

Communication 2520: Introduction to Mass Communication  
Spring 2017. Section 001. 3 Credit Hours.  
Room: Coleman Hall 1110  
MWF 9-9:50 a.m.

**Instructor:** Dr. Scott Walus  
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**Office:** 1810 Coleman Hall  
**Office Hours:** Mon/Wed/Fri 8-9 a.m. / Mon 7-8 p.m.

**Required Texts:**

Texts will be readings provided via flash drive during the first week of class. There is no learning management system. Bring a notebook and pen as well.

**Course Description:**

This course provides a survey of the current media landscape including television, radio, film, mobile communication, recorded music, and new media. The course examines the historical context for and theoretical perspectives of electronic and emergent media in the 20th and 21st centuries. Additionally, the course traces the interrelated nature of the media industry and producers, mediated messages, and audiences to examine how these changing relationships impact the mediated landscape.

**Course Objectives:**

1. To problematize “media,” understanding them not as monolithic, but rather a series of interrelated structures.
2. To understand how the political economy of media industries impacts media content.
3. To historicize and trace how media became what they are today and their potential futures.
4. To be able to reflect upon and critically understand your own media consumption.
5. To understand the available theoretical perspectives for researching media.

**Professionalism/attendance:**

While attendance is not required, any assignment cannot be made up unless university-sanctioned absences and are presented in advance of the class and are made up within 5 days of the absence. Also, you are expected to read for class as the articles are relevant and give you the basis for course discussions. It is incredibly difficult to learn without multiple exposures to idea. Compare it painting, one coat of paint looks terrible, three look great. The readings are the primer, in class lectures are the first coat, and studying for the exams are the last coats.

**Assignment/Late Work Policy**

Simply: I do not accept late work and do not assignments to be made up.  
Complexly: All out-of-class assignments are to be typewritten, printed, and brought to class the day that they are due at the beginning of class. I do **NOT** accept e-mailed assignments. Late work is **NOT** accepted in this class. I am steadfast on this policy. I will, however, always gladly accept assignments early.

**General Grading Guidelines:**

Grades will be assigned as follows:

100-90% = A      89-80% = B      79-70% = C      69-60% = D      59- 0% = F

In any course, it is important to remember that each of you begins with zero points and must earn your way up to each of these grades. I am here to support you in this process, but this process is ultimately your own evolution as a scholar as you demonstrate not only an understanding of the material, but also the

ability to apply to real life situations and critically evaluate the material and case studies. Grading will be done as follows:

**C:** Represents achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect. This score does not indicate any shortcoming. All the work was done adequately and completely, and the work showed basic understanding and mastery of the course material.

**B:** Represents achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements. Not only were all the basic expectations met, they exceeded minimum expected quality levels. This work probably showed one or more of the following characteristics: excellent understanding of the class material, excellent application of theory to practice, unusual thought and thoroughness in thought and preparation.

**A:** Represents achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements. This work is superior in every respect and represents the highest level of achievement. Its quality is good enough that even though there is still room for improvement, it would be unreasonable to expect a college student to do better.

**D:** Represents achievement that is worthy of credit even though it does not fully meet course requirements. While there was merit to what was done, there were also deficiencies that meant the work did not fully meet the minimal expectations.

**F:** Represents performance that fails to meet the course requirements and is unworthy of credit. This work shows serious deficiencies in regard to the expectations for the assignment.

#### **Point breakdown:**

##### **16 points      Weekly media reflections**

These must be typewritten and handed in within the first 5 minutes of a class or they will not be accepted. There are 16, thus each reflection is worth one point. To gain this point, each question must be answered completely and thoughtfully. Each requests multiple components. I am always glad to look at them in advance to guarantee that you get each point. As this is 66% of your total grade (with each reflection constituting 4% of your total grade), I suggest spending a significant amount of time on them.

##### **8 points      Media observation papers**

There are two papers worth six points each. If done satisfactorily, you receive full points. If not, you receive zero points. You do, however, have the opportunity to revise the paper within two weeks of receiving it back to receive full points on the assignment. These papers must also be handed in within the first five minutes of the class period that they are due.

##### **24 points total**

#### **Academic integrity:**

Students are expected to maintain principles of academic integrity and conduct as defined in EIU's Code of Conduct (<http://www.eiu.edu/judicial/studentconductcode.php>). Violations will be reported to the Office of Student Standards. You are expected to write your own papers and generate your own answers on quizzes and exams. Plagiarism and academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Consequences of academic dishonesty range from failing of the course to expulsion from the university.

#### **Students with disabilities:**

If you are a student with a documented disability in need of accommodations to fully participate in this class, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services (OSDS). All accommodations must be approved through OSDS. Please stop by Ninth Street Hall, Room 2006, or call 217-581-6583 to make an appointment.

**The Student Success Center:**

Students who are having difficulty achieving their academic goals are encouraged to contact the Student Success Center ([www.eiu.edu/~success](http://www.eiu.edu/~success)) for assistance with time management, text taking, note taking, avoiding procrastination, setting goals, and other skills to support academic achievement. The Student Success Center provides individualized consultations. To make an appointment, call 217-581- 6696, or go to 9th Street Hall, Room 1302.

**Student Standards:**

All faculty in the Department of Communication Studies are expected to uphold the standards of good scholarship and we expect our students to do the same. Students earning a degree in Communication Studies will develop superior reasoning/critical thinking, argumentation, writing and presentational skills while also building comprehensive knowledge of their content area. Students in Communication Studies classes will be expected to read all assigned materials, write extensively, complete their own work, and engage in respectful interactions in the classroom. We, as a faculty, agree to hold our students to these standards.

**Tentative Class Schedule:**

| <b>Week 1</b> | <b>Topic for Discussion</b>                                    | <b>Assignment due</b>                 |
|---------------|--|---------------------------------------|
|               | Course Orientation. Mass Communication:<br>A Critical Approach | Read:<br>“Mass Media” – Durham Peters |

Media Reflection 1: Create two columns (one mediated, one non-mediated) and contrast five manners in which mediated communication differs from non-mediated communication. Next, provide one example of when mediated communication is a more effective manner of communicating over non-mediated as well as an example of the opposite (non-mediated being more effective than mediated). For each of these examples, provide a few sentences on what specifically is it about the medium/lack of medium that makes it more effective in these situations?

**Week 2**

|   |                        |
|---|------------------------|
| Media Economics & The Global<br>Marketplace | Read:<br>McQuail Ch. 9 |
|---|------------------------|

Note: Monday, 1/16 is MLK Jr. Birthday, No classes held at university

Media Reflection 2: Pick one medium that you use (ex: your phone, your computer, your television, your record player) and one piece of content that you use (ex: a social media platform, a television show, a film you watch, a piece of music that you listen to). For the medium and the content, trace out what media conglomerate(s) each is a part of and list out everything else that these conglomerates owns. For both the medium and content's media conglomerate, print out and include the source. Next, for both the medium and the content, provide how the conglomerate could use its other holdings to promote that medium/content (using specific examples).

**Week 3**

|                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Advertising & Commercial Culture | Read: Schrage – “Is Advertising Dead?” |
|----------------------------------|--|

Media Reflection 3: As you travel around, make a note of five unexpected locations of advertising (ex: on a television at a gas pump, an ad in a video game). The more unusual, the better. For each of the five ads: Provide a sentence for each explaining why each ad is at this location and the desired result of this particular exposure.

**Week 4**

New Media – Internet &  
New Technologies

Read:  
Gleick - “Prest-o, Change-o”  
Harmon - “Trials of multi-tasking”  
Shenk - “The first law of data smog”

Media Reflection 4: Experiment on your self! Simultaneously watch television with a song on in the background while texting/messaging a friend and looking at a website. Then, do all of these tasks separately. In your reflection, tell me about your experiment and how the experiences differed. What parts of the media content did you miss when you did them all together? Next, provide one example of data smog from your own media usage and one example of the law of unintended consequences happening from your media use.

**Week 5**

Public Relations & Framing the Message;    Read: Ch. 12, Brown - “Spin Sisters”  
Legal Control, Freedom of Expression, and Media Ethics

Note: Friday, 2/17 is Lincoln's Birthday. No classes held at university.

Media Reflection 5: Find a controversial issue covered through media (ex: media piracy, pornography, immigration, drugs, health care, higher education, artificial sweeteners, taxes, unions, gambling, holistic medicine). Find one organization that supports this issue, and one who is against it. Go to each organization's web site and print out a press release from an organization from each side of the debate. In two columns, list five terms that each side uses discuss the same concept (For example, on the Earth's increase in temperature is “climate change” for one side and “global warming” for the other. Note: Do not use this example).

**Week 6**

Sound Recording and Para-Texts

Read: Gray - “Para-texts  
Assign: A day without a screen paper

Media Reflection 6: For your favorite music artist/band, find five para-texts about this musician(s). Include pictures of each of them, and underneath each one, tell me what this para-text does to her/his/their image. Be sure to focus on meaning and brand, as well as the specifics of how the para-texts accomplish this through symbols.

**Week 7**

Popular Radio & the Origins of  
Broadcasting; Television History

Read:  
Biagi Ch. 8

Media reflection 7: Select your favorite television channel. Construct a comprehensive timeline of all of its ownership changes from current day, all the way back to the 1930s and the days of radio. Note that this will take some time and research to follow the history of ownership and conglomerates.

**Week 8**

Flow/Programming Strategies  
Television and the Power of Visual Culture

Read: Williams - “Flow”  
**A Day Without a Screen paper due (3/3)**

Media Reflection 8: Watch television for a few hours. Write down every program that you watch on every channel. Include every channel swap and the times at which it happened. Next, watch YouTube videos for one hour. Write down every video you watch and the approximate duration that you spent watching each. After listing out each of these, provide 2-3 sentences about the specific strategies that television and YouTube used to keep you viewing for this length of time.

**Week 9**

Cable: A Wired vs. Wireless World

Read: Ted Turner reading

Media Reflection 9: Pick three very different cable channels. For each channel, find a source that details their “corporate overview” and a second source that discusses their “viewer demographics.” Print out all six pages. In your reflection, for each channel, describe the specific audiences that each channel attempts to reach. For each, in two sentences use specific language (direct quotes with citations) from your sources (Lexis Nexis, Bloomberg, corporate web sites). For each channel, list three sponsors who reinforce your claim of that channel's demographic. Finally, after each one, tell me about their closest competition and how the audiences that the two channels seek differ.

**3/13-3/17 No Classes Held (University Spring Break)****Week 10**Cable Continued &  
New Viewing Practices

Read: Winslow “SVOD is the New Green”

Media Reflection 10: Everyone knows about Netflix, Amazon Prime, and Hulu, but there are some lesser-known up-and-coming SVOD services. Find three of the most promising ones and explain them in 2-3 sentences each. Explain why they will be successful. At the end, in a new paragraph, tell me which one will be a juggernaut within a decade by detailing the recurrent need from the history of broadcast and new media that this OTT SVOD fulfills?

**Week 11**

Audiences &amp; Media Effects

Read: McQuail Ch. 17

Media Reflection 11: Experiment on your friends! In this experiment, you will manipulate the presence and absence of media (ex: “Losing” the remote control or having it in sight. Hanging out with a friend and having recorded music playing or sitting in silence.). You will try the situation of your choosing with the medium in question and one without. You will do the same experiment on three different people. In your write up, you will tell me first about the experiment, and then a detailed paragraph on your findings between the two situations. What elements of the media technology / content led to the effects?

**Week 12**Mass Communication Effects &  
Media Theories

Read: McQuail Ch. 18

Assign: Media Observation and Reflection

Media Reflection 12: Choose three of the following five theories: Cultivation, Spiral of Silence, Priming, Agenda Setting, Social Learning Theory. For each of the three theories: first, in one sentence of plain language, tell what it is (the relationship between media and effect on the audience). Next, tell me about a specific situation where you directly observed the theory happening with people that you know and media. Remember that media content (as the independent variable) causes the theories to happen (dependent variable).

**Week 13**

Media Studies

Read: Kellner and Durham – “Adventures in  
Media Studies”

Media Reflection 13: Select a media text that people you know use (this can be a platform, an app, a television show, a type of music medium, a magazine, etc.). Interview three people with different demographics about the same media text. Find out what it means to them, how they use it, the gratifications they attain with it, and what effects they believe it has on them. Transcribe your interviews and include them in your reflection. For the reflection, in a detailed paragraph tell me how the same media text has different meanings/gratifications for different demographics.

**Week 14**

Media Studies & Encoding/Decoding  
Medium Theory

Read: Hall “Encoding/Decoding”  
McLuhan “The Medium is the Message”  
**Media observation and reflection paper due (4/17)**

Media Reflection 14: Pick a message that you wish to communicate about how you are currently doing. Communicate this message across three different media/platforms (ex: Instagram, SMS, Facebook, phone call, Twitter). For your reflection, show me pictures of the three forms of communication and tell me specifically how your encoding differed on each platform. Next, tell me about how people on each of the three platforms decoded the message differently (using specific examples). Finally, in a separate paragraph, tell me about the normative traits as well as social conventions of the channel that cause these three channels to require different communication tactics.

**Week 15**

Representational Practices

Read: O'Donnell “Representation”

Media Reflection 15: Find two photographs. One should depict the perfect man. The other should depict the perfect woman. Underneath each of the photos on the page, describe five *mise en scene* elements, three production elements, three contextual factors of the distribution, and two narrative actions that construct the ideal woman/man (13 in total for each picture).

**Finals Week**

5/1

Monday at 2:45 p.m. as scheduled by the university

Media Reflection 16: You are starting your career and the owner of the company invites you to her/his office to discuss the current media ecosystem. In detail, explain each of the following and include an actual media example to prove your point.

1. How media effects happen.
2. Why putting a message “out there” is a misleading phrase.
3. Why framing is important in language.
4. Why encoding and decoding can often differ.
5. How does the medium itself impacts the message.
6. Why social media is not a magic marketing solution.