

## **Mass Communication in Modern Society: 920:205:01**

Department of Sociology

Rutgers University

Spring 2013

Monday & Wednesday, 8:10 – 9:30 pm

LCB 110

**Instructor:** John Rand

**Office Hours:** Mondays, 7:00 – 8:00pm

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**Problem Statement:** Everyday we are bombarded with messages from mass media – television, radio, newspapers, and the internet. In fact, in modern society, most of our knowledge, understanding, and interpretations of the world are mediated through mass media. These media have profound cognitive, emotional, and interactional effects on individuals, institutions, and societies. At the same time, individuals and institutions are instrumental in shaping the nature and character of the mass media. How do these complementary processes of media production and media consumption occur? What is the relationship between media, culture, and society when each is shaping and defining the other? Is culture and opinion shaped –or even manipulated –by the media? And with so much information coming our way, how do we know which to heed and which to ignore?

**Goals for this course:** This course provides a sociological perspective to the issues of mass communication and media-making. We examine the relationships between the media and the social systems that organize social, economic, political and cultural power in contemporary society. We explore the influences that mass media have on us in the way we think of ourselves and others. This will lead us to challenge our positions as just “consumers” of mass media and popular culture. It will encourage us to critique the media, to obtain a better understanding of how the media work, and to comprehend how the media impact us. In other words, the goal is to increase our media literacy.

**Core Curriculum Goals:** This course is recognized as meeting the Social and Historical Analysis requirement of the SAS Core Curriculum.



In particular, at the conclusion of the course students will be able to:

- Understand the bases and development of human and societal endeavors across time and place.
- Identify and critically assess ethical issues in social science and history.
- Understand different theories about human culture, social identity, economic entities, political systems, and other forms of social organization.
- Apply concepts about human and social behavior to particular questions or situations.

**Required Texts:** Introductory courses are about breadth (getting to know the overall field) with pockets of depth (studying a few specific topics more completely.) To this end, there is one required textbook for this course - available at the Livingstone Bookstore - to provide the breadth and a series of articles available electronically to provide the depth.

Grossberg, L. et al (2006). *MediaMaking: Mass Media in a Popular Culture* (2nd Edition). London: Sage Publications.

**Class Website:** The course website is [MassCommSp13@sakai.rutgers.edu](http://MassCommSp13@sakai.rutgers.edu). You should plan to check this website regularly as new readings will be added during the semester. Readings will be posted on the website under “Resources”.

#### **Exams:**

There will be three exams and each will consist of multiple choice and short answer questions. They will include material covered in class as well as the assigned readings whether or not we have had time to discuss them. Please note that make up exams will be permitted only if you meet the appropriate university requirements. You will be given the opportunity to make up work missed if you have a valid excuse from a doctor, police officer, or the obituary for the funeral you need to attend.

#### **Attendance, Participation and Assignments:**

Attendance is expected at each class as we will cover issues not in the readings. Participation means speaking in class in response to my questions during lecture, contributing to discussions and group work, and completing assignments. Note that there is no grade for attendance. If you attend every class but never contribute, you will not get points for participation. Participation points will also be granted for contributing test questions. If you expect to miss one or two classes, please use the University absence reporting website <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An email is automatically sent to me. Frequent absences and persistent lateness will count against your participation grade.

#### **Paper:**

One paper will be due on Monday, April 8th. This will be a short (4 to 5 page) personal reflection paper. More details will be provided in class.

#### **Grading:**

Your grade in this course will be based on the following:

Exam 1	= 25%
Exam 2	= 25%
Final Exam	= 30%
Participation	= 10%
Paper	= 10%

Your final grade will be assigned in accordance with the system shown below.

<i>Grade</i>	<i>Point Range</i>
A	90-100%
B+	87-89
B	80-86
C+	77-79
C	70-76
D	60-69
F	< 60

#### **Extra Credit:**

Extra credit may be offered in this course at the instructor's discretion. I do not negotiate final grades.

#### **Courtesy:**

Please come to class on time and plan to attend the entire lecture. The Department of Sociology encourages the free exchange of ideas in a safe, supportive, and productive classroom environment. To facilitate such an environment, students and faculty must act with mutual respect and common courtesy. Thus, behavior that distracts students and faculty is not acceptable. Such behavior includes cell phone use, surfing the internet, checking email, text messaging, listening to music, reading newspapers, napping, leaving and returning, leaving early without permission, discourteous remarks, etc. Courteous and lawful expression of disagreement with the ideas of the instructor or fellow students is, of course, permitted.

If a student engages in disruptive behavior, the instructor, following the University Code of Student Conduct, may direct the student to leave class for the remainder of the class period. Serious verbal assaults, harassment, or defamation of the instructor or other students can lead to university disciplinary proceedings. The University Code of Student Conduct is at <http://studentconduct.rutgers.edu/university-code-of-student-conduct> .

#### **University Policy on Academic Integrity**

Students in this class are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity. I will not tolerate cheating of any kind in my courses, and I will report the incident directly to the appropriate college officer if I believe the university's policy on academic integrity has been violated. Violations include: cheating, fabrication, plagiarism denying others

access to information or material, and facility violations of academic integrity. For more details, please see the following website:

[http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/files/documents/AI\\_Policy\\_9\\_01\\_2011.pdf](http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/files/documents/AI_Policy_9_01_2011.pdf)

**E-mail Protocol:**

I don't want to delete your e-mails as "spam" so please include "**MassComm 205**" and your name in the subject line. If these don't show up, it is more than likely that I will delete the e-mail. Also, please do **NOT** use the Sakai e-mail function as I will not be able to retrieve them. Please use the e-mail address noted above.

# **COURSE SCHEDULE**

**Most of the class discussions will be based upon the readings. Therefore, it is imperative that you read the assigned materials before class in order to be an informed participant during our discussions.**

**Wed. Jan. 23                    Introduction & Course Overview**  
**Who am I? Who are you? What is this course about? What will you get out of taking this course? Where do you find the readings?**

## **I. UNDERSTANDING MASS COMMUNICATIONS**

**Mon. Jan 28                    Media in Context**  
**Problem Statement: The media seem to be everywhere. How do we define mass communication and media? Transmission Model vs. Cultural Model**

Read: Grossberg – Chapter 1  
Croteau & Hoynes – pp. 3-13

**Wed. Jan 30                    Culture & Media Literacy**  
**PS: What does it take to be media literate in modern society?**

Read: Media Literacy – Considine  
Grassian  
What is Media Literacy?

**Mon. Feb. 4                    Narratives of Media History**  
**PS: Humans have been communicating since the dawn of their existence. So what makes mass communication so significantly different? “To what extent has the history of communications fundamentally shaped the directions of human endeavor and social life?” (Grossberg 38)**

Read: Grossberg – Chapter Two

**Wed. Feb. 6                    One Step, Two Step and the Magic Bullet**  
**PS: Theories abound that attempt to explain mass communication. Do any of these three popular theories explain the phenomena?**

Read: Bennett & Manheim – One-Step  
Katz – Two-Step  
DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach – Magic Bullet

Mon. Feb, 11

**Media People, Organizations, and Money**

**PS: Media is big business – employing millions and making billions. How is the media business organized and how is it responding to new forms of media?**

Read: Grossberg – Chapter 3  
Kornblut (NY Times)

**II. MAKING SENSE OF MEDIA**

Wed. Feb. 13

**Meaning and Interpretation of Meaning**

**PS: Often messages have more than one meaning. How do the media contribute to our understandings of meanings and their interpretations?**

Read: Grossberg – Chapter 5  
Grossberg – pp. 161 - 168

Mon. Feb 18

**Ideology**

**PS: How do the media contribute to the making of the dominant ideology and how does the dominant ideology make the media?**

Read: Grossberg – Chapter 7

**III. POWER OF MEDIA**

Wed. Feb 20 **Producing Identities & Review for Exam 1**

**PS: How do the media shape our sense of who we are?**

**Movie: The Merchants of Cool**

Read: Grossberg – Chapter 8  
Watkins

Mon. Feb. 25

**Exam 1**

Wed. Feb. 27

**Consuming the Media & Behavior**

**PS: As consumers of media, how much do we contribute to the actual use and effects of media products?**

Read: Grossberg – Chapter 9  
Grossberg – pp. 293-315

**Mon. Mar. 4**

**Media & Violence**

**PS: The media claim that violence on TV doesn't contribute to violence in America. How can that be when businesses spend billions of dollars on advertisements to affect our behavior?**

Read: Grossberg – pp. 315-333  
Savage & Yancey  
Potter vs. Fowles (Taking Sides)

**IV. MEDIA AND PUBLIC LIFE**

**Wed. Mar. 6**

**Media and Politics**

**PS: The media and politics are two entwined institutions. How does this entanglement impact the consumer? Is negative campaigning bad for the American political process?**

Read: Pinkleton et al vs. Lariscy & Tinkham (Taking Sides)  
UCTV Dunbar Video

**Mon. Mar. 11**

**Media Regulation and Censorship**

**PS: The 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment guarantees freedom of the press. But is it really free of government intervention?**

Read: Maciejewski vs. Center for Survey Research (Taking Sides)  
Volokh vs. Edison (Taking Sides)

**Wed. Mar. 13**

**Bias, Ethics, and Propaganda**

**PS: What responsibility do the media have for eliminating bias, maintaining ethics (but who's) and identifying propaganda for what it is?**

Read: Jowett  
Media in the United States (URL Link)  
UK Newspapers' Bias  
Parry – Liberal Media Myths

**SPRING BREAK**

**Mon. Mar. 25**

**Media Globalization**

**PS: How has the world changed as a result of the media globalization?**

Read: Mowlana  
From Globalization to Hyper-Localization  
Effects of Globalization on Mass Media (pgs 1750-1760)

**Wed. Mar. 27**      **Open Date and Review for Exam 2**  
**This session is held open for the discussion of a recent event related to mass communications and review for exam.**

**Mon. Apr. 1**      **Exam 2**

**Wed. Apr. 3**      **Oppositional Media**  
**PS: In time of war, what role do the media have in presenting oppositional viewpoints?**

Read: Hallin  
Perlmutter

**Mon. Apr. 8**      **Mass Media, Terrorism & Online Bullying**  
**PS: What role do mass media play in the spread of terrorism? Do online services increase bullying and harassment?**

Read: Tuman  
Cyberbullying Reading

**Wed. Apr. 10**      **Does Fake News Mislead the Public?**  
**PS: Do the Daily Show and Colbert help or hurt public knowledge?**

Read: Fox, Koloen & Sahin (Taking Sides)  
Hollander (Taking Sides)

## **V. THE FUTURE OF MEDIA**

**Mon. Apr. 15**      **Understanding the 6<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup> Media**  
**PS: In the past two decades, two new media – the internet and mobile phones – have come into their own. What impact will they have on traditional media?**

Read: Ahonen



Randle

**Wed. Apr. 17**

**New Technologies and New Social Media**

Read: Cerulo 1998  
Guardian Battle for the Internet

**Mon. Apr. 22**

**Sociology of Disasters and Mass Media**

Read: Role of Media and Media Hypes in Aftermath of Disasters  
Role of Media in Disaster Mitigation  
Social Media's Crucial Role in Disasters

**Wed. Apr. 24**

**The Sociology of Twitter**

Read: How Twitter Will Change the Way We Live  
The Twitter Explosion  
Time-Iran-Twitter  
Twitter Political Coverage  
What is Twitter?

**Mon. Apr. 29**

**The Sociology of Facebook**

Read: Facebook and the New Language of Friendship  
Is Facebook Exploitive  
How Facebook Uses You  
MySpace and Facebook: Uses and Gratifications  
Social Networking's Good and Bad  
Tales from Facebook

**Wed. May 1**

**Open Date**

**This date is being held open to cover issues not previously addressed.**

**Mon. May 6**

**Final Review**

**TBD**

**Final Exam**