

Syllabus: Media and Digital Literacy

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Course Description

This course introduces students to the world of digital literacy. Its main objective is to shape smart media consumers who are able to access, analyze, evaluate and construct digital media messages. This course aims to show students how media influence cultures, politics and societies, on a national, regional and international level. This is how students are taught to depict manipulated messages and analyze them: it is about raising their resistance to wrong and biased messages. Specifically, the course will provide discussions on the following:

- An expanded notion of literacy in a mediated world
- An Examination of different aspects of the media (especially mass media) and popular culture
- A demonstration of the application of critical thinking skills in dealing with media messages
- An Exploration of how the media are used to construct meaning and/or to persuade people
- An examination of how the notions of race, class, gender, region, and sexuality are represented in the mass media to perpetuate inequality in the society
- An examination of bias, stereotypes, data, and information sources in the mass media and the way their choice creates different versions of reality
- A discussion of the notion of sectarianism and the contribution of media to the concept
- A discussion of the concept of media consumption diet and its importance
- A hands-on experience on digital and media production skills
- A discussion of digital and active citizenship in a digital world

Course Objectives:

This course aims to

- Help students develop understanding of how media influences our perceptions of reality, including ourselves, society, politics and culture.
- Increase students' awareness of the methods, issues and theories of digital and mass media.
- Provide essential analytical and technical skills to analyze and control the influences of media.
- Promote civic engagement in a mediated world.

Learning outcomes:

After completion of this course you should be able to:

- Critically analyze, encode and decode media messages.
- Create effective and creative digital messages by using a selection of the latest digital applications.
- Distinguish and discuss manipulated messages.
- Promote digital citizenship by becoming a wiser digital, media practitioner/consumer.
- Use the media capacities for making a positive change in the society.

Course Content:

Module 1: What is Media Literacy?

- A definition of Literacy
- Critical Media Literacy Questions
- Elements of Media Messages
- Fundamental Media Concepts
- An introduction to Wordpress.

Assignments:

- 1- Analyze a piece of TV commercial using the five critical media literacy questions and also think about the impact of technical aspects on your own perception of the message.
- 2- Prepare the draft for a commercial of a product or cause of your choice. Include the visuals and the script.
- 3- Write a two page, double-spaced reflection essay on how your audience, purpose, type of product or cause or service affected your choice of words and visuals in the scenario.
- 4- Create your own personal page on Wordpress and post all assignments on it.

Module 2: Media Literacy in a mediated world

- The Political, social, ideological and economical context of media
- The Evolution of Media
- The reciprocal interaction between the media and the society
- Media and the creation and the reinforcement of stereotypes
- An introduction to Pixlr and picture manipulation.

Assignments:

- 1- Analyze a set of photos from a newspaper or a magazine depicting men and women. In what ways are they similar or different? What features are attributed to each of the genders?
- 2- Take some pictures of men and women in their real roles in the society.
- 3- Compare and contrast the images presented in media from both genders and your own images. Write a two page, double-spaced reflection essay about the similarities and differences. Use Pixlr to add changes on the pictures presented in media.

Module 3: Media representations of stories: Subjectivity vs. Objectivity

- Framing
- Media ownership
- Media agendas
- Different versions of reality
- An introduction to Meograph

Assignments:

- 1- Analyze the same piece of news as reflected in two different media outlets representing two different viewpoints about the same issue. What/who were their sources for the article? Do they present all the reality? Do you believe their presentations were fair? Why or why not?
- 2- By using Meograph show the different representations, add narration and music.
- 3- Select a common campus news topic with a partner. Each student will write a two page, double-spaced feature article about the topic.
- 4- Exchange the articles. Now separately write a two page, double-spaced reflection essay on how your partner's representation of the same topic is different. Why?

Module 4: Media and Sectarianism

- Sectarianism: Origins, history and forms
- Media ownership in Lebanon and Sectarianism
- The Contribution of media to sectarianism
- An introduction to Audacity.

Assignments:

- 1- Select and a piece of news from different news presentations in your local media that promotes sectarianism.
- 2- By using Audacity, in 3 min, define sectarianism, insert a quote and add music.
- 3- Reframe the piece of news in a more objective way so that it is not sectarian anymore.
- 4- Write a two page, double-spaced reflection essay about how media has contributed to sectarianism in your news stories and what modifications were necessary to avoid it.

Module 5: Media and Digital Citizenship

- Digital Citizenship in a digitally mediated world
- Media Literacy and the issues of sustainability and access
- National/International organizations and the promotion of digital citizenship
- Digital Citizenship and the empowerment of oppressed/excluded citizens
- An introduction to Videolicious.

Assignments:

- 1- Select and analyze a case which has used media to create change.

- 2- Write a two page, double-spaced article as to the reasons the case has been successful. What have been the innovations used in the case? What have they done to make their voice heard?
- 3- In a 1 min video using Videolicious demonstrate how this course helps to promote Citizenship.

Module 6: Final Project (Weeks 11-14)

- Team up with two partners for the final project.
- Choose a topic for your final project considering the following points:
 - The topic should be relevant to one of the problems in your society which has been bothering people.
 - The topic should be unique in that each group should choose a different topic.
 - The topic must be doable in two weeks.
 - The topic should lend itself to making a movie since you have to create an action plan as to how media can contribute to finding a solution to that problem and you need to make a 1 minute movie for it.

Grading:

Task	Assessment
Module 1	10%
Module 2	10%
Module 3	10%
Module 4	10%
Module 5	10%
Final Project	30%
Final Exam	20%
Total	100%

Recommended readings and textbooks

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

Module 1:

- Media Literacy: James Potter
- Media Literacy: Keys to Interpreting Media Messages by Art Silverblatt, Andrew Smith, Donald Miller (Ch. 1)

- Livingstone, Sonia (2004). Media literacy and the challenge of new information and communication technologies [online]. London: LSE Research Online.

Module 2:

- Gamson, et al. (1992). Media Images and the Social Construction of Reality.
- Stober, R. (2004). What media evolution is a theoretical approach to the history of new media.
- O'Shaughnessy, Michael and Stadler, Jane Media and society 5th ed. South Melbourne, VIC, Australia: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Module 3:

- Donsbach and Klett (1993). How Journalists in four countries define a key term of their profession.
- Tankard, J.W. (2001). The empirical approach to study of media framing. In Reese et al. Framing Public Life. Perspectives on Media and our understanding of the Social World.
- Noam, E. (2009). Media Ownership and Concentration in America.

Module 4:

- Cochrane, P. (2007). Lebanon's Media Sectarianism.
- Suad, J. (2008). Sectarianism as Imagined Sociological Concept and as Imagined Social Formation.
- Makdisi, U. (2000). The culture of sectarianism: community, history, and violence in nineteenth-century Ottoman Lebanon.

Module 5:

- Bennet, W. L. (2008). Changing Citizenship in the Digital Age.
- Anduiza, et al. (2012). Digital Media and Political Engagement Worldwide: A Comparative Study.
- Bimber B. Digital media and citizenship (2012). In Semetko et al. The SAGE Handbook of Political Communication.
- Mihailidis, P. et al. (2003). Theorizing Journalism Education, Citizenship, and New Media Technologies in a Global Media Age.

Optional Books:

- Vossen, Gottfried and Hagemann, Stephan (2007). Unleashing Web 2.0: From Concepts to Creativity.
- Macedo, D. and Steinberg, S., (2007). Media Literacy. 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