Sociology of Mass Media

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Mentors:  
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This distance learning course provides an overview and analysis of sociological perspectives regarding the role of mass media in American society. This is an important area of sociological inquiry because mass media shape American culture, politics, and social life. During the summer session we will examine the political economy of media, the role of news in democratic societies, media effects, and the role of technology in our lives.

Course Objectives:  
1. To provide you with a foundation in the major theoretical perspectives that guide how sociologists evaluate mass media and their influence on American society.  
2. To introduce you to empirical methods in the study of mass media.  
3. To strengthen your critical awareness and understanding of contemporary debates involving American media.

The following book is required for this course:  

This book may be ordered from the Bookstore, or from various online booksellers. Other required reading materials, films and PowerPoint lectures will be posted under “course material” in the appropriate week.

If you are having difficulty with Blackboard or accessing materials via Blackboard, contact the Blackboard help desk. Be advised that Apple users tend to have more difficulty accessing course videos.

Help Desk Hours & Contact Information  
Monday- Friday, 8am - 9:30pm (EST)  
Saturdays 9am - 7:00 pm (EST)  
Sundays 12-9pm (EST)

Email: help@fsu.edu (this generates a ticket)

Phone: If you have difficulties with Blackboard call: (850) 644-8004. You can also go to “Support” in Blackboard (the tab on top furthest the right).
Your grade for the course will be based on the total number of points you earn out of 280 possible points. The assignments are as follows:

Completion of “Online Bio” on Blackboard
You must complete the Online Bio before Midnight on Tuesday, August 30th to satisfy the “first-day attendance” policy. If you fail to do so, you will be dropped from the course. Your first task after you finish reading this syllabus should be to complete the Online Bio, which is a brief survey posted in the Syllabus section of the course.

Six open-book quizzes, each consisting of 10 questions (60 points)
These multiple-choice quizzes will be posted in “Testing” on Monday at approximately two week intervals throughout the semester. You will be able to find the answers to these quizzes in the assigned readings, online material, and films. In order to help you prepare for these quizzes, I have provided reading, film, and PowerPoint questions for each week. These questions will help you identify the important ideas and concepts in the course material, which will help prepare you for the course exams as well. You will have a five-day window (Monday to Friday) to take each quiz. You may take the quiz as many times as you want while the quiz window is open. The quizzes must be completed by Friday at 11pm. If your highest attempt is not recorded, contact your mentor. S/he can change this for you.

Media Use Analysis Paper (100 points total)
For this paper you will analyze your media habits relative to other students in the course. This paper has three parts:

• A 10-day media journal due 9/30 (25 points)
• Two graph summary of your media use due 10/28 (25 points)
• Analysis paper due 11/18 (50 points)

See the paper guidelines in the “paper guideline and submission” section of blackboard.
You will need to submit your work to Turnitin by 11pm on the day the assignment is due. Students agree that by taking this course the required assignments they hand in will be submitted to Turnitin for review. All submitted papers will be checked for originality, become source documents in the Turnitin database, and used for the purpose of detecting plagiarism in papers submitted in the future. Use of the Turnitin service is subject to the terms of the use agreement posted on the Turnitin website. BE SURE THAT YOUR SOFTWARE IS COMPATIBLE WITH THE Turnitin PROGRAM PRIOR TO THE DUE DATE.

You will find the Turnitin links in the Paper Guidelines and Submission folder. Be sure to CONFIRM your submission. If you do not confirm the submission, the paper will not submit. Print your confirmation sheet, which verifies that you successfully uploaded your paper. This is very important because I have no way of verifying your attempts to turn in a paper and unsuccessful attempts will result in a late penalty.

To be clear, navigating to the submission page does not “prove” that you submitted a paper (only that you went to the page) – nor does the creation of a document “prove” you wrote the paper before the deadline. In short, there are NO exceptions to my late policy!
To use this feature:
1. Click the *paper guidelines and submission* link in the course.
2. Click the *view/complete* link, which is under the analytical paper title. The submission form will open.
3. Click the *browse* button to locate the file you want to submit. Be sure to name your paper.
4. Click *submit* to upload the selected file to Turnitin.
5. Be sure to *confirm* your submission once it has uploaded.
6. You will get a confirmation, which verifies that you successfully uploaded your paper. This is very important because I have no way of verifying your attempts to turn in a paper and unsuccessful attempts will result in a late penalty (see above).
7. Look at the originality report provided by Turnitin and see if you need to make changes. The paper may be changed and the new version uploaded until the due date and time.

Again, be sure to keep copies of your papers and your confirmation sheet for your records.

**Two group discussions on the Discussion Board (20 points total)**
At two points in the semester, a discussion topic will be posted on Thursday in the discussion folder on Blackboard. The class will be divided into several groups, and you will participate in a discussion with other members of your group. Each student will be expected to post at least a 300 word initial response to the discussion topic as well as two original 200 word replies to other students’ responses by the following Monday. Based on the quality of your posts, you can earn a possible ten points for your contribution to each group discussion. No credit will be given for late postings on the discussion board or for “flaming” and other inappropriate responses. Please take these discussions and your contribution to them seriously. Since we do not meet in a classroom, these discussions are important for our critical thinking and intellectual growth. You will not receive full credit for simply posting the appropriate number of words.

**Two 120 minute exams, each consisting of essay questions (100 points total)**
The mid-term and final will cover material from the text, films, PowerPoint lectures, and reading material posted on Blackboard. Each exam is worth 50 points. The questions will ask you to write about important theories, concepts, research findings, criticisms, controversies, or other points discussed in assigned readings and online material. *The exams are scheduled for Friday October 14, 2016 and Tuesday December 13, 2016 and will be available to students from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Once you begin taking the exam, you must complete it within two hours. Exams must be taken during this window. No exceptions.*

**Note:** You will have opportunities to earn extra credit points throughout the semester (5 points each). You have two options: 1) complete the extra credit assignments which will be announced throughout the semester or 2) write a 500 word blog postings based on course material (which will be shared with the class). If you want to write a blog, you must get the topic approved PRIOR to posting/writing and let me know that you want to write a post by the end of Week 8. I expect blogs to be related to the course (mass media) and to use course concepts or other scholarly ideas to critically analyze the topic under discussion. While you may participate as much as you want in these activities, you may only receive credit for 5 extra credit assignments (up to 25 extra credit points).
Work Policy: Students must take exams (and complete other assignments) during the times indicated on the syllabus. Make up quizzes and exams are only permitted in extraordinary circumstances and with the appropriate documentation. Late work may be handed in but will be penalized 25% each day it is late. Note: papers handed in between 11:01pm and 11:59pm are considered late.

You are expected to ensure that your computer and internet connection are functioning properly prior to exams or other online exercises. If necessary, please seek technical assistance from ACNS or other online resources listed on the Bulletin Board under “Help with FSU Procedures and Technology.”

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

E-mail Policy: Students must use a FSU e-mail address for course correspondence. E-mails should include the following information: 1) the course name, 2) who you are addressing (“Hey” is not an appropriate greeting), 3) the question, and 4) your name. REMEMBER: E-mail is professional communication and becomes part of your student record.

Each student will be assigned an online mentor the second week of class. Students should contact mentors first with questions and concerns related to the course.

Academic Honor Code. 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, which reads “I affirm my commitment to the concept of responsible freedom. I will be honest and truthful and will strive for personal and institutional integrity at The Florida State University. I will abide by the Academic Honor Policy at all times.” The Florida State University Academic Honor Policy, found at [http://registrar.fsu.edu/bulletin/undergrad/info/integrity.htm](http://registrar.fsu.edu/bulletin/undergrad/info/integrity.htm). Any form of academic dishonesty will result in a "zero" for that particular assignment or an "F" for the course, at the instructor’s discretion, and may be reported to the university administration for further disciplinary action as specified in the Academic Honor Policy.

Courtesy in the Virtual Classroom. During the semester we will discuss a range of topics as they relate to media and they may stimulate strong feelings and heated debate. While I encourage diverse opinions, all papers and postings need to be scholarly in their content. Scholarly comments are: Respectful of diverse opinions and open to follow up questions and/or disagreement; related to the class and course material; advance the discussion/thinking about issues related to the course and/or course material rather than personal beliefs; are delivered in normal “tones” and a non-aggressive manner. Failure to abide by these principles can result in academic penalties ranging from a lowered grade, temporary removal from discussion boards, to failing the course.
**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. THIS INCLUDES COURSE EXAMS. 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 overusing quotations – 25% or more of your paper. This is the most common form of plagiarism. Make good use of turnitin.com, which shows you whether/how much of your work is from others.

**Disabilities.** Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should:
(1) register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center; and
(2) 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/

Enjoy the course!