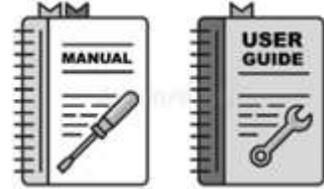


COM235.001  
Introduction to Media Literacy  
Fall 2022  
Course Instruction Book  
(syllabus)



**Instructor Contact:**

Name: Dr. Knopf ["nope"] (she/her) --you can also call me C.K.  
Drop-in office hours: T/Th 11:30-1, W 12:30-2:30  
Office: VanHoesen 125G (and WebEx)  
Email: [christina.knopf@cortland.edu](mailto:christina.knopf@cortland.edu) Phone: 607-753-2530

**Class Meetings:** TuTh 1:15-2:30pm in VanHoesen B110

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** An introduction to the critical consumption of media. Provides methods and techniques to access, analyze, evaluate, and understand the role of the media in framing our views of our world. (3 cr. hr.) Fulfills: GE 12; LASR.

**STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:** Through this course, you will identify and conduct yourselves as members of the communication/media professions, knowing and using ethical guidelines and other professional standards related to the practice of communication. Upon successful completion, you will be able to...

- o analyze ethical issues relating to communication & media.
- o use & analyze sources and evidence.
- ...and demonstrate an understanding of
- o the media message – literacy.
- o semiotics –meaning behind media messages.
- o ideology in the context of our media system
- o media in terms of its representation.
- o the commercial nature of our media systems.
- *GE 12: Science, Technology, Values & Society.* The goal of this category is for students to reflect critically on problems that involve ethical or values-based judgments of technical information and issues that arise at the interface of science, technology and society. Through this course, students will demonstrate an understanding of:
  - o the manner in which value judgments are justified & how interpretation of technical information can lead to different conclusions.
  - o an understanding of issues at the interface of science, technology and society and how the methods of science and scientific data are understood in the context of social issues.

**REQUIRED MATERIALS:**

- *Introduction to Mass Communication: Media Literacy & Culture*, 12<sup>th</sup> edition.
- Brightspace access
- Notebook for class, recommended

**Assignments & Grade Distribution:**

- Unit Tests [5 at 10% each] (50%)
- Project Censored VIN report (30%)
- Choose-Your-Own Project (15%)
- participation (5%)

**GRADE CONVERSION:**

B+: 87-89%	C+: 77-79%	D+: 67-69%	E: 0-59%
A: 94-100%	B: 83-86%	C: 73-76%	D: 64-66%
A-: 90-93%	B-: 80-82%	C-: 70-72%	D-: 60-63%

(Based on CollegeBoard's conversion chart at <https://pages.collegeboard.org/how-to-convert-gpa-4.0-scale>).  
Grades are always rounded up or down according to standard conventions (0.1-0.4 = 0.0 / 0.5-0.9 = 1)

**GRADE POLICIES:** If you *find an error* in grading, bring it to CK's attention immediately so it can be corrected. If you have a question about assignment feedback, exam answers, etc., ask politely. If you *disagree* with a grade earned on, you can file a request for reconsideration no sooner than 24 hours and no later than 1 week after receiving the grade. The original work with all evaluation forms should be re-submitted along with a written explanation of why you believe your work warrants reconsideration and a higher grade. Any grade change at that time, including a lower one, will remain final. **"Extra" credit is available in conjunction with regular work**, such as participating in post-speech Q&A sessions, bonus questions on exams and homework, good attitude or effort in class activities, etc. **Extra credit options are *not* available by individual request or as replacements for regular work.** You can also email the professor a gif of how your semester is going for an extra 2 points, if you read this before Week 5. **Late work is not accepted.**

**A's may be awesome, but B's are beautiful and C's are competent. Even F's are feedback.**





**ATTENDANCE:** Attendance is recorded and factored into course participation, but is not graded directly nor “policed.” There are no excused or unexcused absences; if you miss class or skip work, you do so at your own risk. If you're absent on a "regular" class day, **you should check the syllabus & Brightspace to see what you missed & what's coming up.** Email the professor a picture of something you love for an additional point if you understand your attendance responsibilities by Week 5 of the semester.

**DIVERSITY:** SUNY Cortland is dedicated to the premise that every individual is important in a unique way and contributes to the overall quality of the institution. We define diversity broadly to include all aspects of human difference. The College is committed to inclusion, equity, and access and thus committed to creating and sustaining a climate that is equitable, respectful and free from prejudice for students, faculty and staff. We value diversity in the learning environment and know that it enhances our ability to inspire students to learn, lead and serve in a changing world. We are committed to promoting a diverse and inclusive campus through the recruitment and retention of faculty, staff and students. As a community, we hold important the democracy of ideas, tempered by a commitment to free speech and the standards of inquiry and debate. To this end, we are dedicated to developing and sustaining a learning environment where it is safe to explore our differences and celebrate the richness inherent in our pluralistic society. (College Handbook, Chap 130)

**ACCESS (ACCOMMODATION OF DISABILITIES):** As part of SUNY Cortland’s commitment to a diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment, we strive to provide students with equal access to all courses. If you believe you will require accommodations in this course, please place a request with the Disability Resources Office at [disability.resources@cortland.edu](mailto:disability.resources@cortland.edu) or call 607-753-2967. Please note that accommodations are generally not provided retroactively so timely contact with the Disability Resources Office is important. All students should consider meeting with their course instructor who may be helpful in other ways.” (College Handbook, Chapter 745)



**INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT:** SUNY Cortland is committed to a diverse, equitable and inclusive environment. The course instructor honors this commitment and respects and values differences. All students enrolled in this course are expected to be considerate of others, promote a collaborative and supportive educational environment, and demonstrate respect for individuals with regard to ability or disability, age, ethnicity, gender, gender identity/expression, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, socio-economic status or other aspects of identity. In an environment that fosters inclusion, students have the opportunity to bring their various identities into conversation as they find helpful, but are not expected to represent or speak for an entire group of people who share aspects of an identity. If you have any questions or concerns about this statement, contact the Institutional Equity and Inclusion Office at 607-753-2263.



**What Diversity & Inclusivity Mean in this Class:** A diversity of viewpoints, opinions, and experiences are welcome. We learn and grow when confronted with new ideas and different perspectives. But we are also here to learn to be more effective, more ethical communicators. Therefore, anything that fits the definition of hate speech or degrades fellow human beings will not welcome, anything that violates ethical responsibilities by advocating violence or actions that could harm any audience member’s pursuit of life and liberty will not be welcome, and anything that violates the college’s commitment to diversity and inclusivity cannot be tolerated.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:** All students are expected to uphold academic integrity standards. Plagiarism is defined as taking the ideas of others and using them as one's own without due credit. Students who cheat in examinations, course assignments, or plagiarize in this course may be disciplined in accordance with university rules and regulations. (College Handbook, Chapter 340)



**TITLE IX:** Title IX, when combined with New York Human Rights Law and the New York Education Law 129-B, prohibits discrimination, harassment and violence based on sex, gender, gender identity/expression, and/or sexual orientation in the education setting. The federal Clery Act and NY Education Law 129-B provide certain rights and responsibilities after an incident of sexual or interpersonal violence. When a violation occurs, victims and survivors are eligible for campus and community resources. Where the College has jurisdiction, it may investigate and take action in accordance with College policy. If you or someone you know wishes to report discrimination based in sex, gender, gender identity/expression, and/or sexual orientation, or wishes to report sexual harassment, sexual violence, stalking or relationship violence, please contact the Title IX Coordinator at 607-753-4550, or visit [cortland.edu/titleix](http://cortland.edu/titleix) to learn about all reporting options and resources.

**MENTAL, EMOTIONAL, & PHYSICAL WELLBEING:** Diminished mental health, including significant stress, mood changes, excessive worry, alcohol and/or substance abuse, or problems with eating and/or sleeping can interfere with optimal academic performance. *If symptoms are related to your course work, please speak with the instructor to work out a plan of action that will allow you complete the course successfully and healthfully.*



If problems with relationships, family worries, loss, or a personal struggle or crisis are negatively impacting your mental health and/or interfering with your academic success, SUNY Cortland offers the following resources to help you manage personal challenges that threaten your personal or academic well-being.

- Counseling Center: 607-753-4728
- Substance Abuse & Prevention Education: 607-753-2066

If challenges securing food or housing are affecting your academic performance, or your emotional wellbeing, you are urged to contact the Associate Vice President of Student Affairs for support (607-753-4721). The college offers a food cupboard and a clothes closet, among other services, that may be able to help.



**IT'S IN THE SYLLABUS**

WWW.PHDCOMICS.COM

#### COURSEWORK:

##### Participation

Communication is an active, multi-directional, process. You need to be present, prepared, on time, engaged, and respectful to maximize your success in the course.

- Occasional absences are not a problem; frequent absences (like more than 4 classes, which equals two weeks), frequent late arrivals, and/or frequent early departures are disruptive to your success and to the class as a whole.
- Ask questions. Share stories. If you want your class experience to be personal and meaningful, you need to play a part in shaping discussions.
- Get involved in class discussions, breakout groups, and class activities. They're designed to help you better understand the course material – but they won't work if you don't engage.
- Be an active listener/watcher. This course uses a lot of media, including entertainment media. Like the activities, it's meant to help clarify course concepts – which depends on you staying tuned in.
- Pay attention to deadlines (especially for Project Censored), even if they aren't graded. They exist to help you manage the workload and to see you succeed.



##### Exams



There five unit tests during the semester. They will be multiple-choice/matching/fill in the blank. Exams are designed to help you learn the core concepts that will better prepare you to achieve the course Learning Outcomes. Psychological research on the science of successful learning proves that the acts of preparing for and taking tests is a great boost to memory, making tests learning, not just assessment, instruments. Exams are also a proven way to help you keep up with classwork – they encourage attendance, preparation and review in ways that less traditional or structured means don't. Study quizzes from the text's website can help you prepare.

*Exams address the following Student Learning Outcomes:*

- demonstrate an understanding of the manner in which value judgments are justified and how interpretation of technical information can lead to different conclusions.
- demonstrate an understanding of issues at the interface of science, technology and society and how the methods of science and scientific data are understood in the context of social issues.
- ideology in the context of our media system
- the media in terms of its representation.
- the commercial nature of our media systems.

## Readings

You are assigned a textbook in this class for a reason: it is a resource, a reference, a guide – a source of instructions and examples and explanations that you can move through at your own pace. Reading the book and coming to class and making use of optional online resources gives you multiple chances and multiple modes for learning. **Doing the assigned reading before coming to class** (not just before an exam) will make your class time easier, more productive, and more meaningful because:



- you'll have some familiarity with the terminology, which can make it easier to learn and remember
- you'll be better able to participate in discussions and/or ask questions
- you'll be getting an automatic review of the content

Educational psychology tells us that *active reading strategies* lead to improved comprehension and retention of information and help students perform better in classes: this means, you want to read in a way that forces your brain do something while reading your textbook. To help in this class, you are encouraged to create a handwritten 4x6" notecard for each assigned chapter and to bring the card(s) with you to class on the day the chapter is due. Those cards will then be returned to you for your reference on the unit tests (see above).

To help you take notes, consider the following:

- The chapter's main idea.
- Connections you see between concepts
- A summary statement of each section.
- Key terms, concepts, or vocabulary

These note cards can help you to be more prepared for classes; you'll be able to take better in-class notes, because you'll be more familiar with what's already written down for you in book; you'll be more able to participate in discussions, because you might have questions about something from the reading, or even ideas or connections sparked by the reading to share. And, though there is no guarantee they will contain specific answers to quiz/exam questions, they can be really useful memory aids on exams.

**Notecards are not required** (so there are no makeups for missed/skipped cards and **no late cards accepted**). They are optional, for your use as "cheat sheets." If you choose to do notecards:

- Your name & chapter # must be on the card.
- You may have only 1 card per chapter (both sides).
- Cards must be no larger than 4x6 inches.
  - This box when printed is about 4x6 – trace it if you don't have a ruler
- Notes must be handwritten, not typed.
- Submit it on or before the day the chapter is due

## Extra Credit

Due no later than December 13, you can create and submit up to 3 memes that reflect, capture, teach, or comment on some concept, principle, or theory of mass communication and media literacy. Use your favorite meme generator or other program or app.

## Project Censored VIN

Project Censored educates the public about the importance of a truly free press for democratic self-government. It exposes & opposes news censorship and promotes independent investigative journalism and media literacy through its website, radio program, annual book, and other programs. It does this with the support of students like you who discover and report on censored news through participation in the Validated Independent News (VIN) exercise. A censored news story reports information that the public has a right and need to know, but to which the public has limited access.

The VIN engages you in research of potentially under-reported news stories, providing you with a hands-on opportunity to develop critical thinking & media literacy skills and to share your findings with a wider public, online via Project Censored's website and in print as part of the Project's annual book series. Through class sessions and online materials will Find, Evaluate, and Summarize VINS by selecting an under-reported news story, researching it, summarizing it, and submitting it – both to class and to Project Censored.

Doing Project Censored reporting is challenging and time consuming. Accordingly, you get the whole semester to work on the final project (though early submission is encouraged and can result in extra credit): This cannot be put off until the night or morning before the assignment is due!!

- 1) The first step will be to find an under-reported [aka "censored"] news item. This is tricky, so before you go to all the work to write a full report, you'll want submit a likely story (a proposal) in advance so the instructor can double-check it for you. If it's good to go, you can start the research and move on to #2. If not, you'll need to try again.
- 2) Once your proposed story has been approved, you'll write a first draft of the VIN. The components for the VIN are identified in the rubric below. The first draft will be assessed using the rubric and returned to you for whatever needed re-writes or revisions are needed.
- 3) You'll submit your final version no later than the last day of class. If it meets all the necessary criteria, it will be sent on to the Project Censored for their consideration to publish on their website and/or in their annual yearbook. You may work independently or in groups of 2-4.

### Project Censored VIN Grading Rubric

#### **Story Selection** (8 points possible, 2 each)

- Reports ignored or under-reported news story from independent (not corporate) news source. (If the story has received only limited corporate coverage, but the independent coverage is basically the same, it is not "censored")
- Reports timely news story, published since March 2022
- Reports important, well-sourced news story: The story has broad implications that matter to the public.
- Tracks story back to original news report &/or research studies: There are credible supporting sources or it hasn't been conclusively debunked

#### **VIN Summary (400-600 words):** (12 points possible, 2 each)

- Gives clear, brief, and compelling title capturing the most important point in 5-10 words; must be different from the title used in the original article
- Uses Summary-Lead to tell story's most important point (i.e., what, where & when)
- Provides supporting detail in order of importance, so that the least important items are at the bottom (what is known in journalism as inverted pyramid structure)
- Identifies any corporate news coverage and, if so, what VIN adds to our understanding
- Employs clear writing, including correct grammar, spelling and punctuation
- Avoids editorializing, focusing on just the facts without opinions or judgements.

#### **Format:** (10 points possible, 2 each)

- The first paragraph provides specific & factual summary of the story's most important points, with the original source and date of the story
- The second paragraph provides additional detail (ex. a quote from one of the story's sources, background, or statistics).
- The third paragraph addresses corporate media coverage of the story. (If no corporate media coverage, state so directly & indicate date as of which this was true. If story has gotten some corporate news coverage, use live URLs to link to this corporate news coverage. Describe in specific terms how the independent news provides a more complete understanding of the issue than that provided by the corporate media.)
- Gives complete story reference (for all sources, if more than one) in correct format (Author's first and last name, "Title of Article," News outlet [hyperlinked or article], date.
- Identifies student researchers and faculty evaluator by name and academic affiliation

*Project Censored addresses the following Student Learning Outcomes:*

- *analyze ethical issues relating to communication & media.*
- *use & analyze sources and evidence.*

### Choose-Your-Own-Project

To consider, and engage with, ethical issues that arise at the interface of science, technology and society, you will complete **one** of the following media-creation projects.

You can do any of these projects with one other person. Grading will consider the following:

- ✓ Are all parts of the assignment complete and submitted?
- ✓ Does the written portion of the assignment clearly engage with course content from the book or lectures?
- ✓ Is the writing professional in tone and appropriate for the college level?
- ✓ Does the project show originality and/or creativity of thought and/or design (as appropriate)?

#### ***Model Photography***

Images in magazines and social media, and occasionally in news, are frequently tweaked and manipulated. Your job is to turn the technology onto yourself. You will create a "before" and "after" self-portrait.

- The "before" will be the original unedited, unmanipulated, photo.
- The "after" will be the image as manipulated to conform with society's/media's ideals of physical appearance.
- Manipulation can be achieved through a combination of physical and digital tricks involving light, color, angle, frame, stage, etc.
- With your photos, provide a 2-page typed, double-spaced, report: 1 page describing what you did to make the "after" image, and 1 page explaining how that image conforms to society's/media's ideals of physical appearance and representation.

#### ***Food Photography***

Cooking shows and food blogs boomed in popularity since COVID – and often include carefully manipulated imagery. This activity asks you to create photographic magic to create a "before" and "after" food photo.

- The "before" will be the original unedited, unmanipulated, photo.
- The "after" will be the image as manipulated to achieve an ad-worthy enticement – something that will make people want to tap/click or buy.
- Manipulation can be achieved through a combination of physical and digital tricks involving light, color, angle, frame, stage, etc. (There are a lot of cool articles about food photography out there – and all kinds of physical tricks, like using mashed potatoes for ice cream that won't melt, and motor oil as a photogenic substitute for maple syrup).
- With your photos, provide a 2-page typed, double-spaced, report: 1 page describing what you did to make the "after" image, and 1 page explaining how that image engages ideas of advertising, public relations, or marketing to make people want more.

#### ***Videogame Structure***

Analyze a video game of your choosing. Determine the narrative structure of the game and/or consider its representations of genders, races, places, politics, economics, etc., as appropriate to the particular game, to explain the relationship between the game and its player. Write a 3-page typed, double-spaced, report

- briefly describing the game,
- clearly explaining the narrative structure or elements of representation,
- and considering how those aspects might impact the relationship between the game and its players (or who its players are).

#### ***Culture Jam***

Culture jams use creative communication strategies to play with branded images and icons of consumer culture to make consumers aware of surrounding problems & diverse cultural experiences. Jammers want to disrupt the unconscious thought process that takes place when most consumers view popular advertising. You are to develop a meme or jammed ad that expresses resistance to consumer culture that would constitute an act of rebellion against consumer culture or other forms of social/environmental injustice.

- Provide the original ad/logo.etc
- Your jammed version of the original (it must be a jam of your own creation – not a copy of one you find online)
- A 2-page paper that 1) analyzes who the target audience of the original ad/logo/company is and what message the original, 2) explains what message your jam is trying to send, 3) how your jam works to subvert the original

*The Choose-Your-Own Project addresses the following Student Learning Outcomes*

- *demonstrate an understanding of the media message – literacy.*
- *demonstrate an understanding of the meaning behind media messages.*
- *demonstrate an understanding of ideology in the context of our media system*
- *demonstrate an understanding of the media in terms of its representation.*
- *demonstrate an understanding of the commercial nature of our media systems*
- *demonstrate an understanding of issues at the interface of science, technology and society*

★ ★ ★ ★ COM235 COURSE SCHEDULE ★ ★ ★ ★

wk	Tuesdays	Thursdays
1	<b>8/30:</b> WELCOMES & INTRODUCTIONS	<b>9/1:</b> Read chapter 1 for today (submit notes if wanted)
2	<b>9/6:</b> Read chapter 2 for today (submit notes if wanted)	<b>9/8:</b> ~last chance to submit optional notes for chs. 1-2
3	<b>9/13:</b> PART 1 TEST	<b>9/15:</b> Read chapter 3 for today (submit notes if wanted)
4	<b>9/20:</b> Read chapter 4 for today (submit notes if wanted)	<b>9/22:</b> INTRODUCTION TO PROJECT CENSORED
5	<b>9/27:</b> Read chapter 5 for today (submit notes if wanted)	<b>9/29:</b> <i>Project Censored checkin</i>
6	<b>10/4:</b> Read chapter 6 for today (submit notes if wanted)	<b>10/6:</b>
7	<b>10/11:</b> PART 2A TEST	<b>10/13:</b> Read chapter 7 for today (submit notes if wanted)
8	<b>10/18:</b> <b>FALL BREAK</b>	<b>10/20:</b> Read chapter 8 for today (submit notes if wanted) <i>Project Censored checkin</i>
9	<b>10/25:</b> Read chapter 9 for today (submit notes if wanted)	<b>10/27:</b> Read chapter 10 for today (submit notes if wanted)
10	<b>11/1:</b> PART 2B TEST	<b>11/3:</b> CLASS WILL BE ASYNCHRONOUS ONLINE TODAY PROJECT CENSORED WORK
11	<b>11/8:</b> Read chapter 11 for today (submit notes if wanted) <i>Project Censored early draft due: submit thru Brightspace</i>	<b>11/10:</b> Read chapter 12 for today (submit notes if wanted)
12	<b>11/15:</b> CLASS WILL BE SYNCHRONOUS ONLINE TODAY <b>PART 3 TEST (ONLINE DURING CLASS)</b> -any submitted notes for chs 11 &/or 12 will be emailed	<b>11/17:</b> CLASS WILL BE ASYNCHRONOUS ONLINE TODAY PROJECT CENSORED WORK
13	<b>11/22:</b> Read chapter 13 for today (submit notes if wanted) <i>Choose-Your-Own Project due: submit thru Brightspace</i>	<b>11/24:</b> <b>NOVEMBER BREAK</b>
14	<b>11/29:</b> Read chapter 14 for today (submit notes if wanted)	<b>12/1:</b>
15	<b>12/6:</b> Read chapter 15 for today (submit notes if wanted)	<b>12/8:</b> SHARE PROJECT CENSORED STORIES <i>Project Censored VIN due: submit thru Brightspace</i>
Fin	<b>12/13:</b> <i>Optional Extra Credit Meme due: submit thru Brightspace</i>	<b>12/14, Wednesday, 11-1:00: PART 4 TEST</b>

All work submitted through Brightspace is due by noon on the day indicated.

Unless otherwise noted, tests will be taken in class. Any extra time beyond the test will be used for Q&A, Project Censored checkins, and open discussion.