

**SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION
COMM 201/201 (2272)—MEDIA THEORY AND CRITICISM
WATER TOWER CAMPUS/SPRING, 2020**

Instructor: Michael Mertz (mmertz@luc.edu)

Class meetings: Mon Weds Fri 11:30 - 12:20 pm, Room L08, Corby Law Center

Office hours by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course is an introduction to the study of traditional mass media and new media from a historical, critical and interpretive perspective. We live in a mediated environment; how media work on us as individuals and as cultures and what effects their power have on us are only some of the questions that media theory tries to answer in order to practice criticism of our past and present and envision a more ethical and productive future.

COURSE OBJECTIVES: This course reviews sociological/ethnographic approach, semiotics, discourse and content analysis and other methods of media analysis; it also surveys those theories that approach media as historical, cultural practices that go beyond media technologies and texts to envelope media as businesses with specific political economy, media as agents of change, and experiential aspects of media production and consumption. After taking this course the students will be able to:

identify major media theories and research methods, their main tenets and application contexts;

apply the critical and technical vocabulary (media theory as a body of knowledge) to describe, analyze and critique media (to practice media analysis/media criticism);

**Texts; Eoin Devereaux, Understanding the Media 3rd Edition (UM)
ISBN: 978-1-4462- 4880-5**

Any online sources will be posted in the weekly modules in Sakai.

ATTENDANCE: In this class we are using the discussion teaching method which includes traditional lecturing but stresses interactive, question and answer, discussion during class time between the teacher and students and among students in small groups and small group projects; therefore, all students are expected to attend the class regularly and to be prepared to actively participate in the discussions and activities after reading the required material. The big part of the **Participation** grade is based on student's class attendance and active contribution to the class's activities and discussions. No show in class means no participation points for attendance—more than three unexcused absences or excessive lateness/leaving class early will affect your grade. Any missed assignments must be made up and in some cases a doctor's letter or other official documentation excusing a missed class may be required.

CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE: Attendance is taken at the beginning of the class. Lateness up to 15 minutes is acceptable according to the academic rules. Being more than 15 minutes isn't acceptable unless it's due to a commuting issue beyond your control. In any case, if you enter the classroom after the attendance has been taken it is **your responsibility** to check with the instructor after the class to be sure to get the attendance credit.

PERSONAL TECH POLICY: No phones or laptops. At times we may use them officially as part of a discussion or in group work but unless that's the case they should be put away. An exception will be made for any student with an accommodation allowing notes to be taken on a laptop but everyone else will need to take notes the old school way – on paper.

ACCOMODATIONS: Any student with a learning disability that needs special accommodation during exams or class periods should provide documentation from the Student Accessibility Center confidentially to the instructor. The instructor will accommodate that student's needs in the best way possible, given the constraints of course content and processes. It is the student's responsibility to plan in advance in order to meet their own needs and assignment due dates.

GRADING SCALE:

Participation (attendance, active and critical contribution to the class activities and discussions; class survey; peer teaching, group presentations evaluation...)	200 points
Midterm Exam & Final Exam (125 each)	250 points
Reaction Papers	250 points
Case Study Group Project and In-class Presentation	300 points

TOTAL= 1000 POINTS:

A (EXCELLENT) 950-1000

A-minus 925-949

B+ 875-924;

B (GOOD) 850-874

B-minus 800-849

C+ 775-799

C (AVERAGE) 725-774

C-minus 700-724

D (FAIR) 650-699

F (POOR) Anything below 650

STATEMENT OF INTENT: By remaining in this course, students are agreeing to accept this syllabus as a contract and to abide by the guidelines outlined in this document.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

(This is but a plan; the syllabus and calendar are open to change--all changes will be posted in Sakai)

WEEK ONE (BEGINS MONDAY, JANUARY 13): Course introduction and overview; Getting to know each other; Survey/Questionnaire

WEEK TWO (BEGINS WEDNESDAY JANUARY 22 - NO CLASS ON MONDAY – MLK DAY) Media Histories, Media Power

READ: UM Chapter 1

What is media? What is theory? Why media theory and criticism?

WEEK THREE (BEGINS MONDAY, JANUARY 27): Media Globalization **READ: UM Chapter 2**

Watch Superbowl Sunday 2/2 for discussion Monday 2/3

WEEK FOUR (BEGINS MONDAY FEBRUARY 3): (Media Ownership: Concentration, Conglomeration and Regulation)

READ: UM Chapter 3

WEEK FIVE (BEGINS MONDAY FEB. 10) Media Professionals and Media Production **READ: UM Chapter 4**

WEEK SIX: (BEGINS MONDAY FEB. 17) READ: UM Chapter 5

WEEK SEVEN (BEGINS MONDAY FEB. 24):

Media, Ideology and Discourse **READ: UM Chapter 6**

MIDTERM EXAM FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 28

SPRING BREAK: NO CLASSES WEEK OF MONDAY MARCH 2

WEEK EIGHT (BEGINS MONDAY, MARCH 9) Media, Ideology and Discourse (continues) **READ: UM Chapter 7**

The How and Why of Media Analysis

FORMING GROUPS OF FOUR (& ONE OF FIVE) FOR CASE PROJECT

WEEK NINE: (BEGINS MONDAY, MARCH 16)
READ: UM Chapter 8

WEEK TEN (BEGINS MONDAY MARCH 23): Media “Re-presentations” in an Unequal World

WEEK ELEVEN: (BEGINS MONDAY, MARCH 30) Media “Re-presentations” in an Unequal World continues **READ: UM Chapter 9**

GROUP PRESENTATIONS BEGIN FRIDAY, APRIL 3

WEEK TWELVE (BEGINS MONDAY, APRIL 6 – NO CLASS GOOD FRIDAY APRIL 10): Media Audiences and Reception **READ: UM Chapter 10**

GROUP PRESENTATIONS CONTINUE MONDAY APRIL 6 & WEDS. APRIL 8

WEEK THIRTEEN (BEGINS WEDNESDAY APRIL 15 - NO CLASS MONDAY, APRIL 13): New Media, Social Media **READ: UM Chapter 11**

GROUP PRESENTATIONS CONTINUE WEDS. APRIL 15 & FRIDAY, APRIL 17

WEEK FOURTEEN (BEGINS MONDAY, APRIL 20):

GROUP PRESENTATIONS CONTINUE MONDAY, WEDS. & FRIDAY

LAST DAY OF CLASSES IS FRIDAY, APRIL 24

OUR FINAL EXAM IS SCHEDULED FOR ... TBA

SAKAI (<https://sakai.luc.edu>) is an online learning tool that allow us to communicate and collaborate with each other during the semester. You will find on it the course syllabus, e-mail addresses of all course participants, announcements, online assignments, online gradebook, etc.

LOCUS (<https://locus.luc.edu>) is Loyola's information portal for a wide variety of tasks. The instructor posts on Locus the midterm academic alerts and the final grades.

ACADEMIC HONESTY: A basic mission of a university is to search for and to communicate truth as it is honestly perceived. A genuine learning community cannot exist unless this demanding standard is a fundamental tenet of the intellectual life of the community. Students of Loyola University Chicago are expected to know, to respect, and to practice this standard of personal honesty.

Academic dishonesty can take several forms, including but not limited to cheating, plagiarism, copying another student's work, and submitting false documents. Academic cheating is a serious violation of academic integrity. **Cheating** includes, but is not limited to, obtaining, distributing, or communicating examination materials prior to the scheduled examination without the consent of the teacher; providing information to another student during examination; obtaining information from another student or any other person during an examination; using any material or equipment during an examination without consent of the instructor, or in a manner which is not authorized by the instructor; attempting to change answers after the examination has been submitted; unauthorized collaboration, or the use in whole or part of another student's work, on homework, lab reports, programming assignments, and any other course work which is completed outside of the classroom; falsifying medical or other documents to petition for excused absences or extensions of deadlines or any other action that, by omission or commission, compromise the integrity of the academic evaluation process.

Plagiarism is a serious violation of the standards of academic honesty; it is the appropriation of ideas, language, work, or intellectual property of another, either by intent or by negligence, without sufficient public acknowledgement and appropriate citation that the material is not one's own.

It is true that every thought probably has been influenced to some degree by the thoughts and actions of others. Such influences can be thought of as affecting the ways we see things and express all thoughts. Plagiarism, however, involves the taking and use of specific words and ideas of other without proper acknowledgement of the sources, and includes, but is not limited, to submitting as one's own material copied from a published source, such as Internet, print, CD- ROM, audio, video, etc.; submitting as one's own another person's unpublished work or examination material; allowing another or paying another to write or research a paper for one's own benefit, or purchasing, acquiring, and using for course credit a pre-written paper. The above list is in no way intended to be exhaustive. Students should be guided by the principle that it is of utmost importance to give proper recognition to all sources. To do so is both an act of personal, professional courtesy and of intellectual honesty. Any failure to do so, whether by intent or by neglect, whether by omission or commission, is an act of plagiarism. A more detailed description of this issue can be found at <http://www.luc.edu/english/aboutthewritingprogram/theuseandmisuseofsourcematerials/#d.en.23.8783>

In addition, a student may not submit the same paper or other work for credit in two or more classes. A student who submits the same work for credit in two or more classes will be judged guilty of academic dishonesty and will be subject to sanctions described below. This applies even if the student is enrolled in the classes during different semesters. If a student plans to submit work with similar or overlapping content for credit in two or more classes, the student should consult with all instructors prior to submission of the work to make certain that such submission will not violate this standard. Plagiarism or any act of academic dishonesty will result minimally in the instructor's assigning the grade of "F" for the assignment or examination. The instructor may impose a more severe sanction, including a grade of "F" in the course. All instances of academic dishonesty must be reported by the instructor to the appropriate area head and to the Office of the Dean of the School of Communication.

The Office of the Dean of the School of Communication may constitute a hearing board to consider the imposition of sanctions in addition to those imposed by the instructor, including a recommendation of expulsion, depending on the seriousness of the misconduct. In the case of multiple instances of academic dishonesty, the Dean's office may convene a separate hearing board to review these instances. The student has the right to appeal

the decision of the hearing board to the Dean of SoC. If the student is not a member of the SoC, the dean of the college in which the student is enrolled shall be part of the process. Students have the right to appeal the decision of any hearing board and the deans of the two schools will review the appeal together. Their decision is final in all cases except expulsion. The sanction of expulsion for academic dishonesty may be imposed only by the Provost upon recommendation of the dean or deans.

Students have a right to appeal any finding of academic dishonesty against them. The procedure for such an appeal can be found at:

http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicgrievance.shtml

The School of Communication maintains a permanent record of all instances of academic dishonesty. The information in that record is confidential. However, students may be asked to sign a waiver which releases that student's record of dishonesty as a part of the student's application to a graduate or professional school, to a potential employer, to a bar association, or to a similar organization.

STUDENT ACCESSIBILITY CENTER (SAC): If you have a special circumstance that may have some impact on your course work and for which you may require accommodations, please contact SAC as soon as possible. Formal arrangements must be made through the office before course adjustments can be made. Additional information about the services available at: <https://luc.edu/sac/sacstudents/>

MANAGING LIFE CRISES AND FINDING SUPPORT: Should you encounter an unexpected crisis during the semester (e.g., securing food or housing, addressing mental health concerns, managing a financial crisis, and/or dealing with a family emergency, etc.), I strongly encourage you to contact the Office of the Dean of Students by submitting a CARE referral (<https://www.luc.edu/csaa/>) for yourself or a peer in need of support. To learn more about the Office of the Dean of Students, please find their websites here: <https://www.luc.edu/dos/> or LUC.edu/csaa; 773-508-8840; deanofstudents@luc.edu.