

COMM 101 UNDERSTANDING MASS MEDIA SYLLABUS

Spring Semester 2006

Westchester Community College

COMM 101 Understanding Mass Media 3 credits
Survey of language, structure, and operation of mass media, with emphasis on the seven major mass media. Study of major changes in print and electronic media and the effects of mass communication on individuals and society. Class hrs. 3. No prerequisite required for communications and media arts majors. Offered every semester.

5700 Tue 12:00-12:50 CLA 0104
 Thu 12:00-12:50 CLA 0104
 Fri 12:00-12:50 CLA 0104

PROFESSOR: Carol Smith Passariello

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OFFICE HOURS: TBA

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TEXT: Richard Campbell, *Media and Culture 5*, Bedford/St. Martins, 2006.

Readings also will include class handouts, and it is recommended that students follow coverage of mass media issues in the news.

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.

METHODS:

The class will include lectures, documentary analysis, discussions, and research projects to explore these topics. Grading of performance in the class and of understanding of course materials will include evaluation of tests, writing assignments, and class discussions. Grades for attendance will be based on the same scale as overall grading for the class. If you attend at least 90 percent of class sessions, for example, you will receive an "A" for attendance.

TESTS:

Examinations for the class will measure your understanding of course materials and allow application of course materials. There are four exams, including a final exam, each counting as 15% of your final grade.

GRADES:

Grading for the class will be as follows:

Tests (60 percent)
 Midterm Project (15 percent)
 Final Project (15 percent)
 Attendance and participation (10 percent)

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

PROJECTS:

- a. All Understanding Mass Media students will prepare and present two projects. Details to help you complete project assignments are provided with this syllabus to provide you with sufficient preparation time to meet required deadlines.
- b. Requests for submitting projects after the deadline must be written on the attached Late Paper form and will be judged on basis of the explanation of the need for more time.
- c. Written presentations should follow standard manuscript form (see "Acceptable Papers" below) and comply with standards of effective essay writing (structure, substance, and style). Whenever research is done, the sources of information must be cited within the paper and listed at the end according to the MLA format. (The library can provide you with their "Documentation Style Sheet," which explains the correct MLA form for citing and listing sources.)

Meeting the deadline means submitting assignments at the start of the class on the due date. In the event of not being in class on the day the paper is due, you can meet the deadline by Emailing the paper to me in rich text format or as a word document before the start of class that same day; otherwise it will be considered past deadline. Emails with corrupted files, incorrect addresses, forgotten attachments, late delivery or any other problem will not excuse the paper from late penalties.

Up to one day (including weekends and holidays) late –one letter grade
Up to two days late –two letter grades
More than two days late –F

Acceptable form for all written projects:

- Papers must be typed on standard 8.5 x 11, white paper.
- Standard manuscript form must be used: margins, double spacing, room at top and bottom, page numbering beginning with page two of the text.
- The paper will have no cover page.
- Near the top, left corner, in this order, include the following information:

Your name
The assignment number
Course & Section #
Date due

- Your first page will include a title that gives a specific indication of the paper's purpose (centered).
- Papers must be stapled in the upper left hand corner.
- Do not put papers in folders, plastic binders, etc.

Papers will be returned as unacceptable if:

- a. they do not comply with above;
- b. sources are not properly documented (MLA form);
- c. they do not comply with the assignment;
- d. errors and style problems obscure the content.
- e. they are late and not covered with Late Paper form.

Plagiarism:

In the event that I suspect that a paper has been plagiarized, I will ask the writer to meet with me. If my suspicions are confirmed, the paper receives an F. Refer to the college catalogue for a definition of plagiarism.