

COMM 3800 BROADCAST/ELECTRONIC MEDIA

Course Description & Objectives

This course is designed to give you an overview of the structure and functions of the media industries in the United States. We will be focusing primarily on the electronic media, particularly the broadcast industries, but we will also be including the recording industry, Hollywood, and new media in our discussions. By studying the media as an industry we will examine how changes in regulations have allowed for the growth of integrated media conglomerates whose output covers a range of entertainment and informational content. We will also be comparing two approaches to the organization of media industries: the market model and the public interest model.

Thus, the specific objectives of this course are to be able to:

- understand the economic and political reasoning behind contemporary media industry structure
- understand the differences in goals and outcomes between the market and public interest models of media structure
- identify and describe examples of how government regulation has influenced the structure of the media industries
- identify and analyze examples of the influence of the media industries on society.

Students will work toward achieving these objectives by developing and practicing the following skills:

- reflecting, in writing and in oral discussion, on your own experiences with the media industries as they relate to the course materials
- developing and articulating a position on the market vs. public interest model debate
- analyzing examples of media consolidation for their economic benefits and societal impact
- describing the changes in the regulation of media industries and their consequences for industry structure

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FACULTY INFORMATION

E-mail:

Office: Office Phone:

Office Hours:



Assignments

The assignments in this class are designed to help you further your understanding of the course material by applying what you learn to a series of projects. This section of the syllabus will give an overview of the assignments, but specific details for each one will be available on the class eCourseware site.

Reflection Essays: Over the course of the semester you will complete four (4) short reflection essays (600-800 words each). These essays will allow you to demonstrate your understanding of the concepts and issues discussed in the class by examining your own experiences and opinions and relating them to the class material.

Group Project: The class will be divided into groups of approximately 5 people and assigned to research a major media merger. Each group will prepare a written report and a 20-minute presentation explaining the chronology of the merger, reasons behind the merger, and the effects of the merger on the media landscape of the time. Each group's report and merger will also take a position on whether or not the merger served the public interest.

Final Exam: There will be one, open-book, in class comprehensive essay exam covering the readings and class discussions.

Grade Breakdown:

Reflection Essays (4@10% each):	40%
Group Project:	20%
Final Exam:	30%
Participation:	10%
Total	100%

Understanding Your Grades

A = Outstanding Achievement

Should be understood as truly excellent work that integrates concepts, and theories and presents them in a well-argued manner. The written work is generally error-free in spelling and grammatical errors. To earn an "A" on an assignment, you will need to be extremely proficient at explaining, applying, evaluating, and synthesizing the concepts, models, etc., covered in this class.

B = Good Achievement

Should be understood as good work that demonstrates a firm grasp of concepts and class material and presents them in a solid manner. The written work has a minimal number of spelling and grammatical errors and is structured with an appropriate introduction and conclusion.

C = Satisfactory Achievement

Should be understood as passable work that fulfills the requirements of the assignment in a basic way. It may have some organizational flaws but generally demonstrates an understanding of the key concepts. The written work has a moderate number of spelling and grammatical errors. An assignment that meets, but does not exceed the basic requirements will receive a grade somewhere in the "C" range.

D = Poor Achievement

Should be understood as not acceptable work that demonstrates competence in less than half of the required concepts, theories, etc. It may have major writing or organizational flaws that hamper the interpretation of the work.

F = Unsatisfactory

Should be understood as work that does not address the criteria of the assignment and does not indicate an understanding of the course material. It may have severe problems in expression, organization and writing, and accuracy.

General Class Policies

Participation

This class will be conducted through a mix of lecture and class discussion. ALL students will be expected to critically assess the course readings and to come to each class prepared to analyze and discuss the assigned readings, and I may cold call on any student to discuss the readings at any time. Therefore, you should read ALL assigned materials and come prepared with any questions or concerns so that they can be address them in class. Engagement in class discussion will make up 60% of your Participation grade.

Participate constructively and respectfully. Attacks and critiques should focus on ideas and evidence, not on personal characteristics. Treat others as you would have them treat you.

Avoid bringing up personal stories unless they relate *directly* to the material being discussed. Wild tangents waste everybody's time.

Because class participation and discussion are an important part of this course, it is essential that you show up to class prepared and in a timely manner (i.e., at the start of class would be the best time for this).

At the same time, it is my responsibility to come to class prepared to explain and clarify the readings and to start and end class on time. I'll keep up my end of the bargain if you keep yours.

Attendance

Attendance at all class sessions is critical to success in this class. Lectures may include information not covered in the readings, and insights from discussions may be important for assignments. Students will be allowed 2 unexcused absences without penalty. For each subsequent unexcused absence, 5 points will be deducted from your attendance grade (worth 40% of Participation). Five points will also be deducted for every 3 tardies.

Notifying me of an intended absence does NOT constitute an authorized absence. Authorized absences, in general, include illness, participation in official university events, unavoidable personal emergencies, and religious holidays. Advance notification and third party documentation is required for ALL authorized absences. You are responsible for ALL material covered in missed classes, whether or not the absence was authorized.

Technology Use

Before entering the classroom, please turn off all cell phones, beepers, pagers, alarms, and any other bits of technology that could disrupt the class. You may not listen to personal MP3 players or similar devices during class. You are welcome to use your laptop computer to take notes in class, however you accept responsibility for limiting your use of extraneous applications that distract from the class discussions and lectures. In addition, please be aware that others in your immediate area may be distracted by your computer screen, so if you choose to use a laptop, please choose a seat near the back.

POLICY ON LATE WORK

All assignments are due on the date and time specified by the instructor.

Late papers will be penalized with a 10-point deduction for each day the paper is late, including weekends. Papers more than 7 days late will not be accepted.

As a general rule I do not grant extensions, so it is your responsibility to make sure to keep track of deadlines and turn all assignments in on time. Any exceptions to this will be granted at the sole discretion of the instructor.

POLICY ON WRITTEN WORK

With the exception of work completed in class, all written work must be computer-generated, double-spaced, with proper margins. Please adhere to the word limits established for each assignment, as points will be deducted for papers that are egregiously under or over the limits. All papers must be accurately and completely documented using APA 5th edition style. Papers may be turned in as hard copies or electronically through the eCourseware site.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND STUDENT CONDUCT

Expectations for academic integrity and student conduct are described in detail on the website of the Office of Student Judicial and Ethical Affairs: (<http://saweb.memphis.edu/judicialaffairs>). Please take a look, in particular, at the sections about “Academic Dishonesty,” “Student Code of Conduct and Responsibilities,” and “Disruptive Behaviors.” I will expect students to be aware of these guidelines and to conduct themselves accordingly.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Any student who may need class or test accommodations based on the impact of a disability is encouraged to speak with me privately to discuss his or her specific needs. Students with disabilities should also contact Student Disability Services (SDS) at 100 Wilder Tower, 678-2880. SDS coordinates reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

GRADE DISPUTES & QUESTIONS

Assignments are developed to achieve a variety of academic and assessment goals and I always attempt to describe exactly what is required. However, if you have a question about the assignment—it’s content, format, etc., do not hesitate to ask. I usually respond to email within 24 hours during the work week and 48 hours over the weekend.

As a general rule I will return graded assignments within two weeks. All grades will be posted on eCourseware, giving you a running total of your grade in the course. If you have additional questions about your progress you may check with me at any time throughout the semester. To do this, schedule a meeting time with me and bring *specific* questions.

If you would like to discuss any assignment after receiving feedback/grades, please wait 24 hours to “catch your breath” and collect your thoughts; again, be sure you bring *specific* questions to our discussion. I hope you will approach the grading philosophy as a challenge, not as an obstacle :-)

Required Materials

The Business of Media: Corporate Media and the Public Interest, D. Croteau & W. Hoynes, 2nd edition (2006). Pine Forge Press.



Additional required readings will be posted on eCourseware. All students must have regular and reliable access to a computer and the Internet and their University of Memphis email accounts. Familiarity with blogs and wikis is helpful but not required.

Breakdown of Letter Grades (in %)

A = 94-100	A- = 90-93	
B+ = 87-89	B = 84-86	B- = 80-83
C+ = 77-79	C = 74-76	C- = 70-73
D+ = 66-69	D = 60-65	F = 0-59

--Schedule --Subject to Change--		
Date	Topics	Readings to be discussed/Assignments due
T 9/1	Introduction to the course	Bring copy of syllabus to class
TH 9/3	Media, Markets & the Public Sphere	Croteau & Hoynes ch. 1
T 9/8	Media & Money overview	Grossberg et al. (2006) ch. 4
TH 9/10	Economics & Media Regulation	Corn-Revere & Carveth (2004)
T 9/15	Regulation & Deregulation	Croteau & Hoynes ch. 2
TH 9/17	Growth & Mergers (overview)	Ozanich & Wirth (2004)
T 9/22	Growth, Mergers & the Public Interest	Croteau & Hoynes ch. 3
TH 9/24	Debate/Discussion: What is the public interest?	Reflection Essay #1 DUE Discuss group projects
T 9/29	Industry Focus: Hollywood	Gomery (2004)
TH 10/1	Industry Focus: Recording Industry	Rothenbuhler & McCourt (2004)
T 10/6	Strategies of Media Giants	Croteau & Hoynes ch. 4
TH 10/8	NO CLASS MEETING	Work on Group Project. Progress Report due online by 6pm.
T 10/13	Neglecting the Public Interest	Croteau & Hoynes ch. 5
TH 10/15	Content Diversity Online	Webster (2007); Hindman (2007); Hargittai (2007) Reflection Essay #2 DUE
T 10/20	NO CLASS-FALL BREAK	
TH 10/22	Media & Society	Croteau & Hoynes ch. 6
T 10/27	Who Are We? Media & Identities	Grossberg et al. (2006) ch. 8
TH 10/29	Watch Merchants of Cool	
T 11/3	How Does the Media Affect Us?	Grossberg et al. (2006) ch. 10
TH 11/5	Is TV Bad for Us?	Postman (1985) [excerpt] Reflection Essay #3 DUE
T 11/10	Is TV Bad for Us?	Johnson (2005) [excerpt]
TH 11/12	NO CLASS MEETING	Work on Group Project. Progress Report due online by 6pm.
T 11/17	New Media Giants	TBA Reflection Essay #4 DUE
TH 11/19	New Media Giants	TBA
T 11/24	TBA	
TH 11/26	THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY	
T 12/1	GROUP PRESENTATIONS	ALL GROUP REPORTS DUE
TH 12/3	GROUP PRESENTATIONS	
T 12/8	Course wrap-up	