SOCIOLOGY OF MASS COMMUNICATIONS

Course Description:

The purpose of this course is to offer an overview of how the mass media and American cultural, political, and other economic institutions mutually affect each other and how this interaction affects the ownership, control, dissemination and consumption of various types of information by the public. The systems of mass communications that will be examined in this course include advertising, the Internet, movies, news, publishing and television.

Student Learning Outcomes:

1) Provide students with an understanding of the objectives, the processes and the effects of various types of mass media on the mass audience.

2) Provide students with a degree of literacy in symbolic expression and its consequences for the mass audience.

3) Provide students with an appreciation of the different types of evidence used in mass media research. Students will acquire a preliminary understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of different research methods and data. Interpreting public opinion research and market research requires skepticism concerning the generalizability of the research findings.

4) Give students a preliminary understanding of different theories of the mass media.

5) Give students an appreciation of the dynamic interplay between the historical context, social context and technology

Course Requirements:

Your final grade in this course will be based on your performance on the following four assignments: 1) short comparison paper 20%; 2) mid-term exam 20%; 3) a debate or a position paper which will account for 25% of your final grade; and 3) the final exam which will account for 35% of your final grade.

Effective participation in class discussions may raise your final grade by 1/3 of a letter grade. For example, if you regularly make informed contributions based on your knowledge of the assigned reading to classroom discussions, I may raise your final grade from B- to B or B+ to A-.
Effective participation entails regularly enriching classroom discussions by offering informed observations, imaginative insights and/or cogent criticisms. Your participation must demonstrate a good understanding of the reading on the assigned topic under discussion for a particular class meeting. You are responsible for all the e-mail messages that I send to the class over the course of the fall semester.

**Policies for Missed Assignments and Attendance:**

Sometimes, a student, due to illness or other unavoidable circumstances, is unable to do his/her debate or hand in a required paper on time. Completing the missed assignment without being penalized entails satisfying two requirements. First, you must present me with a legitimate excuse within one week of the missed assignment. Specifically, you must obtain official validation as to the reasons why you were unable to attend class. If you fail to honor this stipulation, you will receive a “F” for the missed assignment. Second, all make-ups exams and debates will occur at the end of the semester. Attendance is required. I permit three unexcused absences. Students who have excessive absences will be penalized.

**Policies Pertaining to Classroom Etiquette, the Use of Laptops, Cell Phones and Other Communications Technology:**

This class begins at 9:25 a.m. and ends at 10:30 a.m. I expect you to be on time. It is a sixty-five minute class. There is no need to regularly leave class to either receive or make cell phone calls or purchase food, et cetera. If you leave to do such errands, please do not return. Needless to say, in an emergency, you may leave class and return.

**The use of laptops in this course is strictly limited to taking notes on lectures and discussions. If you plan to use a laptop for these purposes, you must request permission from Professor Reader.** Using your laptop for personal entertainment such as doing e-mail, surfing the Internet or updating your Facebook profile is not permitted. At the start of class, please turn off all cell phones, Blackberries, pagers, and other communications technology. Students who frequently violate this policy may be asked to leave class. I adopted these policies, because the distractions discussed above create a classroom that is not conducive to learning.

**Extra-Credit Paper Assignment:**

For ambitious or penitent students, there is the possibility of submitting an optional paper. Your paper must be based on the reading material contained in the syllabus. An outline of your paper must be approved by me prior to writing the final draft. Under no circumstance can you submit a paper that you are writing for another course. Resorting to this strategy to fulfill the requirements for this assignment constitutes a violation of the College of Liberal Arts policies pertaining to academic dishonesty; and, therefore, if you adopt this strategy, you will be penalized accordingly. Your extra-credit paper will receive one of the following four grades: 1) excellent; 2) good; 3) satisfactory; or 4) unsatisfactory. If your paper receives a grade of excellent, I will raise your final grade 10 points. If your paper receives a grade of good, I will raise your final grade 5 points.
If your paper receives a grade of satisfactory, I will raise your final grade 3 points. If your paper receives a grade of unsatisfactory, I will not take this grade into account when calculating your final grade.

Plagiarism:

University rules pertaining to plagiarism, cheating and other forms of academic dishonesty will be strictly enforced; an offender will be punished even if he or she is unaware of the offense that he or she has committed. Ignorance is not an acceptable alibi. In the preparation of the papers in this course, a student must observe all rules pertaining to quotations and paraphrasing so the reader can distinguish the student’s original contribution from the primary or secondary sources that she or he has used.

Academic Accommodations:

If you require academic accommodations for an exam, you must file a request with the Office of Educational Affairs,( Brothers College, Room 114, Extension 3327). It is your responsibility to self-identify with the Office of Educational Affairs and provide me with the appropriate documentation from that at office at least one week prior to any request for specific course accommodations such as exams. There are no retroactive accommodations.

Required Reading:

The following books constitute the main reading material in Soc. 110. They may be purchased at the Drew bookstore. The rest of the material is on reserve at library.

Alexander, Alison and Jarice Hanson  
*Taking Sides: Mass Media and Society.*  

Bagdikian, Ben H.  

Dines, Gail and Jean Humez  

Powers, Stephen, David J. Rothman, and Stanley Rothman  

The Calendar for Readings and Assignments
### The Evolution of Mass Communications Over Time and Across Cultures

**Aug. 29**  
Ball-Rokeach, Sandra and Melvin DeFleur  
“Media and Society”  
(Xerox, Library Reserve and Your K-Drive)

**Aug. 29**  
Key concepts and assumptions associated with the concept of culture. Why are values important in the study of the media?  
Ian Robertson  
“Culture” (Xerox, Library Reserve and Your K-Drive)

**Aug. 29**  
Herbert Gans  
“Values in the News” (Xerox, Library Reserve and Your K-Drive)

**Aug. 31**  
A Sociological Framework for Analyzing the Mass Media  
Charles R. Wright  
Chapter 1, “The Nature and Functions of Mass Communication” (Xerox, Library Reserve and Your K-Drive)

**Charles R. Wright**  
Chapter 2 “Mass Communications as Social Institutions: the Case of American Broadcasting” pp. 49-58. (Xerox, Reserve and Your K-Drive)

**Aug. 31**  
Charles R. Wright  
Chapter 4, “Sociology of the Audience: Interpersonal Communication and the Mass Audience” (Xerox, Reserve and Your K-Drive)

**Sept. 5**  
No Class: Labor Day

**Sept. 7**  
Discussion of Debate Long Paper Instructions and Short Paper Instructions

**Sept. 7**  
Practice Debate:  
Herbert Schiller versus James Carey  
“Are American Values Shaped by the Mass Media? “ Issue 1 in *Taking Sides*, pp. 2-26
Sept. 12
William Kornhauser
“Two Views of Mass Society”
(Xerox, Reserve and Your K-Drive)

Sept. 14
Charles R. Wright
Chapter 6 “Cultural Content of American Mass Communication”
(Xerox, Library Reserve and Your K-Drive)

Sept. 19
Exam

Sept. 21-Oct. 5
Cultural Messages in the Mass Media and their Consequences for the Mass Audience: Depictions of Class, Gender, and Youth in the Media.

Sept. 21
Lisa Cuklanz and Sujata Moorti
“Television’s ‘New’ Feminism: Prime-Time Representations of Women and Victimization”
GRC 14.

Laurie Ouellette
“Inventing the Cosmo Girl: Class Identity and Girl-Style American Dreams”
GRC 25

Sept. 26
Men and Masculinity in the Media

Steve Craig
“Considering Men and The Media”
(Xerox, Reserve)

Lynn Spangler
“Buddies and Pals: A History of Male Friendships on Prime-Time Television”
(Xerox, Reserve and K-Drive)

Richard Butsch
“Ralph, Fred, Archie, Homer and the King of Queens: Why Television Keeps Re-Creating the Male Working-Class Buffoon”
GRC 13.

Jackson Katz
“Advertising and the Construction of Violent White Masculinity: From BMWs to Bud Light”
GRC, Chapter 29.
Oct. 3  Growing Up With Contemporary Media

Oct. 3  Juliet Schor  “From Tony the Tiger to Slime Time Live: The Content of Commercial Images in Advertising”  GRC, Chapter 40.

Oct. 3  Lee Artz  “Monarchs, Monsters and Multiculturalism: Disney’s Menu for Global Hierarchy”  GRC, Chapter 42.


“Do Video Games Encourage Violent Behavior?” Craig Anderson versus Henry Jenkins  Issue 5 in Taking Sides, pp. 91-104.

Oct. 3  Position Papers are due on these topics.

Oct. 10  NO CLASS: READING DAY

Oct. 5  Advertising

Oct. 25  Michael Schudson  “Introduction” and Chapter 1, “The Advertiser’s Perspective” (Library Reserve)


Oct. 17  Guest Speaker

Oct. 19  **Position Papers on this topic are due.**
Oct. 24  Darrell West                             Chapter 1” Overview of Ads “Chapter 3 “Ad Messages” and Chapter 4 ” Media Coverage of Ads” in Air Wars: Television Advertising In Election Campaigns 1952-2008. (Library Reserve and K-Drive)
Oct. 26  **Position Papers on this topic are due.**
Oct. 26                                  Government Policies and the Media
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading Material</th>
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<tr>
<td>Oct. 26</td>
<td><strong>Debate:</strong></td>
<td>Jeffrey Maciejewski and David Ozar versus First Amendment Center “Should the Public Support Freedom of the Press” Issue 11, <em>Taking Sides</em>, pp. 228-255.</td>
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<td>Oct. 26</td>
<td><strong>Position Papers on this topic are due.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct. 31</td>
<td>Ownership and Control of the Media</td>
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<td>Nov. 2</td>
<td>Ownership and Control of the Media</td>
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<td>Oct.31</td>
<td>Ben Bagdikian</td>
<td><em>The New Media Monopoly</em></td>
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<td>Forward, Preface, Chapters 1-3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov.2</td>
<td>Ben Bagdikian</td>
<td><em>The New Media Monopoly</em></td>
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<td>Chapters 4, 5, 7 and 9</td>
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<td>Nov. 2</td>
<td>Jonathan Reader, Linda Connors, and Sara Henry</td>
<td>“From Art to Corporation: Harry N. Abrams, Inc. and the Cultural Effects of Merger” (Xerox, Library Reserve and K-Drive)</td>
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<td>Nov. 7-21</td>
<td>The Cultural Dynamics of the Movie Industry</td>
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<td>Nov. 7</td>
<td>Stephen Powers et al.</td>
<td><em>Hollywood’s America</em>, Chapters 1-2</td>
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<td>Nov. 9</td>
<td>Movie</td>
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<td>Nov. 14</td>
<td>Stephen Powers et al.</td>
<td><em>Hollywood’s America</em>, Chapters 3-4</td>
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<td>Nov. 16</td>
<td>Stephen Powers et al.</td>
<td><em>Hollywood’s America</em>, Chapters 8 and 11.</td>
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<td>Nov. 21-30</td>
<td>The Internet and the Information Revolution</td>
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<td>Nov.21</td>
<td>Andrew Chadwick</td>
<td>Chapter 1 “Introduction” and “Internet Politics” Chapter 2, <em>Internet Politics: States, Citizens and New Communications Technologies</em>, (Library Reserve and K-Drive)</td>
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<td>Nov. 21</td>
<td>Sherry Turkle</td>
<td>“Growing Up Tethered” Chapter 9, <em>Alone Together</em> (K-Drive and Library Reserve)</td>
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<td>Nov. 23</td>
<td>NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING VACATION</td>
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<td>Nov. 28</td>
<td>Sherry Turkle</td>
<td>“No Need To Call” Chapter 10 and “Reduction and Betrayal” Chapter 11, <em>Alone Together</em> (K-Drive and Library Reserve)</td>
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<td>Nov. 30</td>
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<td><strong>Position Papers on these topics are due.</strong></td>
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