EMORY UNIVERSITY

Sociology 343

MASS MEDIA AND SOCIAL INFLUENCES

Spring 2013
T / Th
11:30 – 12:45 & 4:00 – 5:15
321 & 106 Tarbutton Hall

Dr. Timothy J. Dowd
231 Tarbutton Hall (x6259)
tdowd@emory.edu
Office Hours: 1:00-3:00 (W)

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course, we examine the history and nature of mass media in four sections. (1) We begin by considering the social implications of new forms of media, heeding the roles that competition, technology and regulation played in the historical spread of such forms. (2) We then examine how current media industries are organized and likewise consider the implications of the extensive commercialism that can accompany this current organization. (3) We focus next on the content of media products and investigate factors that promote or inhibit both the diversity of content and its consecration by critics and others. (4) Finally, we consider the audience for mass media products and inspect how they are affected by and actively use media content.

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COURSE REQUIREMENTS

You are strongly encouraged to attend class, especially because we use class time to integrate the assigned readings and to present additional information not found in the readings. Regular attendance, moreover, will raise your final grade. If you miss only one class during the semester, I will add two points to your final grade. If you miss only two classes, I will add one point.

You are required to complete four written assignments: one major paper and three short memos. The paper involves a research project that you will complete over the course of the semester. You may choose your paper topic from a list that I will circulate on February 26 or you may propose a topic of your own (subject to my approval) by March 19. In either case, an outline of your paper is due on March 28 and the completed paper is due on May 3 (although it may be submitted before that date). This 8- to 10-page paper is worth 25% of your final grade. The memos will help you prepare for the examinations. In these 3-page assignments, you will synthesize the readings and the issues that emerge as the class progresses. The due dates for the memos, as well as the dates for when I distribute memo questions, are listed below. The memos
will comprise 15% of your final grade (5% each). Note that I will distribute a total of four memo assignments, but you are required to complete only three.

You are also required to take two examinations – a midterm and a non-cumulative final. Both exams consist of short-answer and essay questions. Prior to each exam, I will distribute a handout that will help you prepare for the test. Each exam will be worth 30% of your final grade. The midterm examination occurs on March 7 during class time. The final examination occurs on May 6 from 12:30 to 3:00 p.m. (for the 4:00 class) and on May 7 from 8:30 to 11:00 a.m. (for the 11:30 class).

The Emory University honor code applies fully to this course. When you sign an exam or submit your assignments, you are pledging to the honor code. For reference, please consult: http://www.college.emory.edu/current/standards/honor_code.html.

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COURSE RESOURCES

As the semester progresses, class materials (e.g., syllabus, overheads) will be posted on the Blackboard site for SOC 343 (see http://classes.emory.edu/).

The assigned readings are drawn from many sources, so there is no textbook. Instead, the required readings will be available at both our Blackboard site and at Woodruff electronic reserves (see https://ereserves.library.emory.edu/index.php).

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/).

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COURSE SCHEDULE

(subject to revision)

SECTION ONE: CONCEPTUALIZING THE IMPACT OF MASS MEDIA

January 15: Introductions

Construction of Media Industries: Competition, Regulation & Technology at Play


SECTION TWO: MASS MEDIA PRODUCERS

Organization of Current Media Industries: Consolidation and “Bigness”


MEMO QUESTION #1 DISTRIBUTED

January 31:  Video Viewing: The Pixar Story


MEMO QUESTION #1 DUE


Organization of Current Media Industries: Commercialism and Its Implications


MEMO QUESTION #2 DISTRIBUTED

SECTION THREE: MASS MEDIA PRODUCTS

Gatekeepers and the Diversity of Content


MEMO QUESTION #2 DUE

RESEARCH TOPICS DISTRIBUTED


TEST PREPARATION SHEET DISTRIBUTED


March 7: MID-TERM EXAMINATION

March 12 & 14: SPRING BREAK (No Class Meetings)

March 19: Video Viewing: The Face Looks Familiar

ALTERNATIVE RESEARCH TOPIC DUE

Gatekeepers and the Consecration of Content


RESEARCH PAPER OUTLINE DUE

April 2: Video Viewing: Under African Skies

MEMO QUESTION #3 DISTRIBUTED

April 4: Video Viewing: Under African Skies

SECTION FOUR: MEDIA AUDIENCES

The Active Audience: The Formation of Tastes and Opinions


MEMO QUESTION #3 DUE


The Active Audience: The Formation of Connections and Communities


MEMO QUESTION #4 DISTRIBUTED


MEMO QUESTION #4 DUE

TEST PREPARATION SHEET DISTRIBUTED

May 3: RESEARCH PAPER DUE (5:00 p.m.)

May 6: FINAL EXAMINATION (4:00 class): 12:30 – 3:00 p.m.

May 7: FINAL EXAMINATION (11:30 class): 8:30 – 11:00 a.m.