



COMM 2307 Media Communication

St. Edward's University • Department of Communication

Section 01 & 02 • John Brooks Williams South 268

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Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday 12:30 – 2:00

Also via email & by appointment

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

Croteau, David and William Hoynes. *Media/Society: Industries, Images, and Audiences, 4th edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press, 2011.

Postman, Neil. *Amusing Ourselves to Death (20th Anniversary Edition)*. London: Penguin Press, 2005. [*Available online as a free pdf*]

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course focuses on the significance and influence of the media upon the individual and furthers examination of the impact of the media upon social, political, and economic factors of society. My objectives for this course are:

- To explore the influence of the mass media upon individuals and society.
- To provide you with a broad range of theories and critical perspectives which help illustrate the workings of the mass media within our society.
- To make clear the ethical concerns and responsibilities of those who choose to work in the mass media.
- To examine the global nature of our current media system.

COURSE POLICIES

1. Attendance

Attendance at each class is required. Each time you are absent from class counts as one absence. If you arrive more than 10 minutes late to class, you will be marked absent for that day. After your second absence, your final grade will be reduced by three (3) percentage points for each additional absence. Accruing more than six (6) unexcused absences (including the two (2) free absences you receive) will result in Withdrawal or Failure of the class. After the second week of class, it is your responsibility to sign the roll sheet each class period. Be sure to do so, as this is the official record of your attendance in class.

Excused Absence Requests: If you have a valid and unavoidable reason for missing class, you may submit a completed Excused Absence Request along with a two page (at least 500 words) chapter summary / discussion for the material you missed. The request form is available on Blackboard. A separate request form and additional chapter summary / discussion must be submitted for each absence. You will also need to provide me with proper documentation for your absence (such as a doctor's note, a hospitalization record, a university excuse, or an athletic excuse). For your request to be considered, all documentation must be turned in to me no more than two-weeks from your return to class or the final class day of the semester, whichever comes first. After review of your request I will determine whether the excuse will be granted.

504 accommodation letters: If you have a 504 accommodation letter which calls for flexibility with attendance, you will need to follow the instructions listed under the Excused Absence Request section, except that you do not need to provide documentation each time you miss class for a 504 related disability.

University or Athletic activities: If you are involved in athletics or another school-sanctioned activity that requires you to miss this class, please provide me with appropriate supporting material signed by your sponsor. Please underline or highlight the specific dates that involve this class. You will need to submit an Excused Absence Request form along with chapter summary / discussion as outlined above for each absence. Please keep me updated should your schedule change throughout the semester.

Withdrawal for Absences: I reserve the right to "WA" a student for excessive absences. Please note that this does not mean that I will automatically "WA" you if you risk failing the class. It is your responsibility to initiate drop procedures if you are in danger of failing this class. Accruing more than five (5) unexcused absences will result in failure or withdrawal from the course.

2. Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty includes cheating on exams as well as plagiarizing (presenting another's work as your own). Cheating comes in all different shades—ranging from blatant copying off another's exam/bringing a 'cheat sheet' to class to more subtle forms of 'borrowing' a few ideas and not citing your sources—all of which will be treated with the same level of seriousness in this class. The St. Edward's University Undergraduate Bulletin and the Student Handbook state that a student who is dishonest in any work may receive the maximum penalty of a mark of F for that course. Withdrawal from a course is not allowed when an F in the course for academic dishonesty has been imposed. Students caught committing academic dishonesty in this course will be subject to the full range of penalties as described in the Undergraduate Bulletin and in the Student Handbook.

3. Courtesy

Cell phones: As a courtesy to your teacher and to your classmates, please make sure at the beginning of each class period that your cell phones are silenced. Any texting during class will result in you being counted absent for the day.

Laptops: I would encourage you to take notes by hand. Studies show¹ that students who take notes by hand remember more and have a deeper understanding of the material than students who use a computer to take notes. However, you may use laptops and tablets in class but their usage is restricted to taking notes about this particular class and during the lecture portion of the class only. No laptops will be allowed to be open during video presentations or peer presentations. Writing papers for other classes, surfing the Internet, checking email, visiting Facebook, or other such distractions are prohibited. Using your laptop for anything other than taking notes can be distracting for your classmates and detrimental to your grade. Improper usage of your laptop will result in you being counted as absent for that day and asked not to use your laptop during future class sessions. If laptop usage in general becomes a problem for the class, we will revise our policy as the course progresses.

Email Policy: I check email once per day, usually in the afternoon, and I will get back with you as soon as possible. Please note that I do not return email over the weekend.

4. Assignments

Late work will result in a 10% grade reduction for each day it is late. Assignments must be submitted on or before the beginning of the class period when they are due.

5. Special Accommodations

Student Disability Services coordinates reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities (medical, learning or psychological). Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should follow the university's accommodation procedure by contacting Student Disability Services (512-448-8561 or Moody Hall 155). Please note that special accommodations cannot be made retroactively. If you have a disability and require accommodations in this class, let me know early in the semester or as soon as you are eligible.

6. Letters of Recommendation

I am happy to write letters of recommendation for students who have performed well in the classes they have taken with me. Before writing letters of recommendation, however, I require that students have taken at least two courses with me in which they have performed at the level of B or better. Requests must be made at least two weeks prior to any submission deadline. Requests should be made via email and provide a recent resume as well as materials regarding the position or scholarship for which you are applying and instructions on how and where to submit the recommendation. Please note that I do not supply open recommendations such as those found on Linked In.

7. Grades

If you are not doing as well in the course as you had anticipated, please don't hesitate to come talk to me so that we can discuss how you might improve your performance on the remaining assignments.

¹ Psychological Science, June 2014, 25(6), 1159-1168

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

Assignment	Weight	Record Your Grade	Multiply by	Assignment Total
Postman Presentation (Group)	20%		x 2.0	
Media Organization Presentation (Dyad)	10%		x 1.0	
Exam #1	20%		x 2.0	
Exam #2	20%		x 2.0	
Response Paper #1	5%		x 0.5	
Response Paper #2	5%		x 0.5	
Response Paper #3	5%		x 0.5	
Participation and In-Class Activities	15%		x 1.5	
			Total Points	
			Divide by 1000	

Keeping track of your grade? You can get a good idea of what your course grade is by using the chart provided above. Just fill in the grades as you receive them. Multiply each grade by the number listed in the “Multiply by” column and record the total. Numeric equivalents for letter grades are listed above under “Grading Scale”. Total up all of your multiplied assignments and divide by 1000, this will give you your course grade You can use this chart anytime during the semester to find your current grade by dividing by the total points possible at that time instead of 1000. Please note that the matrix does not take into account absences so that is something you should also keep track of below.

Absences	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Subtract	0	0	-3	-6	-9	-12	F
Record							

Grading Scale

A+ = 100	A = 95	A- = 92
B+ = 88	B = 85	B- = 82
C+ = 78	C = 75	C- = 72
D+ = 68	D = 65	D- = 62
	F = 50	

Course Grade

A	90-100
B	80-89
C	70-79
D	60-69
F	Below 60

ASSIGNMENTS

POSTMAN PRESENTATION:

For this assignment our class will be divided into five groups. Each group will consist of approximately 4 - 5 members. Each group will be assigned a section from Neil Postman's *Amusing Ourselves To Death*, which they will present to their peers. The Postman book is available on Blackboard in both a pdf and audiobook formats. Each group will conduct the last 45 minutes of class on the day when their topic is scheduled (See schedule below).

Each group will:

1. Present the Main Points from the section you have been assigned. The chapters are loaded with lots of details so it will be your job to sort through them to discover what the important information is and how it is relevant to your peers. Be sure not to make it just a dull PowerPoint of the points from Postman but instead make it useful. You must use PowerPoint slides for notes and may use audio/visuals to help to make the information come alive for the class. Videos should be kept to no more than 8 minutes total and must be clearly relevant to the subject area. (approximately 25 minutes)
2. Engage the current state of media. Not only should you cover Postman's arguments but you should also find relevant and recent examples in the media that either back up or counter Postman's position. *Amusing ourselves to Death* was written in the mid eighties, does it hold true today? What has changed and what remains the same? Are there new technological advances that open up new questions or extend those of Postman?
3. Lead a Discussion / Debate. Your group should attempt to develop a discussion with your peers concerning the topic matter. This should not be in the form of closed answer type quiz or game show but rather some interactive form where you can discuss the issues in depth. You will be in charge of this segment and should foster a rigorous and intelligent discussion / debate but also maintain a civil and non-hostile atmosphere. Other topic areas that we have discussed in class, especially the material covered the week of your presentation, may be useful to foster a lively discussion. (approximately 20 minutes)
4. Provide documentation. One week before you present, you will provide me with a list of each group member's responsibilities. Part of your grade on the project will be an overall grade for the group and reflect how the group worked together and the overall quality of the group's presentation. Another part of your grade will be individual and based on the portion of the presentation you were responsible for. This will include an evaluation of the content you provide and professionalism of your delivery.
5. Provide PowerPoints. The notes you provide during your presentation are fair game for the final exam. You must submit your completed PowerPoint or Keynote file to me one week before your presentation. Please submit this file to Blackboard using the link under the Assignments tab entitled "Submit Postman Presentation PowerPoint." Also, submit a printed, hard copy version of your PowerPoint to me on the day you present.

How it works:

For the first Thursday of class, you will need to hand in a brief classified ad for yourself. On a half sheet of paper, type up a paragraph that describes your best attributes and markets yourself to be hired by one of the groups--something similar to a short resume or classified for Monster.com. In the paragraph, describe qualities and interests that you think would make you a strong group member. Do not put your name on the front of the paper but rather write it in lightly on the back. Also do not physically describe yourself or mention your gender or age. You may mention any affiliations and honors. Over the weekend I will choose the team leaders for the group based on the ads. The following Tuesday these leaders will be announced and will go through the classifieds to choose their groups.

Factors Determining your grade:

- Application submitted on time.
- Group participation and cohesion.
- Fulfillment of your responsibilities in the group.
- Submission of group responsibilities one week before the presentation.
- Submission of group PowerPoint through turnitin one week before the presentation.
- Submission of PowerPoint printout by presentation day
- Being fully prepared on the date you are to present.
- Professionally designed PowerPoint presentation no typos-Creative use of images & text.
- Presenting the information in a professional manner. Appropriate attire and nonverbals.
- Highlighting and conveying to your peers the main points of Postman's critique.
- Crafting a well-written presentation, not just reading from the book.
- Utilizing proper intros, conclusion, and transitions.
- Making the material relevant to your audience.
- Utilizing audio / visual supporting material well and within time limits.
- Fostering an engaging, intelligent and thoughtful discussion of the material.
- Meeting the required time recommendations for the assignment.

MEDIA ORGANIZATION PRESENTATION:

For this assignment you will pair up with another student in class and choose a media organization to explore. You will choose from a list of media outlets that I will provide on Blackboard. We will sign up for the media companies / conglomerates in class. You will explore the conglomerate and map out the organization of media companies and resources. Each pair will give a 5-minute PowerPoint presentation with appropriate charts showing the ownership of the companies and how they interconnect. Be sure to discuss any recent or upcoming mergers. You should explore the regulations of the country in which the company is located and any recent laws that have impacted the conglomerate. Are there any legal or ethical situations the conglomerate has been involved in? What are some of the positive aspects of the conglomerate? What are some of concerns about the organization? You won't be able to map out the full extent of every conglomerate or answer every question, but do your best to present a good scope of the company's holdings, its organization, and culture. Please submit your PowerPoint file to Blackboard using the link under the Assignments tab entitled "Submit Media Organization PowerPoint."

RESPONSE PAPERS:

There will be three response / brief analysis papers throughout the semester. Each paper must be approximately 2 pages in length (650 to 850 words). Papers should be double spaced with 1-inch margins and use a 12-point variable width font. Papers will be submitted to turnitin on Blackboard. The turnitin links are under the “Assignments” tab. Each paper is due at the beginning of class on its assigned due date (see schedule below). Grades and feedback will be given through Blackboard. Papers will be graded on how well they address the issues outlined for each. You should show a solid understanding of the material and compose a response or propose a solution in your original voice. Any proposed policies must be serious and potentially implementable and not merely trivial or apathetic. All assertions should be backed up with convincing examples, observations, or research. Papers should read smoothly and incorporate proper spelling and grammar.

Response Paper #1: A Response to Chomsky

In this paper you will respond to the documentary *Manufacturing Consent*. You do not need to summarize Chomsky’s views for such a short paper. Rather, jump right in and express your agreement/disagreement with his assertions. These should not be your “feelings” about Chomsky’s ideas but rather your well-reasoned rebuttal or agreement. Be sure to support your assertions. Your reaction should be based on evidence and observation. There are several ways in which to write a response paper—here are some possible ways to respond. Note: Smith is a fictional example.

1. Agree or disagree with the author’s main point or thesis. (Ex. Smith’s thesis that excessive television viewing has led to a denigration of personal communication is correct.)
2. Agree or disagree with the extent to which the thesis is made (Ex. While Smith is correct in asserting some of the problems associated with excessive television viewing, he oversimplifies television's effect and fails to address other potential causes.)
3. Agree or disagree with specific points that are made that relate to the thesis (Ex. While Smith’s overall thesis is justified, he takes his argument too far with several points made in paragraph #4.)
4. Agree or disagree with specific evidence that is offered in support of the thesis (Ex. Some of the evidence offered by Smith lacks credibility.)
5. Agree or disagree with the relevancy of the overall topic (Ex. Not only is Smith’s claim correct, but the issue should be expanded and discussed further as new technologies emerge that have a similar effect on society.)

Response Paper #2: Examining the News Organizations

For this paper, you will view at least one week of televised news from four different sources. You may choose from the following list of news organizations: ABC, NBC, CBS, PBS, FOX News, CNN, MSNBC, BBC, and Al Jazeera. You should focus on examining either news programs or opinion programs. Comparing news programming to opinion shows is like comparing apples and oranges, so keep it consistent. You may explore any of the areas we discussed concerning

media organizations and journalism. Keep an eye out for biases and misrepresentations such as discussed in *OutFoxed*. Who gets to talk? What are seen as good sources? How are political leaders framed? How is each party discussed? How is world news framed? How is economic news framed? What suggestions might you offer for individuals hoping to get an honest appraisal of current events? These are just a few possible perspectives. You can follow the lines of inquiry that interest you and intersect with our class discussion. Stray away from just describing the newscasts but endeavor to explain how you think they may be working.

Response Paper #3: Issues of Access, Copyright, and Privacy in a Digital World

Choose one of the areas that have been radically redefined by the introduction of digital media. Consider topics where political and legal actions may shape the way we interact with entertainment, news, information, and each other. Some of the biggest issues include: copyright law and its impact on the art, music, and literary communities; Net Neutrality concerning everyone's equal access to the Internet; and with recent government and corporate espionage, our privacy rights as citizens of the U.S. and the world? Pick a narrowly focused topic so you can provide some depth. For instance instead of taking on copyright in general, take on how copyright laws are changing the music business and how you feel this can be addressed to provide maximum access to users and adequate remuneration to creators. How do you think some of the biggest problems facing our digital world can be solved?

EXAMS

There will be two exams in this course. The exams are multiple-choice and matching. The final will be comprehensive.

IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES

This grade is made up of miscellaneous in-class activities and group projects.

PARTICIPATION

Students are required to participate in class discussions and activities. Attendance is mandatory.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1

- T 8/26 Introduction to the Course
- R 8/28 Media & The Social World C&H, Chapter 1
Classified Ad Due

Week 2

- T 9/02 Groups & Chapters Selected • Media Organization
Presentation Assigned • Response Papers Assigned
- R 9/04 The Economics of the Media Industry C&H, Chapter 2
Manufacturing Consent – Part I

Week 3

- T 9/09 The Economics of the Media Industry
Manufacturing Consent – Part II
- R 9/11 The Economics of the Media Industry

Week 4

- T 9/16 Political Influence on Media C&H, Chapter 3
- R 9/18 Political Influence on Media
Consuming Kids

Week 5

- T 9/23 **Media Organization Presentations**
- R 9/25 Media Organizations and Professionals C&H, Chapter 4

Week 6

- T 9/30 Media Organizations and Professionals
Outfoxed
Response Paper #1
- R 10/02 *Media and Ideology* C&H, Chapter 5

Week 7

- T 10/07 Media and Ideology
- R 10/09 Exam Review

Week 8

- T 10/14 **Midterm Exam**
- R 10/16 Social Inequality and Media Representation C&H, Chapter 6

Week 9

- T 10/21 Violence, Sex and Media Effects
Tough Guise – Part I
- R 10/23 Violence, Sex and Media Effects
Tough Guise – Part II

Week 10

- T 10/28 Media Influence and the Political World C&H, Chapter 7
Response Paper #2
- R 10/30 Presentation 1: *The Medium is the Metaphor & Media is Epistemology* (Postman, Chapters 1-2, pg. vii-16)

Week 11

- T 11/04 Active Audiences and the Construction of Meaning C&H, Chapter 8
- R 11/06 Presentation 2: *Typographic America & The Typographic Mind* (Postman, Chapters 2-4, pg. 30-63)

Week 12

- T 11/11 Media Technology C&H, Chapter 9
- R 11/13 Media and Resistance
Presentation 3: *The Peek-a-Boo World & The Age of Show Business* (Postman, Chapters 5-6, pg. 64-98)

Week 13

- T 11/18 Media and Resistance
Presentation 4: *“Now...This” & Shuffle Off to Bethlehem* (Postman, Chapters 7-8, pg. 99-124)
- R 11/20 Media in a Changing Global Culture
The Corporation – Part I

Week 14

- T 11/25 Media in a Changing Global Culture C&H, Chapter 10
The Corporation – Part II
Response Paper #3
- R 11/27 **No Class – Thanksgiving Holiday!**

Week 15

T 12/02 Presentation 5: *Reach Out and Elect Someone, Teaching as an Amusing Activity & The Huxleyan Warning* (Postman, Chapters 9-11, pg. 125-163)

R 12/04 Course Evaluation and Exam Review

Final Exam:

Section 01: Tuesday, December 9th from 9:00-11:00 in our regular classroom

Section 02: Monday, December 8th from 11:15-1:15 in our regular classroom