

Media Literacy Syllabus

General Course Information:
CORCTR 130-1 Media Literacy
Wednesday 11:30-2:00 W-2-123 or Taylor Center (3rd floor)

Instructor:
Nettrice R. Gaskins
Email: nettrice.gaskins@umb.edu
URL(s): <http://www.nettrice.us>
http://portal.nettrice.us/media_lit
<http://medialit101.blogspot.com/>

Office Hours: Wednesday 10:30-11:30 AM or by request

Description:

In the United States, information about the world often comes to us through commercial mass media. Media is a powerful tool of education, socialization, and indoctrination that influences our understanding of the world and the way the world functions. It affects how we perceive others and ourselves. Media culture permeates the fabric of our daily lives.

This course will ask students to critically examine and analyze the media projects of others, especially those they find in the real world around them. Through in-class screenings, interactive media demonstrations, and other experiences this course will help students make sense of and control their media environments, as well as develop a critical approach to understanding and creating media. At times, the media literacy activities may complement production activities where students work on their own media projects.

Objectives:

- To examine aspects of the mass media and popular culture that expand our notions of literacy
- To explore how the media are used to construct meaning and/or to persuade
- To investigate how the categories of race, class, gender, region, and sexuality are represented in the mass media
- To assess bias, stereotypes, data, and information sources in the mass media
- To compare alternative and mainstream media
- To look at responses to problems with mainstream media
- To gain hands on media production skills

Demonstrating the Competency – Acquiring this competency requires the following elements:

- Assigned Readings
- Short Blog Assignments: reaction statements to media usage, on-line discussions, journaling and summary pages
- Oral Presentations/Discussions
- One 5-10 page paper or equivalent project
- 75 percent attendance

Required Reading:

Students will be required to read articles provided both online and in class. Specific readings may be assigned at this electronic reserve site:
<http://docutek.lib.umb.edu/> (url may have changed)

If available, some of the readings will appear as links on the site.

There are additional links and resources on the class web site at: http://portal.nettrice.us/media_lit or on the course blog at <http://medialit101.blogspot.com/>

Some of these articles/links are recommended/optional.

A Note About Blogging:

Students will be required to create their own blogs for the course. Assignments will be posted on the blog for the instructor and students to view and posts comments on. In order to create a blog and post comments students must have an email account and they must sign up for their own account via blogger.com or WordPress. Information will be given during the first class regarding blogging and how to create a blog. Lab staff will be available to help students before or after class.

On-going Assignments:

Students will be expected to keep a journal, or Web log (blog). Journal/blog writing, or reaction essays will be frequently assigned after a reading. These essays are to be 500 words or no more than a page. A course blog will be set up and published for class AND students will publish their own personal blogs or online journals. Students may also submit writings via email/attachments. Writing in this way is intended to develop a language that allows the class to critically examine media material – material that is often designed for the senses, or formats that restrict critical understanding. The journaling or blogging may take the form of any media: text, video, audio, blogs, web sites, photography, etc., so as long as they can be shared with the class electronically, via the Internet.

Web Related Reading:

Media Literacy – Overview

http://portal.nettrice.us/media_lit

Media Lit 101 Course Blog

<http://medialit101.blogspot.com/>

Digital Creativity

<http://portal.nettrice.us/>

Media Awareness Network – Key Concepts

http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/teachers/media_literacy/key_concept.cfm

Media Awareness Network – What is media literacy?

http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/teachers/media_literacy/what_is_media_literacy.cfm

Media Awareness Network – Media Statistics and Public Opinion

http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/tools/main_search/search_results.cfm

Resources – Other Related Links:

Adbusters

<http://www.adbusters.org/home/>

Center for Media Literacy

<http://www.medialit.org>

Action Coalition for Media Education

<http://www.acmecoalition.org>

Alliance for a Media Literate America

<http://amlainfo.org>

Media Education Across the Curriculum

<http://www.mediaeducation.net>

Center for Media and Democracy

<http://www.prwatch.org>

Media Working Group

<http://digitalliteracy.mwg.org/studies.html>

National Alliance for Media Arts and Culture

<http://www.namac.org>

Alliance for Community Media

<http://www.alliancecm.org>

Independent Media Centers

<http://www.indymedia.org>

Community Technology Center's Network

<http://www.ctcnet.org>

Final Paper or Project:

The critical element in gaining this competency will be demonstrated by your presentation of a final paper or project. Students will have some flexibility in choosing a topic but the final project should reflect some familiarity with the materials covered in the course. They must apply the kinds of Critical Questions, Key Concepts, and, in the media screened during class. Students should consider their total media environment and choose an area that stimulates their personal interests. Here are the basic requirements:

- Paper- 5-10 pages, single-spaced.
- Multimedia- 10-15 slides or images (PowerPoint), 5-10 minutes of video, audio, animation, or other graphics (i.e. Web).

Students who choose to prepare a multimedia project should spend an equivalent amount of time, energy, focus, and commitment as writing the 5-10 page paper. *A draft will be due on November 30th. Your final draft is due the last day of class.*

Final Paper/Project Format Guidelines:

The final paper or project must have an identifiable structure that includes an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. Also, it should include an identifiable thesis statement that clearly indicates the overall purpose and focus of the presentation.

The project should be a critical analysis and description of the subject. A purely subjective response to the topic without reference to the elements and methods of critical inquiry covered in class is not appropriate.

When quoting from other texts or media students must properly identify the sources through footnotes, or a resources section at the end of the project. Students' ideas and words must be clearly distinguished from ideas taken from other texts. This applies to images, photos or graphics taken from other sources.

Fall Semester Sessions:

Session 1 – September 7, 2005

Introduction to Media Literacy

Class Plan:

Introductions

Discussion

Global Media Landscape

Resources/Class Site and Blog (blogger.com)

Assignments:

Write a brief essay about Who Owns the Media?

Read the Critical Questions.

Media Consumption Log

Keep a log of your media consumption, noting which media you use, when you use it, what else you are doing when you use it, including what, if anything, it causes you to eat, buy, etc. or what motivates you to use a medium at that moment. Post or publish the log via the Web, so it will be available for class reading and comment.

Key Terms:

Reflection or reaction (paper)- a short essay-like statement

Log – a listing, grid, or chart, e.g. what you consumed over the course of a significant period of time

Required Reading:

Media Literacy – Overview

http://portal.nettrice.us/media_lit

Media Lit 101 Course Blog

<http://medialit101.blogspot.com/>

Plato, The Allegory of the Cave, from *The Republic*

http://www.wsu.edu:8080/~wldciv/world_civ_reader/world_civ_reader_1/plato.html

The Media Channel's Media Ownership Chart
<http://www.mediachannel.org/ownership/front.shtml#chart>

Glossary of Media Terms
http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/resources/educational/teaching_backgrounders/media_literacy/glossary_media_literacy.cfm

Recommended Reading:
Visual Storytelling
http://babel.massart.edu/~nettrice/stories_page.html

Session 2 – September 14, 2005

Visual Storytelling

Class Plan:
Discussion
War of the Worlds (radio broadcast)
Visual Storytelling Tutorial
Story Idea Brainstorm

Assignment – Story Idea Brainstorm and Media Consumption Log

Reading: Lippman, The World Outside and the Pictures in Our Heads (Chapter 1)
<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~Hyper2/CDFinal/Lippman/ch01.html>

Session 3 – September 21, 2005

The Pictures in Our Heads
Class Plan:
Discussion
Print Media: Art and Design
Our Approach to Media Literacy
Compare/Contrast 2-3 Images/Photos and Captions

Assignment:
Write a brief essay about one of two articles/issues from
<http://medialit101.blogspot.com/> and post via comments (on the course blog).

Media Consumption Log

Required Reading:
Introduction: What is Communication? (on e-reserve)

Introductory Chapter from: Introduction to Communication Studies, by John Friske

Media Awareness Network – What is media literacy?
http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/teachers/media_literacy/what_is_media_literacy.cfm

Recommended Reading:
First Things First 1964: A Design Manifesto
<http://maxbruinsma.nl/ftf1964.htm>

First Things First 2000: A Design Manifesto
<http://maxbruinsma.nl/index1.html?ftf2000.htm>

Optional Field Trip to Mass College of Art exhibit:
The Graphic Imperative: (click on title for info)
An Exhibition of International Posters for Peace, Social Justice and the Environment

Session 4* – September 28, 2005

Media and Popular Culture – NO CLASS (NAMAC Conference)

Class Plan:

For this class students may come to the Taylor Center to watch the movies or rent The Corporation and watch it on their own. Viewing The Corporation (Perception Management) is mandatory.

From: http://www.thecorporation.com/index.php?page_id=2

The Corporation explores the nature and spectacular rise of the dominant institution of our time. Footage from pop culture, advertising, TV news, and corporate propaganda, illuminates the corporation's grip on our lives.

Screening: The Corporation (Perception Management) and/or The Ad and the Ego (at the Taylor Center)

Assignments:

Post reaction essay via course blog on The Corporation (Perception Management) and/or The Ad and the Ego.

Catch up on all previous assignments and post Media/Cultural Consumption essay via your blog.

Media Consumption Log

Keep a log of your media consumption...has anything changed?

Required Reading:

Media Awareness Network – Key Concepts

http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/teachers/media_literacy/key_concept.cfm

Doors of Perception: Why Americans Will Believe Almost Anything

<http://www.mercola.com/2001/aug/15/perception.htm>

The Meatrix

<http://www.themeatrix.com/>

Adbusters

<http://www.adbusters.org/home/>

Session 5 – October 5, 2005

Media and Popular Culture II

Class Plan:

Discussion – Recap Assignments and Readings

Media/Cultural Consumption Essays are Due

Screening: Super Size Me (1 hour, 38 min.)

Assignment:

Read review at http://movies2.nytimes.com/gst/movies/movie.html?v_id=301680 and opposing viewpoints from <http://www.techcentralstation.com/supersizecon.html>. Compare the arguments, write a brief essay, and post via your blog.

Media Consumption Log

Post/publish log and respond to at least one other log/blog. Your response might be a question, observation, or clarification.

Required Reading:

Chandler, Daniel "Texts and the Construction of Meaning"

Visit the Media Working Group website and go to the "Negotiated Meaning" diagram at:

<http://digitalliteracy.mwg.org/studies/meaning.html>

Session 6 – October 12, 2005

Media and Meaning

Class Plan:

Discussion/Log Results
Super Size Me (re-cap)
Create a PSA

Screening: Bill Moyers' The Public Mind: Consuming Images, "Becoming Images" (15 min.)

<http://rstream.umassonline.net:8080/ramgen/boston/CPCS/CORCOM130-CORCTR130/Johnson-CORCOM130-CORCTR130-PublicMind3.rm>

Assignment:

Compare The Ad and the Ego and Consuming Images (see required reading)

Post a brief essay on The Ad and the Ego and Consuming Images (via course blog)

Catch up on all previous assignments

Required Reading:

"The Ad and the Ego," On-Line: Go to course web site, click on "Lectures" in the right margin, then click on the individual segments of the film. It is segmented to facilitate seeing it on-line. You will need media playing software called Real Player to view this film in this fashion. You may already have this software but if you do not you can download it free. Just go to RealPlayer's web site and download it.

Session 7 – October 19, 2005

Tabloidization

Class Plan:

Discussion
Tabloid Truth
Recognizing "Quality" Media

Screening: "Tabloid Truth": Frontline Documentary on Tabloid Media

Assignment:

Find two examples of Tabloid Media and write a brief essay on why you consider them to be "tabloid"

Post essay via your blog

Required Reading:

American Photography: Cultural

<http://www.pbs.org/ktca/americanphotography/features/cultural.html>

Listen to interview with Jeff Chang, Can't Stop Won't Stop, A history of the hip-hop generation.

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4529225>

The Fox Network and the Revolution in Black Television (handout)

Session 8 – October 26, 2005

Creating Identities

Class Plan:

Discussion
Race-Class-Gender-Sexual Orientation

Screening: Coal Black Voices or Ethnic Notions

Assignment:

Find a media product that addresses race, class, gender, or sexual orientation and answer these questions:
Who is communicating?

What about Who?
Why is it that Way?

Required Reading:

The Father of Spin: Edward L. Bernays & The Birth of P.R. (review)
Banana Republic- The United Fruit Company
<http://www.mayaparadise.com/ufc1e.htm>

The Father of Spin: Edward L. Bernays & The Birth of P.R.
<http://www.prwatch.org/prwissues/1999Q2/bernays.html>

Propaganda Techniques

http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Propaganda_techniques

Session 9 – November 2, 2005

Setting the Political Agenda

Class Plan:

Discussion
Political Bias
Propaganda

Screening: Outfoxed (1 hr, 17 min.)

From <http://movies.yahoo.com/shop?d=hv&cf=info&id=1808583146>

"Outfoxed examines how media empires, led by Rupert Murdoch's Fox News, have been running a "race to the bottom" in television news. This film provides an in-depth look at Fox News and the dangers of ever-enlarging corporations taking control of the public's right to know."

Assignment:

Post reaction essay on Outfoxed. Consider the Critical Questions, or these questions:
How are corporations influencing media and how might this have an effect on society?
How does political bias and propaganda effect public opinion?

Required Reading:

Wands, Bruce "The History of Digital Media", from Digital Creativity.

"The Desktop," Steven Johnson, *Chapter 4 of Interface Culture: How New Technology Transforms the Way We Create and Communicate*, Harper San Francisco, 1997.

Session 10 – November 9, 2005

Technology and Media

Class Plan:

Discussion – How has technology transformed media?
Technology and Media (1900, 1950, 2001)
21st Century Media and Technology Landscape
Introduction to Photoshop/Photoshop Essentials

Assignment:

Choose one technology to write a brief essay about and answer these questions:
How has this technology used in the creation and/or dissemination of media?
What is one media/technology example?
How would you use the media/technology in your own project?

Required Reading:

American Photography: Digital Truth
http://www.pbs.org/ktca/americanphotography/features/digital_essay.html

Wands, Bruce "The History of Digital Media", from Digital Creativity.

Websites: View one of the following and come prepared to take us through the site next week:

- Community Technology Centers <http://www.ctcnet.org/>
- Digital Divide Network: <http://www.digitaldividenetwork.org/>

Session 11 – November 16, 2005

Digital Truth

Class Plan:

Discussion - Websites

Photoshop Demo

Image Manipulation/Special Effects

Image Lab Exercises* (from American Photography: Digital Truth)

http://www.pbs.org/ktca/americanphotography/features/digital_essay.html

Assignment:

Complete the Image Lab exercises (see class plan) – At the Edge, Digital Manipulation, Virtual Photo Shoot.

*Note – The Image Lab section requires free Flash or Shockwave plug-ins. You may have to download them from <http://www.macromedia.com/flash> if your browser does not have them.

Write a brief essay about why “Digital Truth” is important.

Required Reading:

Post-Media Aesthetics by Lev Manovich (handout)

Digital Media

<http://portal.nettrice.us/>

Session 12 – November 23, 2005

Cyberspace and Multimedia

Class Plan:

Discussion

Cyberspace & Multimedia

Post-Media Aesthetics

Create a Basic Web Page

Assignment:

Find 2 media-related examples of multimedia, one Web-based and one other form.

Write a brief essay about your examples and consider this question:

What are the implications of the media in cyberspace, or for aesthetics, or society?

Required Reading:

Gaskins, Nettrice “The Creation Machines: An Overview of Digital Tools and Technologies” (Community Media Review)

Session 13 – November 30, 2005

Digital Media Studio

Class Plan:

Discussion

Digital Media – Hands-on

Draft of your Final Paper/Project is due.

Assignment:

Optional – Choose one digital media tool or application to explore.

Required Reading:

Gaskins, Nettrice "Convergence...and the Changing Landscape of Digital Media." (Community Technology Review)

Session 14 – December 7, 2005

Cyber-Tech Mergers and Acquisitions

Class Plan:

Discussion

Concentration of Ownership

Digital Convergence

Screening: AT&T's Vision of the Future and "Googlezon and The Newsmasters EPIC"

Assignment:

View <http://www.robinsloan.com/epic/> and write a brief essay about "Googlezon".

Discuss final projects.

Required Reading:

Deep Focus: A Report of the Future of Independent Media

"Public Access: The Vision of George Stoney", Chap. 11, Public Radio and Television in America

Websites: View one of the following and come prepared to take us through the site next week:

- National Alliance for Media Arts and Culture <http://www.namac.org>
- Alliance for Community Media <http://www.alliancecm.org>
- Independent Media Centers <http://www.indymedia.org>

Session 15 – December 14, 2005

Alternative Media

Class Plan:

Discussion

Alternative Media

Community Media & Technology

Final Paper/Projects are due.

Screening: Stone & Stoney and Antonia Stone Tribute (CBC media)

Assignment:

Complete all the readings and assignments.

Submit final project(s).

Optional: Alternative Media Site Visit