**COM 320 – Mass Media: Cultural Criticism & Problems**



Instructor: Dr. John Huxford

Fall 2019

Tues & Thurs: 11am-12.15pm

Fell Hall 125

OFFICE HOURS

Tues & Thurs: 12.15pm-1.45pm

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The aim of this course is to prepare you to be a more literate consumer – and manufacturer – of media products by encouraging you to think more deeply and critically about the media’s role in our society. Lectures, classroom activities and writing assignments have been designed to teach a range of core concepts surrounding mass media, and to assist you in applying these principles to the creation of quality media criticism.

The course begins with an examination of the power of culture in shaping both society and the individual. We then move to a consideration of the modes of media communication before exploring a number of professional arenas and issues, including globalization, advertising and commercialization, journalism and politics.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

My primary objective as an instructor is to do everything I can to create an atmosphere in which we can learn creatively, productively, and happily. Each member of this class contributes to that environment, and together we share the power to determine whether or not we achieve that goal. To that end, please do not hesitate to ask questions or to seek help, in or out of class.

Upon successful completion of this course, you should be able to:

* Apply critical thinking skills to examine issues of power and persuasion.
* Become a more purposeful and ethically-aware consumer of media.
* Understand the influence of media channel on cultural meanings.
* Use the media more effectively to satisfy your own requirements.
* Have a firm grasp of the problems that surround the mass media.
* Understand how individuals and society at large are shaped by mass media and culture.

This class fully supports ISU’s commitment to creating a working, learning and living environment that is welcoming, supportive, respectful, inclusive, diverse and free from discrimination and harassment.

**REQUIRED READING**

The following course text is available from the campus bookstores:

Media and Culture with 2015 Update: An Introduction to Mass Communication 9th Edition, Bedford/St. Martin's (February 26, 2014). By Richard Campbell, Christopher R. Martin , Bettina Fabos.

In addition, assigned readings are available on the ReggieNet site under “Resources.”

**INSTRUCTIONAL TASKS & ASSIGNMENTS**

There will be three main papers, with each aimed at helping the student to develop their critical understanding of mass media and culture. The course will also include in-class activities, quizzes, a group presentation and a final exam.Some in-class exercises will be graded on a pass/fail basis, with those students who miss these losing points.

**GRADING**

Paper #1 20% of final grade

Paper #2 20%

Quizzes 10%

In-Class Activities 5%

Group Paper/Presentation 10%

Media Use Report & Reflection paper 5%

Exam 30%

NOTE: Failure to complete any assignment/paper satisfactorily may incur an additional penalty, as well as the loss of the percentage points allocated here.

**COURSE POLICIES**

*REQUIREMENTS*

Assigned readings should be read BEFORE class discussions, so as to facilitate student participation. Class attendance and participation are both expected and required. Students missing more than three classes without a satisfactory explanation will receive a grade penalty, as will students who repeatedly come late.

Assignments must be completed and turned in at the beginning of the class period on the date they are due. If you turn in an assignment late you will receive a zero for that assignment unless an alternate due date has PREVIOUSLY been approved. Penalty points may also be taken from your overall score.

*LAPTOPS AND OTHER ELECTRONIC DEVICES*

When in class, students should be engaged with the discussion. To this end, cell phones and other devices should be turned off.

Note that the most efficient way to take notes is NOT by laptop, and the use of computers to surreptitiously surf the Web during class seriously impairs your ability to learn. Consequently the use of laptops in class is not recommended, although they may be used for the sole purpose of taking down notes offered on the board at the beginning of each class. Ten minutes will be allowed for this, after which time laptops must be closed and notes then taken by pen and paper for the remainder of the class. The use of cameras and other recording devices in class is **strictly prohibited**, as is the use of Google Glass.

*ACADEMIC INTEGRITY*

Students are expected to accomplish their own work and submit work that is original for this class. All students are also responsible for reading and understanding the university’s position on academic integrity as outlined in the ISU Student Code of Conduct as found in the Student Handbook, Policy IIIB. It is not acceptable to claim “I didn’t know it was plagiarism” or “I didn’t know plagiarism was prohibited” as a defense. If a breach of academic integrity is discovered, I will assign a penalty appropriate to the severity of the offense. Such penalties may include: completing the assignment again, a point penalty on the assignment, a score of zero on the assignment, failing the entire course, and/or reporting the incident to Community Rights and Responsibilities for resolution at the university level.

*ASSISTANCE*

Students who are having difficulty with readings, class material or assignments are encouraged to talk to me at the earliest opportunity. Time will be set aside in class for question and answer sessions, and I will be available to discuss questions or difficulties either after class, during office hours or by e-mail. If you’re feeling stressed, overwhelmed, lost, anxious, depressed or are struggling with personal issues, do not hesitate to call or visit [Student Counseling Services](https://counseling.illinoisstate.edu/) (SCS). These services are free and completely confidential. Website: Counseling.IllinoisState.edu, or call (309) 438-3655.

Any student needing to arrange a reasonable accommodation for a documented disability and/or medical/mental health condition should contact Student Access and Accommodation Services at 350 Fell Hall, (309) 438-5853, or visit the website at StudentAccess.IllinoisState.edu.

 **CLASS SCHEDULE**

PART ONE: CULTURE & SOCIETY

**WEEK ONE: Introduction**

8/20 Course Introduction

8/22 High v Low Culture

Reading: Campbell et al, Chapter 1.

**WEEK TWO: Cultural Studies & Hegemony**

8/27 Cultural Studies & Cultivation

Reading: The Culture Industry - ReggieNet

8/29 Hegemony

Reading: From Culture to Hegemony - ReggieNet

**WEEK THREE: Narrative & Socialization**

9/3 Children’s Media & Narrative

Reading: Campbell et al, Ch. 2.

9/5 Narrative & Cultural Values

*Paper #1 Assigned*

**WEEK FOUR: Social Identity**

9/10 Identity Creation

Reading: Social Identity Theory – ReggieNet

9/12 Television & Social Roles

Reading: Campbell et al, Ch 6

**WEEK FIVE: Gender & Minority Representation**

9/17 Gender & Minorities I

Reading: The Female Gaze - ReggieNet

 A Woman’s View - ReggieNet

9/19 Gender & Minorities II

Reading: Masculine Identities - ReggieNet

**WEEK SIX: American Culture**

9/24 The American Dream

Reading: Campbell et al, Ch 16.

9/26 The American Paradox

PART TWO: MODES OF MASS COMMUNICATION

**WEEK SEVEN: Print & Audio**

10/1 The Print Revolution

Reading: Campbell et al, Ch 10.

10/3 Popular Music

Reading: Campbell et al, Ch 4.

*Paper #1 due*

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**WEEK EIGHT: Sound & Vision**

10/8 Radio & Society

Reading: Campbell et al, Ch 5.

*Paper #2 Assigned*

10/10The Visual Turn

Reading: The Rise of the Image - ReggieNet

**WEEK NINE: Visual Culture**

10/15Images & Visual Culture I

Reading: Campbell et al, Ch 7.

10/17 Images & Visual Culture II

Reading: Visual Persuasion - ReggieNet

PART THREE: ARENAS & ISSUES

**WEEK TEN: Commercialization & Advertising**

10/22 Commercial Culture

Reading: Campbell et al, Ch 11.

*Group Paper Assigned*

10/24 Advertising

Reading: Decoding ads - ReggieNet

**WEEK ELEVEN: News & Politics**

10/29 News: Strengths & Weaknesses

Reading: Campbell et al, Ch 14.

10/31 Political Communication

Reading: Campbell et al, Ch 15.

**WEEK TWELVE: Culture & Information**

11/5 Culture and Education

Reading: Teaching as an Amusing Activity - ReggieNet

11/7 Cultural Blinders & Cultural Lag

*Paper #2 Due*

**WEEK THIRTEEN: The Virtual World**

11/12 Age of the Duplicate

Reading: Walter Benjamin: The Work of Art - ReggieNet

11/14 The Virtual World

Reading: Campbell et al, Ch 3.

**WEEK FOURTEEN: Globalization**

11/19 Effects of Globalization

Reading: Campbell et al, Ch 13.

11/21 The Global Marketplace

 Reading: Campbell et al, Ch 12.

**WEEK: FIFTEEN: Thanksgiving Break**

No Classes

**WEEK SIXTEEN: Group Presentations**

12/3 Presentations and Group Papers

12/5 Presentations and Group Papers

**WEEK SEVENTEEN: EXAM**

Date and time to be confirmed