COMM 101 UNDERSTANDING MASS MEDIA SYLLABUS
DISTANCE LEARNING
SPRING 2013

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TEXT:


COURSE OBJECTIVES:

The course begins with the premise that, as citizens within a democracy and educated people within an "information society," we must have the critical tools to understand, analyze, and use our primary sources of information, entertainment, and, some believe, spiritual enrichment--the mass media.

Such understanding requires attention to some fundamental elements of communication itself, the history of each of those means of mass communication and the development of the technology, to the economic realities that drive the content and direction of the media, to the effects prolonged exposure to mass media has had on individuals, cultures, and society. The course then concludes with an examination of the need for ethical standards and for regulation or self-regulation of those media that play such an enormous part in our lives.

GOALS:

As explained in Chapter One of our text, by connecting their own consumption of media to the larger issues of citizenship and democracy, and through close, critical analysis, students will develop an informed perspective of media culture as a force for both democracy and consumerism.

Over the course of the semester, we will also strive:

• to understand and critically analyze concepts, patterns, and issues that affect the organization of communities and the relationship between individuals and society
• to examine and discuss how the media shape our image of reality and how communications
conglomerates shape and influence our society and economy.
• to examine and discuss the values and ethical issues that underlie social, political and economic organizations.
• to examine the formulation of policies and the impacts of those policies on the media and society, i.e., the First Amendment’s role in democracy.
• to gain an overview of trends in the development and use of mass media.
• to gain an understanding of the roles of mass media in government, the economy, and society.
• to improve skills in research and presentation of research.
• to gain knowledge to improve one’s perspective as a consumer, media practitioner, and citizen in an information-based society.

COURSE UNITS:

Mass Media and the Cultural Landscape
Mass Communication: A Critical Approach
Information and New Technology: Media at the Crossroads
Sounds and Images
Sound Recordings and Popular Music
Popular Radio and the Origins of Broadcasting
Television and the Power of Visual Culture
Cable and the Specialization of Television
Movies and the Impact of Images
Words and Pictures
Newspapers and the Rise of Modern Journalism
Magazines in the Age of Specialization
Books and the Power of Print
The Business of Mass Media
Advertising and Commercial Culture
Democratic Expression and the Mass Media
The Culture of Journalism: Values, Ethics and Democracy
Legal Controls and Freedom of Expression

Grading criteria:

A. Participation (15 %): Assessed by your participation in discussions and consistency of use of this web site
B. Quizzes (40%): A multiple-choice quizz per chapter to be completed online
C. Project (30%): See “Research Project” on course homepage
D. Final Exam (15%): Comprehensive examination of all material covered in quizzes for each chapter of the text

Research Project:
During the semester, you will prepare and submit a research project. For your research-based project, you must follow all specifications provided in the Research Project files on the course homepage. If you do not, the project will not be accepted. This project, which constitutes 30 percent of your grade, will be your opportunity to examine in depth topics or material covered in the text. Topics and detailed instructions for the project are included within the Research Project section of the course web site.

Final Exam:

You'll have a final exam consisting of 75 multiple choice questions from each of the chapters covered this semester. You will need to complete the exam in one sitting over any two-hour period during final exam week. The final exam is taken online. You are not required to come to campus to complete the exam unless you anticipate experiencing technical difficulty with your browser or internet connection. You are responsible for ensuring a reliable connection for the full two-hour seating for the exam. You will have two attempts to complete the final exam. If you score well on the first attempt, DO NOT take the second attempt as the latest attempt is the score that will stand even if you scored lower than your first attempt. The second attempt is an accommodation for service interruption. If you are booted off the system during your first attempt at the exam, please find your way to a campus lab or library to complete your second attempt. Any student who cannot complete the exam on the second attempt because of technical difficulty or service interruption will not be offered an incomplete for the course and will not be given any further attempts to complete the exam.

Chapter Quizzes: QUIZZES ARE LOCATED IN WEEKLY FOLDERS

All quizzes and discussions for each chapter are available in a weekly folder from the start of each Sunday to 11:55 p.m. the next Sunday night except for the shorter first and last weeks of the semester. Once a folder closes you will no longer have access to post on the discussion or take the quizzes assigned for that week. No exceptions.

Quizzes: As you know from reading the syllabus, quizzes count as 40 percent of your grade. As you have only two attempts to submit each quiz, please be sure to read the chapter before attempting the quizzes.

After reading the chapter, take the multiple-choice quiz provided for each chapter. You will have two attempts to succeed. The first attempt gives you an idea of how well you have prepared. If you perform poorly on the first try, go back and review the chapter.
Discussions: I will post discussion questions each week to promote thought and exchange of ideas among class members. This activity will be tracked as part of my estimation of the quality and quantity of your participation.

- Post a minimum of three detailed, well-written, analytical answers to the designated questions for each chapter, each week.

- Post a minimum of three brief but well-written responses to classmates’ responses for each chapter, each week; I agree or disagree is an insufficient response. Give specific reasons indicating your understanding of the readings and course concepts.

- Also post three peer post reviews. Reviews are anonymous, and you may leave an anonymous comment with the review if you choose. You will not be able to see review for any other students unless you first post a review for the topic. The REVIEW button is available at the bottom of each posting. Once you click it, a star rating system will appear.

- Discussion Board points are assigned based on your interaction with your classmates on each topic, not simply posting your own response to the questions.

- Please respect one another’s opinions. No flames (attacks) or foul language allowed. Disrespectful or disruptive students will be blocked from discussion and will lose all points for participation.

- All discussion postings are due no later than the Sunday after the discussion questions are posted.

- Do not wait until the last day of the discussion to post all of your entries. Repeat late posters will lose participation points.

SUMMARIZED RECAP
Each week:

1. Make sure you've read the assigned chapters.

2. Review the PowerPoint slides for each chapter. You should reference these key concepts in your discussion postings and research project to demonstrate your grasp of the material.

3. Complete the quiz (for each chapter).

4. If you did not succeed during the first attempt, you may take the quiz again (limited to two attempts per quiz). The score for the latest attempt stands as is in the Grade Center. If you feel the need to retake the quiz (the questions are randomized) do so only after preparing to succeed.

5. Complete Discussion Board Questions, Responses & Ratings (for each chapter).