

*Initial Syllabus*  
**Mass Communication and Society**  
**MMC 6660, Section 8611**  
**Spring 2015**  
**Mondays 1:55 to 4:55**  
**1090 Weimer Hall**

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**Office Hours: Tuesday & Wednesday**  
**2:00 to 5:00 p.m., by appointment**

### **Purpose of the Course**

The purpose of this course is to give you the opportunity to explore issues in the interaction between mass media, culture and society. The course is aimed at helping you to develop critical perspectives on mass media as you consider the interplay between media institutions, media content, culture, audiences and society.

### **Course Objectives**

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

1. developed multiple perspectives to evaluating competing claims regarding the interaction between media, culture and society;
2. gained or enhanced your ability to analyze literature and media products relevant to the study of media, culture and society;
3. completed a literature review that critically examines an issue or trend in the interstice of media, culture and society.

### **Course Structure**

The course relies primarily on student teams to present on assigned topics, compile resources (readings, data, statistics, examples and evidence), and engage in debate and discussion. Presentations require student teams to review and synthesize the various arguments and evidence related to selected topics. The purpose of these presentations is to help your class members expand their knowledge and perspectives on each issue. After each presentation, the class will discuss various aspects of the issue presented and possibly view and discuss related texts, videos and other media.

**The class will rely on E-learning/Sakai courseware and email 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.**

## Required Reading:

There are two required textbooks for this course. The first is **Media/Society: Industries, Images and Audiences** by David Croteau and William Hoynes (Pine Forge, Thousand Oaks, CA). The second is **Approaches to Media Literacy: A Handbook**, by Art Silverblatt, Jane Ferry and Barbara Finan (M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, New York).

Three other textbooks will assist you greatly in this course: The first is **Media and Cultural Studies: Keywords**, edited by Durham and Kellner (Blackwell, Malden, MA). The second is **Gender, Race and Class in Media: A Critical Reader**, by Dines and Humez (Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA). The third is **Media/Cultural Studies: Critical Approaches**, by Rhonda Hammer and Douglas Kellner (Eds.) (Peter Lang, New York). These can be obtained inexpensively at [www.half.com](http://www.half.com) or [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

*You may also find the following relevant textbooks in the UF library holdings of value:*

**Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Controversial Issues in Mass Media and Society**, Alison Alexander and Jarice Hanson, (Eds.); **Questioning the Media: A Critical Introduction** by John D.H. Downing, Ali Mohammadi and Annabelle Sreberny-Mohammadi **Controversies in Media Ethics** by A. David Gordon and John Michael Kittross. I will suggest additional readings from time to time.

## Course Assignments

**1. Class Presentations:** Each student will be assigned to one or more presentation teams. A team has the responsibility for preparing a brief on its assigned topic and presenting that topic to the class. Presentations should not exceed 50 minutes and should be supported by audio-visual materials.

Team members will evaluate each others' contributions to the class presentation, and these evaluations will figure into the grade each team member receives for the presentation. Although the team as a whole will receive a grade, individual scores may be higher or lower than the team grade depending on the peer evaluations. For instance, if team members generally agree that it was a group effort, but that one person was a strong team leader, contributed more than his/her fair share to preparing the team's presentation, the grade that person receives may be higher than the team grade. On the other hand, if a team member fails to contribute significantly to the project, that individual's grade may be lower than the team grade.

**2. Presentation Summaries:** These are 5-10 page summaries of an issue, challenge or problem in the interaction of mass media, culture and society. They should include an introduction, summaries of the various sub-issues or perspectives, and annotated references from recent books, periodicals, journals or qualified web resources that discuss the topic. By annotation, I mean a 2- or 3-line abstract describing the essential content of each of the books, periodicals, journals or qualified web resources you reviewed which discuss the topic. **They are due no later than midnight Thursday preceding the Monday your team is scheduled to present.**

**3. Weekly Reading Reflection:** Each student will contribute a weekly reading reflection, addressing some significant issue raised by the weekly assigned readings. These reflections will be evaluated based on your success in logically and coherently summarizing the assigned reading(s), incorporating ideas from your reading with proper citation style, and your thoughtful consideration of the implications of what you have read for critical thinking about the relationship between media, culture and society. **These should be submitted by midnight Wednesday preceding the Monday class discussion, via E-learning. You should bring a copy of your review with you to class and be prepared to introduce and elaborate on it in class, if called upon.**

**4. Online and Classroom Participation:** Student involvement is vital to the success of this course and you are expected to play an active part in shaping this course and keeping it focused on its broad objectives. Obviously, this means you are expected to attend class, to complete the assigned readings, to do your weekly reflection on the readings, to be in the classroom by the time class begins, to contribute to identifying other relevant readings and resources and to participate meaningfully in online discussions and class discussions. When you are assigned to be a discussion leader, your performance in this role will be included in your participation grade.

**Again,** discussion is **critical** to the success of this course. You are expected to read ALL assigned materials BEFORE the class period for which they are assigned. One of the purposes of class discussion is to reveal multiple perspectives on and understandings of course topics. 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 critiques of others' statements and reasoning may occur and are encouraged. **If you cannot gracefully accept having your opinions thoughtfully challenged, you should not be in this class!**

One way you can contribute to class discussions is to bring to class relevant, articles, photographs, website materials or videos you find that relate to course topics. We will try to find time during class to discuss them. Another option is to email me materials that can be shared in class or, preferably, online, or to send them directly to the other members of the class via Sakai.

**5. Mid Term Exam:** You will have an opportunity to demonstrate your essential grasp of the fundamental issues for critical thinking about media and society in a midterm exam.

**6. Final Paper/Literature Review:** You will write a paper discussing some aspect of the media and society nexus. The paper is due on Wednesday of the last week of class.

## Assignment Weights

Your final grade for the course will be calculated as follows:

Class Presentation(s)	20%
Weekly Summaries	20%
Participation	20%
Mid-term exam	20 %
Lit review	20%

Final grades will be awarded according to the current grading policies established by the Graduate School.

### Late Assignment Policy

**Class assignments should not be turned in late.  
They may be turned in early.  
Your grade will be adjusted downward for any late assignment.  
PLEASE PLAN AHEAD!**

### COURSE ACTIVITY AND ASSIGNMENT SCORING

I employ a base-10 grading scale, as follows:

**10= Above my expectations for top performance in the course**

**9= Very good**

**8= Above average (minor deficiencies)**

**7= Average (mixed performance)**

**6= Below average with major deficiencies**

**5 or less = Unsatisfactory**

**Final Grades** will be assigned according to the following scale (I reserve the option to curve final grades):

**A (Excellent) 90-100 percent**

**B (Good) 80-89 percent**

**C (Average) 70-79 percent**

**D (Below Average) 60-69 percent**

**E (Insufficient) <60 percent**

**Minus and plus grades will be awarded according to current University of Florida grading policies.**

### COURSE POLICIES, INSTRUCTOR EXPECTATIONS AND METHODS OF EVALUATION:

**Submissions: Handwritten submissions, except for tests and quizzes, will not be accepted. I suggest you make a copy of any written work before you submit it, just in case an assignment is lost or misplaced. Most of your assignments will be posted in and submitted electronically. Please *proofread* your assignment before you turn it in and make sure your spelling is accurate and the content is coherent. Submissions that do not meet these standards will incur a grading penalty. Late submissions will also be penalized.**

### **General Evaluation Criteria**

All assignments, debates and presentations will be evaluated based on both form and content. *Form* refers to professional and timely presentation in accordance with assignment instructions, as well as cogency and organization. Content refers to quality of analysis, correct application of principles, coherence in reasoning, and thoroughness of research. Your grade will indicate your success in meeting these standards.

### **Attendance/Online Participation**

You are **expected** to attend all classes, presentations/debates, video showings, discussions, and other class activities. **Your grade for this course will be negatively affected if you do not participate online and/or are frequently absent from class.** Covering news for any of the stations, no matter how significant the story, is not a valid excuse for missing quizzes, assignment due dates, failing to complete assigned reading/viewings, or failing to participate in group projects.

### **Classroom Decorum**

No reading of newspapers, eating, drinking, loud talking, work on assignments for other classes, web surfing, texting, etc. is permitted during lectures, presentations, group discussions, or other class activities. If you are discovered engaging in these activities, you will be asked to leave the classroom.

**Students with special challenges:** I am committed to helping students with special challenges overcome difficulties with comprehending the subject matter, while abiding by the standards of fairness and confidentiality. In order to address your academic needs, I must be informed of your circumstances at the beginning of the semester *before* performance becomes a factor. Reasonable and appropriate measures will be taken to ensure that officially recognized challenges do not become a hindrance to your ability to succeed in this course. You should provide me with an official statement from the Office of Student Services explaining the accommodation required, if you face such a challenge.

### **Other matters:**

- I reserve the right to make changes, if necessary, to the grading system, assignments, schedule, or other matters pertaining to the class.
- I can be reached preferably via e-mail, and the telephone, but please be aware that I will not be able to respond immediately to your communication. As a rule, allow up to 48 hours for a response. Therefore, barring an emergency situation, it is advisable to contact me well in advance of any deadline in order to give me adequate time to respond.
- Students are not permitted to bring guests to class unless arrangements have been made with me prior to class.
- Please feel free to approach me about any concerns or comments you might have about this class. I will be happy to meet with you during my office hours, or by appointment.
- You are expected to arrive promptly for class, fully prepared to discuss the assigned readings. While I understand the problems created by a large campus, it is your responsibility to arrive in class in a timely manner.
- You are responsible for signing the attendance sheet every class.
- Any evidence of plagiarism or cheating will result in an “E” for the course and possible disciplinary action.

- Regarding plagiarism: Do not submit the same work to more than one class without prior written permission from both instructors. Do not adapt work from another class for this class without my prior written permission. Do not adapt someone else's work and submit it as your own. This course requires original work, created at this time, for this purpose.
- Spelling counts. So do grammar, punctuation and professional presentation technique.
- An assignment turned in past the deadline will be penalized one letter grade for each day it is late.
- In addition to the required or recommended readings, you are encouraged to take class notes because classroom sessions often reveal information that is not contained in the readings.

## Plagiarism and Academic Honesty

For the communications professional, there hardly exists a graver crime than plagiarizing another writer's work. In short, it is YOUR responsibility to make certain you understand what constitutes plagiarism and to ensure that you give proper credit anytime you draw on someone else's writing or work. If you're not certain you understand what's acceptable and what isn't, check out this website:

<http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml>

If you read these materials and still aren't certain what's acceptable, ASK ME! Do not assume that any other student or professor can tell you what will be acceptable in my class. There is no penalty for asking questions -- but there ARE penalties for failing to credit someone else's work properly because you didn't ask questions.

Be especially careful about the use of information you find on the Internet. It is all too easy to copy and paste background information into your papers, but unless you enclose such information in quotation marks and clearly cite the website from which it came, this constitutes plagiarism. Even if you paraphrase, you must include a clear reference to any written materials on which you've drawn.

Be aware that if I suspect, for whatever reason, that material in one of your submissions is plagiarized, I will submit it to a web-based plagiarism checking program. Relatively minor and *clearly unintentional* instances of plagiarism will result in your being required to re-write and re-submit your work. More extensive plagiarism, even if unintended, and ANY instance I believe represents an intentional attempt to pass off someone else's work as your own will result in a failing grade for that submission, at the least. If the plagiarism is severe enough (for example, if a substantial portion of your submission has been copied from others' work), you will receive a failing grade for the class and I will report the incident to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs as academic dishonesty.

Another no-no is recycling your own work for this class. Let's make the policy clear and simple: **You will 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 well be acceptable IF you discuss it with me and get permission IN ADVANCE.

In accordance with UF policy, I'm also including in this syllabus the definitions of the types of academic dishonesty that seem most likely to be potential problems for students in this class. 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.

***From the Office of Student Judicial Affairs website:  
<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/Academichonestyfaculty.html>***

**Plagiarism.** The attempt to represent the work of another as the product of one's own thought, whether the other's work is published or unpublished, or simply the work of a fellow student. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, quoting oral or written materials without citation on an exam, term paper, homework, or other written materials or oral presentations for an academic requirement; submitting a paper which was purchased from a term paper service as your own work; submitting anyone else's paper as your own work.

**Misrepresentation.** Any act or omission with intent to deceive a teacher for academic advantage. Misrepresentation includes taking another's work and handing it in as your own; lying to a teacher to increase your grade and lying or misrepresenting facts when confronted with an allegation of academic honesty.

**Fabrication.** The use of invented or fabricated information, or the falsification of research or other findings with the intent to deceive for academic or professional advantage.

**A Note about Office Hours:** As much as humanly possible, I will be available during my office hours. 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., during my non-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. Remember, the most efficient method to communicate with me is via email.

# Initial Reading and Presentation Schedule

## Week 1

January 6: Orientation to the course

## Week 2

January 13: Media and Society, *Part 1: Media and the Social World (Croteau, Hoynes and Milan)*.

## Week 3

January 20: No Class (Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday)

## Week 4

January 27: Presentation: Media and Society, *Part 2: Production: The Media Industry and the Social World*.

## Week 5

February 3: Presentation: Media and Society, *Part 3: Content: Media Representations and the Social World*.

## Week 6

February 10: Presentation: Media and Society, *Part 4: Audiences, Meaning and Influence*.

## Week 7

February 17: Presentation: Media and Society, *Part 5: Globalization and the Future*.

## Week 8:

February 24: Mid Term Exam

## **Week 9:**

March 4: Spring Break

**Part II Media and Culture**

(TBA)