In this course, we examine the nature and impact of mass media in three broad sections – with each section devoted, respectively, to media producers, to the content that these producers provide, and to the audiences who interact with that content (and sometimes make their own content in the process). In the first section, 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. This historical perspective, in turn, allows us to make sense of such contemporary media as Netflix and Spotify. We then examine how current media industries are organized, and we likewise consider the implications of those industries being dominated by a few large firms. In the second section, we focus 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. In the third and final section, we consider the audience for mass media products and inspect how they are affected by and actively use media content. We pay particular attention here to the audience and their engagement with social media.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A) Attendance

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.

B) Written Assignments

You are required to complete four short assignments (i.e., “memos”). In these 3- to 4-page memos, 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. Note that I will distribute a total of four memo assignments, but you are required to complete only three. The memos comprise 30% of your final grade (10% per each of the three memos).

C) Examinations

You are also required to take two examinations – a midterm and a non-cumulative final. Both exams consist of short-answer and essay questions. One week prior to each exam, I will distribute a handout that will help you prepare for the test. Each exam will be worth 35% of your final grade (for a combined total of 70%). The midterm examination occurs on October 18 during class time. The final examination occurs on December 18 from 11:30 am – 2:00 pm. That final exam time is set for us by the Registrar’s Office.

D) Honor Code

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://catalog.college.emory.edu/academic/policies-regulations/honor-code.html.

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COURSE RESOURCES

As the semester progresses, class mate materials (e.g., syllabus, overheads) will be posted on the Canvas 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 Canvas site and at the 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 Accessibility Services website (see http://equityandinclusion.emory.edu/access/index.html).

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THREE POINTS ABOUT THE COURSE READINGS

Please keep in mind three points regarding the readings below. (1) We will frequently be attending to the historical context of mass media – and that will be evident in the readings. This is not to say that we will be memorizing all sorts of dates and names. But, instead, we will heed historical patterns because they frequently have a bearing on what occurs today in the realm of mass media. (2) The readings below provide a mixture of modern “classics” and brand new article (with the rest falling chronologically between those two). The classics matter because they put forward important arguments and provide an important comparison with contemporary situations. Meanwhile, the newest articles help us keep apprised of the latest developments. (3) Some of these articles are written for specialists. Consequently, they sometimes make use of jargon and sophisticated techniques of analysis. But, have no fear! My job will be to translate
those articles for you and, in the process, show you the usefulness of those articles for making sense of mass media and their social implications.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**
*(subject to revision)*

**August 30:** Introductions

**SECTION ONE: MASS MEDIA PRODUCERS**

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


**September 6:** **MEMO QUESTION #1 DISTRIBUTED**


*Organization of Media Industries: Consolidation and “Bigness”*


**September 13:** **MEMO #1 DUE**


*Organization of Media Industries: Place and Globalization*

SECTION TWO: MASS MEDIA PRODUCTS AND CONTENT

Creative Workers and the (Constrained) Making of Content


October 4: Video Viewing: Being George Clooney (2016)

October 4: MEMO #2 DUE

October 9: FALL BREAK (No Class)


October 11: TEST PREPARATION SHEET DISTRIBUTED


October 18: MID-TERM EXAMINATION

The Ebb and Flow of Media Content across Time: Large-Scale Patterns


Lyrics and Social Network Analysis of Singers and Composers.” *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 29 (3).

**October 30:**

**The Consecration of Media Content**

**November 1:**

**November 1:**
**MEMO QUESTION #3 DISTRIBUTED**

**November 6:**

**SECTION THREE: MEDIA AUDIENCES**

**The Active Audience: The Formation of Tastes and Opinions**

**November 8:**

**November 8:**
**MEMO #3 DUE**

**November 13:**

**November 15:**

**November 20:**

**November 22:**
**THANKSGIVING (No Class)**
**The Active Audience, Digital Divides, and Prosumption**


**November 27:** *MEMO QUESTION #4 DISTRIBUTED*


**December 4:** *MEMO #4 DUE*

**The Active Audience and the Political Environment**


**December 11:** *TEST PREPARATION SHEET DISTRIBUTED*

**December 18:** *FINAL EXAMINATION: 11:30 am to 2:00 pm*