

INTRODUCTION TO MASS MEDIA (SECTIONS 20261, 20263)

County College of Morris
Randolph, NJ
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Course Description

Introduction to Mass Media is a survey course focusing on the history and consequences of mass media for the individual, society, and culture. Specific areas of emphasis include the development and characteristics of media forms, production practices, media research methods, and theories concerning the nature and impact of mass media. Special attention will also be paid to current events in the media and their social consequences.

Course Objectives

1. To improve media literacy, critical thinking, and writing skills.
2. To familiarize students with the history and development of mass media forms.
3. To familiarize students with the process of media production.
4. To familiarize students with media research techniques.
5. To familiarize students with the spectrum of media theories and the intellectual traditions from which they derive.
6. To instill an abiding interest in the subject of media through exposure to a diversity of programming material and theoretical perspectives through which they can be understood.

Anticipated Learning Outcomes

1. The ability to describe the historical development and current state of specific media forms (books, magazines, newspapers, film, radio, television, the internet).
2. The ability to explain the various media production technologies and practices.
3. The ability to review basic media research techniques (experiment, survey, content analysis, ethnography).
4. The ability to identify major media theories and understand their fundamental assertions along with their strengths and limitations.
5. The ability to maintain an ongoing discussion on a topic using an electronic bulletin board.

6. The ability to constructively criticize media products, including print media, film, radio, television, and websites.
7. The ability to demonstrate critical writing skills through the application of media theories in an online discussion forum.

Methods of Instruction

1. Lecture: A brief introduction to material that connects readings to class exercises.
2. Class Discussion: Full group discussion of topics related to specific questions, readings, media presentations and/or exam preparation.
3. Group Discussion: Small group discussion of topics related to specific questions, readings, media presentations and/or exam preparation.
4. Web-Based Learning: Reading and writing of online class discussions in addition to material collected at www.mattsmediaresearch.com.
5. Audio-Visual Presentations: Short presentations that are focused on a relevant topic and intended to provoke discussion.

Required Textbook

Dennis, E. E. & DeFleur, M. L. (2010). *Understanding Media in the Digital Age*. New York: Pearson.

Recommended Media

Newspapers: *The New York Times*, *The Daily News* (New York Edition).

Magazines: *Mother Jones*, *The Weekly Standard*, *Time Magazine*, *The Atlantic*, *People*, *Playboy*, *Cosmopolitan*, *MAD Magazine*.

Radio: *WNYC*, *WABC* (see Appendix A for further details).

Film: TBA

Television: Various Network and Cable programming (see Appendix A for further details).

Internet: mattsmediaresearch.com

Additional Resources

<http://mattsmediaresearch.com>: This will serve as the official website for this class. The syllabus and other material will be made available through the “Students” hyperlink at the top of the homepage.

Course Requirements

1. *Attendance*: Students are expected to attend all class meetings.
2. *Reading and Participation*: Students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the topic described in the course schedule (see Course Calendar and Appendix A).
3. *Tests*: Students are expected to demonstrate their knowledge in the form of two in-class examinations.
4. *Discussion Topics*: Students are expected to contribute to online class discussions throughout the course of this semester.

Evaluation and Grading

1. *Attendance Policy*: All students are entitled to two unexcused absences from class. Beyond this single absence, 1/3 of a grade will be deducted from the final grade for each additional unexcused absence (e.g. B- reduced to C+). Excused absences are accepted only if accompanied by documentation relating to the nature of the excuse (e.g. auto repair receipt, doctor's note, jury duty notification, etc.).
2. *Lateness*: Roll is taken at the beginning of the class as the attendance sheet is circulated. Students who are late must sign in at the end of class and be marked late. Three late arrivals are equal to one absence.
3. *Participation*: All students are expected to demonstrate informed participation in class discussion. Participation can include [1] initiation of discussion about an issue related to the topic scheduled for discussion for that class session [2] contribution to an ongoing discussion through informed opinion and/or presentation of evidence. Please note that there exists a distinction between an uninformed opinion and the assertion of a particular theoretical perspective. As opposed to personal opinion that is grounded in individual anecdotal experience, the statement of a perspective implies a coherent paradigm that has application value based on functionality in other circumstances. Put simply, a perspective has demonstrated its validity elsewhere. Having made that distinction, participation will be evaluated based on the number of valid contributions that the student makes throughout the course of the semester. A minimum of 1 contribution is expected each week. Additional contributions will be added as half points to the final grade and deficient contribution points will be subtracted as half points from the final grade. For example, if a student has a final test average of 77%, but six contributions above and beyond the quota, the student will have earned an 80%. If that same student has a deficit of six points below the quota, the student will have earned a 74%.
4. *Negative Participation*: The following behavior is prohibited in the classroom: sleeping, use of electronic devices, offensive language, remarks, and/or actions. Students who sleep or use electronic devices in class risk reduction of their final grade by 1/3 for each offense. Students who make offensive remarks and/or actions risk failure and expulsion from the course in line with the regulations set forth in the Student Code of Conduct.

5. *Tests:* There will be two periods of examination throughout the course of this semester. These will be evaluated in terms of percentile and translated to a letter grade based on the grading chart below.
6. *Discussion Topics:* As noted above, students are required to contribute to online class discussions throughout the duration of the semester. Discussions must be updated weekly and they have the potential to count as 1-3 contributions of class participation based on the quality of their content (see Appendix B). Conversely, *each Missing discussion thread update will detract a total of 2 full percentage points from the final grade.* For example, if a student were to decide not to create a web log for this course, 32 points would be deducted from his or her final grade (even a final average of 100% would be reduced to a D+ at 68%). All discussion threads are due on the Saturday after the thread is assigned for the group making the initial response, and Sunday for the group making the secondary response.

Grading Chart

| | |
|------------|--------------|
| A (93-100) | C (73-76) |
| A- (90-92) | C- (70-72) |
| B+ (87-89) | D+ (67-69) |
| B (83-86) | D (63-66) |
| B- (80-82) | D- (60-62) |
| C+ (77-79) | F (below 60) |

Course Calendar

Week 1

Sessions 1 & 2

1/20

❖ Overview:

- Fill out index cards.
- Divide into groups.
- Personal introductions.
- Introduction and overview of the course.
- What is Mass Media and why should we study it?

❖ Media:

- mattsmidiaresearch.com
- Blackboard/WebCT
- *The Media's Influence on the Things We Do* (DVD262)

❖ Discussion:

- Questions.

❖ Assignments:

- Read Chapter 2: Navigating Change.
- Discussion Thread (Groups A & B): Write your first thread explaining how a particular medium has changed your life (e.g. television, film, comic books, ipod).

Week 2

Session 1

1/25 [Last Day to Add a Class]

❖ **Overview:**

- Discussion of Chapter 2: Navigating Change.
- What media changes have you noticed throughout your lifetime?

❖ **Media:**

- Excerpts from *Printing Transforms Knowledge* Part I (VC 893)

❖ **Discussion:**

- Discussion of Oral and Literate media.
- Discussion threads.
- Current events in the media.

❖ **Assignments:**

- Read Chapter 3: Books.
- Bring a favorite book from your personal collection to class.
- Required Media.

Session 2

1/27

❖ **Overview:**

- Discussion of Chapter 3: Books.

❖ **Media:**

- Excerpts from *Printing Transforms Knowledge* Part II (VC 893)

❖ **Discussion:**

- The Printing Press.
- Favorite Books.
- Current Events in the Media.

❖ **Assignments:**

- Discussion Thread (Groups A & B): TBA
- Required Media.

Week 3

Session 1

2/1 [Last Day to Drop a Class]

❖ **Overview:**

- Printing and Photography.

❖ **Media:**

- The History of Photography (Powerpoint).

❖ **Discussion:**

- The Impact of Reproducible Photography.
- Current events in the media.

- ❖ **Assignments:**
 - Required Media.

Session 2

2/3

- ❖ **Overview:**
 - Introduction.
- ❖ **Media:**
 - Excerpts from *Standard Operating Procedure* (Morris, 2008).
- ❖ **Discussion:**
 - Discussion Thread.
 - *Standard Operating Procedure* (Morris, 2008).
 - Current events in the media.
- ❖ **Assignments:**
 - Read Chapter 5: Magazines.
 - Discussion Thread (Groups A & B): What is the cultural significance of the Super Bowl?
 - Required Media.

Week 4

Session 1

2/8

- ❖ **Overview:**
 - Introduction.
- ❖ **Media:**
 - Magazine Comparisons (Powerpoint).
- ❖ **Discussion:**
 - A Closer Look: *Mother Jones* Vs. *The Weekly Standard* Vs. *Time* Vs. *MAD*, *The Atlantic* Vs. *People*, *Playboy* Vs. *Cosmopolitan*.
 - Current events in the media.
- ❖ **Assignments:**
 - Read Chapter 4: Newspapers and News Media.
 - Required Media.

Session 2

2/10

- ❖ **Overview:**
 - Discussion of Chapter 4: Newspapers (Straubhaar & LaRose, 2006).
- ❖ **Media:**
 - The History of the Newspaper (Powerpoint).
 - The History of the Comic Strip (Powerpoint).

❖ **Discussion:**

- Discussion thread.
- Newspapers and Comic Strips.
- Current events in the media.

❖ **Assignments:**

- Read Chapter 7: Radio.
- Discussion Thread: Listen to *The Brian Lehrer Show* for Thursday or *The Rush Limbaugh Program* for Thursday and write a review of the program.
- Required Media.

Week 5

Session 1

2/15

❖ **Overview:**

- Discussion of Chapter 7: Radio.

❖ **Media:**

- Selected clips of historic radio broadcasts.

❖ **Discussion:**

- Radio History.
- Current events in the media.

❖ **Assignments:**

- Required Media.

Session 2

2/17

❖ **Overview:**

- Continued: Discussion of Chapter 7: Radio.

❖ **Media:**

- Selected clips of historic radio programs.

❖ **Discussion:**

- Discussion threads.
- Radio as a Medium.
- Current events in the media.

❖ **Assignments:**

- Read Chapter 6: Motion Pictures.
- Discussion Thread: TBA
- Required Media.

Week 6

Session 1

2/22

- ❖ **Overview:**
 - Discussion of Chapter 6: Motion Pictures.
- ❖ **Media:**
 - Selected clips from *When Movies Began*.
- ❖ **Discussion:**
 - Film History.
 - Current events in the media.
- ❖ **Assignments:**
 - Required Media.

Session 2

2/24

- ❖ **Overview:**
 - Continued: Discussion of Chapter 6: Motion Pictures.
- ❖ **Media:**
 - *Visions of Light*
 - Selected clips from modern films.
- ❖ **Discussion:**
 - Discussion threads.
 - Film as a Medium.
 - Current events in the media.
- ❖ **Assignments:**
 - Read Chapter 8: Television.
 - Discussion Thread (Groups A & B): Watch *The O'Reilly Factor* for Thursday or *Countdown with Keith Olbermann* for Thursday and write a review of the program.
 - Required Media.

Week 7

Session 1

3/1

- ❖ **Overview:**
 - Discussion of Chapter 8: Television.
 - Broadcast Journalism.
- ❖ **Media:**
 - *The Edward R. Murrow Collection*
- ❖ **Discussion:**
 - Television History.

- Current events in the media.
- ❖ **Assignments:**
 - Required Media.

Session 2

3/3

- ❖ **Overview:**
 - Continued: Discussion of Chapter 8: Television.
 - Entertainment Programming
- ❖ **Media:**
 - *Classic Television* (VC 4127)
 - Clips from contemporary television programs.
- ❖ **Discussion:**
 - Discussion threads.
 - Television as a Medium.
 - Current events in the media.
- ❖ **Assignment:**
 - Discussion Thread: TBA
 - Required Media.

Week 8

Session 1

3/8

- ❖ **Overview:**
 - The Internet.
- ❖ **Media:**
 - *Internet: Behind the Web* (VC4540)
- ❖ **Discussion:**
 - History of the Internet.
 - *Media Now*: Current events in the media.
- ❖ **Assignment:**
 - Required Media.

Session 2

3/10

- ❖ **Overview:**
 - Continued: The Internet.
- ❖ **Media:**
 - MySpace, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.
- ❖ **Discussion:**
 - Discussion threads.
 - Net Neutrality.

- Media Literacy.
- ❖ **Assignment:**
 - Required Media.

Week 9

3/15-3/19 Spring Break!

Week 10

Session 1

3/22

- ❖ **Overview:**
 - Review for Midterm Exam
- ❖ **Media:**
 - TBA.
- ❖ **Discussion:**
 - Review for Midterm Exam
- ❖ **Assignment:**
 - Prepare for **Midterm EXAM** (Chapters 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12).
 - Required Media.

Session 2

3/24

- ❖ **Overview:**
 - **Midterm Exam**
- ❖ **Media:**
 - N/A
- ❖ **Discussion:**
 - N/A
- ❖ **Assignment:**
 - Read: Chapter 14: Media Effects.
 - Discussion Thread: Formulate a research question, hypothesis, and method for testing a question related to media effects.
 - Required Media.

Week 11

Session 1

3/29

- ❖ **Overview:**
 - Discussion of Quantitative Research Methods.
- ❖ **Media:**
 - Examples of Sampling: *The Comics Adaptations List*

- Stanley Milgram's *Obedience to Authority* (VC3515).
- ❖ **Discussion:**
 - Quantitative Research.
 - Quantitative Sampling.
 - Content Analysis.
 - Surveys.
 - Experiments.
- ❖ **Assignment:**
 - Read Chapter 11: Advertising.
 - Required Media.

Session 2

3/31

- ❖ **Overview:**
 - Discussion of Qualitative Research Methods.
- ❖ **Media:**
 - *Cool Hunting* (<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/cool/view/>)
- ❖ **Discussion:**
 - Discussion threads.
 - Qualitative Research.
 - Qualitative Sampling.
 - Textual Analysis.
 - Interviews.
 - Ethnographies.
- ❖ **Assignment:**
 - Discussion thread: Use a theory to explain the effects of specific violent and/or sexual media content.
 - Required Media.

Week 12

Session 1

4/5

- ❖ **Overview:**
 - Discussion of Effects Research.
- ❖ **Media:**
 - Media and Antisocial Behavior (Powerpoint).
 - Clips from *TV Violence and You* (VC5280).
 - Clips from *Electronic Storyteller* (VC3897).
 - Clips from *Killing Screens* (VC3083).
- ❖ **Discussion:**
 - Media Effects.
- ❖ **Assignment:**
 - Required Media.

Session 2

4/7

- ❖ **Overview:**
 - Continued: Discussion of Effects Research.
- ❖ **Media:**
 - Clips from *Pornography of Everyday Life* (DVD833).
 - Clips from *Not a Love Story* (VC3201).
- ❖ **Discussion:**
 - Discussion threads.
 - Media Effects.
- ❖ **Assignment:**
 - Read: McLuhan Chapter (online)
 - Discussion Thread: TBA
 - Required Media.

Week 13

Session 1

4/12

- ❖ **Overview:**
 - Discussion of Cognitive Media Theory.
- ❖ **Media:**
 - TED Conference.
- ❖ **Discussion:**
 - Technological Determinism.
 - Discussion threads.
- ❖ **Assignment:**
 - Required Media.

Session 2

4/14

- ❖ **Overview:**
 - Continued: Discussion of Cognitive Media Theory.
- ❖ **Media:**
 - TED Conference.
- ❖ **Discussion:**
 - Discussion threads.
 - Technological Determinism.
- ❖ **Assignment:**
 - Read Chapter 13: Social Forces.
 - Discussion Thread: TBA
 - Required Media.

Week 14

Session 1

4/19

- ❖ **Overview:**
 - Critical Studies.
- ❖ **Media:**
 - Country Music Recordings.
- ❖ **Discussion:**
 - Marxism.
 - Hegemony.
 - Web Log Entries.
- ❖ **Assignment:**
 - Required Media.

Session 2

4/21

- ❖ **Overview:**
 - Continued: Critical Studies.
- ❖ **Media:**
 - *The Secret Millionaire* (<http://www.fox.com/secretmillionaire/>).
 - *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* (<http://abc.go.com/primetime/xtremehome>).
- ❖ **Discussion:**
 - Marxism.
 - Hegemony.
 - Discussion threads.
- ❖ **Assignment:**
 - Read Chapter 12: Public Relations.
 - Required Media.

Week 15

Session 1

4/26

- ❖ **Overview:**
 - Global Media.
- ❖ **Media:**
 - *The Corporation*.
- ❖ **Discussion:**
 - Globalism.
 - Media Imperialism.
 - Discussion threads.
- ❖ **Assignment:**
 - Required Media.

Session 2

4/28

- ❖ **Overview:**
 - Global Media
- ❖ **Media:**
 - *The Corporation.*
- ❖ **Discussion:**
 - TBA
- ❖ **Assignment:**
 - Review for **Final Exam**

Week 16

Session 1

5/3

- ❖ **Overview:**
 - Final Exam Review
- ❖ **Media:**
 - *The Corporation.*
- ❖ **Discussion:**
 - Final Exam Review
- ❖ **Assignment:**
 - Review for **Final Exam**

Session 2

5/5

- ❖ **Overview:**
 - Final Exam Review
- ❖ **Media:**
 - Powerpoint.
- ❖ **Discussion:**
 - Final Exam Review
- ❖ **Assignment:**
 - Review for **Final Exam**

5/10-5/13 (All Sections)

- ❖ **Final Exams.**

END

Appendix A – Media Requirements

1. Newspaper Requirements:
 - 1.1. *The New York Times* (front page stories).
 - 1.2. *The New York Daily News* (front page stories).
 - 1.3. In addition to reading front page stories, students must find the stories that correspond between the two newspapers.
2. Magazine Requirements:
 - 2.1. *The Atlantic*.
 - 2.2. *The Weekly Standard*.
 - 2.3. *Mother Jones*
 - 2.4. *Time Magazine*.
 - 2.5. *MAD Magazine*.
3. Radio Requirements:
 - 3.1. WNYC [93.9 FM, 820 AM]
 - 3.1.1. Weekdays: *BBC News Hour* (9-10 AM), *The Brian Lehrer Show* (10am-12 PM), *All Things Considered* (4-6 PM).
 - 3.1.2. Weekends: *Weekend Edition Saturday* (Saturday 8-10 AM), *All Things Considered* (Saturday 5-6 PM), *Weekend Edition Sunday* (Sunday 8-10 AM), *On the Media* (Sunday 10-11 AM), *All Things Considered* (Sunday 5-6 PM).
 - 3.2. WABC [770 AM]
 - 3.2.1. Weekdays: *Paul Harvey's News & Comment* (11:45-12 PM), *The Rush Limbaugh Program* (12-3 PM), *The Sean Hannity Show* (3-6PM), *Mark Levin* (6-8 PM).
 - 3.2.2. Weekends: *Monica Crowley* (1-4 PM).
4. Film Requirements:
 - 4.1. TBA.
5. Television Requirements:
 - 5.1. *Fox News Channel*
 - 5.1.1. Weekdays: *The O'Reilly Factor* (8-9 PM), *Hannity & Colmes* (9-10 PM).
 - 5.1.2. Weekends:
 - 5.2. *MSNBC*
 - 5.2.1. Weekdays: *Countdown with Keith Olbermann* (10-11 PM).
 - 5.2.2. Weekends:
 - 5.3. *WCBS*
 - 5.3.1. Weekdays: *CBS Evening News With Katie Couric* (6:30-7 PM).
 - 5.3.2. Weekends:
 - 5.4. *FOX Network*
 - 5.4.1. *The Simpsons* (Sunday, 8-8:30 PM).
 - 5.5. *Comedy Central*
 - 5.5.1. Weekdays: *The Daily Show* (8-8:30 PM), *The Colbert Report* (8:30-9 PM).
6. Internet Requirements:
 - 6.1. mattsmediaresearch.com

Appendix B – Discussion Threads

Discussion threads are graded on a 1-3 scale. Scores of “1” indicate that all the basic requirements have been met while scores of “2” or (rarely) “3” indicate high quality contributions. To meet the basic requirements and earn a score of “1,” students must (1) answer the question in sufficient detail (at least two paragraphs, each containing at least three complete sentences), and (2) use correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation. To earn a score of “2” or “3” students must integrate a theory in answering the question. In other words, students must answer the question using an idea discussed in class or read in the book. As the semester progresses, examples of high-quality discussion threads will be shared with the class.