

Journalism 100 Intro to mass communication Fall 2009

Instructor, Ezra Shapiro

Survey and analysis of newspapers, books, magazines, radio, television, popular music, movies, advertising, public relations, Internet and emerging technologies. Examines media history and economics, as well as their roles, rights and impact in contemporary society. Particular emphasis on media literacy, critical thinking, research and writing.

The study of mass communication is a social science, combining elements of psychology, sociology, history, economics, and communication studies.

Major themes include convergence (the gradual merging of traditional media), demassification (the targeting of smaller and smaller audiences), conglomeration (the gradual takeover of media by a few huge corporations), and the impact of new technologies.

Required text

John Vivian, **The Media of Mass Communication**, 9th ed., Pearson, 2009, ISBN 0-205-52110-X.

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Course work

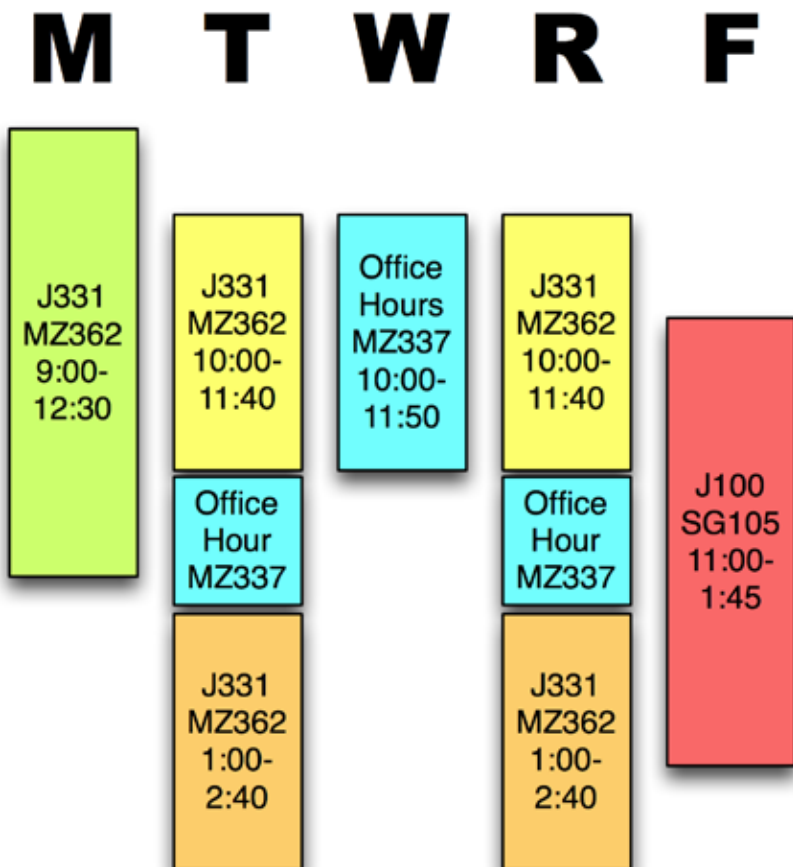
There will be **quizzes** at almost all class sessions, each worth approximately 10 to 15 points, for a final total of 100 points. Be sure to bring a Scantron 815-E and a #2 pencil with you to every class. Quizzes will concentrate on material read for the current class, but expect some questions from lectures and/or earlier work. Note that quizzes are not always Scantron tests; there may be short answer, fill-in-the-blank, or essay questions too. Missed quizzes may not be made up.

There will be NO midterm. The **final exam** will be cumulative and worth 100 points.

Short homework projects, worth 10 or 20 points each, will be assigned throughout the semester. Late projects will be accepted any time after the due date for a maximum of half credit. Projects must be typed to receive credit. These projects will be graded loosely, that is: maximum for excellent work, half credit for sloppy or incomplete work, zero points if you don't turn it in.

There will be a **final project**, a short paper, consisting of a minimum of five pages of text with footnotes, plus an academic bibliography. There will be several possible topics. This will also be worth 100 points.

Finally, **class participation** can grant up to 50 bonus points. An important part of class participation is contributing to a Twitter feed about mass media, technology, and society. Details will be provided in class.



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Philosophy

Benefits of this course are best realized by spending time in class and by working on the assignments in the proper sequence. Attendance is therefore mandatory.

Lecture policy

The instructor does not repeat lectures.

Develop a friendship with someone who takes good notes.

Email policy

Off-hours email will be answered at the instructor's convenience. A 24-hour turnaround is typical. No email on weekends or holidays unless it's a true emergency. The question "What did we do in class yesterday?" will not be answered in detail, see lecture policy.

Homework

Homework must be typed, and delivered at the start of the class in which it is due. No email. And please, no binders or folders. Attach the pages with paper clips rather than staples, so I can separate the sheets.

Missed classes

Excuses must be written and verifiable, including serious illnesses, major accidents, court appearances, and so forth. Parking hassles, business trips, and routine medical appointments don't count.

As a rule, missed tests and quizzes that have been excused will be given at the instructor's earliest convenience.

Ungraded projects that have been excused may be completed within a week of the absence.

Breaks

There will usually be a 10-15 minute break in the middle of each class.

Extra credit

No such animal.

Grading system

Standard CSUN plus/minus system is used. Points are totaled and grouped into a rough curve. You will be kept aware of your total during the semester. Final grades will be based on the top point total in the class, not total points. You should be aware that it is likely that half the students in a class will receive final grades of C+ and below.

Grades for individual items

Percent*	Means roughly	
91-100	Outstanding	A
81-90	Above average	B
71-80	Average	C
61-70	Barely passing	D
Below	Failing	F

* Your grade for any given exercise, project, test, or quiz will be expressed as a point total. It's up to you to convert the total to get an idea of the grade. For example, on a quiz worth 20 points a grade of 18 would be "outstanding." Note that this is only an approximation; you're wiser to compare your grades to the rest of the class.

Courtesy and rules

Cell phones: okay (for incoming emergencies only).

Food: not okay. Foul-smelling food: REALLY not okay.

Beverages: okay (if handled responsibly).

Interrupting for a question when instructor is speaking: okay. Chatting or typing or texting or reading mail when instructor is speaking or when a video is being shown: not okay.

Entering and leaving the room after class has started: same courtesy as when you're in a theater. Don't walk in front of people. Don't bash folks in the head with your backpack. Don't make your entrances and exits noticeable; if you know you have to leave early, sit near the door.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism and other forms of cheating will not be tolerated, and anyone caught cheating will fail the course and will be reported to the University for possible further action. For a further explanation of the behavior defined as academic dishonesty, and a more detailed discussion of disciplinary procedures, consult pages 536-538 of the 2006-2008 CSUN catalog.

Please also remember that much of the information posted on the Internet is protected by US copyright laws. Passing this information off as your own is a violation of CSUN's plagiarism policy and carries the penalties outlined above.

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Class of:	Focus:	Read BEFORE class!	Project due dates:
Aug 28	Introduction		
Sept 4	Technology	Chapters 1, 2	
Sept 11	Internet	Chapter 10	Corporate ownership project due
Sept 18	News	Chapter 11	
Sept 25	Newspapers	Chapter 4	Media log due
Oct 2	Entertainment	Chapter 14	
Oct 9	Movies	Chapter 7	Film/TV POV due
Oct 16	Television	Chapter 9	
Oct 23	Advertising & PR	Chapters 12, 13	TV commercial comparison due
Oct 30	Music and radio	Chapters 6, 9	
Nov 6	Research	Chapter 15	
Nov 13	Media effects	Chapter 16	Violence project due
Nov 20	Global media	Chapter 17	
Nov 27	THANKSGIVING		
Dec 4	Ethics and law	Chapters 19, 20	Final paper due
Dec 11	FINAL EXAM		

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Projects

Corporate ownership

Compile a list of what businesses/media are owned by a specific corporation, to be assigned in class.

Personal media log

Pick a seven day period and log all the media you read or view. Further details in class.

Film and television POV (point of view)

Watch half an hour of a favorite comedy or drama (this can either be a film or a television show). Keep a careful log as you watch. When does the camera move in on someone? When does it pull back, or pan across the scene? Is it taking your point of view, or that of a character, or some other point of view? Does it always do the same thing in similar situations, or is there some variety? Looking at it this way, do you feel you're being manipulated? Does this bother you? What are your conclusions from this experiment?

Submit both your conclusions and your logs. The overview has to be typed, but the logs do not.

Television commercials

Pick a television commercial you really like, one that you feel has influenced you to purchase a specific product. On a sheet of paper, describe it. Why does it appeal to you? Do you like the people in it, or the story line, or what it says about the product? How much of the commercial is substance, and how much is image? Why do you think it works? Don't neglect technical details like editing, music, and color!

On a second sheet, pick a commercial you really can't stand. Again, describe it. This time when you analyze it, explain why it irritates you. What about the commercial gets on your nerves? Would you ever buy the product? Are there production factors that hurt this commercial?

Finally, on a third page, compare the two commercials. What makes them different?

Clip the three pages together before you submit them.

Violence on television

George Gerbner defines violence as "the overt expression of physical force against self or other, compelling action against one's will on pain of being hurt or killed, or actually hurting or killing." Watch an hour of prime-time dramatic television, an hour of prime-time sitcoms, an hour of news, or an hour of Saturday morning cartoons. Keep a log of violent acts; it might be helpful to split this up into categories, such as punching, prolonged fighting, intentional murder, warfare, and so forth.

Discuss the effects this programming might have on viewers. Do you agree with those who decry the violence on television, or do you think their concerns are hogwash? Why?

Some scholars claim there's a cathartic effect from watching media violence, while others claim media violence only replicates that which occurs in the society at large. Which view do you believe is correct? If you feel the answer depends upon the circumstances, describe what they may be. Does any theoretical media effects model support your theory? Why?

One page for conclusions, one page for the log.