

Sociology of Mass Media

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This distance learning course provides an overview and analysis of sociological perspectives regarding the role of mass media in American society. This is an important area of sociological inquiry because mass media shape American culture, politics and social life. During the semester we will examine the political economy of media, the role of news in democratic societies, media effects, and the role of technology in democracy.

Course Objectives:

1. To provide you with a foundation in the major theoretical perspectives that guide how sociologists evaluate mass media and their influence on American society.
2. To introduce you to empirical methods in the study of mass media.
3. To strengthen your critical awareness and understanding of contemporary debates involving American media.

The following book is required for this course:

Croteau, David and William Hoynes. 2003. *Media Society: Industries, Images, and Audiences* (3rd edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press. ISBN# 0761987738

This book may be ordered from the FSU Bookstore, Bill's Bookstore, or from various online booksellers, but *please make sure you get the correct edition of the text*. Other required reading materials, films and PowerPoint lectures will be posted under "course material" in the appropriate week. Please let me know immediately by e-mail if you have any problems obtaining the required books or using the Blackboard website for the course.

Your grade for the course will be based on the total number of points you earn out of 175 possible points. The assignments are as follows:

Completion of "Online Bio" on Blackboard (5 points)

You must complete the Online Bio before Midnight on Monday, August 25th to satisfy the FSU "first-day attendance" policy. If you fail to do so, you will be dropped from the course. Your first task after you finish reading this syllabus should be to complete the Online Bio, which is a brief survey posted in Assignments. You will automatically receive five points for answering several questions that will help me know more about your background and interests.

Six open-book quizzes, each consisting of 10 questions (60 points)

These multiple-choice quizzes will be posted in Assignments on Monday at approximately two week intervals throughout the semester. You will be able to find the answers to these quizzes in the assigned readings or online material. In order to help you prepare for these quizzes, I have provided reading, film and PowerPoint questions for each week. These questions will help you identify the important ideas and concepts in the course material. You will have a five-day window (Monday to Friday) to take each quiz. Quizzes must be complete by Friday at 11pm.

Two short papers (40 points total)

These papers require you to conduct research and integrate course material as well as outside scholarly sources into your analysis.

- For the first short paper, you will analyze the news coverage of one issue.
- For the second short paper, you will analyze race in three different television programs.

You will need to submit your paper to Turnitin.com by 11pm on the day the paper is due. Students agree that by taking this course the required assignments they hand in will be submitted to Turnitin.com for review. All submitted papers will be checked for originality, become source documents in the Turnitin.com database, and used for the purpose of detecting plagiarism in papers submitted in the future. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the terms of the use agreement posted on the Turnitin.com website. **BE SURE THAT YOUR SOFTWARE IS COMPATIBLE WITH THE TURNITIN PROGRAM PRIOR TO THE DUE DATE.**

To use this feature:

1. Click the *assignments* link in the course.
2. Click the folder named *papers*. A list of available paper assignments will appear.
3. Click the *view/complete* link next to the assignment you want. The submission form will open.
4. Click the *browse* button to locate the file you want to submit. Be sure to name your paper.
5. Click *submit* to upload the selected file to Blackboard.
6. Print your confirmation sheet, which verifies that you successfully uploaded your paper. This is very important because I have no way of verifying your attempts to turn in a paper and unsuccessful attempts will result in a late penalty.

Be sure to keep copies of your papers and your confirmation sheet.

Three group discussions on the Discussion Board (30 points total)

At three points in the semester, a discussion topic will be posted on Monday in the Groups folder on Blackboard. The class will be divided into two groups, and you will participate in a discussion with other members of your group. Each student will be expected to post a 150 word response to the discussion topic by Wednesday of that week and to post two 75 word replies to other students' responses by the following Monday. Based on the quality of your posts, you can

earn a possible ten points for your contribution to each group discussion. No credit will be given for late postings on the discussion board or for “flaming” and other inappropriate responses.

Two one-hour exams, each consisting of six short-essay questions (40 points possible)

The mid-term and final will cover material from the text, from the films, from PowerPoint lectures and from reading material posted on Blackboard. Each exam will cover half of the course and will include six “open-ended” (short-essay) questions. Each exam is worth 20 points. The questions will ask you to write a paragraph or two about important theories, concepts, research findings, criticisms, controversies, or other points discussed in assigned readings and online material. Each exam will be scheduled on a specific day and will be available to students during a five-hour window, from 3:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m. Once you begin taking an exam, *you must complete it within one hour.*

Note: You will have opportunities to earn extra credit points throughout the semester. These opportunities are noted on the course schedule. Each extra credit is worth 2.5 points.

Work Policy: Students must take exams (and complete other assignments) during the times indicated on the syllabus. Make up quizzes and exams are only permitted in extraordinary circumstances and with the appropriate documentation. Late work may be handed in but will be penalized 10% each day it is late. Note: papers handed in between 11:01pm and 11:59pm are late and will be assessed a 10% late penalty.

You are expected to ensure that your computer and internet connection are functioning properly prior to exams or other online exercises. If necessary, please seek technical assistance from ACNS or other online resources listed on the Bulletin Board under “Help with FSU Procedures and Technology.”

Note: *Missing work is not sufficient reason for a grade of Incomplete (I).* An incomplete will not be given except under extenuating circumstances at the instructor’s discretion. Note that College of Social Science guidelines require that students seeking an “I” must be passing the course.

Academic Honor Code. The Florida State University Academic Honor Policy outlines the University’s expectations for the integrity of students’ academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members throughout the process. Students are responsible for reading the Academic Honor Policy and for living up to their pledge to “. . . be honest and truthful and . . . [to] strive for personal and institutional integrity at Florida State University.” (Florida State University Academic Honor Policy, found at <http://dof.fsu.edu/honorpolicy.htm>.) Any form of academic dishonesty will result in a "zero" for that particular assignment or an "F" for the course, at the instructor’s discretion, and may be reported to the university administration for further disciplinary action as specified in the Academic Honor Policy.

Courtesy in the Virtual Classroom. During the semester we will discuss a range of topics as they relate to media and they may stimulate strong feelings and heated debate. While I encourage diverse opinions, all papers and postings need to be scholarly in their content. **Scholarly comments are:** Respectful of diverse opinions and open to follow up questions and/or disagreement; related to the class and course material; advance the discussion/thinking about

issues related to the course and/or course material rather than personal beliefs; are delivered in normal “tones” and a non-aggressive manner. Failure to abide by these principles can result in academic penalties ranging from a lowered grade, temporary removal from discussion boards, to failing the course.

Cheating and Plagiarism. The Provost and legal counsel of Florida State University warn us that any uses of others' copyrighted materials without proper acknowledgement is unlawful and may lead to criminal prosecution. To this end, please be scrupulous in using the work of others by giving full and appropriate credit to the sources and materials that you use. Please use care when taking words and phrases from others. If you use a string of three or more exact words from another source, you must place the words in quotes and cite the author, year and page number. Be a stickler about citing; cite more rather than less; cite early rather than late. Do NOT appropriate the concepts, phrases, or ideas of other people without giving them credit. If you do so, you risk losing your good name and getting into legal trouble. Any form of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, will result in a "zero" for that particular assignment or possibly an "F" for the course and may be reported to the University Judicial Office. Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated.

Your paper would be considered as plagiarized in part or entirely if you do any of the following:

- Submit a paper that was written by someone other than you.
- Submit a paper in which you use the ideas, metaphors or reasoning style of another, but do not cite that source and/or place that source in your list of references.
- Submit a paper in which you "cut and paste" or use the exact words of a source and you do not put the words within quotation marks, use footnotes or in-text citations, and place the source in your list of references.

Disabilities. Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should:

- (1) register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center; and
- (2) bring a letter to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type.

This should be done during the first week of class. This syllabus and other class materials are available in alternative format upon request. For more information about services available to FSU students with disabilities, contact the:

Student Disability Resource Center
874 Traditions Way
108 Student Services Building
Florida State University
Tallahassee, FL 32306-4167
(850) 644-9566 (voice)
(850) 644-8504 (TDD)

sdrc@admin.fsu.edu
<http://www.disabilitycenter.fsu.edu/>

Please let me or your mentor know if you have any problems obtaining the texts, understanding assignments, or using the website.

Enjoy the course!

Course Calendar

All times are Eastern Standard time. Updates to this calendar will be indicated **in red**.

Readings	Quizzes and Exams	Discussion Boards and Papers
Week One: Introduction - The Role of Mass Media in American Society		
		Online Bio: Complete by Monday August 25th at 11pm to verify first day attendance.
Week Two: Structural Constraints and Media Content		
	Quiz 1 due at 11pm 9/05/08	
Week Three: Institutional Intervention and Media Content		
Week Four: Looking at the News from the Inside – Organizational Processes		
	Quiz 2 due at 11pm 9/19/08	
Week Five: Looking at the News from the Outside -- Economic Pressures and Democracy		
		Analytical Paper 1 Due at 11pm on Friday 9/26/08

Week Six: News Effects – Race and Ethnicity in the News		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jessica Pollak and Charis Kubrin. 2007. “Crime in the News: How Crimes, Offenders and Victims are Portrayed in the Media.” Journal of Criminal Justice and Popular Culture, 14 (1): 59-83. PowerPoint Presentation 3: The case of “The Jena 6” 	Quiz 3 due at 11pm on 10/3/08	<p><i>Extra credit discussion board: What makes a story “national” rather than “local”? What was it about the “Jena 6” story that made it difficult to cover?</i></p> <p><i>The board will be open Wednesday at 8am and close Friday at 11pm. You must have 1 original post and 2 posts that directly respond to the other posts.</i></p>
Week Seven: News Effects – Gender, Crime and Violence in the News		
		Exam 1: This is a one hour exam that consists of 6 short answer questions covering Weeks 1-6. The exam is Online on Monday 10/6/08 from 3pm to 8pm.
Week Eight: Ideology and Media Content		
Week Nine: Media as an Economic and Social Structure – The Case Study of Cool		
	Quiz 4 due at 11pm on 10/24/08. This quiz covers weeks 7 and 8 only.	
Week Ten: Social Inequality and Media Representation		
Week Eleven: Social Construction of Race		
	Quiz 5 due at 11pm 11/7/08. This quiz covers weeks 9, 10, and 11.	

Week Twelve: Social Construction of Race Continued		
Week Thirteen: Globalization and mass media		
Week Fourteen: Active Audiences and Mass Media		
	Quiz 6 due at 11pm on 11/28/08. This quiz covers weeks 12, 13 and 14.	
Week Fifteen: Power to the People?		
Week Sixteen: Finals Week		
		Exam 2. This is a one hour exam that consists of 6 short answer questions covering Weeks 7-15. The exam is Online on Monday 12/8 from 3pm to 8pm.