

Introduction to Media Studies

RTF 305 Online –

Fall 2012 □

Lectures: Online

Screenings: Online

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Course Description and Objectives: □ This course examines the context and significance of media in society. It offers an overview of the social and political aspects of media technologies. How do media shape our lives? How does society shape media? This course will therefore begin by looking at the major theoretical framework of media and their role in society. In order to understand the context of the relationship between media and society, we will look at the history of telecommunications and media, their creation, their development, and finally the political impacts of these technologies since their inception. Once you have completed this course, you should have acquired solid knowledge of:

- Theoretical approaches to media studies.
- Critical approaches to producing media and media role in society
- History of communication technology
- Ethical issues and policy regarding media
- Major elements of the RTF introductory level courses, including TV and film history, and info/media technology.

Readings:

The course has one textbook: □ ***MEDIA NOW: Understanding Media, Culture and Technology, 7th Edition, updated***, by Joseph Straubhaar and Robert LaRose, Wadsworth.

Textbooks are for sale at the [University Co-op](#). You can also buy an ebook version of the text from the publisher. Go to the Coop to purchase or follow this link to purchase from the publisher site: <http://www.cengagebrain.com>. If you choose to order online, be sure to get the 7th edition, updated.

The custom version cuts out several chapters we are not using, so the cost is lower, and adds one extra chapter on production that we are using. You can find the book available online, but do take care to get the right edition. I will be uploading Chapter 1 of the book to Course Documents on Blackboard for you to work from until you get the book.

There will be smaller articles and excerpts available on Blackboard under “Course Documents.” The first chapter of the book is also on Course Documents to give you time to buy the book. It is missing images, but I think it will do ok for the first week.

Lectures: □ Your lectures will be available online on Vimeo. You will have hyperlinks to the lectures. You can click on these or, if that doesn’t seem to work for you, copy and paste the address into your browser. The lectures are password protected, and for most of them, the password is: 305. “305” no period. The occasional lecture has a different password (online305 or spring305), and we will alert you to that as it comes up.

Sections:

This course will not have section meetings. However, you will be assigned a section according to TA for the purpose of organizing the turning in of assignments, grading, and emailing with questions. Your TA will be your primary point of contact for the course. Information about your TA will be distributed to you by email on the first class day.

Student Responsibilities:

- By registering for this course, you agree to abide by the rules and regulations governing this class. Your responsibilities include but are not restricted to the following points:
- All information stated in this syllabus in regards to your duties and responsibilities.
- Any additional announcements provided through email.
- Viewing all lectures, video examples and screenings.
- Reading and understanding the concepts in your readings. Lectures and writing assignments will depend on your understanding of the concepts covered in the assigned reading.
- Lectures will present information in addition to your readings. You are responsible for all information presented in them.
- Completing and turning in electronically all assignments ON TIME. Tardiness may be excused only if you have an official document that meets the University's standards and regulations.
- Taking your module quizzes on Blackboard ON TIME.

And furthermore, to achieve full points for participation in this online course:

- Check your email everyday. Please update your email address on the [UT system via UT Direct](#) and keep up with any
- Be focused when you are working online.

Technological Specifications

If you are using a Mac or PC you should use the [Firefox browser](#). Many of the lectures are available only through a streaming media server which requires a broadband (high-speed) Internet connection. The [wifi network](#) on campus is sufficient and there are many computer labs on campus open to undergraduate students, including the one in the [FAC](#). If you do not have your own computer, or if it does not have a fast, broadband connection, we recommend you use these options.

Blackboard

This course uses Blackboard, a Web-based course management system. The course syllabus; lecture notes; announcements; and guidelines for assignments, quizzes, and tests will all be posted to Blackboard on a regular basis. You can log in at courses.utexas.edu with your UTEID and password. The link to the RTF305 Blackboard site should appear under your "My Courses" menu. You will be responsible for checking the course site regularly.

Course Organization

On Friday afternoon, you will receive an email titled "Weekly Work Plan." This email will repeat the syllabus and add any explanations and details needed for you to successfully complete your weekly work. Some parts of the syllabus are under revision this semester as we are revising some of the online lectures to improve sound quality and adding a couple new ones that we think will suit the course even better. Consider your weekly work plan as the most important document for staying on track in this course.

This course will be organized by modules, which are made up of smaller concept units. These

replace more conventional lectures. Concept units are usually 15-20 minutes long, but some may be as long as an hour. You will listen to a speaker and watch their powerpoint slides, images, and links to video clips, following links that we give you later in the syllabus. You will find links to lectures, some films for streaming and short videos in the Web version of this syllabus.

At the end of every week, you will take a timed quiz on Blackboard to complete the module or unit you are in. You will go to Blackboard to take quizzes. There you will find a tab or button on the left side of the 305 main page. You go to:

<https://courses.utexas.edu/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp> and log in with your EID and password.

We have organized the course in terms of modules, which typically last one or two weeks. Within each module, you are working at your own pace for much of the time, but there will be deadlines for the quizzes and writing. After a deadline has passed, the quizzes will close automatically, and writing assignments will no longer be accepted. Your instructional team cannot accept late work. You will turn in writing assignments on Blackboard.

Course Performance Assessment

Requirements

Percent of Final Grade ☐

Weekly Quizzes	40% <input type="checkbox"/>
3 writing projects	35% <input type="checkbox"/>
Final exam	25% <input type="checkbox"/>
	----- <input type="checkbox"/>
Total	100%

Quizzes (40%): At the end of every week there will be a multiple choice quiz, which covers textbook chapters, any other assigned readings, lectures, assigned video clips, and film screenings. The point of the quiz is to test your weekly comprehension of main terms, ideas, theories, and topics. It is not a “gotcha” kind of quiz, but do expect the material to be thoroughly integrated. Some questions will stretch you a little bit and test your ability to apply concepts.

You will have 10 minutes and 10 questions. This is a quick pace to ensure that students who have done the reading and watched the lectures throughout the week are rewarded for their work.

Trying to look up answers as you go **will not work** for the quizzes in this class.

After the due date, we will close the quiz and you will no longer be able to take it. If you stay up with the material and quizzes, you have an excellent chance of doing well in the course. If you don't keep up and start missing quizzes, it is all too easy to fail the course.

Quizzes will be taken every Friday. They will open Friday at 10am and close Friday at 7pm. Quizzes will be totaled and weighted to be 40% of your grade.

Writing projects (35%): You will complete 3 developed writing assignments this semester, spread out throughout the class. These will be completed individually. More information will be given as the course progresses. They will be graded on a scale of 1 to 10, with an 8 being a very good assignment, a 9 being a great assignment, and a 10 being a near-perfect assignment. Grades of a 7 and lower indicate that most likely some part of the assignment was incomplete, didn't address the prompt fully, or was written in a way (with lots of grammar errors, for example) that we had trouble understanding your ideas. All writing projects will be accepted until 10pm on the day that they are due, and they will be due on Blackboard. More information on writing assignments and due dates will be coming on a separate information sheet. The writing

assignments will be totaled and weighted to be 35% of your grade.

Final (25%): □ There will be one test at the end of the semester. This test will include 40 multiple-choice questions that cover course materials. You will have one hour to take it. The final will cover lectures, screenings and readings. You can take the final online through Blackboard any one hour from 10 a.m. - 7 p.m.

No make-up tests will be allowed without official documentation as defined by the UT. Students with disabilities are required to present the appropriate documentation to us well in advance so we can make special testing arrangements. The final will be scored and weighted to comprise 25% of your grade.

Communication

Every Friday, you will receive a Weekly Work Plan email for this course by email from me. This will follow the syllabus, but it will explain assignments much more in-depth and have any revised lectures and materials included.

If you have questions about the course, your Teaching Assistant for your section is the first line of communication for this course. Next is Laura, the Instructor. (Some of you will have Laura in the role of primary TA as well.) When you have a question, the best thing to do is send an email to your teaching assistant. They will respond to you within 24 hours during the week, but weekends are weekends, and you can expect emails Friday-Sunday to be responded to on Monday. In general we were selected to be part of this class because we are attentive to our emails, but if you write us and you don't hear back in 24 hours, it's ok to send a polite reminder email.

Because the class is online, we encourage you to send an email if you have a small or large question. Even if you have the feeling you should know the answer or you may have seen the answer somewhere, go ahead and email us. We'd rather have you double check than make a mistake because you were unsure of the proper materials, directions, or procedures.

We don't have office hours scheduled because it has not been too popular in the past, but we are most definitely available for "online" office hours (chat) or in-person meetings if you make an appointment.

Screenings:

Throughout the semester, you will be asked to watch films for the class. These films are either available online for free or low cost or very easy to access on DVD, such as *The Social Network*.

Students with Disabilities

Any student with a documented disability who requires academic accommodations should contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 471-6259 (voice) or 232-2937 (Video Phone) as soon as possible to request an official letter outlining authorized accommodations. For more information visit: <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>

Scholastic Dishonesty

The University defines academic dishonesty as cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, falsifying academic records, and any act designed to avoid participating honestly in the learning process. Scholastic dishonesty also includes, but is not limited to, providing false or misleading information to receive a postponement or an extension on a test, quiz, or other assignment, and submission of essentially the same written assignment for two courses without the prior permission of the instructor. By accepting this syllabus, you have agreed to these guidelines and

must adhere to them. Scholastic dishonest damages both the student's learning experience and readiness for the future demands of a work-career. Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. For more information on scholastic dishonesty, please visit the Student Judicial services Web site at <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs>

For an online class in particular this means: doing your own work on tests, quizzes, and writing assignments.

Writing Assistance

The Undergraduate Writing Center is located in FAC 211, phone 471-6222. The Center offers individualized assistance to students who want to improve their writing skills. There is no charge utilizing this service. Students may come in on a drop-in or appointment basis.

Student Athletes

At the beginning of the semester, student athletes and participants of other university-sponsored organizations who will miss class due to university-sponsored commitments must see the instructor and present a letter from the athletic department or appropriate sponsoring office.