Standard Course Outline

Journalism 110 Introduction to Mass Communications

Goals

The course should help students to develop and improve their critical thinking, reading, and writing skills by focusing on the relationship between mass communication media and society. By analyzing the interactions between mass media and social, economic, political, cultural, ethnic-based, and gender-based issues, students should be able to sharpen their critical thinking skills; to appreciate and understand multiple perspectives; and to balance arguments and counter-arguments pertaining to media-related issues.

The course has a significant writing component. Students are exposed to broader and deeper perspectives and views related to the mass media and their role in a democratic society. They are asked to examine issues relating to racial, ethnic and gender-based stereotypes; as well as ethical questions, and problem-solving, "real life" scenarios. The course also challenges students to critically analyze their own values, attitudes and beliefs, and examine how those have been shaped or influenced by the mass media.

It is important to notice that, although they might differ now, future course syllabi will conform with this standard course outline.

Course Objectives and Measurable Outcomes

By the end of the semester, students should be able:

• To synthesize and explain the economic, political, cultural, social, gender-based, and ethnic-based influences that shape and determine the multifaceted interactions between mass media and society.

Corresponding assignments: media journal, class presentation, essay exams.

• To contrast, compare, and apply the theories that explain the relationships between mass media and society.

Corresponding assignments: essay exams.

• To identify and critically analyze values, assumptions, beliefs and attitudes that shape audiences' interaction with the mass media.

Corresponding assignments: media journal, class presentation.
• To synthesize and use concepts such as “information society,” “globalization,” “convergence,” “interactivity,” “media ethics,” and “concentration of ownership,” among others.

Corresponding assignments: media journal, class presentation, essay exams.

• To identify and evaluate the effects of information technology on individuals and society.

Corresponding assignments: class presentation, essay exams.

• To anticipate how information and media technology will affect their lives and careers.

Corresponding assignment: media journal.

Enhanced Skills

• Critical Thinking: By analyzing the interactions between mass media and social, economic, political, cultural, ethnic-based, and gender-based issues, students should be able to sharpen their critical thinking skills. Part of that process includes being able to appreciate and understand multiple perspectives; and to balance arguments and counter-arguments pertaining to media-related issues. Instructors will model critical thinking in everything they do in class.

For example, when discussing a specific media issue, such as Napster and the digital music revolution, students will be presented with readings that approach the problem from different perspectives (economic, political, social, cultural, pro/con). Students will be asked to evaluate, synthesize and present those conflicting views, based on the authors' assumptions, values and beliefs. Students will also be asked to examine their own positions, and evaluate how the new information presented and discussed in class altered/reinforced their original views.

Written and oral assignments, as well as in-class exercises, will often emphasize the need to move beyond personal opinion, into the realm of informed, critical analysis. Students will be instructed to critically evaluate diverse sources, theories and concepts; add relevant examples; synthesize arguments and counter-arguments; and write their journals, essays, or
conduct their class presentations in ways that clearly discusses the different economic, political and cultural factors involved in the particular issue.

**Modes of Instruction**

We will follow an interactive style of teaching and learning. Students and instructor will share the responsibility for a productive learning experience. The course materials draw largely from academic and popular readings, as well as from current media-related events. Students will be able to relate those materials to their daily lives, and should be prepared to engage in lively discussion and sharing of ideas.

Instructors often use student-centered pedagogical techniques, such as small group discussions; group assignments and class presentations; role-playing exercises for the discussion of multiple perspectives; and in-class readings, to convey and discuss course content.

Students are often required to articulate and synthesize their positions, arguments, and beliefs to the rest of the class, making sure they include as many conflicting perspectives as possible. Journals are also used to prompt students to critically reflect on their previously held assumptions; journals help students to critically understand (and constantly revise) those assumptions.

**Use of Technology**

Because of the media-related nature of the class, technology is heavily used throughout the semester. Instructors constantly use Internet resources (web sites, readings, media articles) to enhance course content. Students are asked to find current information and use web resources whenever they have to make a class presentation. Students and instructors are also constantly bringing to class outside, technology-based materials that will enhance class discussion. For example, in a recent discussion of how new technologies are affecting media economics, content, and content distribution, both instructor and students drew upon Napster and the latest developments in digital music to make their point across.
To facilitate the use of technology, faculty have requested the course be always scheduled in a "smart," technology-enhanced lecture room, with access to the Internet, a VCR and TV set, and a PowerPoint-capable computer.

### Outline of Material Covered

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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| 1 | Introduction to Class  
Syllabus and Schedule Review  
Group and presentation assignments  
Changing Media Environment  
Convergence of Media and Convergence of Technologies |
| 2 | Media Theory  
Mass Production and Mass Distribution  
Ownership Patterns  
Critical Studies of Mass Media  
Political Economy and Marxist Analysis  
Reception Studies and Active Audiences  
Societal Functions of the Media |
| 3 | Books and Magazines  
History and Impact of Print Media  
Technological Trends in the Publishing Industry  
E-books  
Diversification and Fragmentation of Magazine Audiences  
Group Presentations Start  
*Media Journal Week* |
| 4 | Newspapers  
History and the Democratic Tradition  
Trends in Newspaper Technology  
Are Newspapers a Dying Medium?  
Newspaper Chains  
*Media Journal due* |
| 5 | Radio and Recorded Music  
Radio Telegraphy and Early Sound Broadcasting  
Radio Networks: Rise and Fall |
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<td>Film and Video</td>
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<td>The First Mass Audiences</td>
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<td>The Studio System</td>
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<td>Trends in Film and Video Technology</td>
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<td>Independent Filmmaking</td>
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<td>Marketing and Economic Impact of the Movie Industry</td>
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<td>Communications Infrastructure</td>
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<td>From Telegraph to Telephone</td>
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<td>Laying the Foundations for the Internet</td>
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<td>Television and Cable</td>
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<td>History of Television and Cable</td>
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<td>A &quot;Vast Wasteland?&quot;</td>
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<td>TV and Cable Ownership and Control</td>
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<td>Audiences and Ratings</td>
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<td>Computer Media and the Internet</td>
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<td>Anticipating the Future</td>
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<td>Convergence of Old Media into a New Medium</td>
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<td>Censorship and Ethical Issues</td>
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<td>Opinion Leaders and Decision Making</td>
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<td>Demystifying the PR Profession</td>
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<td>Advertising and Its Impact on Society</td>
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<td>Advertising in a Consumer-driven Society</td>
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<td>Media Effects</td>
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<td>From Powerful Media to Selective Effects</td>
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<td>Media Theories</td>
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<td>Violence in the Media</td>
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<td>Pornography and Antisocial Behavior</td>
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| 13 | Media and Inequalities  
|    | Minorities and the Media  
|    | Gender-Biased Media  
| 14 | Media Policy, Law, and Ethics  
|    | First Amendment  
|    | Privacy Issues, Concentration of Ownership  
|    | Copyrights  
|    | Media Policymaking  
| 15 | Media Globalization  
|    | The Future of the Media  
|    | Global Village or Global Metropolis?  
| 16 | Final Exams  

**Assignments**

A. **Class Presentation**

Groups are responsible for leading the discussion on an assigned topic. Each topic will include *at least one* required reading assigned by the instructor. When you assign additional readings for your session, make sure you *do that in a timely manner*. Be creative and engaging in your presentation. Further instructions and a list of topics will be handed out in class. *(See attached handout)*

B. **Media Journal**

You will keep a journal where you will record your mass media use during the week of Sept. 11th through the 14th. Keep a daily log of all your media activity (including any "unintended" media use). Make a list of all the media you remember using or being exposed to. Estimate the amount of hours you spent with each medium. You will be asked to answer
questions that will help you analyze your media consumption patterns. Further instructions will be handed out in class. (See attached handout).

C. Written Exams
You will have two written exams during the semester. Both of them will include short-essay questions, which will ask you to analyze, discuss, and elaborate on the topics covered in class. Besides assessing your critical understanding of the issues, the exams will also ask you to go a step further, and substantiate your answers by providing a thorough discussion of the readings. Exams will also pose hypothetical scenarios, problems, and real-life situations, to assess your ability to synthesize knowledge and information, and propose solutions to the issues posed.

D. Group Papers
This assignment is an extension of the class presentation assignment. Each group will produce a 10-page paper that synthesizes the readings, research, and class discussion of the topic assigned to them. You are expected to be the "experts" on the topic, and the paper should reflect that expertise. Again, this is much more than an opinion or position paper: you will examine the issues thoroughly, from different and often conflictive perspectives; you will synthesize different views by incorporating the readings, external resources, and class discussion.

E. Final Portfolio
Your final portfolio will include the media journal, the written exams, a copy of the group paper, handouts and external resources, as well as an introductory 2-page essay in which you will evaluate how the work you did in the class met the course outcomes, goals, and requirements outlined in the beginning of the semester.
Grading Standards

Because it combines the work done throughout the semester, your final portfolio will be used to assess and determine your final grade. The portfolio should clearly indicate a qualitative improvement in the work done. University grading policy determines that "C" is the average passing grade for a course. A "C" grade indicates a satisfactory level of performance in the class, and completion of the course requirements. A "B" grade indicates an above average performance; and an "A" indicates superior progress and a higher level of performance. A grade of "D" denotes an inadequate or unsatisfactory level of performance, and an "F" indicates failure to complete even the minimum course requirements.

Each student will receive extensive feedback on his or her performance throughout the semester. Each assignment will be returned to the student with a grade that reflects the aforementioned standards, and comments meant to improve his or her performance in the class.

Grade Distribution

Attendance/Participation 10%
Class Presentation 15%
Media Journal 15%
Written Exams (2x15%) 30%
Group Paper 20%
Final Portfolio Presentation and Essay 10%

Attendance Policy

Attendance is expected. Each unexcused absence to a class session will be deducted from the student's participation grade. Please refer to the university catalog for a description of CSULB's new attendance policy.

Plagiarism

You are expected to use and quote readings and outside resources in your work. Make sure you give credit to those sources, even when you paraphrase them. Plagiarism is the act of taking ideas, words, or another's work and offering
it as your own, without giving credit to the source. Plagiarism will be treated very seriously, and might result in the student’s automatic failure in the class. Please consult the current Schedule of Classes for the University’s policy on cheating and plagiarism.

Multiple Sections

The Journalism Department often offers multiple sections of Journalism 110. Instructors are required to submit their syllabi and course materials to the department’s Curriculum Development committee, for review. Syllabi are reviewed and evaluated at least once during the semester, to ensure that readings and assignments are consistent throughout the program. Changes in the course’s goals, objectives, assignments and readings are done in consultation with the instructors teaching the class.

Instructional requirements

Textbook currently adopted:

- Straubhaar & LaRose, Media Now (Wadsworth 1999).

Additional readings and resources (Students might also recommend additional readings for their respective group presentations):

- Napster, Inc. (www.napster.com); Save Napster (www.savenapster.net); Stop Napster (www.stopnapster.com).
• Connections: AT&T’s Vision of the Future – 14 min. video produced by AT&T.
• Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ): http://spj.org/spjhome.htm
• Drudge Report: http://www.drudgereport.com/
• Brill’s Content: http://www.brillsccontent.com