Communication 1-B
Media, Culture and Society
Winter, 2021
Lectures: Tu/Th 10:30-11:50, Recorded Live
Sections: TBA

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Zoom Office Hours: TBA
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Goals:

Few social forces are more powerful or more ubiquitous than the American media. From movie theaters to the cell phones in our hands, across the airwaves and the Internet, images and sounds swarm our everyday lives and clamor for our attention. Recently, thanks to digital technologies, ordinary citizens have joined advertisers, politicians and other story-telling professionals in making materials for mass distribution. More than at any other time in American history, we live immersed in media.

This course aims to map that immersion and to equip you with the analytical tools to inhabit it critically. We will take up three topics: media as institutions, media as texts, and media as technologies. We will examine the structure and regulation of the mass media industries, the roles of producers and consumers in the American media system, and the ways that digitalization and globalization are transforming both. By the end of the course, you should have a solid command of core issues in contemporary media studies and a sharp analytical scalpel with which to dissect the claims of contemporary media makers.

Readings: All readings will be available on Canvas and the Web.

Assignments & Grading:

Analytical Projects = 50%
- 1 January 26: 15%
- 2 March 2: 15%
- 3 March 18: 20%

Midterm Exam (February 11, in class): 20%

Final Exam (Date & Time TBA): 20%

Participation: 10%

Expectations:
Participation:

While formally a lecture course, our class meetings will in fact be quite interactive – even on Zoom! The course lectures will be synchronous but also recorded, so if you’re in another time zone, no problem. If you’re there in real time, I’ll look for you to come with the reading done and with the ability to participate in a class discussion.

To participate effectively, you should aim to speak in a way that moves a discussion forward and increases the learning for the whole group. Contributions can include questions, insights, and responses to other comments. They can also include provocative mistakes. Being “wrong” but intellectually adventurous can often help jump-start everyone’s thinking!

I will also call on students by name (e.g., “cold call”). Please be assured this is NOT meant to embarrass you or put you on the spot! Rather, it’s a way for me to make sure we get lots of voices in the class discussion. That’s especially important in a field like media studies, since so many of us have different experiences with media.

One other thing: Please ask questions! Just raise your hand or use the “Raise Hand” function in Zoom. There is no such thing as a bad question. I guarantee that if you have a question, at least three of your fellow students do too!

Projects:

I understand that everyone is working under challenging conditions and that very occasionally you may need some flexibility on deadlines. Even so, I ask that you turn your projects in on time and do your best work at every level. As ever, the Honor Code applies to all your work. Violations of the Honor Code hurt everyone; as a result, they’ll be dealt with severely.

About These Strange Times We’re Living In:

As we all know, these are strange and difficult times. We’re not only working online together, but we’re working with the many repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic. All of us on the course team want to acknowledge the challenges you’re facing and want to help you learn. We’ll need your feedback as we go to help make that happen. Please feel free to reach out to me about how the class is going at any time via email. Or stop by my virtual office hours. And given the stresses we’re all under, I want to be sure you know that Stanford offers support through Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), available 24 hours a day at 650-723-3785.

Course Schedule:
(Note: This schedule is subject to change.)

Week 1: Introductions

Tuesday, January 12: Introductions and planning

No readings
Thursday, January 14: *How do media matter?*


**PART 1: MEDIA AS INSTITUTIONS**

**Week 2: The American Media Industry**

Tuesday, January 19: *American Media Industries*

Croteau & Hoynes, *Media/Society*, Ch. 3 “The Economics of the Media Industry”


Thursday, January 21: *Advertising and American Culture*


**Week 3: Media and the State**

Tuesday, January 26: *The Media and Democracy*

*Due: Analytical Project #1*


Thursday, January 28: *What do journalists do?*


**Week 4: Media and the State**

**Tuesday, February 2: The Market for News**


Guest lecture by Prof. Hamilton.

**Thursday, February 4: Propaganda and Censorship**


Edward Bernays, *Propaganda*, Chapters 1-4

**Week 5: Platforms and Propaganda**

**Tuesday, February 9: Platforms and Propaganda**


DiResta, Renee. “The Digital Maginot Line”

**Thursday, February 11: In-class Midterm Exam**

**PART 2: MEDIA AS TEXTS**

**Week 6: Ideology, Texts and Audiences**
**Tuesday, February 16:** How do mass media texts shape our views? What textual dynamics are at work?


Fred Turner, “This is for fighting, this is for fun,” in Dines, ed., *Gender, Race and Class in Media*, pp. 642-650 Available at [http://fredturner.stanford.edu](http://fredturner.stanford.edu) (download from “Papers”)

**Thursday, February 18:** Polysemy and Active Audiences


**Week 7: Audiences as Users**

**Tuesday, February 23:** The Human Screenome

Prof. Reeves Guest Lecture on “The Human Screenome”

Readings TBD.

**Thursday, February 25:** Audiences as Laborers


**Week 8: Media and Inequality**

**Tuesday, March 2:** Mediating Racial Inequality

*Due: Analytical Project #2*


**Thursday, March 4: Can the Media Undermine Inequality?**


**PART 3: Media as Technologies**

**Week 9: Media and Space**

**Tuesday, March 9: Media Technologies and Local Experience**


**Thursday, March 11: Media Technologies and Globalization**


“Bhutan, The Last Place” PBS documentary: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BZPKjLtVT04](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BZPKjLtVT04)

**Week 10: The Future**

**Tuesday, March 16: Media Technologies and the Natural World**


**Thursday, March 18: Where to Next?**
No reading – In-class review for final exam

*Due: Analytical Project #3*