

**Mass Media and Society**  
MCOM 385

Summer 2009

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**Text:** Holtzman, L. (2000). Media messages: What film, television, and popular music teach us about race, class, gender, and sexual orientation. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

**Course Description:** Seminar on current issues and effects of mass communication. Prerequisite: MCOM 101.

**Course Objectives:** At the end of the course the students should be able to:

1. Identify new and ongoing issues involving the mass media and their effects on society and human behavior.
2. Develop an understanding of ethical theory and its application to ethical problems which may arise in the mass media professions.
3. Develop competence in taking a position on an issue involving the mass media and society and employing arguments and evidence in support of that position.

**Course Content:** This course uses lecture, presentations, videos, discussion and other means to help us consider how the mass media affect our lives and our perceptions of other people in society. Everyone's contribution is vital to the class. Therefore, it is important that you regularly attend class and contribute and that you give your classmates the chance to be heard.

**Grading:** Your grade is based on a 100-point scale, as follows:

**10 points** are based on your participation in the class. Participation requires your being active in our discussions on a regular basis. In addition, you will be required to bring in one short (2-3 minute) video clip during the course; failure to do so will cost you 3 points. Please coordinate with the others bringing in clips on the day of your presentation to make sure that not everyone brings in the same one.

**10 points** are based on your first paper, a two-to-three page description and analysis of your personal media socialization.

You are also expected to watch eight films for the class. For four of these, you are to write two-to-three page analyses discussing the productions in regard to issues raised in class. These analyses will count for **20 points** each. For the other four, you are required to hand in the notes you took while watching. Failure to hand in notes will cost you 3 points each occurrence. Specific questions for all papers are listed below.

Papers will be graded based on use of specific examples, support for your analysis, and incorporation of material from the textbook, handouts, videos and class discussions. **Papers that do not incorporate material from the textbook will be marked down a minimum of one letter grade (2 points out of 20).** All papers should use APA citation style and should include a bibliography. Points also will be deducted for errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation and style. All papers must be typed or printed from a computer. Notes may be handwritten.

**Absences:** If you participate in class regularly, you get one absence with no penalty. If you rarely participate, you will lose three points for each absence. (Arriving late or leaving early two times counts as one absence.) Additional absences will cost you three points each unless you produce medical documentation for **all** missed classes.

**Policy on late assignments:** Assignments are due at the beginning of class. Make sure your assignment has been printed BEFORE class; otherwise it will be considered late. Late assignments will be accepted for full credit only when accompanied by a doctor's note verifying personal illness. If you know in advance that you will be late to class or miss class, you can e-mail your assignment to me at no penalty.

**Academic integrity:** Please see attached department policy. To summarize two important points from that policy:

- Anything from a reference (facts, figures, quotations, any ideas not considered common knowledge) **must** have a citation, both in the text and in the reference list; and
- Any exact words taken from a reference (paragraph, sentence, even a phrase) **must** be between quotation marks or set off as an indented paragraph **and** have a citation, both in the text and in the reference list.

**Failure to follow these guidelines constitutes plagiarism.** The department policy states that plagiarists will fail the assignment and **may** fail the class. My policy is that plagiarists **will** fail the class. This includes allegedly “unintentional” copying. Claims that you intended to include quotation marks and/or citations, or that you just forgot to add them will not be accepted. It is your responsibility to be absolutely certain that everything that should be between quotation marks **is** between quotation marks and everything that requires a citation **has** a citation, both in the text and in the reference list. If you have any question at all about how to handle a citation or quotation, check with me **before** handing in the paper.

**Repeating this course:** Students may not attempt this class for a third time without prior permission from the Academic Standards Committee. Information regarding this policy can be obtained through the Registrar's Office in the Administration Building.

**Cell phones:** Just as in the workplace, ringing telephones are rude and disruptive. Make sure you turn your ringer off at the start of class. The first time your phone rings or buzzes during class, you will lose 5 points out of the 100 for the semester. The second time, you will lose 10 points. The third time, you will get 0 for the course. The same penalties apply for sending or receiving text messages during class. NOTE: If you are expecting an urgent call, please let me know and set your phone on vibrate or silent ring.

## Course Schedule

Date

5/26	Topics:	What are the mass media? What influences our lives? Landmark moments; Media Equation	Homework:	Read <u>Media Messages (MM)</u> Introduction, Chapter 1 Media Socialization
6/2	Topics:	Media Effects; Framing questions; Contextual Analysis Meaning, Modeling Theories	<b>Paper due:</b>	<b>Media Socialization</b>
	Homework:	Read handouts, <u>MM</u> Chapter 2 Bring in a clip of men (Group 1)		
6/9	Topic:	Media Myths; Stereotypes; Images of men in the media (gender, sexuality, body image)	<b>Paper Due:</b>	<b>Contextual Analysis</b>
	Watch:	<i>Tough Guise (0-27, 56-1:02)</i>		
	Homework:	Bring in a clip of women (Group 2)		
6/16	Topic:	Images of women in the media (gender, sexuality, body image)	<b>Paper due:</b>	<b>Images of men</b>
	Visit:	<a href="http://www.cindyjackson.com">www.cindyjackson.com</a>		
	Watch:	<i>Maids, Babes and Mothers; When Sex Goes Pop</i>		
	Homework:	Read handouts, <u>MM</u> Chapter 3 Bring in a clip of rich and poor (Group 3)		
6/23	Topic:	Class	<b>Paper due:</b>	<b>Images of women</b>
	Homework:	Read <u>MM</u> Chapter 6, handouts Bring in a clip of gays/lesbians (Group 4)		
6/30	Topic:	Images of gays and lesbians in the media	<b>Paper due:</b>	<b>Class</b>
	Watch:	<i>Celluloid Closet</i> (in class, this serves as a reading for paper) <i>Out of the Closet, in the Box</i> (in class, this serves as a reading for paper)		
	Homework:	<u>MM</u> Chapters 4 and 5, handouts		



## Writing Assignments

### Media socialization (due 6/2)

Discuss your own media socialization. What has influenced your media consumption and how has your media consumption influenced you? You may want to consider some of the following questions: What are your patterns of media consumption? How did those patterns develop? Do they continue to evolve? Who and what influences them -- parents, peers, advertising, habit, etc.? Have the influences changed? How do the media you consume influence you – the way you spend your money, the way you spend and schedule your time, the clothes you wear, your values and actions, etc.? Is there a difference in the influence of media you choose to consume and that which you are exposed to anyway? Are you more sensitive to media depictions in some areas than in others (violence, sex, body image, etc.)? How does the media's influence relate to other influences on your overall socialization – parents, peers, school, religion, etc.?

### Grading Scale:

**7/10:** You have discussed your media consumption patterns, with specific details and examples to illustrate how you choose the media you consume (advertising, peers, habit, previews, reviews, etc.).

**8/10:** You have discussed your media consumption patterns, with specific details and examples to illustrate how you choose the media you consume (advertising, peers, habit, previews, reviews, etc.). In addition, you have discussed if and how the media you consume, by choice and otherwise, influence you (how you spend your money, how you schedule your time, how you see yourself and others, how you act, etc.).

**9/10:** You have discussed your media consumption patterns, with specific details and examples to illustrate how you choose the media you consume (advertising, peers, habit, previews, reviews, etc.). You have discussed if and how the media you consume, by choice and otherwise, influence you (how you spend your money, how you schedule your time, how you see yourself and others, how you act, etc.). In addition, you have discussed how the media you consume, by choice and otherwise, relate to and interact with other influences in your life (parents, peers, school, religion, etc.): Do they reinforce each other? Do they conflict? What is their relative power, especially when they conflict?

**10/10:** All of the above is done in an exemplary manner.

### Deductions:

**-1 -- -2:** Poor proofreading of spelling, grammar, punctuation, and style (one point deducted for every five distinct violations of attached style sheet).

## Analysis Papers:

Write a two-to-three page paper (500 word **minimum**) on one question in each of the following sets. Papers must be typed or printed on a computer. Papers should be double-spaced, and word counts must be noted at the end. Turn in notes on the other question or questions in the set. **Notes** may be handwritten. Any substitutions must be preapproved.

Although you **must** incorporate the readings, with full citation in the text and reference list (-2/20, if you don't do both), the following **are not** research papers. I am interested in your analysis of the subject. The most common cause of plagiarism in this class is students attempting to create research papers and handing in material they find online. Just do your own analysis and don't risk plagiarizing!

**Do not** retell plots; I have already seen these movies. Include only the evidence (scenes, actors, images, etc.) needed to make your point.

### 1) Everyone must do the following question:

*George A. Romero's Diary of the Dead, Galaxy Quest, Fight Club or South Park: Bigger, Longer & Uncut (due 6/9)*

What does this film tell us about American society at the time it was made, as well as about the role of mass media in that society? Include reference list.

### 2) Choose one of the following two questions (hand in notes on the other one):

*Roger Dodger, The Tao of Steve, Manswars or American Pie (due 6/16)*

Choose **one** of these films and critique the image of men in it. Do they support the stereotypes discussed in class and the readings? Include reference list.

*Charlie's Angels* (either movie, not the TV show) **or** *Legally Blonde* (either movie) (due 6/23)

Critique the images of women in **one** of the above, relating them to the stereotypes discussed in class and in the readings. Include reference list.

### 3) Choose one of the following three questions (hand in notes on the other two):

*Good Will Hunting, Talladega Nights or Flushed Away (due 6/30)*

Compare the images of the classes in **one** of the above with the stereotypes discussed in class and in the readings. Include reference list.

*Brokeback Mountain, Chasing Amy, Monster or I Now Pronounce You Chuck and Larry (due 7/7)*

Critique the images of gays or lesbians in **one** of the above, relating them to stereotypes in *Celluloid Closet* (documentary seen in class) and in the readings. Include reference list.

*Hustle & Flow, Malibu's Most Wanted, or Save the Last Dance (due 7/14)*

Critique the images of African Americans in **one** of the above, comparing and contrasting them to the stereotypes discussed in class, in the readings and in "Color Adjustment" (documentary seen in class). Include reference list.

**4) Choose one of the following two questions** (hand in notes on the other):

**Assignment:**

*Natural Born Killers* (due 7/21)

Director Oliver Stone has steadfastly claimed his film is a satiric critique of our culture and media's obsessions with violence. However, John Grisham (1996) argues that the film is not satirizing, but "glorifying random murder" (p. 4). Would average moviegoers be more likely to interpret this film as a critique, or as just another example of media violence? Are there consequences to the way viewers relate to media violence? Include in-text citation and reference list, using the following readings:

Grisham, J. (1996, Spring). Unnatural killers. *Oxford American*, 2-5. Retrieved May 20, 2008, from <http://facstaff.gpc.edu/~jbusbee/Grisham.htm>

Grossman, D., & DeGaetano, G. (1999). A definition of media violence. In *Stop teaching our kids to kill: A call to action against TV, movie & video game violence* (pp. 121-122). New York, NY: Crown Publishers.

Stone, O. (n.d.). *Memo to John Grisham: What's next -- "a movie made me do it"?* Retrieved December 19, 2006, from [www.selu.edu/Academics/Faculty/scraig/stone.html](http://www.selu.edu/Academics/Faculty/scraig/stone.html)

*Nip/Tuck, Showgirls, Requiem for a Dream, Aristocrats* (most definitely not Disney's *Aristocats*) **or Romance** (due 7/28)

(**Note: You will need to view the NC-17 or Unrated version of the above films.**)

Provide your own definition of indecency and discuss whether or not it applies to **one** of the above. Some of the following questions may apply: Is there a difference between indecent, offensive, obscene, and/or pornographic? Are they merely labels or do they imply value judgments? Does indecency apply only to sexual depictions? Can other types of material be considered indecent? Can a part, a scene or a verse, render a whole work indecent or should the work be judged by its entirety? This is the **only one** of these short papers that does not require a reference; it is based on **your own** definitions.

**Grading Scale:**

**16/20:** Depictions of the topic within the film have been generally discussed and tied to the textbook.

**17/20:** The depictions of the topic within the assigned film have been fully illustrated with specific examples and tied to the textbook.

**18/20:** The depictions of the topic within the assigned film have been fully illustrated with specific examples and tied to the textbook. In addition, some conclusions have been drawn about those depictions and how they fit within the world of that movie/music/TV show.

**19/20:** The depictions of the topic within the assigned film have been fully illustrated with specific examples and tied to the textbook. In addition, some conclusions have been drawn about those depictions and how they fit within the world of the movie/music/TV show. Finally, this one example has been placed in the greater context of the media at large and/or culture at large: Does it fit right in with prevailing social values? Does it question them? Do audiences internalize the values or is it just entertainment, with no effect?

**20/20:** All of the above is done in an exemplary manner.

**Deductions:**

**-2:** Failure to incorporate the textbook readings. This includes failure to give citation, including bibliography.

**-1 -- -2:** Errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation and style.

## Style Sheet

The following list is far from exhaustive, but these are some common proofreading errors I've noticed:

1. Use spell check. However, spell check alone is not always enough. You must proofread to make sure you are employing the correct word, not a correctly spelled wrong word. In addition, check the spelling on all names – [www.imdb.com](http://www.imdb.com) is a good reference for the spelling of the names of characters and actors.
2. The word media is plural and requires a plural verb. Medium is the singular of media.
3. Know the difference between affect and effect. Affect is a verb meaning to influence. Sample sentence: Your cable plan affects what programs you can watch. When used as a noun, effect means result. Sample sentence: Watching too much television may have an adverse effect on your social life.
4. Know the difference between imply and infer. Imply means to lead to a conclusion. Sample sentence: His Pamela Anderson t-shirt implied he was a fan of *Baywatch*. Infer means to draw a conclusion. Sample sentence: After many rejections, he inferred that women were not impressed with his t-shirt.
5. Different from is the correct usage, not different than. Other than is fine.
6. Know the difference between they're, their, and there. They're is a contraction of they are. Their is third person, plural possessive. As a noun, there refers to place or location. Sample sentence: They're going to move their TV over there. As a pronoun, there is used to introduce a sentence or phrase. Sample sentence: There is the DVD, over there.
7. Know the difference between you're and your. You're is a contraction of you are. Your is second person possessive.
8. Know the difference between it's and its. It's is a contraction of it is. Its is possessive.
9. Cannot is one word, not two.
10. When used to designate race, Black and White should be capitalized.
11. Most nouns are made plural by adding an s, without an apostrophe. An apostrophe before the s makes it possessive, not plural. Adding an apostrophe after the s makes it plural possessive.
12. Abbreviations are made plural by adding an s, no apostrophe. For instance, it is CDs.
13. Numbers are made plural by adding an s, without an apostrophe. This comes up most when referring to decades. The s makes it plural, for the ten years in the decade. For instance, it is the 1950s or the 1960s. However, an apostrophe can be used to substitute for 19 in the contractions '50s or '60s.
14. Titles of books, TV shows, CDs, and movies are italicized (underlining is also acceptable); titles of articles and songs are contained in quotation marks. All major words in titles should be capitalized in the text (titles in citations are handled differently; see below).
15. Commas and periods go inside quotation marks; colons, semi-colons, and question marks go outside them unless they are part of the quote contained within them.

## Proper Citation in Body of Paper

1. A typical citation of an entire work consists of the author's name and the year of publication.

*Charlotte and Emily Bronte were polar opposites, not only in their personalities but in their sources of inspiration for writing (Taylor, 1990).*

Use the last name only in both first and subsequent citations, except when there is more than one author with the same last name. In that case, use the last name and the first initial.

2. If the author is named in the text, only the year is cited.

*According to Irene Taylor (1990), the personalities of Charlotte. . .*

3. If both the name of the author and the date are used in the text, parenthetical reference is not necessary.

*In a 1989 article, Gould explains Darwin's most successful. . .*

4. Specific citations of pages or chapters follow the year.

*Emily Bronte "expressed increasing hostility for the world of human relationships, whether sexual or social" (Taylor, 1988, p. 11).*

5. When the reference is to a work by two authors, cite both names each time the reference appears.

*Sexual-selection theory often has been used to explore patters of various insect mating (Alcock & Thornhill, 1983) ... Alcock and Thornhill (1983) also demonstrate ...*

Source: Arthur C. Banks Library at Capital Community College

(<http://webster.commnet.edu/apa/parenthetical.htm>)

## Proper Citation in Reference List

### Book:

Holtzman, L. (2000). *Media messages: What film television, and popular music teach us about race, class, gender, and sexual orientation*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

Parenti, M. (1992). *Make-believe media: The politics of entertainment*. Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's.

In the reference list, only the first word of the title and subtitle, if any, and proper nouns should be capitalized (titles within the text are handled differently; see above).

### Article from periodical:

McWhorter, J. T. (2003, December 28). Oh, R-o-ob, the bad words won't go away. *Washington Post*, B1, B4.

Do not use italics, underlining or quotation marks for titles of articles in reference list (article titles within the text are handled differently; see above).

### Internet article based on print source:

McWhorter, J. T. (2003, December 28). Oh, R-o-ob, the bad words won't go away. *Washington Post*, [Electronic version] B1, B4.

### Document from website:

Hwang, R. W. (n.d.). *Hentai anime: What's up with the tentacles?* Retrieved January 19, 2004, from <http://www.hardboiled.org/2-4/hentai.html>

### Movie:

Epstein, R., & Friedman, J. (Producers & Directors). (1995). *Celluloid closet* [Motion picture]. Culver City, CA: Columbia Tristar.

### CD:

50 Cent (2003). *Get rich or die tryin'* [CD]. Santa Monica, CA: Interscope Records.

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**M E M O R A N D U M**

**TO:** All Students In The Department Of Mass Communication And Communication Studies

**FROM:** Department Faculty

**SUBJECT:** PLAGIARISM AND CHEATING

Plagiarism

The Department of Mass Communication and Communication Studies announce the following policy regarding plagiarism:

1. Any words quoted directly from a source must be footnoted and in quotation marks. Similarly, in oral presentations, attributions must be clear.
2. Any ideas or examples derived from a source that are not in the public domain or of general knowledge must be clearly attributed.
3. Any paraphrasing or rephrasing of the words and/or ideas of a source must be footnoted. In oral presentations, attributions must be clear.
4. All papers and presentations must be the student's own work. Papers or presentations authored by others even with their consent constitutes plagiarism unless such authorship is made to the instructor.

Any student found plagiarizing in any of the above ways will receive an automatic "F" for the assignment and may receive an "F" for the course. Documented evidence of the plagiarism will be kept in the Department office.

Last, any student discovered soliciting others to write a paper, speech, test, or other assignment for that student will receive an automatic "F" for the course.

There are ambiguities in concepts of plagiarism. Each instructor will be available for consultation regarding any confusion a student may have.

Most students are careful to avoid blatant plagiarism, the unacknowledged copying of exact words of the source. However, students must also be aware that the concept of plagiarism extends not only to wording but to patterns or sequences of ideas. If you paraphrase a section from a book without acknowledgement, using the same sequence or structure as the original author, then you are plagiarizing.

Cheating

The Department of Mass Communication and Communication Studies has adopted the following policy regarding cheating:

**ANY STUDENT CAUGHT CHEATING ON ANY QUIZ OR EXAM WILL RECEIVE A MINIMUM OF AN "F" ON THE QUIZ OR TEST AND A MAXIMUM OF AN "F" FOR THE COURSE.**