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.

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 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 29 or you may propose a topic of your own (subject to my approval) by March 16. In either case, an outline of your paper is due on April 6 and the completed paper is due on May 6 (although it may be submitted before that date). This 8- to 10-page paper is worth 25% of your final grade.
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.

C) Final Paper

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 2 during class time. The final examination occurs on May 3 from 3:00 – 5:00 pm.

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 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 Equity and Inclusion website; see http://equityandinclusion.emory.edu/access/index.html).

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COURSE SCHEDULE
(subject to revision)

SECTION ONE: CONCEPTUALIZING THE IMPACT OF MASS MEDIA

January 13: Introductions
Construction of Media Industries: Competition, Regulation & Technology at Play

January 18: NO CLASS – Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday


MEMO QUESTION #1 DISTRIBUTED

SECTION TWO: MASS MEDIA PRODUCERS

Organization of Current Media Industries: Consolidation and “Bigness”


February 3: Video Viewing: The Pixar Story

MEMO QUESTION #1 DUE


Organization of Current Media Industries: Commercialism and Its Implications

February 15: **MEMO QUESTION #2 DISTRIBUTED**


**MEMO QUESTION #2 DUE**

February 24: Video Viewing: *Dixie Chicks: Shut Up and Sing.*

**TEST PREPARATION SHEET DISTRIBUTED**

February 29: Video Viewing: *Dixie Chicks: Shut Up and Sing.*

**RESEARCH TOPICS DISTRIBUTED**

March 2: **MID-TERM EXAMINATION**

March 7 & 9: **SPRING BREAK (No Class Meetings)**

**SECTION THREE: MASS MEDIA PRODUCTS**

Gatekeepers and the Diversity of Content


**ALTERNATIVE RESEARCH TOPIC DUE**

**MEMO QUESTION #3 DISTRIBUTED**

**Gatekeepers and the Consecration of Content**


**MEMO QUESTION #3 DUE**


**SECTION FOUR: MEDIA AUDIENCES**

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


**RESEARCH PAPER OUTLINE DUE**

The Active Audience: The Formation of Connections and Communities


MEMO QUESTION #4 DISTRIBUTED


MEMO QUESTION #4 DUE


TEST PREPARATION SHEET DISTRIBUTED

May 3: FINAL EXAMINATION: 3:00 – 5:30 pm

May 6: FINAL PAPER DUE (5:00 pm)