

# Media and Digital Literacy Syllabus

## INSTRUCTOR

Name

Email

Office

Office Hours:

## COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

**Name of Course; 3 cr.** (Description) Introduces digital information literacy or the ability to effectively access, analyze, evaluate and create digital media. Examines how media messages shape politics, culture and society, and explores new media production skills, including blogs, podcasts, photo and video manipulation. *Each Semester.*

### Course Description

This course teaches students how to critically and effectively access, analyze, evaluate and create various digital media messages. The course builds on the concept on information literacy and frames it within the digital and new media paradigm. It teaches the essential new media production skills and knowledge needed to create digital media messages for their studies and research, including principles of digital design, photo manipulation, video/audio production, blogging and podcasting. Simultaneously, students learn how to analyze media messages, understand the underlying forces that

contribute to shaping those messages, and explore how media shape politics, culture, and society.

### **Course Learning Outcomes**

After completing this course you should be able to:

- critically and skeptically analyze media messages you encounter every day.
- become a wiser consumer of media and protect yourself from deceptive media messages and practices ubiquitous in our society.
- effectively access and evaluate online information and digital media.
- efficiently and inexpensively create digital media messages utilizing the latest web 2.0 technologies.
- become effective in creating and enhancing Wikipedia, Blogs, digital photographs, digital Videos, Podcasts, RSS feeds and other Web 2.0 applications.

## **REQUIRED MATERIAL**

### **Required Textbooks and Equipment**

- Textbooks: There are no required textbooks for this course, but there will be required weekly readings you can access online through the syllabus or in the Library reserves. Still, I recommend you get at least one of the optional books below, depending on the topic in which you are most interested.

- Digital Storage: Please bring your own memory stick, preferably 8GB or larger.
- Computer Headset: Please bring your own headset to class (inexpensive computer headphone with microphone). Do not get a USB headset, as it may not work. Normal mini-jacks will work.
- Photo/Video equipment: Although alternative options will be available for those who don't own cameras, some of your projects will require the shooting of digital photos and videos. You may use your smart cellphones, flip cams or other consumer-level equipment.

### **Optional Textbooks**

- Vossen, Gottfried and Hagemann, Stephan (2007). *Unleashing Web 2.0: From Concepts to Creativity*.
- Macedo, D. and Steinberg, S., (2007). *MediaLiteracy*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Reynolds, Garr. (2008). Presentation Zen: Simple Ideas on Presentation Design and Delivery.
- Lamb, Sharon and Brown, Lyn (2007). Packaging Girlhood: Rescuing Our Daughters from Marketers' Schemes.

### **Additional Readings**

- <http://www.mediacollege.com/>

## **COURSE POLICIES**

**Plagiarism: When in doubt, cite it out!** There will

be **zero tolerance for plagiarism of any kind**. You may fail a course or be dismissed from the program entirely if you are caught. **Ignorance is not an acceptable excuse**. Plagiarism covers all class assignments and tests, including multimedia material and is not limited to text. Everything should be cited appropriately. For further information and assistance in determining when and how to properly cite your sources, please refer to the following resources:

Definitions of plagiarism:

[http://turnitin.com/research\\_site/e\\_home.html](http://turnitin.com/research_site/e_home.html).

University's Student Code of Conduct:

<http://pnp.aub.edu.lb/general/conductcode/index.html>

It is your responsibility to become familiar with the university's ethics policy, to know what is and is not a code violation, and to abide by the university's code of conduct. Violation of any policy will result on disciplinary action, including expulsion.

**Readings** It is IMPERATIVE that you finish ALL assigned readings before class, whether they were media literacy or digital skills related readings. Because this class will cover various topics and skills in a limited time period, it is not possible to cover every detail during lectures. In addition, learning the digital skills covered in this class will be frustrating if you don't familiarize yourself with them conceptually before class. You are expected to have a basic

understanding of the material to be able to engage in the discussions. Your "Attendance, Participation & punctuality" portion of your grade will be negatively affected, otherwise.

**Sharing Assignments** Any sharing of assignments from previous or current semesters, using any previously completed work, or sharing of previously used test questions or video or audio material will be considered cheating. Both the person who shared his or her work and the person who used the previously completed work will be pursued with ethics charges. Sharing here refers to both written and multi-media material.

**Papers Format and Guidelines** All research papers should follow APA style and format, be typed, double-spaced, spell-checked, proof-read, have one-inch margins, and use 12-point serif font (e.g. Times News Roman). See sample APA papers and instructions: [APA 1](#) [APA 2](#) You are required to name the files you upload according to the following formula:

"Lname\_Fname\_AssignmentName.extension"

Example: Mallat\_Sarah\_ML1.doc

Spelling, punctuation, syntax and grammar are an essential component of writing. You will not be penalized for small mistakes, but if it is clear that you did not take the time to revise and edit your paper, you WILL lose points.

**Late Work** Late work will be dropped 1 point for *each day* late. Late work will also affect your "Attendance, Participation and Punctuality" grade. Work is due at the beginning of class on the assigned date. If you have extenuating circumstances or need special accommodations, please contact me well before the due date. Please note that in all cases you are responsible for getting your work in on time. Do not e-mail assignments to me unless I have given you explicit permission to do so.

**Cell Phones** Cell phones are not welcome and should be turned off during class. Cell phones are not permitted during exams. Anyone operating a cell phone or any other portable communication technology (including iPods, mp3 players...) during the exam will be considered cheating. During regular class sessions, you will lose all attendance points if your cell phone or any other digital appliance is used without a granted permission, including if a cell phone rings in class.

**Incomplete Coursework** Incomplete grades are given at the discretion of the instructor, and only under extenuating circumstances such as a major illness, death in the family or other unexpected emergencies. In all instances, you must submit work to me so that I can submit a final grade to the registrar within the time frame allowed by the university before the start of the following semester.

Information on incompletes and other grading policies are ruled by the university and the department's regulations and policies, and it is your responsibility to be informed about them. Any non- or late submission will result in a ZERO on the missed assignment(s).

**Disabilities** If you are a student with a documented disability, who requires accommodations, please bring to me the official paperwork as early as possible, and I will be glad to accommodate.

## **COURSE ASSIGNMENTS**

### **Attendance, Punctuality and Participation (20 pts)**

Attendance is absolutely mandatory. I regularly take attendance. If you are absent more than 10 times, I will do my best to force you to be dropped from the course. Students who are in the habit of missing classes are advised not to enroll in this course. If you need to miss class, it's your responsibility to make sure any assignments that are due reach me on time to receive full credit. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to get any notes or handouts from a classmate. Do not assume that I will automatically

give you copies of any handouts or notes for any class unless you are present. Regardless of the reason for missing class, you will not be able to make up missed class participation points.

Punctuality in attendance, submitting assignments and appearing at appointments on time is absolutely mandatory. Please plan to come to class and to appointments 10-15 minutes before scheduled time. You will lose TWO points for each session you miss and ONE point for each session you are late. You will lose ONE point for each assignment submitted late. If you are late, you will most likely not be allowed in class. I will shut and lock the door promptly after the session starts. You will lose all attendance points for that day if you leave class early, regardless. You may also lose points on sessions you are physically present but not participating in the discussion.

**Media Literacy Critical Papers (10 pts each)** We will cover 10 media literacy topics in this course, and you will write a "critical paper" about FOUR of them. You must complete readings even if you don't submit a paper. Material from all the readings will be on the exams. You will be required to write no less than two pages double-spaced and no more than three pages

double-spaced about the readings for that week. Please note that the page limit will be strictly enforced; I will stop reading at the end of four pages and your grade will be based on what I have read. The body of your critical paper should be exactly that: CRITICAL! Keep descriptive statements to an absolute minimum. Be concise and rewrite your papers to eliminate wordiness and jargon. Your analysis and arguments should be persuasive and supported with "data" or "evidence" or citations or examples from the texts, photos or videos you are analyzing. You should build a logical argument that starts with a concise statement and ends with a summary of what you analyzed and clear and specific conclusion.

For each critical paper, you will be supplied an "analysis criteria." This is a basic guideline for what to look for and what questions to ask. You do not need to use every element in the supplied criteria, and you can certainly go beyond the questions asked.

Use APA format and concise writing. Write in active voice whenever possible, and avoid using expletives, jargon and cliches. Write an introduction that sets out the main thesis of your paper and a conclusion that summarizes your main points. Make sure your introduction includes a thesis statement that introduces the main argument of the paper. The use

of subtitles/subheadings is highly encouraged to aid organization and flow. Your paper should include correct citations, with references listed at the end. You need to also reference multimedia material you use, not only books and web sites. Papers receiving ten points will communicate a clear argument, demonstrate an understanding of all the readings and analysis criteria, be free of APA errors, be elegantly and clearly written, and provide sophisticated well-articulated and supported arguments, not common insights and mere descriptions. Please review the grading rubric below so you know what I will be looking for.

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### Grading Rubric for ML Critical Papers:

1) Writing uses texts and analysis criteria discussed in class with a clear understanding of each. (2.0) 2) Writing makes a clear, well-organized and well-supported argument that provides sophisticated insights and analyses. (2.0) 3) Paper contains a clear introduction with a thesis statement that is supported by the body of the paper and a conclusion with summary. (2.0) 4) Writing is clear and free of APA and grammar errors. It contains proper transitions and headings that give the paper flow. (2.0) 5) Each paragraph has a clear thesis statement

or main idea and supporting documentation. (1.0) 6)  
Paper contains all required sections and adheres to the formatting directions and follows submission directions. (1.0)

**Digital Skills Assignments (10 pts each)** You will work on FOUR "digital skills" assignments. For each assignment, you will be supplied basic directions and training. Although the training exercises are not graded, you must practice them by following exactly what the lessons ask. Simply listening to the lectures will not help you much. Be meticulous and patient with these lessons and exercises, as learning new computer applications can be frustrating. Voice your issues and sticking points in class so I can address them effectively.

You will be graded both on the aesthetic and content aspects of your digital assignments. Your assignments should communicate a clear and coherent message with an appropriate mood set by the colors, images and graphics utilized. At the same time, the assignments should be "clean" and esthetically attractive and reflect high quality of work. Please remember to appropriately cite any material you use and you don't own: images, video, audio, web sites, screen captures, logos, and

anything else I can't think of or hasn't been invented yet!

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### Grading Rubric for Digital Skills Assignments:

1) The work is aesthetically clean and clear of any noise, pixelations or distortions. (2.0) 2) The whole work communicates a coherent message and follows the principles of design covered in class and in the readings. (2.0) 3) The work is message oriented and delivers a clear and simple message with little or not clutter and distractions. (2.0) 4) The text (including audio narrations) used in the work is void of any grammar or dictation errors. (1.0) 5) The colors, special effects, images, widgets and other extra elements used add to the message and are not simply decorations and do not distract from the main message. (1.0) 6) The work is highly "usable" and "readable" and information can be easily found and/or understood. (1.0) 7) The work is saved (stored) in the appropriate digital format and according to the requested criteria (e.g. using JPEG when appropriate for images AND saving the files in using the name/assignment directions provided. (1.0)

**Web 2.0 Presentations (20 pts.)** Each student will deliver a mini presentation (5 minutes) on a new Web 2.0 application he or she researched and learned to operate. The Web 2.0 application needs to be relevant to digital skills lecture for that week. For example, if we are covering PhotoShop, the application should be an online module or plug-in for editing or presenting digital photos. The presentation should include the following:

1. A one-minute introduction about the application specifying its name, creators, where/how to acquire it, how much it costs, and what it does...
2. A two-to-three-minute demonstration of what it does. Please rehearse this on the classroom computers before presentation day! If the demo is likely to take more than 2-3 minutes, provide an example of an output (along with the original file if applicable).
3. A one-minute discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of this application and possible future uses and impacts on society. Who is likely to use this and how?
4. Also supply a one-to-two-page paper that addresses all the above points, including a step-by-step guide to how it works.
5. Do not use powerpoint for this (unless it's a powerpoint plug-in). Instead, demonstrate and

- show the actual application.
6. Be prepared to answer questions after the presentation.
  7. Come to class 15 minutes early to set up the presentation.

Please get my approval for the application you are going to present AT LEAST one week before the date of your presentation.

Grading Rubric for Web 2.0 Presentations: 1) The application was innovative and offered a new tool to the class. (2.0) 2) The presentation did not go over time and the student set it up before class started. (4.0) 3) The demonstration was clear and useful. (4.0) 4) The paper submitted was void of any grammar or dictation errors. (2.0) 5) The presenter was informed and critical about the applications strengths and weaknesses. (2.0) 6) The work was saved (stored) in the appropriate digital format and according to the requested criteria (e.g. using JPEG when appropriate for images AND saving the files in using the name/assignment directions provided. (2.0) 7) All components of the presentation and paper were included (2.0) 8) The student was prepared and well informed about the application and answered reasonable questions effectively (2.0).

## **Reading Quizzes (10 pts)**

There will be four quizzes (5 points each) throughout the semester that will evaluate whether or not you have been completing the assigned readings. Each quiz consists of 10 multiple choice and True/False questions, and is **open-book/notes**. However, the quizzes are timed, which means you must do the readings ahead of time in order to finish the quiz within the time limit.

**Final Project (40 pts)** Your final project is a critical research oriented investigation into some aspect of mass media. You are free to choose your topic. The format should be in one of the digital formats you learned in this class (blogs, videos, podcasts, photo essays, etc...; NO traditional papers!). Whichever format you choose to deliver your project must contain sufficiently researched and well written and produced content (e.g. a photo essay should include photos, captions and an essay distributed around the photos, along with citations and resources). Your topic must relate to concepts that are brought up in class or in the course readings but be more narrow and specific and relevant to Lebanon and/or the Arab world. Essentially, you will be applying media literacy concepts to our region. Be sure that there is enough

information about your topic, while keep in mind that very broad issues (e.g. computers and privacy) will produce too much information to synthesize for a modest project. The project should be the equivalent of 10 pages of word-processed copy, double-spaced using proportional 12 pt. type.

Essentially, you will be performing a **critique** on the topic of your choice, including both some sort of "literature review" and some original content you created, whether critiquing images or videos, or creating digital media pieces that help people become media literate about a topic. This should be more than just a summary or description of what others have said. Your goal is to combine previous literature into a coherent package that provides a well-rounded explanation of the issues that surround your topic along with originally created content of your own. You should **critically** analyze your topic drawing on material from class lectures, discussions and readings, and providing original material, like photos of banner ads, Arabic Newscasts....

You must have at least **10 sources and 6 original products (example: 6 ads, or 6 news articles)**. Half of the 10 sources must be from scholarly journals and/or books and five can be from the Internet or other sources. Please only use credible sources (no Wikipedia).

## Guidelines:

- Project must focus on a topic related to mass media in Lebanon or the Arab world and the issues covered in the course.
- Project must be clearly organized. Consider these elements as guidelines:
  - What is - clearly - your issue, topic or point? Don't forget to give your website or Podcast a title.
  - What is the importance of your topic to society, to the mass media?
  - Discuss the background of this topic using other studies and resources. This is where you will present the literature review.
  - What is your evidence, data? Organize this to build a case or make your conclusions clear. This should be the bulk of your project and rely on your analysis of original material.
  - What are your conclusions? Discuss not only what you found and your opinions or conclusions, but what was unanswered in your search that is important to find out?
  - Finally, don't stop with simple description. **Synthesis and critical thought should be the focus of your paper.**
- Proper referencing is necessary. Use APA as closely as possible. Pay attention to style, grammar and spelling. It can be hard to spot faults in formatted Web documents. If

you cite hypertext documents from the web, try to provide enough information (author, title, organization and date published, the document's URL and the access date). When possible, provide a hypertext link to the source. Your project should include a page or space for the sources and in-document citations.

- Be concise. Be creative.

### Grading Rubric for Final Project:

1) The project has an introduction that clearly introduces and explains the importance of your topic. The writing is compelling and makes the reader care about the topic. The introduction ends with a clear statement of purpose for the paper. (6.0) 2) The project includes a form of "literature review" and background discussion. It begins with a clear introduction that outlines what you will discuss and ends with a summary of the entire review. The literature reviewed is relevant to topic and interacts effectively with the digital (audio, video, images) content. (6.0). 3) The writing and audio/video narrations are grammatically correct, concise and in active voice whenever possible. The project uses APA format whenever possible. The writing is clear, well-organized and the arguments are well-supported and provide sophisticated insights and analyses. (8.0) 4) The analysis section uses texts and analysis criteria discussed in class with a clear understanding of

each. (4.0) 5) The work is aesthetically clean and clear of any noise, pixelations or distortions. The whole work communicates a coherent message and sticks to the principles of design covered in class and in the readings. (10.0) 6) The colors, special effects, images, widgets and other extra elements used add to the message and are not simply decorations and do not distract from the main message. (4.0) 7) The work is saved (stored) in the appropriate digital format (e.g. for photos JPG or GIFF or other). (2.0)

## **GRADING**

### **Total Semester Points Possible:**

Attendance & participation & Punctuality	10
Media Literacy Critical Papers (4 papers, 10pts each)	40
Digital Skills Assignments (4 assignments, 5pts each)	20
Web 2.0 Presentation	5
Final Project	20
Reading Quizzes (4 quizzes)	5
Extra Credit	5
	*
<b>Total:</b>	100
	0
	0
* The total grade cannot exceed 100 points.	