Mechref Campus | Media Literacy | Spring 2014

Course Name	Media Literacy (3-credits)
Course Number	MCOM 202
Class Hours	MWF 8:00 – 8:50
Instructor Name	Serene Srouji
Office Number	I 211
Office Hours	MW 9:00 – 10:00
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"Media literacy education provides a framework and a pedagogy for the new literacy needed for living, working and citizenship in the 21st century. Moreover, it paves the way to mastering the skills required for lifelong learning in a constantly changing world."

Elizabeth Thoman and Tessa Jolls

Course Description: This class teaches students to effectively use critical thinking to deconstruct media messages, analyze and interpret the intent; as well as, evaluate and generate constructive responses. Media is a powerful force in our realities that affects how we perceive ourselves and influence our understanding of society, politics, and culture. Throughout this course, students will examine various ways in which mainstream and alternative medias define our perceptions and shape our life experience. This course also provides students with the essential new media production skills and knowledge needed to create digital media messages for their studies and research. These skills include principles of digital design, photo manipulation, video/audio production, blogging, podcasts and screen casting. The class aims at producing media literate students in Lebanon who successfully use media to voice their ideas, become better citizens and engage in social, political and cultural change.

Course Objectives:

As a result of successfully completing this course, students will be able to:

- Develop critical thinking proficiency to enhance their ability to interpret the intent and strategies of media
- Gain awareness of the methods, issues and theories of mass media
- Provide essential analytical and technical skills to analyze and control media environments
- Become wiser media consumers to protect themself from deceptive messages
- Create efficient and inexpensive digital media messages utilizing the latest web 2.0 technologies.
- Use Wikipedia, Blogs, digital photographs, digital Videos, Podcasts, Screencasts, RSS feeds and other Web 2.0 applications to voice their ideas.

Required Textbooks:

There are no required textbooks for this course, but there will be assigned weekly readings that can be accessed online. Throughout the course, various books, articles, reviews, videos, blogs tweets… will be used and these resources will be uploaded on RHU Media Literacy page on facebook. I also

recommend that you check some of the optional books and buy the one that targets the topics you are interested in.

Optional Books:

- 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.
- Thomas de Zengotita (2006). Mediated: How the Media Shapes Our World and the Way We Live in it.
- Paul Hodkinson (2010). Media, Culture & Society: An Introduction.
- Philip Patterson and Lee Wilkins (2013). Media Ethics: Issues & Cases
- Elliot Gaines (2010). Media Literacy & Semiotics

Additional Online Resources:

- www.adbusters.com
- http://jmle.org/index.php/JMLE/article/viewFile/35/1
- www.aml.ca/home/
- www.reelyouth.org
- www.mediacollege.com

Required Material & Equipment:

- Digital Storage: 8 GB flash drive or hard drive
- Computer Headset
- Photo/Video Equipment: cameras or phone cameras
- Notebook + Sketchbook

Course Assignments:

Assignment 1: Media Blog

Create and maintain your own media blog using Word Press. Design, develop, and network this site while adding content to it throughout the duration of the course. Include all your assignments on this blog so that the instructor and students could comment and critique your work. You will also maintain your blog as a Media Journal, which will include: text, images, audio, video, links, tweets etc

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Assignment 2: Critical Analysis – Reaction Essay

Critically analyze the differences and similarities in the dissemination of one major incident in Lebanon across at least 3 local TV media outlets.

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Assignment 3: **Create a TV Commercial against Sectarianism in Lebanon**

After viewing the various examples promoting sectarianism in Lebanon. Create an awareness campaign ad to promote anti-sectarianism. Be creative! Brainstorm various ideas to highlight in the commercial. Write the script. Consider various genres (humor, parody, myths, persuasion, shocking, informative...)

Edit Video to be less than 1 min.

Assignment 4: **Picture Composition Analysis**

Select 2 ads from a Lebanese magazine and complete a picture analysis for each one. Your goal in this project is to think about how the images you have chosen are guided by the "principles of composition," or *not*. Think about spatial depth, camera angle and white space. Ask yourself questions: Is there any intentional disunity or discomfort? Are there any objects placed deliberately on the margins? Where are the models looking? What does that suggest? What are the colors used and why? Why did the person who created this picture make all these choices? How do these aesthetic choices affect the viewer?

This exercise is about *aesthetics* and the power of the photographer to create emotion and meaning through framing choices alone.

The key to this analysis is to pick 2 good, rich, colorful, artistic ads to analyze, pictures with lots of lines, angles, objects, people who are positioned interestingly in the frame. Take time to pick the right photographs to analyze: The Lens is rich and deep… In other words, you'll want to look for pictures that have many aesthetic components so you can prove to me that you understand all this stuff. Write a complete paragraph analysis on each picture. Show that you understand the concepts revolving around:

color, form, line, movement, frame magnetism (pulling power), vectors, rule of thirds....

Helpful keywords to think about:

- Repetition
- Parallels
- Shapes (square, rectangle, circle, triangle)
- Curves
- Lines (Verticals, Horizontals, Diagonals)
- Line direction
- Vectors (graphic, index, motion)
- Motion vectors (Convergence, Divergence, Continuous)
- Depth (angles, foreground, background)
- Textures
- Light and shade (something we didn't quite get to, but obviously this creates depth)
- Human figures, form
- High and low angles, foreground vs. background, lines and vectors

Upload the images and analysis to your blog on WordPress.

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Assignment 5: **Photoshop Manipulation**

Every image in every magazine is tweaked and manipulated. Your job is to turn the technology onto yourselves. You will create a "before" and "after" photograph of yourself...the "before" being the original digital photo, and the "after" being the photo digitally manipulated in Photoshop to reveal our culture's beauty ideals that none of us will ever live up to. Place your manipulated image as a cover for one of the local magazines in Lebanon. Add a title to frame the context of the image. Be creative!

The end product should imitate the covers usually used for that particular magazine.

* You can find a lot of tutorials on YouTube for photo manipulation and photo enhancement.

Assignment 6: **Reaction Essay – The Image of Women & Men in Ads**

Pick 2 ads - one using only women and one using only men. Critically analyze both ads visually and interpret the messages they portray. Compare & contrast both ads.

Upload the images and analysis to your blog on WordPress.

Assignment 7: **Web 2.0**

Choose a Web 2.0 application to present. The applications should be ones that are applicable and useful for education and media literacy.

Prepare a 5 min presentation for the application including the following:

- A one-minute introduction about the application specifying its name, creators, where/how to acquire it, how much it costs, and what it does.
- A two-to-three-minute demonstration of what it does. 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).
- 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, particularly for the purposes of education and media literacy?
- Do not use PowerPoint for this. Instead, demonstrate and show the actual application.
- Be prepared to answer questions after the presentation.

Assignment 8: **Screen Casting**

Choose a part of a Disney movie or series. Critically analyze its impact on kids and create a screen cast to record your opinion. Create a maximum of 10 sentences to voice your point of view over the chosen piece.

Upload the screen cast on your blog.

Assignment 9: **Final Project**

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 includes 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 tobacco 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. You project should include a page or space for the sources and in-document citations.
  - Be concise. Be creative.

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Course Schedule:

* Due Dates will be assigned in class.

Week 1: Introduction to Media Literacy

. Introduction to course Syllabus – Overview of course content

. Define media and media studies. What is Media Literacy?

. Why is Media Literacy necessary in contemporary society?

Week 2: Media alters Contexts of Communication

. Discuss how media affects us? Explain the role media plays in the Arab world politically, socially & culturally.

. Does Media Alter Contexts of Communication?

. Is meaning Constructed? How does language and representation shape and construct meaning? Case Studies

* Initiation of assignment 1

Week 3: News Analysis – Issues of Objectivity

. Class discussion: News Analysis: how objective is News?

. Case Studies: Comparison of news on Manar & Future TV.

. Investigating the manipulation of messages in various medias.

* Assignment 2

Week 4: Media Portrayal of Religion & Sectarianism

. Media portrayals of Religions – Overview

. Discussing the role of media in Lebanon regarding religious issues. Is the Lebanese media encouraging sectarianism?

. Videos of ads about sectarianism:

1- election Law promo ad in support of the "Orthodox Gathering Law"

http://stateofmind13.com/2013/01/14/the-most-sectarian-ad-on-lebanese-television/

2- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MwQnRfOp0ic

3- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ok4wuueIkWQ

Week 5: Video Editing – Anti- Sectarianism Awareness Campaign

. Video Capturing & Editing workshop

* Assignment 3

Week 6: Media & Constructed Images

. Are images Constructed? Analysis of images, deciphering of their meaning by studying color, form, depth, angle, movement, framing…

. Presentation on Digital Photo Manipulation – image comparison of political manipulation, journalistic manipulation, news magazine covers, other Lebanese magazine covers.

. Watch Photoshop manipulation videos: Dove Evolution, Dove Real Beauty Sketches

* Assignment 4

Week 7: "The Camera Never Lies, but the Software Can" Hafner

. Photoshop tutorial

. Classwork: activity on photo manipulation – Take an abstract photograph. Manipulate the image using Photoshop to fit 2 different contexts. Write a different story for each.

* Assignment 5

Week 8: Media, Gender & Body Image

. How are women portrayed in media? Case Studies in advertising

. Explore ideologies and discourses of Femininity throughout the years.

. Movie: Killing Us Softly 4: Advertising's Image of Women

Week 9: Media, Gender & Body Image

. How are men portrayed in media? Case Studies in advertising

. Explore ideologies and discourses of Masculinity throughout the years.

. Movie: Tough Guise

* Assignment 6

Week 10: Media Representation & Diversity

. How is race and identity portrayed through media?

. How are Arabs portrayed in the United States? Discussion

. How do we portray Americans?

. Group Classwork: Create a Mind map illustrating your vision of how we portray Americans. Rely on examples from the media. Use text & images in composing your mind map. Consider ideas related to health, food, children, schools & universities, fashion, movies, icons, culture, politics…

* Upload the mind map visual to your blog

Week 11: Mainstream Media vs. Digital Media

. How has technology transformed Media?

. Explore 21rst Century Media & Technology Landscape

. Classroom group work: Illustrate a timeline for the different media outlets from 1900 till now. Use inforgraphics to demonstrate the variation in media outlets consumption throughout the years.

Week 12: Web 2.0 and Media Habits, Dependency, Privacy & Safety

. Explore digital media & its impact. Discuss various digital media used today to disseminate information.

. Introduce the New World of Web 2.0. What is it and how can it be used?

. Web 2.0: media habits, dependency, privacy and safety

* Assignment 7

Week 13: Media & Kids

. Discuss Media aimed at kids from TV shows to animation movies & advertising…

. Explore the potentially negative consequences of children's media consumption ex: the impact of food advertising on childhood obesity, violence in video games, sexual content in music videos…

. Social Media safety tips for children

. Positive outcome from children using social media

. Media literacy has become essential for our children.

Group Classwork: Create a podcast voicing your thoughts, ideas, advantages, disadvantages and privacy issues concerning Media & Children. Minimize your podcast to 6 sentences.

* Assignment 8

Week 14 & 15: Final Project

Evaluation/ Grading Distribution:

Assignment 1: Media Blog 15%
Assignment 2: Critical Analysis- Reaction Essay 5%
Assignment 3: TV Commercial 10%
Assignment 4: Picture Composition Analysis 5%
Assignment 5: Photo Manipulation 5%
Assignment 6: Reaction Essay – The Image of Women & Men in Ads 5%
Assignment 7: Web 2.0 5%
Assignment 8: Screen Casting 5%
Final Project 15%
Group Classwork 15%
Assigned Readings & Quizzes 5%
Attendance & Participation: 10%

Grading Profile:

95 – 100	**A+**	Distinguished
90 – 94	**A**	Excellent
86 – 89	**B+**	Very Good
80 – 85	**B**	Good
77 – 79	**C+**	Fair
73 – 76	**C**	Average
70 – 72	**C-**	Satisfactory
65 – 69	**D+**	Minimal Pass
60 – 64	**D**	Weak
0 – 59	**F**	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.

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.

Cheating is an act of deceit, fraud, distortion of truth or improper use of another person's effort to obtain an educational advantage. Plagiarism is the presentation of another person's or source's words and/or ideas as if they were one's own. Any form of cheating and plagiarism are considered a serious offense. The instructor has the right to assign a grade of "0" on the examination or assignment with a warning. If it reoccurs the student will receive a letter grade "F" on the course. A second offense in any other course may result in an automatic expulsion from the program.

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

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).

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory. Students are expected to attend all classes, seminars, and labs in which they are officially registered. Evaluation of progress in any course is cumulative and is based on attendance, class assignments, participation, and examination. Students cannot pursue their education at HCU through correspondence or by merely passing their examinations. Only justified documented absences will be accepted. Absence from any class or make-up sessions, whether excused or not, does not absolve the student of her/his responsibility for the work done or assigned in that class or for any announcements made during her/his absence.

An absence equivalent to 10% or more of the total credit hours before the withdrawal period will lead to the student's automatic withdrawal from the course. **The student is expected to fill a withdrawal form and secure the necessary signatures as if he/she is withdrawing normally from the course.**

A student who does not follow this procedure will receive a failing grade of 40 on the course. After the withdrawal period, 10% or more absenteeism will result in an "F" grade in the course.

Violation of RHU Copyright Policy

It is an RHU policy that any copies of copyrighted course materials are not permitted on campus. Examples of copyrighted materials include textbooks, articles, presentations, videos, websites and handouts. Both hard and electronically formatted copies are not permitted. Students are expected to use only original materials as approved by the administration of RHU on campus. Moreover, students must not use any RHU equipment (for example, photocopiers, and/or computers) to make copies of any copyrighted material.

Failure to adhere to this policy is considered a serious breach of RHU rules and regulations and may result in penalties up to, and including, expulsion from RHU.