

**Sociology of Mass Media**  
**Sociology 317**  
**University of Oregon**  
**Fall 2008**

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### **Course Overview/Goals**

In this course we will examine the media as both an institution and an important agent in the socialization process. While our focus will be on the mass media, we will also explore the relationship between the media and other large-scale institutions in society, such as the economy and the political system. The main goals of this course are:

1. To help students understand the significance of ownership on media content, and its relationship to the larger system of economic inequality.
2. To explore bias in the mass media, including depictions of class, race, gender, U.S. foreign policy, and consumer culture.
3. To help students develop the skills/knowledge necessary to approach the mass media more critically.

### **Expectations**

1. Arrive on time. Class will start promptly and usually last the entire scheduled time.
2. Leave your cell phones off. If your cell phone rings, you may be asked to leave.
3. Refrain from using any derogatory comments, keeping in mind that we might touch on some very sensitive topics. Disagreement is encouraged, but it should be done in a respectful manner.
4. Do the readings before class on Monday. If you do not keep up with the reading, you will not gain as much from the lectures, and consequently you will not do as well in the class.

### **Communication**

E-mail is the best method to reach us, as we check it several times each day. Even so, due to the large amount of e-mail we receive, allow at least 24 hours for us to respond (longer if over a weekend). We will not provide any grades via e-mail; those can be accessed through the course blackboard site.

If you must miss an exam, please contact the office of Student Services, also the Academic Advising office located in 364 Oregon Hall; the phone number is 541.346.3211. If you contact them in advance when facing a problem, they can inform all of your professors that you will not be able to attend class.

## **Attendance**

*Attendance is not required for this class.* However, there is usually a direct relationship between attendance and student performance. In other words, if you come to class on a regular basis you will increase your chances of doing well. If you miss class, you will need to get notes from another student. We will not provide notes, so do not ask.

## **Readings**

Assigned readings will be posted on blackboard for weeks 1 and 2, and will be available through electronic reserve for the remainder of the term. If you are having trouble accessing the readings, please talk to us before or after class.

## **Grades**

Your final grade will be based on the following:

- 15% Paper Assignment #1
- 35% Midterm Exam
- 15% Paper Assignment #2
- 35% Final Exam

## **Papers**

You will be required to write two papers over the course of the term. Each paper will be approximately 3-4 pages in length. More details will be given as the term progresses.

Both paper assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date specified. You must submit your paper in person. We will not accept your paper from other students or accept electronic versions.

Sliding papers under our office doors is also not acceptable; however, if you must turn in a late paper, please turn it in to either one of our department mailboxes (located in 736 PLC). You will be downgraded 1/3 of a letter grade each day the paper is late, including weekends (unless you have an official excuse for not being in class).

If you are having difficulty with your paper, please visit the University Writing Lab (PLC 72), or meet with one of us during our office hours in advance of the due date. It is your responsibility to seek help if you need it.

## **Exams**

There will be two exams in this course. The midterm will be an essay exam. We will provide you with a number of questions in advance, but only select certain ones for the actual exam. There will be no surprises.

The content of the final exam is yet to be determined. We will provide the details at least three weeks before the exam.

We will hold a makeup exam only for students who have an official excuse (illness with a doctor's note, team sports, etc.) Accommodations must be made in advance of the exam.

### **Academic Honesty**

Please be assured that we are proactive about checking for plagiarism and have several reliable mechanisms for doing so.

Plagiarism or any other form of academic dishonesty will be reported to the appropriate university officials and may result in a failing grade. If you are unsure what constitutes plagiarism, please read the Plagiarism Guide for Students on the library website.

### **Students with Disabilities**

Please inform us of any needed special arrangements within the first two weeks of class. We will do our best to accommodate you.

## **Course Outline**

### **Week I (9/29 – 10/1) Media as an Agent of Socialization**

#### **Readings:**

Cottle, Simon. 2003. "Media Organization and Production: Mapping the Field." *Media Organization and Production*. London: Sage Productions. (Chapter 1)

### **Week II (10/6 – 10/8) Class and Power in U.S. Society**

#### **Readings:**

Parenti, Michael. 2008. *Democracy For the Few* (8<sup>th</sup> ed). Boston: Thomson-Wadsworth. (Chapters 1, 2, 3, and 6)

Domhoff, G. W. 2006. *Who rules America?: power and politics, and social change* (5<sup>th</sup> ed). Boston, Mass: McGraw-Hill. (Chapter 2)

**Film:** TBA

### **Week III (10/13 – 10/15) Political Economy of Mass Media**

#### **Readings:**

McChesney, R. W. 2003. "Corporate Media Global Capitalism." *Media Organization and Production*. London: Sage Productions. (Chapter 2 – first two pages)

McChesney, R. W. 2008. *The Political Economy of Media: Enduring Issues, Emerging Dilemmas*. New York: Monthly Review Press. (Chapter 6)

Parenti, Michael. 2008. *Democracy For the Few* (8<sup>th</sup> ed). Boston: Thomson-Wadsworth. (Chapter 13)

Parenti, M. 1993. *Inventing Reality: the Politics of News Media* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed). New York: St. Martin's Press. (Chapters 3 and 4)

**Film:** *Manufacturing Consent*

#### **Week IV (10/20 – 10/22) Public Relations and Social Control**

**Readings:**

Lippmann, W. 1925. *The Phantom Public*. New York: Harcourt, Brace. (Chapter 2)

Bernays, E. L. 1928. *Propaganda*. New York: H. Liveright. (Chapter 1)

Ewen, S. 1996. *PR: a Social History of Spin*. New York: Basic Books. (Chapters 7 and 8)

**Film:** *Century of the Self*

#### **PAPER #1 DUE ON OCTOBER 22<sup>ND</sup>**

#### **Week V (10/27 – 10/29) Media, Advertising, and Consumerism**

**Readings:**

Antitrust Laws for Consumers: [http://www.usdoj.gov/atr/public/div\\_stats/211491.htm](http://www.usdoj.gov/atr/public/div_stats/211491.htm)

Dawson, Michael. 2003. “The Consumer Trap.” and “Escaping the Consumer Trap.” *The Consumer Trap*. (Chapters 9 and 10)

McChesney, Robert W. 2004. “The Age of Hyper-Commercialism.” *The Problem of the Media*. NY: Monthly Review Press. (Chapter 4)

McChesney, Robert W. 2004. “Media and Antitrust.” *The Problem of the Media*. NY: Monthly Review Press.

Parenti, Michael. 1993. Ch. 5 “The Big Sell.” *Inventing Reality: the Politics of News Media* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed). New York: St. Martin's Press.

**Recommended Films:** *Advertising and the End of the World; The Overspent American; Affluenza; Rhyme pays: Hip Hop and the Marketing of Cool*

#### **MIDTERM ON OCT. 29<sup>th</sup>**

#### **Week VI (11/3 – 11/5) Overview of U.S. Foreign Policy**

**Readings:**

Zinn, H. 2005. *A People's History of the United States, 1492-present*. Harper Perennial Modern Classics. New York: Harper-Perennial. (Chapter 1)

Blum, W., & Blum, W. (2003). *Killing Hope: US Military and CIA Interventions Since World War II*. London: Zed Books. (Introduction + Chapters 9, 10, 19, 23, and 37)

**Film:** *The War on Democracy*

### **Week VII (11/10 – 11/12) The Role of the Media in a Time of War**

#### **Readings:**

McChesney, R. W. 2008. *The Political Economy of Media: Enduring Issues, Emerging Dilemmas*. New York: Monthly Review Press. (Chapter 4)

Solomon, N. 2005. *War Made Easy: How Presidents and Pundits Keep Spinning Us to Death*. Hoboken, N.J.: J. Wiley. (Chapters 8, 9, 10, and 11)

**Films:** *Buying the War, Control Room*

### **Week VIII (11/17 – 11/19) Race, Class, and Gender**

#### **Readings:**

Butsch, Richard. 2003. "Ralph, Fred, Archie, and Homer: Why Television Keeps Re-creating the White Male Working-Class Buffoon."

hooks, bell. 2000. "Solidarity with the Poor." *Class Matters*.

Labbe, Theola. 2008. "Michelle, Meritocracy, and Me." *Washington Post*.

Nelson, Sophia A. 2008. "Black. Female. Accomplished. Attacked." *Washington Post*.

Parenti, Michael. 1993. "Class, Race, and Gender." *Inventing Reality: the Politics of News Media (2<sup>nd</sup> ed)*. New York: St. Martin's Press. Pp. 9-13.

Pough, Gwendolyn D. 2002. *Love My Feminism but Where's My Hip Hop?*

Zook, Kristal B. 1999. "The Fox Network and the Revolution in Black Television."

**Films:** *Dreamworlds 3; Hip Hop: Beyond Beats and Rhymes; Ethnic Notions; Born Rich; Race is the Place*

### **Week IX (11/24 – 11/26) Race, Class, and Gender (Continued)**

#### **Readings:**

Dean, James. 2006. "Heterosexual Anxiety and Gay Media Visibility: Heterosexuals' Perceptions of Gay Images." *Censored Media Democracy in Action: The Top 25 Censored Stories*. NY: Seven Stories Press.

Killbourne, Jean. 1999. *The More You Subtract, the More you Add*.

Massoni, Kelley. 2004. "Modeling Work: Occupational Messages in Seventeen

Magazine.” *Gender and Society*. 18(1).

Raymond, Diane. 2003. *Popular Culture and Queer Representation: A Critical Perspective*.

**Films:** *Tough Guise; Slim Hopes; Off the Straight and Narrow; Spin the Bottle*  
*Body: The Value of Women*

**Week X (12/1 – 12/3) Alternative Media/Internet**

**Readings:**

Albarram, Alan. 2002. “The Internet Industry.” *Media Economics Understanding Markets, Industries and Concepts*. Ames: Iowa State University Press. (Chapter 8)

Atton, Chris. 2003. “Organization and Production in Alternative Media.” *Media Organization and Production*. London: Sage Productions. (Chapter 3)

Bennett, Lance W. 2003. “New Media Power: The Internet and Global Activism.” *Contesting Media Power: Alternative Media in a Networked World*. MD: Rowman & Littlefield. (Chapter 2)

Carveth, Rod. 2004. “The Economics of Online Media.” *Media Economics: Theory and Practice*. N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum. (Chapter 13)

Grossman, Lev. 2006. “Time’s Person of the Year: You.”  
<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1569514,00.html>

Hackett, Robert A. 2006. “Finding the Opening for Media Democracy.” *Censored Media Democracy in Action: The Top 25 Censored Stories*. NY: Seven Stories Press. (Chapter 15)

McChesney, Robert W. 2004. “Media Policies and Media Reform.” *The Problem of the Media*. NY: Monthly Review Press. (Chapter 6)

Parenti, Michael. 1993. Appendix. “A Guide to Alternative Media.” *Inventing Reality: the Politics of News Media (2<sup>nd</sup> ed)*. New York: St. Martin's Press. Pp. 229-32.

**Film:** *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised*

**PAPER #2 DUE DEC. 3<sup>rd</sup>**

**\*\*\*\*\*FINAL EXAM DEC. 12, 10:15AM\*\*\*\*\***