

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT
Faculty of Arts & Sciences
Department of Sociology, Anthropology & Media Studies

MCOM 204: Digital & Media Literacy
Class Hours: TTH @ 10.00 a.m.

'Media Literacy involves gaining the skills and knowledge to read, interpret, and produce certain types of texts and artifacts and to gain the intellectual tools and capacities to fully participate in one's culture and society.' -D. Kellner & J. Share (2005)

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Office: Nicely 201 E

Office Hours: MWF @ 10.00 or by appointment

Course Description: This course introduces students to the basics of information literacy and frames it within the digital and new media realm. In the evolving multimedia environment, this course cultivates skills in analyzing media codes and conventions, abilities to criticize stereotypes, dominant values, and ideologies. By teaching the essential new media tools, including principles of digital design, photo manipulation, video/audio production, blogging and podcasting, students learn how to use media intelligently.

Course Learning Outcomes:

Upon completion of this course, students will:

- Analyze critically media messages
- Develop an understanding of the visual message--visual literacy.
- Develop an understanding of semiotics--the meaning behind media messages.
- Develop an understanding of ideology in the context of our media system.
- Develop an understanding of the media in terms of its representation of gender and ethnicity.
- Develop an understanding of our commercial culture, particularly of the Arab world
- To become a wiser consumer of media and protect yourself from deceptive media messages and practices ubiquitous in our society.
- Apply Web 2.0 applications to create digital media messages
- Use these media skills to critique the media with the media

Required Material:

- 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

- O'Shaughnessy, Michael and Stadler, Jane (2012). *Media & Society*, 5e. London. Oxford Press
- 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*.

Outline of the course:

Module 1: -What is Media Literacy? Introduction, definition and impact

Module 2: - Freedom of expression and democracy

Module 3: Global media landscape in the Arab world (critical analysis of news coverage in Arab news).

Module 4: -Media bias and representations

Module 5: -Semiotics

Module 6- Race/Gender/class: Global citizenship and global responsibilities. Case study: creating new Arab identities by using Arab media as a tool to create and diffuse the gender, race, and class role of the Arab citizen- Use of digital platform (storify, audacity)

Module 7: -The digital age

Module 8: -The development of technology: how technology has transformed media and how the cyberspace can be used to communicate, initiate Arab movements and ensure communication among different initiatives.

Module 9: The culture of consumption and consumerism

Module 10: Resistance to corporate controlled media (alternative media)

Module 11: Critical Analysis of advertising in Arab media

Course Assignments:

Assignment	Grade Percentage	Due Date
JOURNAL: Regular journal entries graded on a pass/fail basis to help you connect with the readings, contribute to class discussions, and study for the two exams. Please expect to write about 3/4 page--1 page, single space, 12-point.	20%	TBA during the first week of the semester and the grading rubric to be posted on Moodle
Group Work: Picture analysis	5%	TBA during the first week of the semester and the grading rubric to be posted on Moodle
Critical essay assignment: Consider signs, signifiers, connotations, codes, and anchorage, as well as the possible ideological meanings of the advertisement (storify)	15%	TBA during the first week of the semester and the grading rubric to be posted on Moodle
Midterm Exam	15%	
Final Project	15%	
Final Exam	20%	TBA during the first week of the semester and the grading rubric to be posted on Moodle
Participation	10%	You are strongly encouraged to participate in class

Course Rating:

90-100%	High Distinction
80-89%	Distinction
70-79%	Credit
60-69%	Pass
0-59%	Fail

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.

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.

Attendance, Punctuality and Participation

Your attendance is required at all times. There will be a policy of 2 excused absences over the term. A third absence will result in an extra assignment to be determined by me. More than 3 absences will negatively affect your final grade for 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.