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2018

### Introduction to Media Studies

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*CUNY City College*

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Introduction to Media Studies  
#MCA10100 (4RS)  
The City College of New York  
Shepard Hall, Room 310  
Wednesday 3:30-6 pm  
Spring 2018  
Gregory Kent Oswald  
email: goswald@ccny.cuny.edu (or kentoscribe@gmail.com)  
Office hours are after class or by appointment

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Mass Media, as a concept, should be easy to understand: These are the collection of communications industry vehicles by which a message (content) is shared with the largest possible audiences. However, understanding mass media is not as simple as that, because recent and continuing technological advances and social changes have dramatically changed standard practices, and revolutionized the flow of information between creators and consumers. This core course examines the technological, historic, economic, social, and even some philosophical evolution of communications. Readings, viewings, and discussions will also focus on understanding the challenges and opportunities of the rapidly changing news/entertainment/communication environment. Particular emphasis is placed on the development of critical analysis, and effective writing and presentation of that analysis, skills essential for both academic achievement, and success in the highly competitive communications industries.

## **COURSE OUTCOMES**

This course will enable students to:

1. Recognize the historic context in which current mass media developed.
2. Develop effective writing, critical thinking and analytical skills resulting from an awareness of the role mass media plays in society.
3. Recognize and dissect media and personal bias, and translate critical thinking into clear and effective arguments.
4. Research, analyze and write with academic formality about the media environment.
5. Analyze and demonstrate competency evaluating how the variety of media synthesize into a complete environment.
6. Utilize persuasive oral and written presentation techniques to better understand the role of mass media.

## **MATERIALS**

### **Required Texts**

*Biagi, Shirley. Media/Impact: An Introduction to Mass Media 12th Edition*

Other Selected Readings (links will be provided)

### **Additional Resources**

In addition to working with the people at the *CCNY Writing Center* (<https://www.ccny.cuny.edu/writing>), you will improve your writing by looking for answers to questions of form at

*Grammar Girl Quick and Dirty Tips for Better Writing* (<http://www.quickanddirtytips.com/grammar-girl>). Quick, easy (and sometimes amusing) answers to grammar and syntax questions

and

*The Purdue Online Writing Lab* (<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/>). This is probably the best known of all the grammar sites. If you have an English usage question you'll find the answer is here.

Useful perspectives on mass media can be found at, among other sources:

*Digiday* (<http://www.digiday.com>), a website featuring discussion and analysis of issues facing advertisers and marketers online and via social media.

*On the Media* (<http://www.wnyc.org/shows/otm/>), a weekly podcast discussing journalism's challenges and practices.

*The Poynter Institute* (<http://www.poynter.org/>) dissects various issues related to journalism

### **Classroom Expectations**

In order to be accepted as an MCA major, you must receive a B- or better in this course. You will also need to have a 2.5 GPA and will need to file your application for the major.

This is a participatory class—listening, observing and giving feedback are as important as reading and writing assignments. The regulations to follow are in the “Department Policy for all CFV students” available in the Department Secretary’s office.

### **Attendance and Academic Integrity**

Please carefully review CCNY policies on these and other matters at ([https://www.ccny.cuny.edu/tlc/policies\\_procedures](https://www.ccny.cuny.edu/tlc/policies_procedures)). Ignorance of the University's policies regarding class attendance or plagiarism is not an acceptable excuse.

### **Electronic Devices**

Research has shown that taking notes by hand improves understanding and retention and so is encouraged, but not required. Unauthorized use of electronic equipment is not allowed in the classroom.

## **Written Assignments & Grading**

All written assignments must be submitted in hard copy form (i.e. paper, not email) to the following specs: 8½ x 11 white paper, standard 12pt font, double-spaced, 1" margins. Unless otherwise specified, the formal rules of grammar, and sentence and paragraph construction will apply. Each assignment is expected on the due date given. There will be a one-grade penalty for late assignments.

Final grades will be calculated as follows:

There will be two research papers due. The first will be three to four pages long (approximately 1000 words), and will be worth 15 percent of your grade; the final paper will be five to seven pages long (approximately 1500 words) and be worth 25 percent of your grade.

Short assignments and reflections of two to three paragraphs (approximately 200 words) will be due by the beginning of many classes, and in aggregate will make up 10 percent of your grade.

A midterm exam will be worth 15 percent of your grade.

A final exam will be worth 25 percent of your grade.

Class participation will be worth 10 percent of your grade.

## **Grading Rubric**

### **A** *Your work is excellent*

Work is handed in on time

No more than 1 or 2 typos or technical/grammatical writing errors

Presented in a format appropriate to the assignment

Tone is professional—language is well crafted and clear

Ideas are relevant to the topic, and presented persuasively and professionally

### **B** *Your work is good*

Work is handed in on time

Minimal typos and technical errors do not impede overall quality of work

Presented in a format appropriate to the assignment

The writing needs minor corrections and edits

Ideas are relevant to the topic; the organization is logical

### **C** *Your work is competent, but not strong*

Work is late

Typos and grammatical issues are prevalent  
Format and or tone are sloppy or not appropriate to assignment  
Ideas and or structure are unfocused or irrelevant to topic

**F** *Your work is poor*

Work is late

Many typos and grammatical errors (e.g., incomplete sentences, poor grammar)

Work does not show understanding of material

Language, theme, structure, and/or evidence poorly crafted

**Course Calendar**

*Week 1: January 31*

Discussion: Introduction to Course and Mass Media

Due Next Class (February 7):

Reading Assignment for next session: Mass Media and Everyday Life (Ch 1);  
Advertising (Ch 10)

Supplemental Assignment for next session:

Video on Mass Media, Society & Culture

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5RRyX9mI5Lw> (video)

How to frame a headline for the digital age

(<https://engagingnewsproject.org/research/clickbait-headlines/>)

Consider the people and pressures behind what you read in "the media." Lessons from  
the work of two NY-based journalists

(<http://www.poynter.org/2017/on-911-n-r-kleinfield-was-downtown-his-story-is-a-master-class-in-deadline-writing2/468860/>) and

([https://www.cjr.org/first\\_person/new-york-post-reporting-lessons.php](https://www.cjr.org/first_person/new-york-post-reporting-lessons.php))

The future of Advertising

(<http://adage.com/article/att-adworks/stepping-future-key-trends/310570/>)

Writing Assignment: After looking at chapter titles in text to make sure you understand  
scope of "mass media," reflect in a paragraph or two, and with a specific example or two,  
how and why you consume media differently than your parents did at your age.

*Week 2: February 7*

Discussion: Mass Media as "Art" and Business

Due Next Class (February 14):

Reading Assignment: Books (Ch 2)

Supplemental Reading/Listening Assignments:

Changes in Book Publishing (50 minute podcast)  
(<http://www.wnyc.org/story/on-the-media-2016-08-19>)

The future of Book Publishing  
<https://newrepublic.com/article/146430/silicon-valley-wont-save-books>

"The Kindle Changed the Book Business. Can It Change Books?"  
[https://www.wired.com/story/can-amazon-change-books/?mbid=email\\_onsiteshare](https://www.wired.com/story/can-amazon-change-books/?mbid=email_onsiteshare)

Writing Assignment: Write a paragraph or two using specific examples to explain how your book reading is or isn't or will change.

*Week 3: February 14*

Discussion: Book Publishing/Preparation for first research paper

Due Next Class (February 21):

Reading Assignment: Newspapers (Ch 3); Magazines: (Ch 4)

Supplemental assignments:

Changes at The Washington Post  
([http://www.cjr.org/q\\_and\\_a/washington\\_post\\_bezos\\_amazon\\_revolution.php](http://www.cjr.org/q_and_a/washington_post_bezos_amazon_revolution.php))

John Oliver on newspapers  
([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bq2\\_wSsDwkQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bq2_wSsDwkQ)) (video)

A magazine changes its focus  
(<http://abcnews.go.com/Business/teen-vogues-evolution-high-fashion-magazine-community-activism/story?id=52104594>)

Writing Assignment: Write a paragraph or two on why you prefer long or short form journalism. (Define the terms and then use as a reference one or more specific articles you have read for your own interest.)

*Week 4: February 21*

Discussion: History and Challenges of Print

Due Next Class (February 28):

Reading Assignment: Recordings (Ch 5); Radio (Ch 6)

Supplemental Assignment:

Recent Changes to the Music Industry  
(<https://www.ft.com/iovine>)

Music industry Changes:  
(<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-07-03/music-industry-didn-t-learn-from-its-digital-destruction>)

What's going on in Podcasting, diversity and opportunity  
(<https://mashable.com/2017/07/29/podcasts-diversity-radio/#XI7T8Kywjaqn>)

Can "free" streams make money?  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/01/magazine/if-soundcloud-disappears-what-happens-to-its-music-culture.html>

Writing Assignment: First Research Paper: What makes you a unique consumer of media, and what makes you part of a specific group of media consumers, and how might this matter to advertisers targeting you?

Using an industry standard definition, define yourself in terms of a demographic group to which you belong. Then, having researched the characteristics associated with that demographic group, explain, with specifics and references to materials we have read as well as to other research you have done, how you share some characteristics of the group as well as how you are different.

You may find it helpful to think about how advertisers target you based on the demographic and how, among the ads that you see, how some miss their mark targeting you while others are correct in identifying you as a likely prospect for their product.

*Week 5: February 28*

Discussion: The Difference between Consuming with Our Eyes and Ears

Due Next Class (March 7):

Reading Assignment: Movies (Ch 7); Television (Ch 8)

Supplemental Reading Assignment

Changes to measuring television viewership  
(<http://www.latimes.com/business/hollywood/la-fi-ct-nielsen-ratings-tca-20170805-story.html>)

How television set design has changed

(<http://www.fastcodesign.com/3033336/infographic-of-the-day/how-the-television-has-evolved>)

Movie Industry Challenges

(<http://variety.com/2017/film/features/movie-business-changing-consumer-demand-studios-exhibitors-1202016699/>)

Technical changes influence how we experience media, in this case movies

[https://www.wired.com/story/the-evolution-of-color-in-film/?mbid=email\\_onsiteshare](https://www.wired.com/story/the-evolution-of-color-in-film/?mbid=email_onsiteshare)

Writing Assignment: In a paragraph or two and with specific examples, explain why you believe the advertising on or about a favorite television show or movie is (or isn't) aimed at your demographic group.

*Week 6: March 7*

Discussion: Challenges to the Business of Buying Eyeballs

Due Next Class (March 14):

Reading Assignment: Public Relations (Ch 11),

Supplemental Reading Assignment:

Interview with PR pro

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vmdMGoIX1rU> (video)

History of PR (video)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iOwUkkeE2A4c> (video)

Edward Bernays, Inventor of PR/Propaganda (video)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Q-3qwEDyPM>

How to pitch PR stories

(<http://www.buzzstream.com/blog/17-pr-pros-share-their-best-pitching-tips.html>)

How to write a Press Release

(<https://ireach.prnewswire.com/tips.aspx>)

Writing Assignment: Using the standard format, write a two to three paragraph press release pitching a product, person or event (either real or fictional).

*Week 7: March 14*

Discussion: The Differences of "What is News?" according to the newsmakers, business and journalists. There will also be time set aside to discuss preparation for next week's midterm.

*Week 8: March 21*

MIDTERM

Due Next Class (March 28)

Reading Assignment: Digital Media (Ch 9)

Supplemental Reading Assignments

Children and digital media

(<http://www.businessinsider.com/parents-urged-to-stop-children-bingeing-on-social-media-during-holidays-2017-8?r=UK&IR=T>)

Interview with author of book on public shaming

<https://relate.zendesk.com/articles/jon-ronson-publicly-shamed/>  
(<https://relate.zendesk.com/articles/jon-ronson-publicly-shamed/>)

Ad spending on digital media

(<http://www.mediapost.com/publications/article/293586/us-media-spend-up-7-in-2016-digital-best-perfo.html>)

News and Trends in Digital Media

(<http://www.niemanlab.org/2017/08/newsonomics-nine-midsummer-lessons-from-a-unique-moment-in-press-and-american-history/>)

Thoughts from Obama White House on its social media use

(<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2017/01/05/new-lenses-first-social-media-presidency>)

Writing Assignment: React to one or more of assigned/supplemental readings in the style of both a Tweet and Facebook status update

*Week 9: March 28*

Discussion: Welcome to the Digital Age. Try and keep up.

Due Next Class (April 18):

Reading Assignment: News and Information (Ch 12)

Supplemental Reading Assignment:

Why "If it Bleeds It Leads" Is a Principle of News Business  
(<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/two-takes-depression/201106/if-it-bleeds-it-leads-understanding-fear-based-media>)

Is the Future of the News Business in Dialogues with Machines?  
<http://www.niemanlab.org/2017/09/the-future-of-news-is-humans-talking-to-machines/>

Fake News Masterpiece  
(<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/18/us/fake-news-hillary-clinton-cameron-harris.html>)

Report on Trends in Digital News in US and around World  
(<http://mediashift.org/2017/06/u-s-digital-news-habits-seven-key-trends/>)

Writing Assignment:  
Consider where and "who" you will be in five years. In two or three paragraphs, define what kind of news you will want to consume and in which ways (and from what sources) you believe you will receive it.

**NO CLASS APRIL 4 OR APRIL 11**

*Week 10: April 18*

Discussion: The Digital Age and why does "bad" news get our attention?

Due Next Class (April 25):

Reading Assignment: Society & Political Issues (Ch 13)

Supplemental Reading Assignment:

Pew Research Center State of the News Media Fact Sheets  
(<http://www.pewresearch.org/topics/state-of-the-news-media/>)

The Challenge for Societal Cohesion  
(<http://journalistsresource.org/studies/society/news-media/media-fragmentation-political-polarization-lab-experiments>)

Real World Applications: What Media Fragmentation Means for Advertising Buyers  
(<http://www.mediapost.com/publications/article/233145/media-fragmentation-means-ad-worlds-future-based.html>)

Writing Assignment: Write a paragraph or two discussing media you consume that you agree with and what you consume that has an editorial viewpoint different from yours. Why do you make these choices, and how would you like the media you do and don't consume to change?

*Week 11: April 25*

Discussion: Politics, Society & Mass Media

Due Next Class (May 2):

Reading Assignment: Law & Regulation (Ch 14)

Supplemental Reading Assignment:

Reputation vs. Free Speech Legislation

(<http://www.hlmediacomms.com/2017/01/24/new-u-s-federal-law-prohibits-contracts-with-anti-yelping-provisions/>)

Challenges for regulating internet (a BBC analyst perspective)

(<http://www.bbc.co.uk/guides/z3mnmnb>)

Issues Regarding International Regulation of The Internet

<http://www.economist.com/news/international/21709531-left-unchecked-growing-maze-barriers-internet-will-damage-economies-and>

Writing Assignment: Write a paragraph or two on any one aspect of mass media regulation. What is it; what would you change; why; how?

*Week 12: May 2*

Discussion: The Legal Landscape - copyright, libel, government regulation of media ownership, etc.

Due Next Class (May 9):

Reading Assignment: Ethics (Ch15);

Supplemental Reading Assignment:

Questions and challenges for student journalists

([http://www.cjr.org/united\\_states\\_project/trump\\_students\\_press\\_media.php](http://www.cjr.org/united_states_project/trump_students_press_media.php))

Mass Media and Mass Invasion of Privacy

(<https://iapp.org/news/a/when-mass-media-commits-a-massive-privacy-invasion/>)

Plagiarism in the Music Business

(<http://consequenceofsound.net/2016/05/10-famous-instances-of-alleged-music-plagiarism/>)

The Need for "Ethics" Is Because this is a Business Based on Trust (video)

(<https://vimeo.com/131121144>)

Writing Assignment: Write a paragraph or two on how often you "plagiarize" (i.e., do

friendly borrowing of an idea or words) and where is the line that makes it okay for you and not okay for a larger business or another person

*Week: 13: May 9*

Discussion:: Current Challenges and the Future of Mass Media

Due Next Class (May 16):

Reading Assignment: Global Media (Ch 16)

Supplemental Viewing:

Marshall McLuhan's "Media is the Message" (video)  
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gCr2binb4Fs>)

The Case Against Social Media (video)  
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3E7hkPZ-HTk>)

Writing Assignment: Final research paper: In five to seven pages exploring the history and practice of two or three of the media we discussed this semester, discuss similarities and differences (e.g., in terms of content, audience and economic structure). Then, using references from outside out class discussion and readings, note current trends and predictions for changes to them in the near future.

It is strongly advised that you discuss your thesis (and research plan) with the professor three to four weeks before paper is due and also consult with CCNY librarian to prepare a research plan.

*Week 14: May 16*

Review of Key Concepts and Thoughts on Future of Mass Media in Digital Age

*Final Paper Due*

*Week 15: May 23*

*Final*