

# Communication 106 Syllabus: Introduction to Media Theory, History, & Criticism

Spring 2018

Mondays & Wednesdays 8:00-9:15am in CAC 300

Course website: D2L

Instructor: Alex Ingersoll - [alex.ingersoll@uwsp.edu](mailto:alex.ingersoll@uwsp.edu)

Office Hours: (CAC 309) Mon & Wed 9:15-10:15am

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## Course Objectives<sup>i</sup>

*"All media work us over completely."*

-Marshall McLuhan

This course introduces the techniques and theories for critiquing media images, messages and technologies. Examining media from a critical perspective allows us to question why things are the way they are and how they came and continue to be as such. We will ask and try to conceptualize answers to difficult questions including: (1) How have media texts and practices contributed to my sense of who I am and how I think about my social world? (2) What sort of influence do various forms of media have? What is the relationship between media representations and existing social inequalities? (3) How have media images and messages changed over time and how have these changes shaped our contemporary media culture? By the end of the semester, students will be to:

- ...think and write critically about media content
- ...identify and analyze key forms, content, and practices in the history of media within their specific political, economic, and social contexts
- ...demonstrate the ability to discuss the role of social responsibility, ethics, and public engagement in the industrial practices, regulation, and everyday use of media

This work will require students to question much of what we might normally take for granted about the media, our culture, our democracy and, ultimately, ourselves. This endeavor will likely be a pleasurable, challenging, and possibly sometimes uncomfortable investigation into the politics of our everyday lives.

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## Required Texts

- Course readings available on D2L or handed out in class.

## Evaluation

Your final grade in this course is a composite of the different assignments listed below. Detailed explanations of each assignment will be given in class at the appropriate times.

<u>Assignments</u>	<u>Total</u>
5 Essays	25%
Midterm Essay	35%
Final Project	40%

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<sup>i</sup> This syllabus is subject to change as my opinions change and evolve, especially with your help and guidance.

## Grade Breakdown

A (100-93.5%) A- (93.4-89.5%) B+ (89.4-86.5%) B (86.4-83.5%) B- (83.4-79.5%) C+ (79.4-76.5%)  
C (76.4-73.5%) C- (73.4-69.5%) D+ (69.4-66.5%) D (66.4-59.5%) F (<59.4%)

## Evaluation Cont.

Since the success of this class depends upon your presence in class, it is expected that you will come to every class on time and ready to engage in the day's materials. Students who attend every single meeting will see their diligence reflected both in their overall grade, and most likely, in the quality of their work. For an absence to be considered excused, you must present University-approved documentation. Your second unexcused absence will result in 1 full letter grade deducted from your total essay grade. Your third will result in 1 full letter grade deducted from your overall grade (the fourth will be another letter grade). Lateness of more than ten minutes will count as 1/2 of an absence. (Repeated lateness of less than ten minutes will also add up to an absence, at my discretion). **If you have five unexcused absences, you will fail the course.** If you do miss a class, please be sure to check with me and/or your classmates for what you missed and make sure you receive any assignments, handouts, etc.

## General Requirements

There are a number of expectations that are common to each class at UWSP but I want to emphasize:

1. **If you plagiarize the work of others, you will fail the course.** Please be aware of what plagiarism entails (<http://www.plagiarism.org>). Proper citation is REQUIRED for ALL sources, including information you use from Internet publications and sites. Also, remember that you CANNOT legally use someone else's music or art work UNLESS you get written permission from the copyright holder, or unless you purchase a license allowing you to use specific music or images. The only exception is if the work in question is in the public domain or explicitly states that you may use it free of charge. Any student caught plagiarizing will receive a grade of "F" for the class.
2. All cell phones must be turned off before class, **no excuses**. You may use your computer for class but you cannot be using it for leisure purposes. Any time the room is dark, you may not create any light.
3. Creating an environment of mutual respect is *paramount* to successful work. While difference of opinions and vigorous debate are highly encouraged, you will be expected to refrain from using disparaging remarks (e.g., sexist, racist, homophobic language). **The material presented in class may challenge you and I expect you to approach these materials in the spirit of the wider educational environment.** The selection of these materials are intended to spark a healthy discussion and I expect mature and respectful interactions. All reactions will be welcomed in class and respected, and they will be received in the spirit of extending discussion rather than forestalling it.
4. Late assignments are highly discouraged. **I will not accept any assignment, quiz, or other class material past the due date.** Please don't come to class without homework due to technical difficulties (my computer crashed, printer ran out of ink, not enough batteries, etc.). Don't wait until the last minute to do your work. If you do, you will be rushed, your work will suffer and you won't have time to deal with the *inevitable* computer issues.

## Communicating with Me

The best way to talk to me is during my office hours. I am available over email but it may take me a day to respond. This means that you will need to ask questions about assignments more than 24 hours before they are due. If you are having problems completing the assignments, you need to communicate the issues with me at least 24 hours before the assignment is due so we may lay out alternative courses of action.

## **Community Bill of Rights and Responsibilities**

UW-Stevens Point values a safe, honest, respectful, and inviting learning environment. In order to ensure that each student has the opportunity to succeed, we have developed a set of expectations for all students and instructors. This set of expectations is known as the *Rights and Responsibilities* document, and it is intended to help establish a positive living and learning environment at UWSP. Read more here: <http://www.uwsp.edu/stuaffairs/Pages/rightsandresponsibilities.aspx>

Academic integrity is central to the mission of higher education in general and UWSP in particular. Academic dishonesty (cheating, plagiarism, etc.) is taken very seriously. Don't do it! The minimum penalty for a violation of academic integrity is a failure (zero) for the assignment. For more information, see the UWSP "Student Academic Standards and Disciplinary Procedures" section of the *Rights and Responsibilities* document, Chapter 14, which can be accessed here: <http://www.uwsp.edu/stuaffairs/Documents/RightsRespons/SRR-2010/rightsChap14.pdf>

## **Assistive Accommodations**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal law requiring educational institutions to provide reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. For more information about UWSP's policies, check here: <http://www.uwsp.edu/stuaffairs/Documents/RightsRespons/ADA/rightsADAPolicyInfo.pdf>

If you have a disability and require classroom and/or exam accommodations, please register with the Disability and Assistive Technology Center and then contact me at the beginning of the course. I am happy to help in any way that I can. For more information, please visit the Disability and Assistive Technology Center, located on the 6th floor of the Learning Resource Center (the Library). You can also find more information here: <http://www4.uwsp.edu/special/disability/>

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## **Advice From Students in Previous Versions of the Course**

*At the end of every semester I ask my students to reflect on what they learned in the course and to give advice to students who will take this course in the future. Here is a small sample of the most common replies:*

"Take time to read the readings for the class because it will help you understand what is going on in the class a lot better."

"Join in the discussion in the class. Share your ideas and opinions!"

"Don't be passive. Don't assume new technology is for the better. Don't let your phone become your life. Remember to disconnect once in a while."

"Prepare yourself to think critically in order to finish."

"Be aware if what is happening in the here and now. Question why things are the way they are and why they are important. Open your mind to see all perspectives and that everything is not black and white."

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## Course Schedule

### Week 1 - Introductions & What ARE Media?

1/22	Introduction and course overview
1/24	Read: Devereaux Ch. 1 - Understanding the Media

### Week 2 - Media & Theory in Everyday Life

1/29	Continuing the conversation
1/31	Continuing the conversation

### Week 3 - Communication / Culture / Semiotics

2/5	Read: Sturken & Cartwright Ch. 1 - Images, Power, and Politics
2/7	Continuing the conversation

### Week 4 - Ideology

2/12	Read: Sturken & Cartwright Ch. 2 - Viewers Make Meaning
2/14	Essay 1 DUE on D2L

### Week 5 - Discourse / Institutions

2/19	Continuing the conversation
2/21	Continuing the conversation

### Week 6 - Democracy / Public Sphere

2/26	Read: Sturken & Cartwright Ch. 6 - Media in Everyday Life
2/28	Essay 2 DUE on D2L

### Week 7 - Media Effects

3/5	Read: Stokes Ch. 6 - Researching Audiences
3/7	Continuing the conversation

### Week 8 - Audience Research

3/12	Continuing the conversation
3/14	Essay 3 DUE on D2L

### Week 9 - SPRING BREAK

3/19	NO CLASS
3/21	NO CLASS

### Week 10 - Consumer Culture / Fan Culture

3/26	Read: Sturken & Cartwright Ch. 7 - Advertising, Consumer Cultures, and Desire
3/28	Continuing the conversation

**Week 11 - Gender / Race**

4/2	Read: Devereaux Ch. 7 - Media Re-Presentations
4/4	Midterm Essay DUE on D2L

**Week 12 - Political Economy & Freedom of Expression**

4/9	Read: Devereaux Ch. 4 - Media Ownership
4/11	Continuing the conversation

**Week 13 - Political Economy & Propaganda**

4/16	Continuing the conversation
4/18	Continuing the conversation

**Week 14 - Digital Media**

4/23	Read: Devereaux Ch. 9 - New Media, Social Media
4/25	Essay 4 DUE on D2L

**Week 15 - Technology / Agency / The Body**

4/30	Read: Croteau & Hoynes Ch. 9 - Media Technology
5/2	Continuing the conversation

**Week 16 - Technology / Space & Time / Politics**

5/7	Continuing the conversation
5/9	Essay 5 DUE on D2L

**Final Project**

5/15, 2:45pm	<b>Final Projects DUE</b>
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