Emory University

SOCIOLOGY OF MASS MEDIA

SOC 562; Spring 2019

Thursdays, 5:30 – 8:30 pm, 206 Tarbutton Hall

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Office Hours: Mondays, 11:30 – 1:00
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This 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 are organized and how such organization is sometimes transformed by regulation, competition, and/or technology. This examination includes both “old” (e.g., film) and “new” media (e.g., social media, streaming video on demand). (b) We focus on the careers of workers within media industries, connecting the constraints of their work environments to the type of content the produce. (c) We inspect media content and investigate factors that promote stability, change, and diversity – including online content. (c) We address the consumers of mass media products and inspect how they utilize and are shaped by media content, as well as how they are also sometimes the producers of 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. This second objective is especially crucial in an age where “big data” techniques have expanded greatly sociological research on mass media. 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 half of your final grade.

C) Electronic Device Policy

Electronic devices, such as laptops and tablets, can be very useful in terms of taking notes. However, when students use them in class to do other things (e.g., surf the Internet, order from online stores, check social media posts) that proves detrimental both to student participation and discussion. Note that using devices in a non-curricular way will, most definitely, affect your final grade in a negative fashion.

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 February 14 and submit an outline by March 28. The final paper will be briefly presented in our last class, and is due on May 9. It comprises 50% of your final grade.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

As the semester progresses, class materials will be posted on the Canvas site for SOC 562 (see http://canvas.emory.edu).

The assigned readings are drawn from many sources, so there is no textbook. Instead, the required readings are available at both our Canvas 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 my 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. You may access those syllabi here: http://sociology.emory.edu/home/people/faculty/dowd-tim.html.

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).
## COURSE SCHEDULE

*(Subject to Revision)*

### SECTION ONE: MEDIA AND PRODUCTION

**January 17:**  
*Introductions*  

**January 24:**  
*The Construction of Media Markets*


**January 31:**  
*Gatekeeping, Selection and Uncertainty*


February 7: Concentration, Commercialization and Their Impact in Media Markets


February 14: Media Work and Careers


PAPER TOPIC DUE

SECTION TWO: MEDIA AND CONTENT

February 21: Linking Production and Content: Representation & Innovation


**February 28: Framing and the News**


**March 7 and 14: NO CLASSES (SPRING BREAK)**

**March 21: Content and Its Classification**


**March 28: Consecration and Media Content**


**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*

Phillipa Chong. *Selection to be Announced.*


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


May 9: FINAL PAPER DUE