

Communication 2520: Introduction to Mass Communication
 Spring 2018. Section 001. 3 Credit Hours.
 Room: Coleman Hall 1210
 MW 3-4:15 p.m.

Instructor: Dr. Scott Walus
Email: smwalus@eiu.edu

Office: 1810 Coleman Hall
Office Hours: M 7-8 p.m.; T 6-7 p.m.;
 W 10-11 a.m., 4:15-5:15 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.

Criteria for Evaluation

14 points Brings

These are typed responses to a stated prompt. There are 29 “brings” in total meaning 2 brings = one point (with the ability to miss one without consequence). These are due at the beginning of class and you must be present for the duration of the entire class to be eligible for credit. These must be typewritten and handed in within the first 5 minutes of a class or they will not be accepted. Each element of the prompt must be addressed completely and thoughtfully. I am always glad to look at them in advance to guarantee that you earn full credit.

4 points A Day Without a Screen

Oxygen is not something you consider until it is not available. In this project, you will avoid all screens for a 24 hour period and take field notes on the experience. In your report, you will address a series of prompts in claim/data/warrant form to articulate the role of media in your life.

4 points Media Observation & Reflection

In this project, you will apply your newfound knowledge on the effects of mass communication on audiences. Through a personal media journal the first 24 hours, and observations of others in multiple locations over the next 24 hours (complete with field notes), you will engage with multiple prompts and report in claim/data/warrant form the influence mass communication on individuals.

22 points total**General Grading Guidelines**

Projects in the professional world do not receive partial credit. They are either of professional quality or not. However, projects of a professional quality seldom happen on a first draft. They nearly always require revisions that ultimately improve the project. The assessments in this class will mirror the professional world of mass communication.

- All assignments are assigned orally. (There is always substantial time for clarification in class.)
- You must have your project in class during the class that it is due or else you cannot make revisions, and therefore receive a zero. There is a five minute grace period in the beginning of class, after these five minutes, it will be considered late and therefore a zero.
- All projects must be in hard copy form (absolutely no digital copies will be accepted) in print form. Additionally, they must be properly fastened together (ex: staple, paper clip, folder) or else they will not be accepted (no a folded corner does not count, and no, I do not have a stapler. This is college, buy a stapler).
- There is only the score of full points or zero. The score of full points will be awarded to complete and throughout projects that thoughtfully meet all assigned criteria.
- If you get a zero, you have two weeks to revise it into a quality project that thoughtfully fulfills all criteria. If it meets the quality required, you receive full credit. I encourage you to discuss the revisions with me during office hours to assure that you earn the 100%. Additionally, just because you make revisions, does not guarantee points. The project has to be right. This can take one draft or four.
- I am on your team and will do everything I can to help you get the project to a polished level of quality. We serve the product, not our egos!

There are several advantages to this grading process. First, it mirrors a professional environment, where your work is not complete until it is ready for the public. Secondly, it rewards good work with full credit. Remember, you start this (and every course) with zero points, and you must earn your way up Point Mountain. Third, it allows for revision, which is an invaluable skill and will motivate you to do quality work as you must stand by your work. The drafting process is an invaluable one. Unlike other classes “just getting it done” does not get you points; it must be right.

Note: The revision option does not apply to “brings.” These are all or nothing where full credit is awarded if you attend class that day (on time and for the full duration) and the “bring” contains all requested elements in a thoughtful manner.

General Grading Guidelines:

Grades will be assigned as follows:

100-90% = A

89-80% = B

79-70% = C

69-60% = D

59- 0% = F

Attendance, late work, and two extension coupons:

While there is no formal attendance policy in the course, you are required to be present on-time and for the duration of a class where is an assignment is due or it will not be accepted. Let me reiterate, no late work is accepted in this course as it only leads to future problems. This includes “brings,” which made up 63.6% of this course's grade. We spend each class discussing and unpacking media theories and concepts and the “bring” is meant to prime you for the discussion. They cannot be separated from one another and there are no exceptions.

That being said, life does happen sometimes. With this in mind, this syllabus includes two extension coupons that can be used on any assignment for any reason without any explanation needed. This coupon

allows you an extension on any assignment (bring or project) until the next class period, and you still receive full points if you accomplish the assignment satisfactorily. Here is how to use the coupon:

1. You may only use two coupons per semester. This system is meant to be flexible and to simplify life for both of us in the event that you miss class or cannot complete an assignment on time. By using these coupons, you will not ask me to accept any other late work this semester regardless of your circumstance. If you ask me to accept late work after using your coupons, the previous coupons will be considered null and void and you will receive zeros on those projects.
2. These coupons can be used at any point in the semester through week 14. This means that coupons cannot be used in the final two weeks of the semester.
3. Write your name on it and staple or paper clip it to your assignment. Folded over does not count and will not be accepted.
4. If you miss a “bring,” you must talk to a classmate about the topic of the day and provide a 2-3 sentence summary of the discussion with the original “bring.”

Cell Phones & Digital Devices:

Absolutely no cell phone / tablet / laptop / digital device usage is allowed in this class. Unless directly directed to use the device for in-class research or if you inform the professor about an urgent situation where someone will be contacting you, device usage is absolutely banned. This classroom is a space for complex thought and conversation. In order to have complex thought and conversation, you need to be present without disruption. This policy is supported by unequivocal data on the negative correlation between screens in the classroom and learning.

1. A Massachusetts Institute of Technology study demonstrated that it is impossible for the brain to multi-tasking and any attempt to do so “ruins productivity, causes mistakes, and impedes creative thought.” Disrupting a thought process by checking digital content is not good for learning or the generation of new ideas.
2. Multiple empirical studies have demonstrated that screens in the classroom diminish learning. A Princeton study demonstrated how taking notes on a laptop lowered comprehension of material and retention. Studies by Kaspersky found that the mere presence of a smart phone on a desk lowered test scores by 23%, causes “digital amnesia,” and makes employees 26% overall less productive at work.
3. Checking your phone also makes class time emotionally less enjoyable. The National Institute of Health found that a rise in anxiety and stress is directly related to problematic cell phone usage. If you believe you will have a difficult time abstaining from digital devices, you are not alone. A Baylor University study found that 60% of college students felt mentally and physically addicted to their cell phones.

In order to encourage a singular focus, I will not accept whatever assignment is due that day from you and you will receive a zero on it if you look at your digital device during class. This is any glance at a cell phone, tablet, or lap top. Notes should be taken by hand (and then transcribed later if you wish). There are no warnings. If you continue to look at the device, you will lose a previous “bring” point for each infraction. To add some spice to the equation, if I miss the infraction, and your classmate informs on you, he/she gets the “bring” point taken from you.

I run a classroom that places a premium on showing up and engaging with a topic. Under this system, conversations are more intriguing, students report a deeper understanding of material, and every class period goes by faster. “Be here now,” as there is no advantage to thinking about somewhere else that you are not.

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) 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 Course Schedule**Week 1 - What is mass communication?**

M: Introduction to Course

W: Defining media

Read: Durham Peters – “Mass Media”

Bring: After reading the Durham Peters article, create a list of five ways 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 and provide a 1-2 explanation of why. Finally, provide an example of the opposite (non-mediated being more effective than mediated) with the same 1-2 sentence explanation of why.

Week 2 - Medium Theory

M: Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday – No classes held

W: Medium Theory & Media Ecology

Read: Meyrowitz - “Medium Theory”

Bring: Index your interests in media and at the top tell me what your perfect job would be after graduating. Next, make a list of any 20 medium channels/platforms (ex: Television, email, Twitter, letter, phone, SMS) and rank them from the best (1) channel to worst (20) channel through which you would apply for that job.

Week 3 – Uses & Gratifications / Media Ownership

M: Uses and Gratifications

Bring: Create a three column sheet. In the first column, for four hours, write down every medium with which you engage (ex: SMS, radio, applications, television channels, etc.). Before you engage with it write down your gratification sought (what sociopsychological need you are looking to fulfill) in the second column. After using the medium, write down your gratification obtained (what gratification you got out of it) in the third column.

W: Media Ownership

Bring: 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 each (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 (try searching the term “investors” with the conglomerate name). For both the medium and content's media conglomerate, print out and include the source(s). Next, for both the medium and the content, provide how the conglomerate could theoretically use its other holdings to promote that medium/content without spending ad money (using specific examples).

Week 4 - Monetary Strategies, Advertising, & Mass Culture**M: Media Business Strategies**

Read: McQuail - “Media Economics”

Bring: Ad-supported content differs greatly from subscription-based content in both format and actual content. In three separate paragraphs, you will compare one ad-supported television service, one ad-supported website, and one ad-supported streaming service (either a video or audio) to their ad-free, subscription-based counterparts. Focus your write-up on contrasting your specific experiences with each ad-supported/subscription-based pair. How specifically do they differ?

W: Advertising and mass culture

Bring: Create a three column sheet. In the first column, 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: In column two, provide a sentence for each explaining why each ad is at this location and in column three tell me what effect that the advertiser imagined that it would have upon you.

Week 5 – Mechanical Media**M: Moving images & film**

Bring: Moving images were not projected onto a large screen in a cinema until nearly 1900. Instead, they were viewed privately in homes or through an individualized slot. Looking at web sites that discuss moving image media formats from 1800-1890 (ex: Kaleidoscope, Zoetrope, Kinetoscope), find pictures of the five that you believe are the most important in the evolution of film. Underneath, provide a sentence telling me why you believe it was influential (ex: subject matter, length of use, common-ness of medium, ability to tell a story, etc.).

Assign: A Day Without a Screen

W: Sound recordings

Bring: Select your favorite popular song from the 1960s or 70s (if you do not have one, I'm sure you can call your parents and ask for an example of a song). Next, using a variety of sources (ex: Discogs) list out every single format of media on which this song has been released. Additionally, do some research on the radio and television outlets (ex: FM, XM, VH1) on which the song has been played. List these out as well.

Week 6 – Early Electronic**M: Early Wireless**

Bring: While commercial radio began in the 1920s, the war for the airwaves began with dots and dashes through wires and crackling voices through a phone line. Read up on the three major figures in early

“wireless telephony” and voice (Guglielmo Marconi, Lee de Forest, and Alexander Graham Bell) and posit 1. Who was the most influential in the development of radio and for what three specific reasons why is he? 2. In your supported opinion, looking at the evidence, was radio invented primarily for entertainment or information programming?

W: Radio Programming Develops

Bring: In the era before widespread television, radio broadcasts mirrored the programming practices of what we consider television today. Searching through archives of your choice (ex: oldradioprograms.us, archive.org/details/oldtimeradio) listen to one episode of a comedy program, one episode of a drama/detective show, and one variety show. For each, in bullet point form, tell me the episode or air date, a synopsis of the episode, and three elements of the show that struck you as strange and why.

Week 7 – The Network Era of Television

M: The Rise of Television

Read: Biagi - “Television Changing Channels”

Bring: Select your favorite television channel. Construct two timelines. First, construct a comprehensive timeline of all of its ownership changes of the individual channel from current day to the date that it started. Second, figure out what media conglomerate that it is a part of, and trace that conglomerate through all its changes all the way back to the 1930s and the days of radio networks (ex: NBC Blue, NBC Red, CBS). Note that this will take some time and research to follow the history of ownership and conglomerates.

W: Flow and Programming Strategies

Read: Williams - “Television as sequence or flow”

Bring: Watch legacy television (broadcast, cable, satellite) 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 an over-the-top television platform (ex: Netflix, Hulu, Amazon Prime) for a few hours. Make a note of every program that you watched and the path by which you chose these programs. 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, OTT television, and YouTube used to keep you viewing for this length of time.

Week 8 - Cable Television

M: Cable and the niche-ification of television

Bring: Pick three very different cable channels. For each channel, describe two of their “core demographics” (www.comcastspotlight.com/offerings/overview is a good source for this). Print out all six pages. In your reflection, for each channel, describe the specific audiences that each channel attempts to reach. 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 channel-wise (ex: ESPN and Fox Sports) and how the audiences that the two channels seek differ.

W: Cable continued

Read: Ted Turner - “My Beef with Big Media”

Bring: After reading billionaire television mogul Ted Turner's views on regulation and competition in media, find three broadcast/television/radio companies that are operating under the three original mandates of the FCC (localism, diversity, competition). For each, describe the channel, and tell me how they are fulfilling all three mandates.

Due: A Day Without a Screen

Week 9 - New Televisual Frontiers & Broadcast Law

M: New Televisual Frontiers

Read: Winslow - "SVOD Is the New Green"

Bring: Everyone knows about Netflix, Amazon Prime, Sling, and Hulu, but there are some lesser-known up-and-coming SVOD services. Find two of the most promising ones and in 2-3 sentences per SVOD, explain them (what makes them different) and why they will be the next big thing. Ad-supported video on demand (AVOD) is also starting to make waves. Find two of the most promising AVODs and, in 2-3 sentences per AVOD, explain them and why they will be the next big thing. At the very end, predict the future, and out of the At the end, in a new paragraph, tell me which one will be the juggernaut within the decade. Support your prediction with facts from the history of television that show the future.

W: Broadcast Law

Bring: Although the First Amendment of the Constitution guarantees that "Congress shall make no law... abridging the freedom of speech or of the press," several restrictions are on the books about content on television and radio. For this bring, find three acts related to television, radio, and broadcasting that you did not know were illegal. In 2-3 sentences per act, list the law, a brief description of what it entails, and why it surprised you that it was illegal.

Week 10 - New Media & Mobile Communication

M: New Media

Read: 1. Gleick - "Prest-o, Change-o";
2. Harmon - "Trials of multi-tasking" 3. Shenk - "First law of data smog"

Bring: 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, in two bullet points, 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.

W: Mobile Communication & Digital Amnesia

Read: Kaspersky - "The impact of digital amnesia"

Bring: Over the course of an average school day, keep a journal of how you used your smart device and computer as an extension of your memory. Specifically detail every piece of information that you kind of knew before, but instead looked it up on a device. This includes things such as phone numbers, meeting times, trivia, class information, job-related activities, and anything else that without a digital device you would have had to remember. Not remembering is not an excuse!

Week 11 - Media Effects & Audiences

M: Audiences Audience

Read: McQuail - "Audience theory and research traditions"

Bring: Watch the local newscast on television (WEIU News Watch at 5:30 p.m. or WCIA 3 News). List out, in two columns, the types of planned and unplanned hypothetical effects that this particular newscast may have on an audience. Then, in a separate bullet list, tell me a list of every audience who may see a clip of this telecast / video over the next five years.

Assign: Media Observation and Reflection

W: Media Effect Types

Read: McQuail - "Media Effects"

Bring: 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. In your big conclusion tell me, what elements of the media technology or media content (IV) led to the effects (DV)?

Week 12 – Mass Communication Theories

M: Cultivation Theory, Diffusion of Innovation, & Social Learning Theory

Read: McQuail - “Social-Cultural Effects”

Bring: For all three of the three above theories (Cultivation Theory, Diffusion of Innovation, & Social Learning Theory): first, in one sentence of plain, basic language, tell what the theory entails (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. Tell me the specific independent variable (media content) that caused the dependent variable to happen (the effect as stated by the theory).

W: Agenda-setting, Priming, & Spiral of Silence

Bring: For all three of the three above theories (Agenda-setting, Priming, & Spiral of Silence): first, in one sentence of plain, basic language, tell what the theory entails (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. Tell me the specific independent variable (media content) that caused the dependent variable to happen (the effect as stated by the theory).

Week 13 – Media & Audience Meanings

M: Encoding / Decoding

Read – Hall - “Encoding / Decoding”

Bring: 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). Include pictures/screenshots 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 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.

W: Audience positions & cultural clusters

Bring: 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 bring. For the reflection, in a detailed paragraph tell me how the same media text has different meanings/gratifications for different demographics/positions/cultural clusters.

Week 14 - Message Analysis & Semiotics

M: Semiotics – Deconstructing message and meaning

Read: Fiske - “Codes of Television”

Bring: A magazine of your choosing (note: it must be a magazine and not a newspaper. Booth has multiple available for check out and multiple stores have them for sale). Select one page and trace out 10 manners by which the producers attempted to make meaning. In one column, put the signifier (the symbolic element we can see), and in the other corresponding column, list the signified (the meaning they attempted to make).

Due: Media Observation and Reflection

W: Semiotics and narrative in message

Bring: Select any television spot that intrigues you then storyboard the entire ad. Select a storyboard template online with the image box on top and lines below. For each shot in the commercial, either draw or use a screen grab for the box (every individual shot!). On the lines beneath it, you should include: All dialogue (verbatim), any actor actions, all camera movements (ex: pan, tilt, crane), any sounds effects or music, and transitions (ex: dissolve, star wipe). It should be complete enough to provide all details to accurately recreate the ad.

Week 15 – Message Analysis – Representation & Framing

M: Representation

Read: O'Donnell - "Representation and its audience"

Bring: 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).

W: Framing

Read: Entman - "Framing"

Bring: 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 two organizations that support this issue, and two who are against it. Go to each organization's web site and print out their "about" and any other descriptors 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 16 – Final draft / final reflection

May, 3 (Thursday), 12:30-2:30 p.m. (as scheduled by the university)

Bring: 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 the medium itself impacts the message.
2. How media effects happen.
3. Why the encoding and decoding of a message can often differ.
4. Why putting a message "out there" is a misleading and dangerous phrase.
5. How small things make a big difference in media content (Whether we intend for them to do so or not).
6. How understanding individuals' psychological needs and media history can predict the future of both media channels and content.

This coupon entitles _____ to turn in any one assignment the next class period of CMN _____ for literally any reason. This includes all excused or unexcused reasons including, but certainly not limited to: illness, alarm clock malfunction, oversleeping, leaving for vacation, printer malfunction, funerals, weddings, "just totally spacing on it," work issues, computer explosions, not understanding an assignment, exhaustion, vehicle malfunction, or literally any reason. This coupon provides you with an extension to do the assignment (from "brings" to major projects) without question or judgment. This coupon must be attached to the late assignment.

EXTENSION COUPON

Usage Notes: There is an absolute limit of two extensions per semester.

Additional requests result in the voiding of all coupons. If you choose to use this coupon on a typically unexcused reason and then you have a family emergency / illness / some other typically excused reason, you are out of luck. Use these wisely.

Restrictions: Non-transferrable. Not valid after Week 14. Individual use only.

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