

COM 245: Diversity & the Media

Spring 2011/Rowland Hall 209

MW 2–3:15 p.m. (sec. 1) & 3:30–4:45 p.m. (sec. 2)

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COURSE OVERVIEW & GOALS:

A primary goal of this course is to assist students to become communication professionals who are prepared to work in increasingly diverse societies.

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Communication professionals are often required to cross borders of cultural identity, race, religion, age, sexual orientation and socio-economic status. Studying race, ethnic, multicultural groups, issues, and cultures from a mass communication perspective is important because your careers will most probably require you to work with, portray, and/or represent people of diverse backgrounds. Radio, television, and film producers and writers, broadcast and print journalists, advertising and public relations specialists, teachers, professors, counselors, and general media consumers will all need to understand, communicate with and relate to individuals of diverse backgrounds in our changing nation and world. In an effort to prepare students to embark on the journey of understanding and working in a diverse society, this course will investigate underrepresented audiences through reading academic research on the topic of media and diversity, consuming stories produced by underrepresented groups, and experiencing these theories by way of assignments designed for hands-on learning.

COURSE OBJECTIVES: By the end of the course students should be able to:

1. Discuss basic facts and concepts of the U.S. as a diverse country, including a discussion on the social and psychological effects of the portrayals of underrepresented groups in the media.
2. Identify and challenge portrayals, especially stereotypical representation, of underrepresented groups in the media.
3. Understand concepts of diversity relating to audiences, sources, and issues.
4. Understand the role of the media in translating and shaping cultures.
5. Understand some of the ethical and legal issues related to writing across borders.
6. Strengthen writing and editing skills.
7. Develop strong story ideas.

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS AND TEXTBOOKS:

This class requires a working knowledge of computer word processing software such as Microsoft Word and Internet access web browser experience, such as Firefox or Internet Explorer. Most course materials will be distributed through the course page on Desire2Learn (D2L).

Some of the assignments will require access to Shippensburg's electronic databases, which can be viewed at <http://www.ship.edu/library/>.

Required textbook: (available from the campus bookstore) *Race/Gender/Media: Considering Diversity across Audience, Content and Producers*, Second Edition, by Rebecca Ann Lind, covers the major ideas and principles that scholars have identified influence the communications environment and the portrayal of non-majority members of society.

Links to contemporary news stories will also be posted throughout the semester, for which reading is **required**. Students should be prepared and expect to discuss late-breaking events in class or on discussion boards. *Daily access to our class D2L site is expected and required.*

Professional Values and Competencies for Communication/Journalism Majors & Minors:

The Communication/Journalism Department faculty sets the goal of developing within each student the following core professional values and competencies as defined by the Accrediting Council for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC): [competencies addressed in this course are in bold]

1. **Understand and apply First Amendment principles and the law appropriate to professional practice.**
2. Demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications.

3. **Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of groups in a global society in relationship to communications.**
4. **Work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity.**
5. **Think critically, creatively and independently.**
6. **Conduct research and gather information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work.**
7. **Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve.**
8. **Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for grammatical correctness, appropriate style, clarity, accuracy and fairness.**
9. **Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information.**
10. **Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts.**
11. **Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.**

Academic Dishonesty Policy:

Plagiarism and cheating will be handled according to the University's Academic Dishonesty Policy found in the Shippensburg University Undergraduate Catalog (or online here: <http://www.ship.edu/catalog/HTML/ugrad09-11/index.htm>). Penalties for any violation of the Academic Dishonesty Policy include grade reduction, assignment of a failing grade for the course, suspension and expulsion from the University. All instances of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Communication/Journalism Department and the Dean of Students.

American Disabilities Act (ADA) Statement:

Students with disabilities are not required by law to identify themselves to Shippensburg University and the Office of Disability Services. However, if a student desires accommodations, the student is obligated to complete the necessary forms and provide disability documentation at the time other requests are made. It is the policy of Shippensburg University to accommodate students with disabilities, pursuant to federal law, state law, and the University's commitment to equal education opportunities. Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the Office of Disability Services, which is located in 120 Horton Hall, or via phone at 717-477-1329.

Learning Center Resources:

If you feel you need extra help to improve your academic performance in this course or any of your other courses, please consider making an appointment with a tutor or learning specialist in the Learning Center (LC). The LC is located in Lehman Library, and can also be reached at 717-477-1420. Even if you are off campus, there are resources available to help you.

CLASS POLICIES:

Attendance & Tardiness: Plan to treat classes like you would a job — show up on time and be prepared for the “meeting.” Because even jobs have personal time off, students will be permitted **up to two** sick/commitment days without penalty. After that, 20 points will be deducted from your final grade for each additional absence. Do not look at these days as “vacation” days. *All assignments must be turned in on time, even if you're going to be absent from class. Work may only be made up if you have an excused absence (see below).*

Excused Absences: Contact the **Dean's Office** (College of Arts & Sciences, Dauphin 225, 717-477-1151) immediately if you must miss class because of a family emergency, religious observance, or an extended illness. Absences will only be excused with notification from the Dean's Office, a doctor's note, a note from an athletic coach, or other official documentation. Written documentation for all university-sponsored events, such as sporting events or field trips, must be provided prior to the missed class.

Late & Missed Work: Students must attend each class with all necessary materials in hand and all homework and reading assignments completed. In-class quizzes or assignments cannot be made up and will receive zero points if your absence is unexcused. Late work will not be accepted for unexcused absences. When you miss class, it is your responsibility to turn your work in on time and to find out what you missed. If a student is going to miss class for any reason, assignments should be posted to the dropbox on D2L.

Classroom Behavior & Etiquette: Texting and other cell-phone use during class is strictly prohibited. Turn your phone OFF upon entering the classroom and store it in your backpack or bag for the duration of the class period. Likewise, all homework assignments must be completed and printed before class begins (handwritten homework will not be accepted).

Students are expected to treat each other and their professor with respect and courtesy at all times. Treat others and their views and opinions respectfully and kindly, even if these views are not the same as yours. Students who choose to disregard

these rules will be asked to leave the classroom and will be marked absent for the day, meaning that work missed in class that day cannot be made up.

Class Participation: Class participation is required of **every student every day** and is absolutely essential for the success of this course. Participation includes coming to class on time and prepared, asking informed questions, actively participating in small-group activities and discussions, and sharing relevant and fruitful insights to discussions in a respectful manner. Students will regularly be called on to share their thoughts and work in class and should be prepared to do so. Students are expected to have completed all reading and other assignments by class time and be prepared to discuss them. *Students who never participate in class should not expect to earn higher than a C+ in the course.* In addition to in-class participation, students must regularly post to the discussion board on D2L.

Deadlines: Assignments are due on the dates indicated on the syllabus. Plan to work on your assignments well before deadline. A grade of zero (0) will be posted for missed deadlines.

GRADING & EVALUATION:

Grading rubrics will be used for assignments and will be available on D2L.

Excellent work is required to earn an A: A = 94-100; A- = 90-93.

Good work earns a B: B+ = 87-89; B = 84-86; B- = 80-83.

Satisfactory work earns a C: C+ = 77-79; C = 74-77; C- = 70-73.

Poor work earns a D: D = 60-69.

Failing work earns an F and includes all work numerically scored below a 60.

Final Course Grade:

The final grade is determined by the following:

1. **Class Participation** (determined by attendance and preparation for class, online posts, and willingness to participate in class discussions and activities) = 25%
2. **Quizzes** (quiz each week for 12 of the weeks – two lowest grades dropped) = 20%
3. **Short Papers** (3 papers at 10% each) = 30%
4. **Final Exam** = 25%

ASSIGNMENTS:

The reading for each week is listed in the assignment schedule. Articles in addition to the required textbook chapters are posted in the Content section of D2L. Beginning with week 2, weekly quizzes (every Wednesday) will address the readings that were assigned for that week.

There will be three short written assignments during the semester. The dates for these assignments are included in the weekly section of this schedule. The topics for the papers will be announced at the appropriate time and listed in the Content area of D2L.

A final exam will be given during the mandatory-attendance finals week class.

Assigned readings are listed under the headings of the class period prior to when they are due.

Contingency Planning:

In case of unforeseen events (such as cancellation of class due to instructor illness or inclement weather), this assignment schedule may be modified. Any changes to the assignment schedule will be posted on the D2L home page and sent to students via e-mail. It is the student's responsibility to be familiar with any such addendum to the syllabus.

Semester Class Schedule:**Week 1**

Wed., Jan. 19 Introduction to the course & D2L site

Week 2

Mon., Jan. 24

Assignments Due: Read Chapter 1: Laying the Foundation for Studying Race, Gender, and the Media; AND Part I Audiences: Chapter 2: Considerations of Media Effects: 2.1; 2.2; 2.3

Wed., Jan. 26

Topic: Discussion of key themes in text, thinking critically, and media literacy + discussion of stereotyping of gender and race, credibility of reporting based on race and gender. Week 2 quiz.

Assignments Due: Read Part I Audiences: Chapter 3: 3.3; 3.4

Additional Readings: From PoynterOnline: "Making Sense of News"; from PoynterOnline: "Read 'Journal-isms' That Engage and Inform Diverse Audiences" (links available on D2L)

Week 3

Mon., Jan. 31

Topic: Interpretation of media content

Assignments Due: From Star Tribune: Read "Tug of War" (link available on D2L); read "100 Questions About Arab Americans" & type a list of 10 items that you found interesting/surprising (link on D2L)

Wed., Feb. 2

Topic: How reporters' backgrounds influence and inform the reporting process; difference between writing *from* a culture versus writing *about* a culture. Week 3 quiz.

Assignments Due: Read Part I Audiences: Chapter 3: 3.6; 3.7

Week 4

Mon., Feb. 7

Topic: Audience Reception and the Interpretation of Content: Mascots & Race and Relevance of Race in Interpreting News Stories.

Assignments Due: From KRON-TV: Read "What is race?" and "News and race" transcripts; from Radio Television Digital News Association: Read "Women & Minorities Survey" (all links on D2L)

Wed., Feb. 9

Topic: Discussion of factors that contribute to the way stories of race are told & discussion of diversity in the newsroom. Week 4 quiz.

Assignments Due: Read Part II Content: Chapter 4: 4.2; 4.3; 4.4

Week 5

Mon., Feb. 14

Topic: Discussion of media framing of immigration, women as sources and reporters of news & stereotypes online.

Assignments Due: From the *Washington Post*, read “Old South Goes with the Wind” (link on D2L); from NPR, listen to “Immigration in America: The Vietnamese” (on D2L); from NPR, Kaiser, and Kennedy School, peruse the Immigration Survey (available on D2L). Type and bring a list of top 5 survey items that you found interesting.

Wed., Feb. 16

Topic: Discussion of tensions with majority culture, Hull’s character choices, and the Immigration Survey. Week 5 quiz.

Assignments Due: Read articles posted in D2L regarding immigration, including ExplorePAHistory.com documents.

Week 6

Mon., Feb. 21

Topic: Discussion of immigration continued; follow-up with Lind 4.3, 4.4.

Assignments Due: Refresh by reading Lind 4.4. **WRITING ASSIGNMENT #1 DUE.**

Wed., Feb. 23

Topic: Discussion of immigration concluded; discussion of Lind 4.4. Week 6 quiz.

Assignments Due: Read Lind 4.5

Week 7

Mon., Feb. 28

Topic: Finish Lind 4.4 + discussion of gender portrayals in advertising.

Wed., Mar. 2

Topic: Discussion continued; watch “Killing Us Softly.” Writing Assignment #2 Assignment & Rubric Sheet distributed. Week 7 quiz.

Assignments Due: Read: Chapter 4: 4.6

Week 8

Mon., Mar. 7 & Wed., Mar. 9

SPRING BREAK

Week 9

Mon., Mar. 14

Assignments Due:

- 1.) Examine 3 official Native American websites that include pictures. Look at pictures on the sites. Analyze pictures. What do the pictures show? Stereotypes? Modern images of everyday life?
- 2.) Choose 3 different official Native American websites. How many integrate “nature” and tradition? Look for and take notes of examples of resistance that challenge the non-Indian establishment.
- 3.) Search for 3 Native American tribal casino web sites. Are the images different from the official tribal web sites? Who are they targeting?
- 4.) Type your answers to ALL of the above questions, a list of the URLs of all websites you visited (a total of 9 different sites), and 1–2 paragraphs of commentary to turn in during class today.

Wed., Mar. 16

Assignments Due: Read Part II Content: Chapter 5: 5.8 and Chapter 6: 6.2. Week 9 quiz in class.

Week 10

Mon., Mar. 21

Topic: The commodification of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people; Eminem in mainstream public discourse

Assignments Due: From The Hartford Courant, read “From Pain, Family” (on D2L); read commentary from Brown and Hamilton, 2007 Casey Medal winners (on D2L); from Yale Daily News, read “Young, Out and Gay — not Queer” (on D2L)

Wed., Mar. 23

Topic: Discussion of covering GLBT issues. Week 10 quiz.

Assignments Due: Read Part III Production: Chapter 7: 7.1; 7.4. **WRITING ASSIGNMENT #2 DUE.**

Week 11

Mon., Mar. 28

Topic: Discussion of distribution of independent films + media ownership/consolidation

Assignments Due: Read the Executive Summary (3 pages) from “Changes, Challenges, and Charting New Courses” from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration 2001 (on D2L); review the “Who Owns the News Media” Chapter of the State of the News website (on D2L); review the “Ethnic” Chapter of the State of the News web site (on D2L)

Wed., Mar. 30

Assignments Due: Read Part III Production: Chapter 8: 8.1; 8.2. Week 11 quiz.

Week 12

Mon., Apr. 5

Topic: Discussion of diversity and employment Issues

Assignments Due: TBA

Wed., Apr. 7

Topic: Media portrayals of mental illness. Week 12 quiz.

Assignments Due: Read “On-Screen Portrayals of Mental Illness” (on D2L)

Week 13

Mon., Apr. 12

Topic: Media portrayals of mental illness. Begin “The Soloist.”

Assignments Due: TBA

Wed., Apr. 14

Topic: Continue “The Soloist.” Week 13 quiz.

Assignments Due: Read “Reactions to People with Disabilities” (on D2L)

Week 14

Mon., Apr. 19

Topic: Discussion of “The Soloist” AND Reactions to People with Disabilities

Assignments Due: **WRITING ASSIGNMENT #3 DUE.**

Wed., Apr. 21

Topic: Discussion of images of the poor. Week 14 quiz.

Assignments Due: Read “Images of the Poor” (on D2L)

Week 15

Mon., Apr. 26

Topic: Discussion of Gender Stereotyping in Televised Sports

Assignments Due: Read “Gender Stereotyping in Televised Sports” (on D2L); read “Televised Sports Manhood Formula” (on D2L); read articles about UConn women’s basketball coverage & female sideline reporters (on D2L).

Wed., Apr. 28

Topic: Final Exam Review

Assignments Due: Prepare 6 questions for Review Session (2 easy, 2 medium difficulty, 2 complex/thought-provoking).

Week 16

FINAL EXAM WEEK

Section 1: Mon., May 2, 1–3 p.m.

Section 2: Wed., May 4, 3:30–5:30 p.m.

** Exam dates are tentative. A multi-section exam period may be scheduled.*