Emory University

SOCIOLOGY OF MASS MEDIA

Soc 562; Spring 2012

Wednesdays, 1:00-4:00, 206 Tarbutton Hall

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course (1) provides students with grounding in media sociology and (2) prepares students for doing their own media research. To facilitate the first objective, we survey the media literature that spans a number of disciplines, which includes (but is not limited to) sociology, communications, and history. In pursuing this survey, we touch upon the following themes: (a) We examine how various media industries (e.g., radio, TV, record, motion picture, print) are organized and how such organization is sometimes transformed by regulation, competition, and/or technology. (b) We focus on media content and investigate factors that promote stability, change, and diversity. (c) We address the consumers of mass media products and inspect how they utilize and are affected by media content. To facilitate the second objective (i.e., doing research), we give special attention to methods and designs employed in current research, and we heed how theoretical ideas are translated into empirical projects. Thus, by the end of the semester, each student will have a grasp of the field and an understanding of how to do media sociology.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

This course is organized as a seminar, which entails the combination of a fair amount of reading, class discussion, and written assignments. Given this organization, you are expected to attend each class and to participate.

A) Attendance

If you must miss a class, please inform me ahead of time so that we can make arrangements. Note that unexcused absences will negatively affect your final grade.

B) Class Participation and Discussion

Active participation requires adequate preparation. You therefore must read the assigned material before class and develop your own assessment of this material. Such careful preparation will improve the quality of class discussion. Of course, class discussion should be both informed and
respectful; moreover, it should be a forum wherein all can raise questions, explore ideas, and express misgivings. Class participation comprises 30% of your final grade.

C) Weekly Memos

You will prepare a 3-page memo for each week's readings (typed and double-spaced). You should regard these memos as ideas in progress rather than as finished products. Use them to digest each week's readings and to respond with questions, criticisms, and new ideas. Please bring your memo to class and submit it at the end of the evening. The weekly memos comprise 35% of your final grade.

D) Final Paper

You will complete a 15-page paper (typed and double-spaced). The paper should deal with some aspect of media sociology, yet it should also relate to your own research interests. Consequently, this paper may take a variety of forms. For example, it can be a review of the literature, a research proposal, or an empirical project. I ask that you discuss your topic with me by March 7 and submit an outline by April 4. The final paper is due on May 9 and comprises 35% of your final grade.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

As the semester progresses, class materials will be posted on the Blackboard site for SOC 562 (see http://classes.emory.edu/). Each week, for example, I will post a “Questions to Ponder” document that addresses the current readings.

The assigned readings are drawn from many sources, so there is no textbook. Instead, the required readings are available at both our Blackboard site and at Woodruff electronic reserves (see https://ereserves.library.emory.edu/index.php). Note that the readings for this class augment—but do not duplicate—those found in the Sociology of Culture (SOC 560) and Sociology of the Arts (SOC 561) graduate seminars. As a result, you may wish to peruse the SOC 560 and SOC 561 syllabi for additional media readings. Note also that many of the readings listed below are found on the reading list for the preliminary examination in the sociology of culture (those marked below with an asterisk; see http://www.sociology.emory.edu/pid/18/34/).

If you have any special needs, please contact me at the beginning of the semester and we will discuss the necessary arrangements (for additional information, visit the Emory Office of Disability Services website; see http://www.ods.emory.edu/).

COURSE SCHEDULE

(Subject to Revision)

SECTION ONE: MEDIA AND PRODUCTION

January 18: Introductions
January 25: No Class Meeting (Due to Meeting of the POPID Research Group)

February 1: The Construction of Media Markets


February 8: Gatekeeping, Selection and Uncertainty


February 15: Concentration and Its Impact in Media Markets


*February 22: Media Careers (Examples from the Film Industry)*


*SECTION TWO: MEDIA AND CONTENT*

*February 29: The Link between Content Production and Content Innovation*


**March 7: The Encroachment of Commercialization**


**PAPER TOPIC DUE**

**March 14:**  **SPRING BREAK (No Class)**

**March 21:**  **The Consecration of Media Content**


March 28:  Fields, Frames & Public Opinion (Examples from News Journalism)


SECTION THREE: MEDIA AND AUDIENCES

April 4:  Broad Patterns of Media Consumption


PAPER OUTLINE DUE
April 11: Media Audiences in Action


April 18: Media Audiences and (Collective) Interpretation


April 25: Access, Information & Prosumption (Examples from Internet Usage)


May 9: FINAL PAPER DUE