

University of Manitoba
Department of Sociology

SOC 3590 A01 Mass Communication

Tuesdays and Thursdays 1.00-2.30pm
238 University College
Winter 2008, 3 Credit Hours

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Course Summary

This course begins by exploring why it is important to study the media and mass media communication at all. It will offer ways to approach the critical analysis of media forms, as well as encouraging students to think about the ways in which different types of media, for example, newspapers, brands, and television, are produced, organized, and regulated. It will consider the complex and often contradictory relationship between media and society, by examining the texts, messages, and images conveyed by newscasting, advertising, films, television programming, and Internet communication. The course will also look at the ways in which audiences interact with such media communications, and are increasingly involved in the output of the media industries. It will offer students some of the theoretical tools from developments in media and cultural studies and media sociology in order to begin to appreciate the scope of the field and the breadth of the impact of media on contemporary social life.

Course Objectives

- To interrogate common sense assumptions of media influence against sociological explanations of the way the media works.
- To introduce students to the critical analysis of media and cultural forms through the study of organizations and power, texts and meaning, and audiences and social change.
- To introduce students to key concepts in media sociology, such as 'representation', 'ideology', 'discourse', 'genre', 'cultural economy', and 'postmodernism'.
- To explain types of media as differentiated in terms of their organizing bodies, products, and modes of consumption/interaction.
- To develop an appreciation of the significance of media in contemporary culture and social life.

Required Textbooks

O'Shaughnessy, M., and Stadler, J. (2005) *Media and Society*, 3rd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Note: Additional required readings will be on reserve in the Dafoe library.

Assessment

Short Essays (Due Tuesday, February 28 and Tuesday, March 25)

- Students are required to write two short essays of 1500-2000 words. The essay topic for this piece of written work will be chosen by the student from a list of several possible essay questions, which will be distributed in class near the beginning of the term, OR the student can choose to write on a topic of his or her choice, subject to approval by the instructor.

Mid-term Test (Thursday, February 14)

- A test of 1 hour will be held in-class. Students will be presented with a list of possible questions, and asked to choose a fixed number of questions and answer these in mini-essay format. Questions will cover material presented in lectures, readings, films, and class exercises. Study questions will be provided at least one week prior to the test. For this class there will be no exam held during the examination periods. *Students should note that the instructor will not reschedule this test for any reason other than medical.*

Final Test (Thursday, April 10)

- A test of 1 hour will be held in-class. Students will be presented with a list of possible questions, and asked to choose a fixed number of questions and answer these in mini-essay format. Questions will cover material presented in lectures, readings, films, and class exercises. Study questions will be provided at least one week prior to the test. For this class there will be no exam held during the examination periods. *Students should note that the instructor will not reschedule this test for any reason other than medical.*

Participation

- Participation marks will be based on student submissions to informal, mainly in-class exercises. Instructions will be handed out in class. There will be at least three of these exercises throughout the term. Assignments will be carried out either individually or collaboratively in small groups, with the group submitting one finished product and all members of the group receiving the same grade for that assignment. Students may be asked to hand in questions following a film, or analyze one of the course readings, or apply their sociological knowledge to a question given by the instructor.

Note: Students are instructed to *always keep a personal copy of any submitted work* in the case that they are required to submit another copy.

Grade Weights

Short Essays 40% (20% each)

Mid-term Test 25%

Term Essay 25%

Participation 10%

Grade Distribution

<i>Letter Grade</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>GPA</i>	<i>Description</i>
A+	91-100%	4.5	Exceptional
A	80-90%	4.0	Excellent
B+	75-79%	3.5	Very Good
B	70-74%	3.0	Good
C+	65-69%	2.5	Satisfactory
C	60-64%	2.0	Adequate
D	50-59%	1.0	Marginal
F	49% or less	0	Failure

Late Submissions, Missed Tests, and Missed Participation Exercises

Late papers will be penalized 3% per day late (including weekends). Medical documentation will normally be required to waive this penalty. However, if you know before the due date that a paper will be late you should contact me immediately. Extensions may be granted under extenuating circumstances, entirely at the instructor's discretion, ONLY if the student contacts the instructor PRIOR to the deadline.

Missing the mid-term or final test is a serious problem and is likely to result in a grade of 0. Only documented reasons will be accepted for missing the test. If you miss the test for health-related or emergency reasons, you should a) provide advance notice, if possible, by phoning or emailing the instructor, then b) directly contact the instructor *as soon as possible* to arrange a makeup test. Note that it is the student's responsibility for initiating a makeup test. Ordinarily, arrangements must be made within one week of the missed test; requests made later than one week will normally be denied. Under no circumstances will a makeup test be offered more than two weeks after the scheduled test.

If you miss an in-class participation exercise for *legitimate reasons only* (medical or other emergency reasons), you must contact the instructor and arrange for a make-up exercise within one week of the missed exercise. Documentation supporting the reason for missing the exercise may be requested by the instructor.

Missed Films

If you miss a film during a lecture you will need to view it at an alternative time. Making this arrangement is a student responsibility. To view a missed film, you will need a form that is available from 123 Fletcher Argue and which will require the instructor's signature. It is your job to bring the form to the instructor for signing during office hours or by appointment.

Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty is a serious offence. Students should acquaint themselves with the University's policy on 'Plagiarism and Cheating' (Section 7.1) and 'Examinations: Personations' (Section 4.2.8) found in the University of Manitoba Undergraduate Calendar. *Penalties for academic dishonesty are severe and range from failing the course to expulsion from the University.* Guidelines for properly referencing your papers will be distributed in class.

Note: The Faculty of Arts reserves the right to submit student work that is suspected of being plagiarized to Internet sites designed to detect plagiarism.

Religious Holidays

The University of Manitoba acknowledges the right of all students to observe recognized holy days of their faith. You will need to inform the instructor in writing of your intended absence(s) at least three weeks in advance, particularly if such absence(s) coincide with the set mid-term test date.

Special Learning Needs

Students with special learning needs (who, for legitimate reasons, require extra time to write a test, or who require aids or other supports) should introduce themselves to the instructor during the first week of the course in order to organize suitable accommodation and assessment arrangements.

Disruptions

Disruptions due to excessive talking or early departures from the classroom are especially distracting to large classes. Please be considerate and respectful to the needs and rights of others in the class. Students should be aware that persistent disruption may result in disbarment from the course. Any student who has a legitimate reason for leaving class early should inform the instructor at the beginning of class.

Voluntary Withdrawal

Last day for voluntary withdrawal from the course without academic penalty is **March 20, 2008.**

Student and Instructor Responsibility

My responsibility as your instructor begins with the University's ROASS Policy and extends to creating a safe, cooperative and stimulating learning environment for students. As your instructor, I have selected texts and organized classroom time to meet the objectives of this course. Lectures are designed to help you understand and extend the concepts and ideas discussed in your texts and in the films. I comply fully with all University of Manitoba policies regarding teaching.

Student responsibilities include:

- Students are responsible for their own learning. You are expected to do readings in advance of class and are required to come prepared. You will often need to independently cover material in the textbooks (since not everything in the textbook will be directly addressed in class). Tests will draw on assigned readings as well as the lectures.
- If you are unclear about material or have academic concerns or questions, it is your responsibility to ask for help. I will be pleased to provide help during my office hours or by appointment. Students are warmly invited to drop by during office hours or to arrange an appointment to discuss any issues, concerns, or questions related to the course. Students are also responsible to track their own progress in the course, and to take action if you discover you are failing tests or papers.
- Students are responsible for complying with the policies on grades and tests, including policies on missed tests. You will find all course policies listed in this syllabus – please review it regularly. If you misplace this syllabus or a term schedule, you can download a copy from the course website.
- Students are asked to contribute to the creation and maintenance of a collegial learning environment; one in which all can develop as individuals and scholars, and in which the free and respectful exchange of ideas occurs. In order to achieve this, students are especially asked to be considerate and respectful of the needs and rights of other students in the class. Whispering and talking is especially inappropriate, since it bothers other students. Students who talk in class will be asked to leave the classroom. Other disruptions include late arrivals, early departures, mobile phone use, and other behaviour deemed inappropriate by the instructor or other students. Students should be aware that persistent disruption may result in disbarment from the course. Any student who has a legitimate reason for leaving class early should inform the instructor at the beginning of class and sit in a seat near the door to minimize disruption.

Lecture Topics and Readings
Handed out on the first day of term