New Media and Social Change
SYA 4935
Tuesday and Thursday, 12:30pm to 1:45pm
Bellamy 517

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Office hours: Tuesday 11am to 12:00pm and by appointment

Course Description: This seminar surveys some of the research outlining the influence of mass media on individuals, institutions, and culture. We will pay attention to both “old” media (e.g., Television and newspapers) and “new” media (e.g., websites and social media) and broadly explore how technological changes effect social institutions and society. The course is comprised of three segments. We begin by examining the political economy of mass media. Specifically, this segment highlights how factors such as ownership and the emphasis on profit-making as well as professional norms shape information, how it flows across the media landscape, and what this means for deliberative democratic processes. In the second segment of the class, we explore the effects of new media on social institutions such as education, religion, work, the law, and politics. We conclude the class by surveying some of the research on mass media and race, class, gender, sexuality, and disability.

Course Objectives: The primary objectives of the seminar are 1) to provide you with an overview of how mass media work and influence individuals, institutions, and culture, 2) show you how new media are changing social institutions and the ways we interact with and in them, 3) to give you an opportunity to conduct preliminary research on mass media, and 4) to start getting you ready for graduate school. This course also is designed to help you with three skills necessary for a successful graduate and professional career:

- Effective reading and notetaking
- Effective organization of time and materials
- Effective communication

Required Books:
- Phillips, Whitney. 2015. *This is Why We Can’t Have Nice Things: Mapping the Relationship between Online Trolling and Mainstream Culture*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

** Additional readings will be available via Blackboard as a PDF.
Course Requirements:
There are four main requirements in the course:

Course Preparation and Participation. Florida State University policy requires attendance to all classes. Showing up to class, however, is not enough. You need to be prepared to participate in the course each week. You will earn/lose points weekly based on your preparation and participation – and I WILL call on you if you are not participating. Be advised, if you are on your computer doing work for other classes during class time, you will lose all of the preparation and participation points for the day. If you are in my class, I expect you to be paying attention and engaged. I will do some lecturing to “fill in the gaps” and to introduce theories. I would encourage you to take hand written notes. All the research shows that writing – not typing – information leads to better recall and learning.

Three 1-page Article Summarizes: You will be responsible for leading three short discussions during the semester. For this assignment you will prepare a ONE page summary (typed) and analysis of the readings (two pages if it is a book). The synopsis should be organized as follows:

- Title and author of the piece
- A brief description of the main theoretical contribution and points or linkages (if any).
- A brief description of the main empirical contributions
- A brief description of the data and methods used (if applicable)
- Your reaction to the piece. The reaction component of your synopsis should discuss the strengths and limitations of the theoretical insights, address the methodological strengths and weakness, and/or evaluate the theoretical insights in the context of the readings of the previous weeks. In other words the purpose of the synopsis is to both summarize the readings and encourage synthetic and analytical thinking. Please keep in mind that analytical thinking is different than criticism. While a reaction may involve critique of theory and methods it is cognizant of the contributions made by other scholars and makes suggestions about how we might improve our scholarship.

- A list of three course readings to which the piece relates and a brief statement on how.

- A list of three keywords that best describe the theoretical orientation, specific topic, and methods used in the piece.

In addition, you need to prepare at least three questions or comments for the class to discuss. These may be included on a separate sheet of paper. Please email your synopsis to the entire class by 8pm the day before it is due and bring a hard copy for me.

Preliminary Research Projects: You will conduct preliminary research on a topic related to the course. The basic idea is that you will pose a research question, collect some data that addresses the question, and analyze the data. This is NOT a research paper. I do NOT expect you to deliver a complete paper at the end of the semester. The purpose of the paper is to give you the opportunity to collect and meaningfully analyze some data, report some preliminary findings, and reflect on what you would need to change/do differently to make the project work better. In short, this is a learning experience. If you have an interest in a topic (e.g., religion), add a media
spin for the class and explore this for the preliminary research project. You should build on an existing interest.

Here are the components of the project:

- **Annotated bibliography and preliminary research question (Due Week 4):** Your annotated bibliography should consist of at least 7 academic sources that are related to your research question. Start with what you know, what is on the syllabus, and look for additional cites in the bibliographies and using Google scholar. You can give me more than 7 cites, but for the cites most closely related to your question you need to provide a 5-7 sentence paragraph that summarizes the findings or theoretical perspective that is relevant to your question. Be clear about what you want to remember about the article. Your notes should be geared to help you – not reiterate the abstract.

- **Revised question and data collection plan (Due Week 6):** This week you will hand in the revised research question and a plan that details what data you are going to collect, how much of it there will be (e.g., how many cases), over what period you will collect (create a timeline for yourself and put it in your schedule), how you will clean the data, and a clear statement about how this data answers your research question. Don’t worry! We will talk about these in class.

- **Data collection complete and data analysis plan (Due Week 9):** You will hand in a copy of your sample as well as a data analysis plan. Your plan should identify your variables, how they are operationalized, how you will analyze your data, and discuss how the data and variables address your research question.

- **Data analysis reflection 1 (Due Week 11):** You should have analyzed most (if not all) of your data by now. You’ve probably run into a problem or two. Keep track of these, note how you fixed the issue, and what you think you might do differently next time. If you have specific questions about your project or the research process, make note of them.

- **Data analysis reflection 2 (Due Week 14):** For the second reflection you want to hand in preliminary tables, notes about what you see in the data as well as what it suggests, and list any problems or questions you have.

- **“Paper” is due (Finals Week):** This not-a-paper should have a short introduction that talks about your research question and why it matters before jumping into the data and methods section and, then, the analysis. If you put effort into the above assignments, you will mostly be bringing the previous assignments together in a cohesive way, and detail, and expanding your analysis. While I don’t expect full blown projects or papers, I do expect these to be well-written and well put together. I will post additional information regarding my expectations for this assignment.

**Preliminary Research Presentation:** On the last week of regular class, you will give a short presentation summarizing your project. The presentation should introduce your case, discuss
your data and methods, and highlight your findings (even if they are non-findings). The goal of the presentations is to 1) give you an opportunity to share your interests with the class and 2) help you get comfortable presenting findings to an audience within time constraints. Your goal is to do the presentation without notes.

**Seminar grades:**
Your final grade will be based on the quality of your performance with respect to the course assignments and responsibilities. The allocation of points is as follows:

- Preparation and Participation – 25%
- Synopsis and presentation -- 15% (5% each)
- Preliminary research project – 50%
- Presentations – 10%

Your work will be evaluated as follows:

- **Check minus:** Indicates that your assignment is unclear, unfocused, lacks depth, and/or is underdeveloped/fails to meet the guidelines. This roughly corresponds with a “C.”
- **Check:** Indicates that your assignment is satisfactory. This roughly corresponds with a “B.”
- **Check plus:** Indicates that your assignment is particularly insightful, thoughtful, articulate, and an excellent example of quality academic writing/work. This roughly corresponds with an “A.”

**Course Policies and Student Responsibilities:**

1. **Students** are expected to be on time and attend all classes having completed the week’s reading and formulated thoughtful questions and/or comments. To do well in any graduate seminar, preparation for and attendance to class is absolutely necessary. I consider missing more than one class during the semester poor attendance. Missing two or more classes and/or consistent lateness will adversely affect your grade regardless of the reason.

2. **Students** are expected to listen and respond to the comments and concerns in a respectful and scholarly manner. Scholarly comments are:
   - Respectful of diverse opinions, analysis, and methodologies.
   - Invite and are open to follow up questions and/or discussion about the assumptions upon which comments are grounded.
   - Related to and advance the class and course material (rather than reflect personal beliefs).
   - Delivered in normal tones (rather than yelling and interrupting).
Unprofessional behavior will be penalized and may include being downgraded and/or dismissal from class.

3. Late assignments and papers will not be accepted. If you miss your presentation or other assignments, you can assume you received a “0.”

4. Missing work is not sufficient reason for a grade of Incomplete (I). An incomplete will not be given except under extenuating circumstances at the instructor’s discretion. Remember that the College of Social Science guidelines require that students seeking an “I” must be passing the course.

University Attendance Policy:
Excused absences include documented illness, deaths in the family and other documented crises, call to active military duty or jury duty, religious holy days, and official University activities. These absences will be accommodated in a way that does not arbitrarily penalize students who have a valid excuse. Consideration will also be given to students whose dependent children experience serious illness.

Academic Honor Policy:
The Florida State University Academic Honor Policy outlines the University's expectations for the integrity of students' academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members throughout the process. Students are responsible for reading the Academic Honor Policy and for living up to their pledge to "...be honest and truthful and...[to] strive for personal and institutional integrity at Florida State University." (Florida State University Academic Honor Policy, found at http://fda.fsu.edu/Academics/Academic-Honor-Policy)

Cheating and Plagiarism. The Provost and legal counsel of Florida State University warn us that any uses of others' copyrighted materials without proper acknowledgement is unlawful and may lead to criminal prosecution. To this end, please be scrupulous in using the work of others by giving full and appropriate credit to the sources and materials that you use. Please use care when taking words and phrases from others. If you use a string of three or more exact words from another source, you must place the words in quotes and cite the author, year and page number. Be a stickler about citing; cite more rather than less; cite early rather than late. Do NOT appropriate the concepts, phrases, or ideas of other people without giving them credit. If you do so, you risk losing your good name and getting into legal trouble. Any form of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, will result in a "zero" for that particular assignment or possibly an "F" for the course and may be reported to the University Judicial Office. Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated.

Your paper would be considered as plagiarized in part or entirely if you do any of the following:
- Submit a paper that was written by someone other than you.
- Submit a paper in which you use the ideas, metaphors or reasoning style of another, but do not cite that source and/or place that source in your list of references.
• Submit a paper in which you "cut and paste" or use the exact words of a source and you do not put the words within quotation marks, use footnotes or in-text citations, and place the source in your list of references.
• You commit patchwork plagiarism by overuse of quotations – 25% or more of your paper

**Disabilities.** Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should: Register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center; and bring a letter to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This should be done during the first week of class. This syllabus and other class materials are available in alternative format upon request. For more information about services available to FSU students with disabilities, contact the:

Student Disability Resource Center  
874 Traditions Way  
108 Student Services Building  
Florida State University  
Tallahassee, FL 32306-4167  
(850) 644-9566 (voice)  
(850) 644-8504 (TDD)  
sdrc@admin.fsu.edu  
[http://www.disabilitycenter.fsu.edu/](http://www.disabilitycenter.fsu.edu/)

**Syllabus Change Policy:** Except for changes that substantially affect implementation of the evaluation (grading) statement, this syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advance notice.