211-01 Media Literacy

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**What You Will Learn**

This course is designed to help you become a more intelligent and discriminating consumer of media. You will develop the ability to analyze, assess, and critically evaluate media texts, images, sounds and representations. You will also develop awareness and understanding the media’s role in news, advertising, entertainment, ideology, power and citizenship. We will accomplish this through lecture, discussion, individual exploration, and an abundance of interaction with media.

**Materials to Help You Learn**

Supplemental materials on Canvas.

**How You Will Be Evaluated**

A. **Final Exam (15%)** – This will ask you to apply the tools and media analysis skills learned throughout the semester. Based on the material presented in supplemental readings, class lectures, and discussions.

B. **Exercises & 5-Minute Papers (15%)** – I will ask you to respond in writing to questions or exercises regarding the media. The 5-Minute Papers are completed in class. No make-ups. Other exercises are completed outside of class. These may require you to collect information, read an article, post to discussion board, etc. These responses must be posted to Canvas on time or turned in during class (depending on instructions), unless otherwise arranged. Graded on a 1-5 scale; 5=excellent, thorough, detailed, clear; 4=good, but lacking thoroughness, detail or clarity; 3=provides only the minimum, didn’t answer the question, factual or conceptual errors. Details will be provided in class.

C. **Participation (10%)** – A subjective evaluation of how you well you assist the class in achieving learning goals. Assessed quarterly. See guidelines below.

D. **Essays (45%)** – 3 essays will ask you to apply media literacy concepts to real media situations. Details provided in class.
E. Service (15%) – 1) Kickstarter – On two occasions, you will be assigned to initiate a class discussion of a media issue; 2) The Takeaway – You will be assigned produce a set of contextual notes for the class based on lecture and discussion.

### Grading Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100</td>
<td>Excellent work; consistently shows mastery of material; outstanding effort and unusual insight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92</td>
<td>Good, competent work; frequently shows understanding of material, but not always mastery. May show good, but not outstanding, effort.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89</td>
<td>Sufficient understanding of material; weak or inconsistent in some areas. Inconsistent effort.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-86</td>
<td>Good, competent work; frequently shows understanding of material, but not always mastery. May show good, but not outstanding, effort.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82</td>
<td>Sufficient understanding of material; weak or inconsistent in some areas. Inconsistent effort.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79</td>
<td>Sufficient understanding of material; weak or inconsistent in some areas. Inconsistent effort.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73-76</td>
<td>Sufficient understanding of material; weak or inconsistent in some areas. Inconsistent effort.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-72</td>
<td>General weakness in understanding of material; incomplete work. General lack of effort.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69</td>
<td>General weakness in understanding of material; incomplete work. General lack of effort.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>63-66</td>
<td>General weakness in understanding of material; incomplete work. General lack of effort.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60-62</td>
<td>Work not meeting the above standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>59 and below</td>
<td>Work not meeting the above standards</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Attendance

According to the Xavier academic catalog, “In order to earn credit in any course for which he/she is registered, the student is required to attend classroom and laboratory exercises regularly and promptly. Unexcused absence from a previously announced test may incur the penalty of a failure in that particular test. Regular attendance and missed class and test procedures are determined by the individual faculty members. Students should consult the class syllabi for current policy regarding attendance, grading, procedures, etc., by individual faculty members.” Translated, this means that I expect you to show up for all classes.

**Note to athletes and individuals who will be missing class on university business:** To receive full credit on any assignment that is due while you are away, you must turn in the work on or before the due date. Should your absence come on a scheduled exam day, you must take the exam prior to the absence. No make-ups for quizzes or exams will be offered unless arranged with me in advance. Late penalties described below apply to you, same as other students. No make-ups for in-class work.

### Participation

Classes are always more interesting and educational when you participate. To that end, I offer the following guidance on class participation. Points may be awarded for:

- Asking a thoughtful question (other than procedural/housekeeping questions).
- Introducing an incident/case/example not dealt with in our readings.
- Making a reasonable attempt at answering an evaluative question.
- Volunteering facts about specific cases or situations.
- Asking for clarification on concept, language, interpretation.
- Offering a contrary opinion, point of view, interpretation.
- Introducing events from the news that tie in with our subject matter.
- Linking concepts from your other classes to this class.
- Piggybacking off of another student’s comment to add more information and context
- Challenging the accepted wisdom or majority opinion.
Explicating a textual passage or example.
Suggesting new resources for the class (can be done in class or out of class)

Points may be deducted for:
- Disruptive uses of technology (i.e., texting in such a way that I notice)
- Side talk and private conversations that do not assist the class.
- Noisy disruptions (i.e., opening a bag of chips during another student’s presentation).
- Repeatedly showing up late or ducking out early.
- Sarcastic or rude comments that attack the speaker.

The following are welcome but have no impact on your participation grade
- Asking procedural questions about tests, assignments, grading procedures, etc.
- Bravely attempting to answer a question even though you’re pretty sure you have no clue.

**Service Roles**
This class is largely in the hands of the students. Throughout the semester, each of you will be assigned to service roles that assist the class in achieving its goals. I will create and distribute by Canvas a schedule of duties. It is your responsibility to check the schedule and prepare accordingly.

**Canvas**
We will make use of the Canvas system for this class. Supplemental readings and grades will be posted there. If you have questions about how to use Canvas, please see me during the first or second class meeting. Otherwise, I will assume you know how to access the class materials. Should you find assigned documents missing from Canvas or access to certain files mysteriously blocked, I expect you to notify me immediately, not the next day in class. I can usually resolve the problem in a few minutes.

Canvas is available wherever there are computers with Internet access, so there is little excuse for not being able to obtain class materials. Since I will be posting your grades on Canvas, I expect you to review them in a timely fashion. From time to time I make mistakes and post an incorrect score. I am happy to make corrections as long as you notify me in a timely fashion.

**Computer Issues**
When I was in school the most common excuse for not completing an assignment was, “The dog ate my homework.” Now it’s those hungry computers that keep eating student work. Computer crashes and glitches really do happen (they’ve happened to me). That’s why smart computer users learn the following mantra: BACKUP, BACKUP, BACKUP. I back up my computer hard drive every day to an external device. Another good backup system, Dropbox, is available for free. You download a copy of the program to your computer and it stores an additional copy of your work on a remote computer in the “cloud.” Your files are automatically backed up every day and they also become available to you from any computer with access to the web. These measures are standard procedure for people in the work world, and I expect the same of you. You will find me relatively unreceptive to excuses
involving “lost work.” I’m also not terribly sympathetic to computer access issues. In many years of teaching, I have yet to find the email system or Canvas unavailable for extended periods. It’s usually a matter of “Wait an hour; it will be back up.”

**Laptops and Electronics in Class**

Use of laptop computers and other electronics (cell phones, PDAs, MP3 players, texting, etc.) in class is not permitted without instructor’s permission. Similarly, texting in class is not permitted because it is distracting to you and others. Doing so will damage your grade. If you need to communicate with someone on your phone, excuse yourself and step outside the classroom.

**Email**

The university provides you with a free access to email (usually your last name plus “@xavier.edu” through the MyXu portal.) I expect you to use the Xavier account. I send a lot of email to students: reminders, follow-ups to questions in class, late-breaking media news, etc. If you don’t read your email, you may be at a disadvantage.

**Late Work**

Doing your work in a timely fashion and meeting deadlines is simply a matter of being responsible. In the work world, others may be depending on you to deliver, and when you fail to do so, you hurt not only yourself, but others and potentially your entire organization. For this reason, late work will be penalized one letter grade (10 percent) per day, including weekends and holidays. One day means 24 hours from the time the assignment was due. After four days, the grade becomes a zero.

**Disabilities**

Anyone who feels he/she may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability (e.g.: sensory, learning, psychological, medical, mobility) should contact me to arrange an appointment to discuss your needs as soon as possible. I rely on the Disability Services Office for assistance in verifying your eligibility for academic accommodations related to your disability. If you have not previously contacted Disability Services, I encourage you to do so at 513-745-3280 on the Fifth Floor of the Conaton Learning Commons, Room 514 or e-mail Cassandra Jones at jonesc20@xavier.edu, to coordinate reasonable accommodations.

**Academic Honesty**

You are expected to do your own work and credit information and statements from others appropriately. You **may not:**

- cut and paste sentences, paragraphs or pages from documents on the web and offer them as your own.
- buy papers from the web and offer them as your own.
- paraphrase the ideas of others without acknowledging the source.
- collaborate on class work with anyone unless directed by the instructor.
- copy work from others
- allow others to copy from your work
- use work from other classes to satisfy assignments in this class
You are required to:

- place inside of quotations and correctly cite any passages that are drawn from other sources, including those on the internet.
- Acknowledge the source of any information that you have paraphrased.
- Correctly cite the source of factual information
- Report any instances of academic dishonesty to the instructor

**Some Thoughts on Grading**

- Although I apply trained, professional judgment to your class work, I realize that you may not always agree with me.
- The process of grading is painful – for you and for me. While I always attempt to be objective, I do not always succeed. No one can be completely objective all the time.
- Different professors grade differently. People see different things as important. That’s life.
- You are not alone. I get evaluated all the time – by my peers, my bosses, and by you.
- Grades are not necessarily an accurate evaluation of your work or your ability, but it is the system we use.
- It is wise for you to explore the boundaries of your professors’ professional judgments. Learn what he or she values and then do your best to deliver.
- In this class anyway, an “A” is available to all students. In the event that you all earn an “A” for the semester, you will all have delivered not just pretty good work, but outstanding work.

**Professionalism in Class**

The fact that you have chosen to attend college leads me to conclude that most of you are interested in spending your lives doing more than asking people if they would like fries with their meal. That being the case, you might want to look upon your experience here as professional training for your life in the outside world. Part of that training involves learning about expectations that will be placed on you. In this class, those expectations include (but are not limited to):

*Show up for all classes.* It makes little economic sense to pay thousands of dollars in tuition, fees, books and living expenses and then not take your reward – an education. If you are unable to attend because of a serious medical or other situation, do as you would do in the outside world: call your supervisor (that’s me) before you are expected in class. Otherwise, I may worry about you.

*Be on time.* Employers in the outside world do not long tolerate dawdlers, and neither do I. Be punctual. Turn in your work on time. People who show up late in the outside world get docked in their pay. Students who fail to meet deadlines in this class are penalized with lower grades.
Be respectful. This applies to other students as well as your instructor. Showing respect means refraining from reading newspapers in class, talking during lectures and student presentations, leaving early or arriving late.

Take responsibility for your education. The educational experience thrives on student involvement. Do the readings and come to class ready to participate in discussions. Asking questions and offering your point of view in class is good practice for thinking on your feet and expressing yourself. Enjoy your moment on the stage. In this class, any student who attempts to express his or her opinion is a success.

Pay attention to the instructions. Assignments often have detailed instructions. Please follow them to the letter. The instructions, in part, are intended to give every student an equal chance at doing his or her best work. If the instructions are unclear, please ask for clarification. Just as in the outside world, repeated failure to follow instructions in this class results in serious consequences.

Accept challenges with grace. Much of the work you face in this class will be unfamiliar or difficult. This fact should not be taken as an excuse to whine. You are in college to learn, which means there is a great deal you do not know. Get used to it. Exams, papers, and presentations are all learning opportunities. Even from your failures I expect great things.

Accept the consequences of your actions. So you partied the night before the midterm, so you overslept, so you missed the exam. So what? You knew there would be no make-ups for the exam. You made your choice, now live with the decision. Don’t ask for a special exception, because in doing so you devalue the choices of all the other students in the class.

Write, spell, and punctuate as if your job depended on it. This course is offered by the Department of Communication Arts, so the standards of the communication profession apply to your work in this class. Your written assignments should be letter-perfect, down to the spelling, grammar, punctuation, and style. Consider this standard procedure for the outside world, where resumes with typos or other errors are routinely consigned to the trashcan.

Do your own work. You are expected to fully comply with the university’s academic honesty policy. Anything less compromises your integrity and devalues your education. Plagiarism, or taking credit for someone else’s work, is a serious offense — both in this course and in the outside world. Copying a classmate’s work, failing to attribute information to a source, or making up information will lead to your failing the assignment. The same goes for unauthorized collaboration on assignments and exams.

BY REMAINING IN THIS CLASS, YOU AGREE TO THE ABOVE RULES AND CONDITIONS.