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Syllabus: Sociology of Mass Media and Popular Culture

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Syllabus: Sociology of Mass Media and Popular Culture

Abstract

This syllabus is for a 200 level Sociology of Mass Media and Popular Culture course that uses a combination of open-access and library-licensed material. The course explores two of the most transformational and interconnected social institutions in contemporary society, mass media and popular culture. Material is included to analyze the social impact of music, film, television, social media, gaming, sport and related topics. The material also includes an annotated list of additional resources and readings to help professors adapt this course to their own needs.

Disciplines

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning | Sociology | Sociology of Culture

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College Logo Here

Course Number: Sociology of Mass Media and Popular Culture

Professor: Name

Department:

Email:

Office:

Office Phone:

I reserve the right to alter this syllabus and the assignments at any time. Changes may be made to accommodate the specific needs of this class.

Course Description

This course explores two of the most transformational and interconnected social institutions in contemporary society, mass media and popular culture. We will examine the role they play in society, paying particular attention to the following questions: What does it mean to live in a mass media and popular culture driven society? How do the diverse forms they take shape how we experience our social world and our sense of collective identity? What does this mean for our future?

We will consider the implications of existing and emerging forms of mass media that are transforming not only our daily lives, but our collective experience as well. This semester we will focus our study on the power of media driven narratives and discourses.

Required Course Materials

- *Understanding Media and Culture: An Introduction to Mass Communication*
 - This is an Open Access Textbook, available as a FREE download at <https://open.lib.umn.edu/mediaandculture/>.
- Additional readings and links to videos will be posted on Moodle.

Moodle

You will need to access the course Moodle site for this class. Moodle will offer access to course materials including the syllabus, supplemental readings, links to videos, discussion board resources, and be used to submit assignments.

Learning Objectives

Upon the completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Apply sociological concepts, theories and research methods to the study of mass media and popular culture.

- Demonstrate a strong ability to evaluate media, news, popular culture, and digital information using digital literacy techniques.
- Evaluate and critique their own media and popular culture consumption and those of their peer groups.
- Identify and analyze the role of mass media and popular culture in both addressing and contributing to existing social inequalities and social problems.

Grading Scale

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	59% and below

Course Assignments and Grading

In Class Activities (10%)

We will engage in a series of in class discussions and activities throughout the semester. These will count toward your participation for the class and cannot be made up if missed.

Online Discussion Boards (15%)

Each week you will post a summary of the weekly readings and videos (200-300 words) and a discussion question on the Moodle site. This will be due before class on Tuesday. You will then respond on Moodle to the discussion question posted by at least 2 of your classmates by Friday.

“Your Narratives” Individual Presentation (20%)

I will give you the opportunity to select the category of media you wish to present on. Identify an artifact of mass media or popular culture in that category that is meaningful to YOU (e.g., a song, a film clip, a TV show [broadcast or streaming], a video game, a meme, your favorite sport, etc.).

Once you have selected your artifact, you will evaluate it to answer the following questions: What narrative or story does it tell? What existing social norms does it gesture too? Who produced this media, and why? What is its primary goal? What role does it play in resisting, reinforcing, reshaping, or otherwise engaging with social norms and larger social issues? Present a 10-minute discussion of your artifact that addresses these questions to the class.

Take Home Essay Exams (25%)

We will have two Take Home Essay Exams this semester. You will be given a selection of essay questions to choose from.

Final Research Project

For your final paper, select a mass media or popular culture artifact that you consider having had a significant impact on contemporary society. This cannot be the same artifact that you used for

your individual presentation. You will write an argumentative essay that examines the artifact and provides an effective, well supported analysis of its impact (e.g., you could select a film, TV series, music style, social media post, etc.).

Course Policies

College Honor Code

Your policy here

Attendance

Your policy here

Academic Resources

Your policy here

Late Papers and Make-up Exams

Your policy here

Citation Format

Your policy here

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Your policy here

Religious Holidays

Your policy here

Classroom Conduct

Your policy here

Pronoun and Name Usage

Your policy here

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Sociology of Mass Media and Popular Culture - Course Schedule

Week 1: Welcome

- Lecture: Mass Media as Discourse

Readings

- *Understanding Media and Culture*, Chapter 2.1, 2.2 and 2.4 <https://tinyurl.com/sw2acrys>

Week 2: Methods and Media Analysis

- Lecture: Analyzing Media and Popular Culture Through the Lens of Media Literacy
- Activity: Doing Media Analysis

Readings and Video

- *Understanding Media and Culture*, Chapter 2.3 <https://tinyurl.com/27x3a3kk>
- Video: *Media Literacy Basics*, Pace University <https://tinyurl.com/rxx9xnsu>

Assignments

- Readings/Video Summary and Discussion Question Due:
- Responses to Discussion Questions Due:

Week 3: History of Media

- Lecture: Mass Media Through Time
- Student Presentations: *Your Narratives in “New” Media*

Readings and Video

- *Understanding Media and Culture*, Chapter 1.3 <https://tinyurl.com/mz67ae8>
- Video: *Media History*, Films on Demand <https://tinyurl.com/2mxd3sn6>

Assignments

- Readings/Video Summary and Discussion Question Due:
- Responses to Discussion Questions Due:

Week 4: Music: Narratives of Resistance and Activism

- Lecture: Music as Means to Create Social Solidarity
- Student Presentations: *Your Narratives in Music*

Readings

- *Understanding Media and Culture*, Chapter 6 <https://tinyurl.com/32ayu7ee>
- Excerpts from *Sounds of Resistance: The Role of Music in Multicultural Activism* <https://tinyurl.com/y2ekmnu7>
 - “Toward a Truer World: Overt and Implied Messages of Resistance from Slave Songs to Rap”
 - “Anti–Vietnam War Protest Music”

Assignments

- Reading Summary and Discussion Question Due:
- Responses to Discussion Questions Due:

Week 5: Film and Narratives of Power, Status and Control

- Lecture: Minority Representation and Absence in Film
- Student Presentations: *Your Narratives in Film*

Readings

- *Understanding Media and Culture*, Chapter 8 <https://tinyurl.com/f9wu3y4s>
- Excerpts from *The Myth of Colorblindness* <https://tinyurl.com/2d9rxzk4>
 - “The Paradox of Post-racialism: Black Hollywood’s Voice in Post-racial Discourse”
 - “Latinas/os in Hollywood: Contemporary Representations in Black and White”

Assignments

- Readings Summary and Discussion Question Due:
- Responses to Discussion Questions Due:

Week 6: Television as Defining Narratives Past and Present

- Lecture: Gender Roles, Conformity and TV
- Student Presentations: *Your Narratives in Television*

Readings and Video

- *Understanding Media and Culture*, Chapter 9 <https://tinyurl.com/2jzwejkz>
- “#metoo and Twitter: The Feminist Movement on Social Media” <https://tinyurl.com/n59v5325>
- Video: *Gender Roles in Cartoons and Toy Commercials: Its Effects on Children*, Majestic Pictures Television <https://tinyurl.com/urhd5h7t>

Assignments

- Readings/Video Summary and Discussion Question Due:
- **Take Home Essay Exam 1: Passed Out on DATE**
- Responses to Discussion Questions Due:

Week 7: Advertising in TV and Beyond

- Lecture: Goffman and Gender in Advertising
- Activity/Discussion: GenderAds Discussion and Group Activity

Readings

- *Understanding Media and Culture*, Chapter 12 <https://tinyurl.com/krij64uuu>
- “Memes” <https://tinyurl.com/d5fcmk4j>
- Excerpts from *Food Is Love: Food Advertising and Gender Roles in Modern America* <https://tinyurl.com/4yhz32xv>
 - Chapter 2: “Love, Fear, and Freedom: Selling Traditional Gender Roles”
 - Chapter 3: “Women’s Power to Make Us: Cooking Up a Family’s Identity”

Assignments

- Readings Summary and Discussion Question
- Responses to Discussion Questions
- **Take Home Essay Exam 1: Due:**

Week 8: Journalism and Information Distribution

- Lecture: Politics, Partisan News and Echo chambers
- Activity: SIFT, Fact Checking and Echo Chambers

Readings and Videos

- *Understanding Media and Culture*, Chapter 4 <https://tinyurl.com/59sxbrrt>
- “Inside the Echo Chamber,” *Scientific American* <https://tinyurl.com/642pn69f>
- Video: *Beware Online “Filter Bubbles,”* TED Talk <https://tinyurl.com/4bw3hdcu>

Assignments

- Readings/Video Summary and Discussion Question Due:
- Responses to Discussion Questions Due:

Week 9: Disinformation and Misinformation

- Lecture: The Causes and Consequences of Media Manipulation

Readings and Videos

- Media Manipulation and Disinformation Online <https://tinyurl.com/dbe6sczx>

Assignments

- Readings/Video Summary and Discussion Question Due:
- Responses to Discussion Questions Due Due:

Week 10: Sports, Media and Culture

- Lecture: Athletics in Contemporary Culture and Current Events
- Student Presentations: *Your Narratives in Athletics and Media*

Readings and Video

- “Making Sports More Sporting,” *Contexts* <https://tinyurl.com/j3e25d6d>
- “‘Real Men Stand for Our Nation:’ Constructions of an American Nation and Anti-Kaepernick Memes,” *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* <https://tinyurl.com/s2wknvzn>
- Video: *Sociology of Sports*, Castalia Media <https://tinyurl.com/44s33m6b>

Assignments

- Readings/Video Summary and Discussion Question Due:
- Responses to Discussion Questions Due:

Week 11: Video Games and Narratives of Belonging

- Lecture: Gaming and Insider/Outsider Culture
- Student Presentations: *Your Narratives of Gaming*

Readings

- *Understanding Media and Culture*, Chapter 10 <https://tinyurl.com/2s9pjhcm>
- Excerpt from *The Queer Games Avant-Garde: How LGBTQ Game Makers Are Reimagining the Medium of Video Games* <https://tinyurl.com/4b2p24a8>
 - Chapter 1: “Nonbinary Characters, Asexuality, and Game Design as Joyful Resistance”
- Excerpt from *Future Gaming: Creative Interventions in Video Game Culture* <https://tinyurl.com/vfcfvmad>
 - Chapter 5: “GamerGate: Becoming Parasites to Gaming”

Assignments

- Readings Summary and Discussion Question Due:

- Responses to Discussion Questions Due:

Week 12: Narratives of Interconnection and Privacy

- Lecture: Privacy and Social Media
- Student Presentations: *Your Narratives of Social Media*

Readings and Video

- *Understanding Media and Culture*, Chapter 11 <https://tinyurl.com/byjsbnpn>
- “Privacy and Publics,” *Humans R Social Media* <https://tinyurl.com/fy6fs934>
- “Relationships,” *Humans R Social Media* <https://tinyurl.com/29h5ky7j>
- Video: *Tim Cook at the 2021 Computers, Privacy & Data Protection Conference: Enforcing Rights in a Changing World* <https://tinyurl.com/24yvk7eb>

Assignments

- Readings/Video Summary and Discussion Question Due:
- **Take Home Essay Exam 2: Passed Out**
- Responses to Discussion Questions Due:

Week 13: Digital Media and Narratives of Civil and Un-civil Discourse

- Lecture: Trolling, Abuse and the Internet
- Activity: Where Does Digital Media Go Wrong?

Readings and Video

- *Understanding Media and Culture*, Chapter 8 <https://tinyurl.com/yj9dxv4m>
- “Terrorism and the Digital Right Wing,” *Contexts* <https://tinyurl.com/5x6t222y>
- Excerpt from *It’s Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens* <https://tinyurl.com/4ef4huyc>
- Video: *The Moderators*, Field of Vision <https://fieldofvision.org/the-moderators>

Assignments

- Readings/Video Summary and Discussion Question Due:
- Responses to Discussion Questions Due:
- **Take Home Essay Exam 2: Due:**

Week 14: Emerging Technology and Narratives of the Future of Mass Media and Popular Culture

- Lecture: Living Technological Lives
- Activity: The Future of Us

Readings

- *Understanding Media and Culture*, Chapter 16 <https://tinyurl.com/48n6zb8u>

Assignments

- No Reading Summary or Discussion Question Due:

Week 15: Final Comprehensive Paper

- **Final Paper is Due**