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### COM 101 (21471) Media Literacy

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## **COM 101 (21471) Media Literacy. Spring 2021, Online Only**

Department of Media Culture, College of Staten Island, CUNY

M 2:30-4:25, W 2:30-3:20 (21471)

Office Hours (Blackboard Collaborate) Mon. 1:00-2:20; Wed. 3:20-4:30 and by appt.

Dr. Rachel Kovacs [rachel.kovacs@csi.cuny.edu](mailto:rachel.kovacs@csi.cuny.edu)

### **Course Description**

Develops skills to become critical consumers and producers of media. Students will learn how to analyze and evaluate different forms of media such as newspapers, television, radio, magazines, video games, films, and websites and to identify credible, essential sources of information for them. Students will also be introduced to social media, in an age in which anyone can be a media producer.

### **Course Objectives**

1. To understand the way in which various media construct messages that shape our views.
2. To critically listen, view, and evaluate those messages as aware and informed consumers.
3. To identify how and why news/other media present information and “reality” as they do.
4. To conduct research on a public interest issue and use social media to post the research.

Welcome to COM 101 Online: Media Literacy. This course is designed to be simple and manageable if you follow the directions carefully and ask questions when they arise. Office hours are listed above but students are also encouraged to ask questions during class time and in the Questions forum on Discussion Board.

The topics raised in the readings and in your group projects relate to individuals’ and societies’ everyday experiences. Media literacy is essential in a today's world, where we are inundated with visual and auditory messages. We need to identify which messages are most important to us, sort through the rest, determine how best to devote our energies to using media to improve our lives, and become more aware, active consumers, prosocial citizens. During COVID19, when we have been bombarded with audio/visual messages, we need information from multiple credible sources to help us make decisions and wise choices.

**Required Text: This is a Zero Textbook Cost (ZTC) class.**

[Mass Communication, Media, and Culture](https://socialsci.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Communication/Book%3A_Mass_Communication_Media_and_Culture)

[https://socialsci.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Communication/Book%3A\\_Mass\\_Communication\\_Media\\_and\\_Culture](https://socialsci.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Communication/Book%3A_Mass_Communication_Media_and_Culture)

**Required Subscriptions:** Every CUNY student is entitled to a free subscription to *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*. Directions are under Announcements.

**Additional required readings will be posted on Blackboard and the Excel spreadsheet.**

**NOTE: Due to the fluid constantly evolving nature of this course’s subject matter, syllabus dates/content may be modified and updated under Information/Syllabus.**

**Discussions posts and responses are due within one week of the date assigned.**

**Class expectations** include attending online classes consistently, consulting your “buddies,” doing all work & readings, participating actively in your group project and in Discussion Board, and posting chapter notes at least seven days before the exam.

## **Grading**

**Attendance and Participation** (Including all online and Blackboard communication including **Discussion Board posts and responses to other students** (10x2 points each) for a total of 30%/30 points.

**Chapter Notes Postings on Discussion Board** 10%/10 points

**Exam** 20%/20 Points)

**Essays (uploaded to Turnitin)** 15%/15 points

**Final Group Project** 25%/25 points

Students are expected to keep up with all readings, & to study any notes or PowerPoint presentations posted.

**Standards and Formatting:** Use correct English mechanics & APA style, demonstrate independent, critical thinking and credible research. All assignments must be typed and double-spaced; 12-pt. font; 1" margins. Name, title, page number in header. Staple papers.

## **Academic Integrity**

Students should read the College's policy on academic integrity (online). Plagiarism is grounds for failing an assignment and the course. We will discuss this in class. Others' work (statistics, quotes, paraphrased or verbatim text) must be cited in APA style.

## **Attendance**

It is essential that all students attend online class regularly and on time, and be fully engaged in the course. The exception to this is documented illness or other extenuating circumstances. More than **three** undocumented absences may substantially lower a grade. Arriving in class more than five minutes late or leaving more than five minutes early more than twice in the semester equals an absence. Leaving the room to check your phone or for any other reason for more than five minutes counts as an absence.

## **Special Needs**

Any student who has a learning disability, handicapping condition, or other special need and is registered with Center for Student Accessibility, please contact [csa@csi.cuny.edu](mailto:csa@csi.cuny.edu) to send Dr. Kovacs a letter with accommodations needed. Please do this early in the semester.

**Extra credit** is given for Writing Center tutoring and other opportunities. See Dr. Kovacs.

**Readings** are due the session that follows their listing on the syllabus.

**Blackboard figures heavily into all students' grades.** You must regularly log into & use Blackboard. Please consult the Help Desk ([helpdesk@csi.cuny.edu](mailto:helpdesk@csi.cuny.edu)) if you do not receive Blackboard emails. **GETTING ONTO BLACKBOARD AND USING IT PROPERLY IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY.** **Class emails are sent to your CSI account.** Course material is posted on Blackboard. Post chapter notes on Discussion Board Forum 7 days before exam.

**Making Up Work:** If you are not in class for any reason, it is your responsibility to get the information you missed and contact your buddies or those in your groups to achieve this.

**Late Work:** No extensions are permitted except for medical or other documented emergencies. **Due dates are listed on the syllabus.**

**Discussion Board:** Unless otherwise directed, Discussions are done in the Groups area.

**There is a short reaction essay for each film, which is posted under Assignments.**

- 1) There will be a required library information session critical to your final project.
- 2) Everyone must attend both presentation sessions, otherwise it is a double absence.
- 3) There is no final in this class, but you cannot pass the course unless you take the exam and submit papers on the assigned date. There are no makeup exams or presentations except for extenuating circumstances, and with proper documentation.
- 4) There will be a guest speaker--date to be confirmed ASAP. Everyone must attend.

2/1: Intro: Why does media literacy matter? Investigative Journalism

Browse and familiarize yourself with your Blackboard course site.

Assignments: Watch *Spotlight* at home; essay on Blackboard Assignments link

Discussion: Introduce yourself/your media preferences to others by 2/4 (No Credit)

2/3: Media literacy and Key Skills-

Read: Understanding Media 1.8, Potter Notes 1, Building Blocks Graphic, Folder 1—What is Media Literacy

Assignment: *Spotlight* essay (Blackboard) due 2/10 on link (Assignments).

Discussion 1: What news did you seek? Post response on Blackboard 2/10.

2/8: Key Skills (Con't): Evaluating News Sources RE: COVID 19 (see Excel sheet)

Read: Understanding Media 1.8, Folder 2: U. Mich. YouTube Video, U. Mich. sheets on CRAAP and AllSides Chart

Assignment: Be prepared to discuss in class on 2/11 how news coverage after 9/11 attacks or any other crisis differed from news coverage of the COVID19 pandemic.

Discussion 2: Where did you get your news regarding COVID 19? Due 2/11.

2/10: Social Justice: Deciphering News about Violence and Justice

Read: Select an article of your choice in the Times or WSJ on a social justice issue

Assignment: Be prepared to discuss on 2/17

Discussion 3: Select one social justice event, issue, public protests and evaluate how two different media (e.g, a TV station/one newspaper) reported it. Due 2/17.

2/15: No Class—Alternate Assignment-View *The Facebook Dilemma* (YouTube)

Work on Group Topics-Captains should topic post on Discussion forum. Due 2/22

2/17: Social Media: Privacy & Unrest; Underreported Stories and How the Media Report

Read: Understanding Media 14.3, *NY Times* on Capitol Siege, *How to Watch TV News*, Chart on Objectivity, and Inverted Pyramid diagram.

Assignment: Watch *The Facebook Dilemma Part II*

Discussion 4: See Blackboard for prompt on *The Facebook Dilemma*. Due 2/24

- 2/22: Celebrity Deaths in Entertainment: How Media Coverage Differs for Different People  
Read: Understanding Media 4.4, Potter Issue 3; celebrity vs. average citizen deaths  
Article (Blackboard) re: P.S. Hoffman's death for class discussion 2/24.  
Discussion 5: Pick article on any celebrity death--NYT or WSJ-Due 2/24.
- 2/24: Ads and Product Placement: *Wayne's World & The Truman Show*  
Read: Understanding Media 12.1, watch videos on Blackboard  
Assignment: Watch *The Truman Show*; essay due 3/1  
Discussion 6 on product placement and ads Due 3/3
- 3/1: Reality TV, MTV, & Commercials  
Read: Folder 4 Article on MTV, Potter Lecture  
Assignment: Prepare for group in-class discussions of violent media's impact.  
Discussion 7: Pick a favorite reality TV show-analyze its messages. Due 3/8
- 3/3: Violence, Video Games, and Interactive Media--Gaming and Media Addictions.  
Read: Understanding Media 10.3, 10.4, 10.5, Folder #5, Potter Issue 4  
Assignment: View video materials on Internet addictions.  
Discussion 8: Describe what it's like being around someone you know who can't stop playing with video games (you don't have to give their real names) Due 3/10
- 3/8: Library Information Session  
Assignments: Watch *All the President's Men*; essay due 3/15  
**Group subtopics but each individual group member needs to post his or her own thread. Due 3/10**  
Also: Watch one episode of a prime-time TV show  
Discussion 9: Also: Choose the career of one character and evaluate how realistically that character's job or another aspect of the character's life is depicted. see Discussions for details Due 3/17
- 3/10: Prime Time Entertainment: Does It Accurately Represent Society?  
Read: Colston Article Folder #5, *NYT & WSJ-Kobe Bryant*, Potter Issue 3  
Discussion 10: Prompt on Blackboard; Prepare for Class Discussion on Kobe 3/20
- 3/15: Sports Media Coverage: Kobe Bryant in Life and in Death  
Assignment: (Blackboard). Watch *The Paper*-- essay due 3/22.
- 3/17: Mass Media's Owners, Agendas, Pressures, and Messages; Discuss *The Paper*  
Read: Understanding Media 1.5, 1.8, 13.3, 13.5, Potter Issue 1  
Assignment: View *The Witnesses in the Tunnel* (YouTube)-Due 3/24
- 3/22-: Fake News; Media, 4th Estate, Press Freedom, the Law, Piracy and Privacy Issues  
Read: Understanding Media 4.2, 4.3,  
Assignment: *Witnesses in the Tunnel* as part of semester essay upload  
**Semester Essay Upload Link on Assignments-Upload by 3/24 11:59 PM.**
- 3/24: Media Effects Theories  
Read: Understanding Media 2, Potter Issues 2 and 6

Assignments: Watch short YouTube videos (Content AV Folder); read 1-page article about Elizabeth Noelle-Neumann (Same folder).

**Be able to Discuss:** Which theory relates most to your/your family's media use?

**All Chapter Notes must be posted before midnight 3/24**

**All project topics/subtopics finalized-posted on Blackboard by 3/24**

### **3/27 TO APRIL 4—SPRING BREAK—NO CLASSES**

4/5: Finish Media Effects; Mini Test Review

**Assignment: Review for EXAM: Blackboard content, chapter notes, PowerPoints**

4/7: EXAM

4/12: Guest Speaker: Communities Confronting Substance Abuse (Zoom session)

4/14: Class Discussion:; group project  
Expectations; subtopics

4/19: Conferences and Group Time: Explaining Annotated Bibliographies.

4/21: More on Annotated Bibliographies: Locating/Organizing Credible Sources

4/26: Building an Outline

4/28: More on Outlines; Thinking about your final projects

**Assignment: Final annotated bibliographies and outlines due 5/3**

5/3: Group Time; Conferences; Veterans Presentations (time permitting)

**Assignment: Group evaluations due 5/7 by email.**

**Additional help in Office Hours**

5/5: Group Work; Structuring your multimedia presentation.

**Additional help in Office Hours**

5/10: Presentations-Facebook pages must be complete

5/12: Presentations-All postings on Facebook pages must be complete

HAVE A WONDERFUL, HEALTHY SUMMER

**\*NOTE: The exam will be curved. The highest grade will be raised to a 92 (A) and all other students' test grades will be raised the same number of points. Everyone must take the exams at the designated time. The exams are timed and are only opened for a limited time for you to complete them. Your grades they will be visible immediately on Blackboard Grade Center.**

## Final Group Project Guidelines

For your final project you and your group can choose any topic related to COVID19 that you agree is under-reported or not reported in the media but is important for people to understand, and perhaps the knowledge will help them.

The purpose of the project is to give your group members and the class an in-depth understanding of an issue about which the media says little but potentially has a substantial impact on you or people to whom you are close.

Whichever option you choose, your final project is worth 25 points and is broken into the following components—annotated bibliography (5 points), outline (5 points), group evaluation (5 points) and presentation (10 points). The bibliography and outline should be one and one-half to two pages each. The total maximum number of pages for the written submission is 4 pages.

Each person will choose a subtopic—a specific aspect of their topic, which he or she will carefully research.

One person should post the general topic and everyone else in each group should post his or her subtopic on another thread. Each person will create an annotated bibliography based on research for the subtopic and an outline to structure the presentation.

There will be a library research session to help you gather resources for your group topics and subtopics. There will also be lab sessions for the last two sessions before the presentations, during which you can work with your group members on your presentations and complete any of the written materials that you need.

Your presentation should be multimedia (not a PowerPoint)—social media--and the whole group needs to participate. **Facebook is preferred.** Your interactive site must be accessible to the other students in the class so that they can post comments on it. You also need to create some multimedia activity (game, quiz, etc.) that involves the rest of the class.

Your written materials will be due on the date on your syllabus. No late submissions will be accepted.

Additional guidelines will be posted on Blackboard under the file **Final Project/Content** on Blackboard.