

## COURSE SYLLABUS – Spring 2014

COM\* 101, Introduction to Mass Communication (ONLINE!)

CRN # 1098

**Instructor:** Dr. Steven Minkler

**E-Mail:** [sminkler@mxcc.edu](mailto:sminkler@mxcc.edu)

**Office Phone:** (860) 343-5706

**Office:** Founders Hall 107

**Office Hours:** I am generally on campus Monday through Friday, from 8:30am until 5:00pm.  
Stop by – or, if I am not in the office, please make an appointment to see me.

### **Textbook:**

Baran, S.J. (2012). *Introduction to Mass Communication: Media Literacy and Culture*.  
7<sup>th</sup> Edition. New York: McGraw-Hill. ISBN: 978-0-07-352615-7 or 978-0-07-740389-8  
(updated 7<sup>th</sup> edition)

---

### **Course Description**

This course examines the sociological, economic and political effects of mass communications systems and media on American culture. We will examine communication theories and models, historical and contemporary research, the mass media industries, laws and regulations, and the effects of media on society. The course relies on selected readings, “micro lectures” on current topics in media, essay and discussion assignments, and research in mass media. This course requires extensive writing and research.

### **Pre-requisites**

Placement into ENG\* 101. The taking of ENG\*101 concurrently or completion of ENG\* 101 prior to taking this class is highly recommended. This course is a requirement in the Broadcast-Cinema program.

### **Goals**

- To increase students’ knowledge and understanding of the mass communication process and the mass media industries
- To increase students’ awareness of how they interact with those industries and with media content to create meaning
- To help students become more skilled and knowledgeable consumers of media content

### **Outcomes:** By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate their understanding of the relationships among communication, mass communication, culture, and those who live in the culture.
- Recognize trends in mass media, especially concentration of ownership and conglomeration, globalization, audience fragmentation, public relations, hyper-commercialism, convergence, and the move toward digital distribution of mass media product.
- Describe the history and development of individual mass media technologies, and the industries and employment opportunities that have grown up around them.

- Apply their enhanced understanding of mass communication theory toward improving their own media literacy skills.
- Be conversant in a number of controversial media effects issues.
- Demonstrate their understanding of freedom, regulatory, and ethical issues as applied to both mass media industries and individual use of the mass media.

### **Grading Policy**

In this course, you'll have the opportunity to earn a maximum of 1,000 points by completing assignments throughout the semester. Each assignment has a specific point value. You can earn some, or all, of the points based on the quality of your work as assessed by me according to rubrics ("scoring sheets") for each assignment. **Late work will not be accepted.** If you don't submit an assignment by its deadline, you'll earn zero points.

At the end of the semester, I will convert your total points into a letter grade:

A	940-1,000 total points	C	725-764
A-	895-939	C-	695-724
B+	865-894	D+	665-694
B	825-864	D	625-664
B-	795-824	F	less than 625
C+	765-794		

Assignments, and their maximum point values, are as follows:

375 points	<b>Weekly Discussions (15 @ 25 points each)</b> The weekly discussions are public forums where everyone participates based on a prompt I start you with. They are the online version of "Class Participation."
200 points	<b>Unit Exams (4 @ 50 points each)</b>
100 points	<b>Final Exam</b> Due by 11:59pm (Eastern Time) on Monday, May 19, 2014
325 points	<b>My Media Project</b> <b>Each component is due by end of day (11:59pm) on:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monday, Feb. 10      Research Questions (10 points)</li> <li>• Monday, Mar. 10      Annotated Bibliography (50 points)</li> <li>• Monday, Mar. 31      Thesis Statement &amp; Outline (15 points)</li> <li>• Monday, Apr. 21      Rough Draft (50 points) <i>Returned to you on or before May 1. The Rough Draft is your opportunity to have me review your paper for comments and suggestions.</i></li> <li>• Monday, May 12      Final Draft (200 points)</li> </ul>
1000 points	<b>Total Maximum</b>

## Schedule of Assignments (updated 1/13/14)

Each Course Unit begins on a Monday morning and ends the following Monday at 11:59pm. (*Exception: Unit 1 officially begins on a Wednesday due to our Academic Calendar.*) For example, Unit 3 begins on Monday, February 3. All assignments for Unit 3 must be submitted in Blackboard by 11:59pm on the following Monday, February 10. **Late work will not be accepted.**

Dates	Textbook Reading & Topic of the Week	Assignments Due This Week
<b>SECTION ONE: LAYING THE GROUNDWORK</b>		
<b>Unit 1</b> 1/22*- 1/27	<b>Let's Get Started</b> <b>Chapter 1:</b> Mass Communication, Culture, and Media Literacy	Discussion 1 <i>*note: this is the only unit that officially begins on a Wednesday, due to the fact that classes begin on a Wednesday</i>
<b>Unit 2</b> 1/27 – 2/3	<b>Chapter 2:</b> Convergence and the Reshaping of Mass Communication	Discussion 2
<b>Unit 3</b> 2/3 – 2/10	<b>Chapter 13:</b> Theories and Effects of Mass Communication	Discussion 3 Section 1 Exam (content from Units 1-3) <b>My Media Project: Research Questions</b>
<b>SECTION TWO: MEDIA INDUSTRIES – STATIC (content delivered page-by-page)</b>		
<b>Unit 4</b> 2/10 – 2/17	<b>Chapter 3:</b> Books	Discussion 3
<b>Unit 5</b> 2/17 – 2/24	<b>Chapter 4:</b> Newspapers	Discussion 4
	<i>Optional (but Highly Recommended) Information Literacy &amp; Research Sessions in the MxCC Library hosted by Dr. Minkler and librarian Ms. Joy Hansen. Choose one or both:</i> Tuesday, February 18 @ 4:30-6:00pm Thursday, February 20 @ 10:30am-12:00pm	
<b>Unit 6</b> 2/24 – 3/3	<b>Chapter 5:</b> Magazines	Discussion 5 Section 2 Exam (content from Units 4-6)
<b>SECTION THREE: MEDIA INDUSTRIES – DYNAMIC (content delivered over time)</b>		
<b>Unit 7</b> 3/3 – 3/10	<b>Chapter 6:</b> Film	Discussion 6 <b>My Media Project: Annotated Bibliography</b>
<b>Unit 8</b> 3/10 – 3/17	<b>Chapter 7:</b> Radio, Recording, and Popular Music	Discussion 7
3/17 – 3/24	<b>Spring Break – No Required Class Activities</b>	
<b>Unit 9</b> 3/24 – 3/31	<b>Chapter 8:</b> Television, Cable, and Mobile Video	Discussion 8 <b>My Media Project: Thesis Statement/Outline</b>
<b>Unit 10</b> 3/31 – 4/7	<b>Chapter 9:</b> Video Games	Discussion 9
<b>Unit 11</b> 4/7 – 4/14	<b>Chapter 10:</b> The Internet and the World Wide Web	Discussion 10 Section 3 Exam (content from Units 7-11)
<b>SECTION FOUR: SUPPORTING INDUSTRIES &amp; MASS-MEDIATED CULTURE IN THE INFORMATION AGE</b>		
<b>Unit 12</b> 4/14 – 4/21	<b>Chapter 11:</b> Public Relations	Discussion 11 <b>My Media Project: Rough Draft</b>
<b>Unit 13</b> 4/21 – 4/28	<b>Chapter 12:</b> Advertising	Discussion 12
<b>Unit 14</b> 4/28 – 5/5	<b>Chapter 14:</b> Media Freedom, Regulation, and Ethics	Discussion 14 Section 4 Exam (content from Units 12-14)
<b>Unit 15</b> 5/5 – 5/12	<b>Chapter 15:</b> Global Media	Discussion 15 <b>My Media Project Final Draft</b>
<b>Unit 16</b>	<b>FINAL EXAM – Due by 11:59pm (Eastern Time) Monday, May 19, 2014</b>	

## **Assignments**

All assignments must be submitted no later than the end of the day (11:59pm Eastern Time) on the due dates listed in order to receive credit. Late assignments will not be accepted unless extraordinary circumstances warrant. The instructor reserves the right to refuse any late work. **It is your responsibility to know what assignments are due and when, and to have them turned in on time!**

## **Section Exams**

There are four Section Exams found during the weeks of Units 3, 6, 11, and 14. Section Exams must be submitted no later than the end of the day (11:59pm Eastern Time) on the due dates listed in order to receive credit. Late exams will not be accepted unless extraordinary circumstances warrant.

Section Exams contain a mix of multiple-choice questions and short-essay prompts, corresponding to textbook readings and other weekly assignments. Section Exams are available only during the week they are due. Exams go off-line on the Monday evening due dates (11:59pm Eastern Time), so *you are strongly urged to take the exams prior to Monday evening so that if there is a problem you will have time to get it resolved before the quiz goes off-line.* If you have a technical problem, (e.g. log-in issues, you can't see the exam in your browser, the system doesn't allow you to submit answers, etc.) you should contact technical support immediately as I probably cannot fix the problem.

## **Other Hints and Useful Information**

- **You should have a solid Internet connection such as DSL or cable modem.** If all you have is dial-up, make sure no one will do something accidental, like picking up the phone, to disconnect you while doing work in the course. If your Internet connection is wireless (e.g. WiFi) make sure you have a strong solid signal that will not drop out, or connect to your router directly via Ethernet cable for a more reliable connection.
- **Disable pop-up blockers** while taking an exam as the exam system uses pop-ups. If you use the Safari or Firefox web browser, turn off pop-ups for the MyCommNet and Blackboard sites.
- **Close all open applications, including e-mail, when taking exams.**
- **Exams are timed.** Remember, it is important to submit each answer **and** the completed exam, or you will end up with an exam that has timed out and can't be re-taken.
- **Always hit the Submit button when taking the exam** so answers are saved should you get disconnected.
- **I don't reopen exams past the due date.** If an exam shuts down before being submitted, I can check the exam submittal log and history and may be able to hand grade it. When in doubt, please ask.
- **You are not required to do the work on your computer especially in the event of your computer's failure.** The college has numerous computers you can use that are specifically for this purpose. Visit the Library, computer labs, the Meriden Center Learning Lab, or the Distance Learning Lab in Founders Hall. Have a backup plan in the event your computer fails, such as using a computer at the college or at a local library, or using a friend's or family member's computer. Having a broken computer is not an excuse for missing segments of the class.
- **The online gradebook is not the official gradebook.** It is merely a place to post individual assignment scores as it doesn't calculate or weigh grades. I maintain your calculated grade and can give you an average at any time.
- **Our Distance Learning Department, Dr. Yi Guan-Raczkowski and Ms. Sandra Couture, are here to assist you and help with any problems.** Keep their phone number and email address handy. Website: <http://www.mxcc.edu/distance/index.shtml>; 860-343-5756; [mxccdistan@mxcc.edu](mailto:mxccdistan@mxcc.edu); location: Founders Hall 131/131A.

## **College Policies**

### **Academic Honesty and Plagiarism**

At Middlesex Community College, we expect the highest standards of academic honesty. Academic dishonesty is prohibited in accordance with the Proscribed Conduct Policy in Section 5.2.1 of the Board of Regents Policy Manual. This policy prohibits cheating on examinations, unauthorized collaboration on assignments, unauthorized access to examinations or course materials, plagiarism, and other proscribed activities. Plagiarism is defined as the use of another's idea(s) or phrase(s) and representing that/those idea(s) as your own, either intentionally or unintentionally.

### **Religious Accommodation Statement**

If your religious obligations conflict with a course calendar requirement, and if you wish to request an accommodation, you must make your request in writing prior to the date of the assessment or activity you will miss and preferably at the beginning of the semester. When requesting a make-up quiz, test, exam, assignment, or activity, state the reason for your request and the date(s) on which your religious obligation(s) will conflict with the course calendar requirements. Also, if your religious obligation/holiday is unfamiliar to your instructor, you may be asked to provide a calendar which shows the published date(s) of your religious observance(s) or holiday(s).

### **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**

Students with physical or learning disabilities who may require accommodations are encouraged to contact the Disability Support Services office at 860-343-5879. After disclosing the nature of the disability, students are urged to discuss their needs with individual instructors. This should be done at the beginning of each semester. Instructors, in conjunction with appropriate college officials, will provide assistance and/or accommodations only to those students who have completed this process.

### **School Cancellations**

*Introduction to Mass Communication is an online course, so the following policy does NOT apply to any deadlines or activities that we will conduct in our Blackboard online course site – except in extreme weather situations or emergencies. However, this policy does apply to any on-campus activities and classes you have scheduled for a date when the college may be closed due to inclement weather.*

In the event of inclement weather either before the start of a day when classes are in session or during the school day, you may check for information on delayed openings, college closings, class cancellations, etc., by listening to many of the area's local radio and TV stations. Additionally, a message will be posted on the MxCC website at [www.mxcc.edu](http://www.mxcc.edu) and an announcement made on the college's main phone number, 860-343-5800. (When calling the main phone number, be sure to choose option 1 from the menu for school closings.) Students are urged to exercise their own judgment if road conditions in their localities are hazardous.

### **Withdrawals**

You may withdraw from this class any time before the end of the 11th week of the semester (Tuesday, April 15, 2014). A completed and signed withdrawal form must be on file in the Records Office by the deadline in order to receive a "W" on your transcript. (Since you are taking this course online, we can arrange to complete this process electronically.) If you fail to complete this process on time, you will receive a letter grade at the end of the semester, which will include zeroes for any work not submitted. Course withdrawals may affect financial aid and veteran's benefits. Please make this decision carefully and with the help of your advisor.