully in this course.

The course work will consist of weekly in-class analyses, lectures, class discussions, screenings, and readings. **Note: Students are expected to complete all reading assignments prior to class.** Class discussions will be guided by a combination of topic-specific lectures, assigned readings, and course-related media intended to contribute to students' understanding of the subject matter. Students will be encouraged to demonstrate their understanding of the course material through a variety of evaluative measures, including, but not limited to:

- Contribution to class discussions
- Responses to weekly in-class analyses
- The quality of their weekly discussion questions
- In-class presentations on mass communication issues
- In-class discussion and debate of other students' and the instructor's presentations
- Weekly essays on their blogs
- Completion of the first parts of an original research project up through the method that is geared to individual students' research interests that critically examine a mass communication issue or trend affecting society. See [Assignments](#) for fuller explanation about this and other assignments.

Class participation: Class discussion and debate are crucial to the success of this class. To help achieve success, **you are expected to read all assigned materials BEFORE the class period to which they relate.** One purpose of class discussion is to reveal multiple perspectives on and understandings of course topics. (This is what is called the [synoptic method](#) and is especially important in a class that often consists of students from many nations.) Think about it for a second: You are all longtime users of and the products of the media. The [media to you is like water to fish](#), as James Carey notes in one of our readings. It is so [ubiquitous](#) you have no idea how it sustains you and your perception of reality. In addition, you are graduate students taking a course in a college that deals with media of various stripes. Thus, each of you has informed perspectives about the media from both your personal experience and through your interest in advertising or public relations or journalism/telecommunications or any other communications-related field that you can bring to the class.

Still, a note of caution related to this pooling of media interests. I have heard, for example, about some classes where PR majors regularly unfairly criticize the journalism profession as unprofessional and the enemy – and vice versa. In this class, you are expected to show professional courtesy to all other students at all times during the course. Differences of opinion are not only expected but healthy, and disagreement with others' statements and reasoning may occur. However, NO ONE will be allowed to engage in personal attacks on other students. This isn't the [Jerry Springer Show](#). No academic food fights allowed. Here is an [example](#) of a polite – I hope – critique of the media. Look for my comment below this transcript.

Contribute to Class: One way students can contribute to class discussion is to identify and share relevant articles, photographs, website materials or videos you have come across that relate to course concepts and topics – as I just did above. When students bring in these materials, we will try to find time to discuss them. I encourage you to submit such materials to [Media Is Plural](#) – a Tumblr blog I maintain for this class.

Your Professor's Bias

I come to this class with more than 20 years of newspaper experience working in Asia – where I saw up close the overt hand of propaganda and press censorship – and in five Western states – where I saw the more covert influences on journalistic conduct and content such as commercialism, entertainment, advertising, and public relations. Both sides of that communication continuum are examples of a sociological perspective of the media – [structure and agency](#) – which will inform this class. Thus, I should note that my bias lies in that subset of the media – journalism through the venues of print, online, or over the airwaves – both in its attempt to reveal out of the chaos of dissimilar claims and assertions some semblance of what is true and in its attempt to achieve the journalistic ideal of acting as a venue for rational, critical, and untainted discourse – the ground from which democracy grows. But in the process of talking about the media, I acknowledge that we cannot ignore those other powerful structural media institutions – advertising and public relations – which certainly exist outside the realm of journalism but are also very much embedded in and a major influence on the practice of journalism.

Other Course Management Issues

Accommodation for disabilities: Please let me know immediately if you have any kind of problem or disability that would hinder your work in this course. I will do my best to help you. Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the [Disability Resource Center](#) as early in the semester as possible. The center will provide documentation so appropriate accommodations can be made. The center is in Reid Hall, 392-8565.

Class attendance: Class attendance is required. More than one unexcused absence will result in a minimum deduction of one letter grade from your attendance and participation grade. More than two will result in the same deduction from your overall grade. Hey, this class only meets once a week. Arriving or leaving early will be considered an absence. Excused absences include documented medical excuses and religious observances (with advanced notice). Please contact me before class. University-

approved absences must be documented (in advance, if for an approved university activity) according to official university policy. Obtaining written verification for an excused absence is your responsibility, as is arranging to complete any missed work.

Common courtesy: For heaven's sake, turn off your cell phone! Please also observe other rules of common courtesy, such as not speaking to your classmates (or yourself) when others are making a presentation, not falling asleep in class, not scrolling the Web, etc.

Be Good: And I have to say this as part of our contract: You need to conduct yourself in a courteous manner both in and out of class when it comes to dealing with fellow students or your instructor. That means any rude, obstructive or aggressive behavior will not be tolerated, and manifestations of same will mean your ouster from the class. I have a zero-tolerance policy on this. Here is a link to the UF Counseling and Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/default.aspx> The Center is located at 3190 Radio Road and the phone number for Appointments & After-Hour Assistance is (352) 392-1575.

Plagiarism and Academic Honesty:

Begin by listening to this: [Who Makes Stuff Up, And Why They Do It](#)

For the communications professional, there hardly exists a graver crime than plagiarizing another writer's work. We acknowledge other people's work by "[standing on the shoulders of giants](#)," as Newton put it. If you think this class, this university, this nation is "a culture of cut and paste," as two international students described to me their country, think again. In short, it is YOUR responsibility to make certain you understand what constitutes plagiarism and to ensure that you give proper credit any time you draw on someone else's writing.

- You are required to read both the UF [Academic Honesty](#) policy and the Journalism Department's [Academic Honesty](#) document, which was written by Prof. Dave Carlson. I will work under the assumption that you have done so.
- **Do not rely on what you think you've learned before.** Prof. Mindy McAdams has put together an excellent guide: <http://www.macloo.com/cheat/index.htm>.
- If you're still not certain you understand what's acceptable and what isn't, check out this oft-cited website: <http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml>
- **If you have questions, ASK ME!** There's no penalty for asking questions, but the penalties for plagiarism are severe, including **dismissal from the program**.
- **Treat Internet sources like any other book, journal article or other print source.** Make CERTAIN you copy down citation information when you copy material from a website, EVEN if you're paraphrasing.
- **Upload ALL papers to the Sakai e-learning site and know that I will submit them to Turnitin.com to check for plagiarism.** I'll also want hard copies of all your papers.
- **DO NOT turn in to me ANY work you previously have submitted to another instructor or that you plan to submit for any other class at UF or any other institution.** If you want to write on a topic you've worked on before, that may be acceptable IF you discuss it with me and get permission IN ADVANCE.

Please see the UF Office of Student Judicial Affairs website for definitions of academic dishonesty (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/honorcode.php>). The violations most likely to be potential problems for students in this class include plagiarism, misrepresentation and fabrication. It is YOUR responsibility to understand what kinds of actions are prohibited. If a situation ever arises in which you think something you're contemplating MIGHT constitute one of these types of academic dishonesty, ASK BEFORE YOU DO IT. Apologies after the fact are extremely unlikely to resolve the problem for anyone.

CAVEAT: Sometimes a class such as this will deal with controversial topics, so be warned that words that may be considered offensive or ideological may be spoken in the context of the subjects we are discussing. As a teacher, I have no political or social agenda, so do not try to answer in a way you

believe might comport with what I want to hear or read. Feel free to advocate any position as long as you remain respectful of others' opinions, and always be able to defend your point of view.

A Note about Office Hours: As much as humanly possible, I will be available during my office hours.

If you come by during office hours and I'm not in, look for a note – I'm very likely to be back in 5 minutes or less. If you cannot meet with me during my office hours, please make an appointment.

Unless you have made an appointment in advance, please respect the fact that I need to attend to other tasks – research, writing, planning for class, grading papers, meeting with other students, conducting committee work, etc., etc., etc. – during my non-office hours. So please do not be

offended if you drop by unexpectedly and I ask you to make an appointment or come back during office hours. If you make an appointment and then can't keep it, please call or email me as soon as possible to let me know. I have an answering machine on my office phone, and remember, if the

answering machine picks up and you don't leave your telephone number or speak so rapidly that I can't decipher the number, I can't call you back!

Late Assignment Policy: No assignment can be late under any circumstances. Work turned in late will not be accepted unless you have a legitimate and documented excuse. **This is not negotiable, so please plan ahead!**

Grading: Your final grade for the course will be determined as follows:

| Activity | Maximum Points |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| Class Participation | 100 |
| Analyze This | 100 (average of all) |
| Discussion Questions | 100 (average of all) |
| Blog Essays | 100 (average of all) |
| Discussion topic proposal | 100 |
| Discussion topic presentation | 100 |
| Research paper proposal | 100 |
| Annotated bibliography | 100 |
| Review Essay | 100 |
| Research Paper & Presentation | 100 |
| Total points possible | 1,000 |

Final grades will be based on these standard break-points:

(1,000 points = score of 100%)

| | | | |
|----|-------------|----|-------------------|
| A | 93.6%+ | C | 73.6-77% |
| A- | 90-93.5% | C- | 70-73.5% |
| B+ | 87.1%-89.9% | D+ | 67.1%- 69.9% |
| B | 83.6-87% | D | 63.6-67% |
| B- | 80-83.5% | D- | 60-63.5% |
| C+ | 77.1%-79.9% | E | 59.9% or lower |

It is unlikely that the grades will be curved.

The following website provides a chart showing UF's policy regarding the grade points earned for each letter grade designation: <https://gradschool.ufl.edu/catalog/current-catalog/catalog-general-regulations.html#grades> Click on the Grades link

1. Class participation

Because student involvement is vital to the success of this course, you are expected to play an active part in shaping this course and keeping it focused on the broad objectives. Obviously, this means you are expected to attend class regularly, to be in the classroom by the time class begins, to contribute to identifying relevant readings and other resources and to participate meaningfully in class discussions. This also includes your reports on individual readings to the class. In addition to being physically present in class, I expect you to be mentally present. That means you will NOT be texting, emailing or using your laptop or phone to Web-surf, work on assignments for another class or interact with any social networking site during class time. Unless there's a specific need for someone in the class to get online, leave your laptop closed and your phones turned off during class.

2. Analyze This

A weekly question or two or more drawn from assigned readings and previous lectures and/or discussions. I normally allow only 15 minutes for this. You should expect a question or two from the syllabus the second week. This requires you to read and analyze all readings and view all screenings. **One each week.**

3. Deep thinking discussion questions

Each member of the class is expected to file as comment to **this post** one discussion question derived from the readings assigned for the day. The questions should be original to you alone and manifest deep, critical thinking on your part. Points off for being either superficial or overly long or complex or convoluted. Others can feel free to comment on any of the questions posted. In fact, I encourage that. Make sure you are not posting anonymously. The question can target a point or points that you believe constitute a real strength of the material. Or it can deal with a criticism of the material. Just make sure you stay on point to the subject of the material. Points off for not doing so.

Slug your comment **Question for Week XX and sign each of your posts with your full name.** Discussion questions must be filed by **6 p.m. Sunday** before the next class. To repeat, post as comment to this blog post: <http://mmc6660.wordpress.com/2012/04/21/deep-thinking-discussion-questions/> **One each week.**

4. Blog Essays

These are based on my questions about the week's readings posed on the schedule. Points off for being either superficial or overly long, complex and convoluted. Sometimes you will need to do some research to respond fully on these essays. Here is a link to [library resources](#). **One each week due before class. Post to your blog.** Please title your posts **Essay for Week XX** and sign each of your posts with your full name

5. Discussion topic proposal

Each student will be assigned to a discussion topic team the first day of class – so don't be absent. Here is the [Discussion Topic Presentation Handout](#) that covers both Proposal and Presentation. The Proposal is a brief (2-3 pages) summary of an issue, challenge or problem in the interaction of mass media with society. Bring 1-page synopsis to class – enough for all. Read handout for more. ([Here is a Topic Proposal Example](#)) The discussion topic proposal should include a background statement or introduction, summaries of any **opposing views** and annotated references from recent books, periodicals, journals, and popular literature. (This means each citation will include a 2- or 3-line abstract describing the basic thesis or findings of the cited work. The example above shows how this is

done.) Each team will make a 5-minute (maximum, I will cut you off) oral presentation of their proposal in Week 3. **Discussion topic proposal due Week 3 (Which is the second class.) Post to your blog.**

6. Discussion topic presentation

Each student will be assigned to a discussion topic team. More information about the discussion topic presentation is provided in the [Discussion Topic Presentation Handout](#). **To be scheduled.**

7. Research Paper Proposal

Research paper proposal with a list of ten initial annotated references. See references at end of [Topic Proposal Example](#) as one example of annotation. Bring copies of a one-page synopsis to Week 4 class – enough for all. Here is an excellent [outline of the elements](#) of a research proposal. Follow it closely. **Full proposal due Sunday before Week 4 class at 6 p.m. as post to your class blog.**

8. Annotated bibliography

The annotated bibliography of at least three dozen sources should directly relate to the topic of your research project and should provide a foundation on which you can build that and future papers – and your future thesis or project or dissertation. See references at end of [Topic Proposal Example](#) as one example. It should include a synopsis of the key literature related to your topic of interest. It should include full citations in reference note APA style and your own evaluative summation of what you see as the relevant points from each source. This should be an individually generated assignment. Here is an excellent UNC handout on [annotated bibliographies](#). **Annotated bibliography due by 6 p.m. Sunday before Week 7. Post to your blog.**

9. A review essay

A review essay of [Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business](#) by Neil Postman, 4 to 5 pages **single-spaced on a Word doc before you post to blog. That means about 500 per page on average with Times New Roman 12 point font with one-inch margins – for a total of about 2,500 words.** Some of the readings — you choose — from this semester or any other books or articles about the media you have read outside class will also be discussed and inform this reading. A review essay is NOT a book report. It is an opportunity to discuss a general subject from a [macroscopic](#) point of view. However, a review essay need not always discuss the books under review in any kind of detail. The first two or three paragraphs set the stage; they offer the framework within which the book(s) belong(s). As the essay proceeds, a larger perspective may supervene and inform the subject matter. In the end, the essayist draws conclusions about the review book(s) with regard to the larger discourse undertaken. For example, see: Guidelines for Writing a Review Essay <http://urban.hunter.cuny.edu/~apolsky/REVIEWESSAYF03.htm> Here is [Example 1](#) and [Example 2](#) and [Example 3](#). **Due by 6 p.m. Sunday before Week 14. Post to your blog.**

10. Research Paper & Poster Presentation

Each student will research and write the first three-quarters of a 20-page (**about 15 pages**) conference-quality research paper on a topic selected by the student and approved by the professor. **Due Sunday before last class. Send me final paper on email attachment, and bring a hard copy to class.**

See: [General Grading Criteria for Research and Analysis Papers](#) In general, your research paper should be organized thusly (For this class you will complete the first four elements):

1. Introduction: An introduction that outlines the study. This normally answers the question, “Why should we care about this?” or “Why is this an important problem/issue?” The introduction should manifest deep, critical thinking on your part about this subject. Students often choose to write a paper on the topic they propose for a discussion topic, but that is not a requirement. To get you thinking

about this and your research in the future, I suggest you check out past [master theses](#) or [dissertations](#). These links will take you to titles only. Full text is available through the library.

2. Literature review: The introduction should then be followed by a review of the relevant literature that has been done on your subject. This is the meat of your research project as it sets up the context of your study in relation to earlier research and is the ground from which your research question or questions come. Here is an excellent UNC handout on the [literature review](#); if appropriate, the paper may include original research (for instance, interviews, survey evidence, case studies). This paper should also include at end a reference bibliography presented in scholarly form – APA style.
3. Research questions: Then list your research question or questions.
4. Method: You then explain the methodology and procedures you would use to gather your data. This should be explained well enough that another researcher could replicate the study.
5. Discussion and/or conclusion: If you were completing this paper, the method section would be followed by a results section that explains what you found, and then the paper would end with a discussion/conclusion section that argues about what your results show and lays out recommendations for a policy alternative or a specific call for future research on the subject.

10.1 A scholar-to-scholar poster presentation of your research

We will make the classroom into a conference hall and you will offer a poster presentation of your research. What does this involve? See [this link](#) and [this link](#) about posters from AEJMC.(note, the poster is done on a Powerpoint slide and then printed on a big printer: See [How to Make a Poster Using PowerPoint](#)) **During last class. Bring food and drink of your choice to share. (Here is some information on where you can have posters printed on UF campus. <http://print.at.ufl.edu/printplottips.shtml>)**