Instruction Manual for COM235.001, Introduction to Media Literacy

I know "it's in the syllabus" is an annoying trope, something of a joke, and has been memed to death. But, in all seriousness, I spend weeks developing the course plans and days putting this document together *to help you*. I want you to have the information you need. I don't want the class to be an ongoing unknown entity. I want it to be fair to everyone and manageable for you

Instructor: Dr. Knopf ["nope"] or Prof. Knopf or "CK" (she/her) - *not* "Mrs."
  OFFICE: VanHoesen B-125G (and WebEx)
  EMAIL: christina.knopf@cortland.edu   *PHONE*: 607-753-2530
  DROP-IN OFFICE HOURS: Mondays 10-12:30, Wednesdays 10-11:30, Fridays 11:15-12:15

Regular drop-in office hours are held for you when classes are in session & you do not need an appointment to attend, call, or login to WebEx during those hours.

You can **use office hours**[1] to discuss class, get help on assignments, or seek advice on college or career matters, or talk about other things. ~~Please be aware that while you are welcome, even encouraged, to discuss personal experiences or concerns in office hours, that I am legally obligated to report any incidences of violent crime that impacts the campus or campus community - including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, stalking, assault, burglary, motor vehicle and larceny theft, arson and hate crimes – as well as sexual harassment, discrimination, or violence. Because I am not a counselor, I do not have confidentiality and am legally bound to report violations I am told about.

You can also reach me through email. Before emailing, please check available course resources; answers to such questions like "what did I miss in class?" "is there anything due?" "what am I supposed to do for this assignment?" and "can my absence be excused?" When you email, please be **clear and polite**[2] (take the opportunity **to practice professional communication**[3] that you'll need in the career-world). Also, when you email, please respect my need for work-life balance. I cannot be available 24/7. Though you are free to email at any time of the day or night, I will primarily respond to emails during regular working office hours (M-F, 8am-5pm). Also, please understand that I regularly get 50-100 emails per day and responding takes time.

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, students 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 demonstrate an understanding of…

o media messages, with attention to sources & evidence - literacy
o semiotics – meaning behind media messages
o the commercial nature of media systems
o ethical issues relating to communication & media
o ideology & representation in 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 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:
• *Media Literacy in Action* by Hobbs   • Brightspace/D2L access

Assignments & Grade Distribution:
♦ Semiotics observation individual project (15%)
♦ NIFI news media class discussion (15%)
♦ A/V storymap group project (15%)
♦ synthetic media group project (15%)
♦ Quizzes - 5 (10%)
♦ Midterm exam (15%)
♦ Final exam (15%)

GRADING:

		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)

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[1] https://learningcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/using-office-hours-effectively/
[2] https://www.purdue.edu/advisors/students/professor.php
[3] https://hbr.org/2021/08/how-to-write-better-emails-at-work

GRADE POLICIES: If you *find an error* in grading, bring it to Dr. Knopf'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.

PATHS TO COURSE COMPLETION: Your success in this course depends on cooperation between you as the student and me as the instructor. You are taking this course because it has some relevance to your degree – whether as a general education requirement, a major or minor requirement, or an elective that you believe has relevance to your interests and future. Therefore, it is vital that you complete the work of the course to gain the relevant knowledge or experience. This is part of *your* education, so you need to decide what your success in the course looks like. Your options include…

Option 1: A Guaranteed B or Better*
To earn at least a B in the course you must…
☒ Attend at least 37 of the 41 class meetings.
  In the case of college-sanctioned events, such as an athletic competition or a conference, proper documentation will ensure you are not counted as absent. In the case of religious observances, advance notification is needed.
☒ Arrive late or leave early no more than 3 times during the semester.
  If building accessibility slows your progress to the room or between classes, this requirement is waived.
☒ Take at least 4 of the 5 quizzes.
☒ Complete and present or submit (as appropriate) at least 5 of the 6 other assignments on time and *completely*, doing your best to adhere to the instructions

> *THE GUARANTEED GRADE MEANS THAT IF YOU PUT IN THE REQUIRED TIME AND EFFORT YOU WILL EARN AT LEAST A B IN THE CLASS. IF THE QUALITY OF YOUR WORK IS ALSO GOOD, YOU CAN EARN HIGHER. IN OTHER WORDS, YOU MIGHT MEET THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE GUARANTEED B AND STILL HAVE GRADES THAT WILL EARN AN A.*

Option 2: Earn What You Can
The most traditional course path, you complete what you can, putting in as much effort as you want or are able, and earn what you earn. This is a good choice if you know that you either aren't able or aren't interested in committing regular, minimal, effort to the course.

Option 3: The Last-Ditch Effort
People often experience a series of unfortunate events during a semester that distract them from class, usually until the last one to two weeks when these problems either resolve or class becomes a bigger priority. Often in these circumstances, people want to know what they can do to make up for the weeks of class and work they have missed. There is no substitute for regular class involvement, but if you find yourself in a position where you want to put in an extraordinary amount of work in very little time at the end of the semester, instead of putting in reasonable amounts of work spread out over the course of the semester, you can choose to have your entire course grade based on end-of-term 15-20 page research paper, the topic to be determined as appropriate to the semester in Week 12. You may also choose this option if the work you did over the semester did not produce the grade you wanted, but once you choose it, your other grades will be erased and replaced. Basically, waiting until the end of the semester to focus on the class and do the work is a gamble. It's a risky option, but one that is available to you if you need it.

Because of the different options available to complete the course, extra credit is not offered on an individual basis. Extra credit opportunities *might* arise during the semester, depending on the nature of the class dynamics and the possibilities presented by real-world opportunities.

DEADLINES: No more than one assignment will be accepted late and only up to one week. Deadlines are important for scaffolding coursework, so that you can learn from one assignment before doing another. Deadlines help you to manage your time, set priorities, and meet your goals. Deadlines help to coordinate and structure the class, providing the instructor with feedback about how the class is going that allows for necessary adjustments. Deadlines set expectations for our mutual responsibilities to each other in this class community. They are also a basic job skill and are paramount in many communication and media related industries – they determine what is or is not a newsworthy story, drive marketing campaigns, and are embedded into the nature of planning and promoting events.

A 2022 career advice column in *Indeed*[4] noted, "Being able to meet deadlines is a desirable skill for candidates to have in a wide variety of industries. This ability can help professionals succeed while under pressure, overcome challenges and meeting

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[4] https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/resumes-cover-letters/ability-to-meet-deadlines-resume

expectations accordingly." *ZandaX*[5] reports that "Time management is considered to be one of the primary 'soft skills' valued in the workplace, and effective time management skills are key to a successful work life, and play a major part in many of the top attributes valued by employers." And *FairyGodBoss*[6] notes that missing deadlines at work is a sign that you are setting yourself up to get fired.

ATTENDANCE: Showing up is a job skill. According to *Business Insider*[7], one of the top ten reasons people get fired is because of absenteeism – either not showing up to work, being chronically tardy, or taking too many or too long breaks during working hours. You are paying for this course somehow; get your money's worth by being here. Because the attendance policy marginally rewards good attendance but does not penalize absences, no distinction is made between "excused" or "unexcused absences." Absent is absent – it's your choice whether you use that time for illnesses, emergencies, hangovers, naps, to get work done for other classes, or whatever else (just like in the working world we choose whether to save our sick time for when we're sick or to use it for vacation). When absent, you should check the syllabus & Brightspace/D2L to see what you missed and what's coming up. **For attendance requirements on quiz/exam/presentation days, see the details for the particular assignments.*

Arriving late to class may cause you to fall behind in class work by missing notes or important announcements. Being late may mean that your time in class is less productive or less useful because you may feel less prepared or organized, you may be disoriented or unsure of what is going on in the lecture or conversation because of what you've missed. Arriving late also impacts the larger classroom community. It can disrupt the flow of a lecture or discussion, distract other students, impede learning, and generally erode class morale.
- If you arrive late, be respectful, enter quietly and do not let the door slam, and find a seat quickly and near the door to minimize the distraction you cause to others.
- If you must get up or leave during class, reduce the disruption you cause to the classroom by sitting near the door if possible, leaving only when absolutely necessary, and keeping your time away from the class as brief as possible.

PARTICIPATION: The class will be more enjoyable, more meaningful, more interesting, and more effective if you are an involved learner. Be curious. Ask questions. Look for relevance. Make connections. Don't wait for the information and its usefulness to come to you; go after it. If you want class to be interesting, you need to be interested in the class.

Some people think course participation is the responsibility of the professor. That it must be required through grades and enforced through structured exercises - but that reduces "participation" to an assignment at best, and coercion at worst, by policing classroom behavior. True participation should be voluntary and based on your active, engaged, involvement fueled by your motivation and curiosity. It should be about you having a part, a stake, and a role in the class – and you are the best person to know what that is, to determine what you want to get out of the course and to determine the kind of experience you want to have during the semester.

If you want class to be interactive, you need to be active. Listen mindfully. Ask questions. Express, explain, and support opinions. Do the readings before you come to class so you have things to say and ask – a knowledge base to build on, work with, and explore in the classroom space and community. Seek out additional information during or outside of class. Follow current events to bring up topics for discussion. **Take notes**[8] that will be useful and meaningful to *you*; don't just copy PowerPoints (they are only a guide, not a doctrine); write down the ideas that help you to better understand the material or that matter to you.

CLASSROOM TECHNOLOGY USE: Some people need their phones, tablets and/or laptops to monitor their glucose or other health metrics. Some need them because of family responsibilities. Some need them to improve course accessibility. Etcetera. Therefore, technology use in this classroom is allowed, with the expectation that each individual will be mindful and responsible with their use of it.

Unnecessary use of technology during class is strongly discouraged. Multiple studies done both pre- and post-pandemic find that digital multitasking is correlated to reduced academic performance.[9] The physiological reality of our brains is that we can hold only a little information in the mind at any single moment, and so the more things we do at once, the more likely we are to slow our work down, make mistakes, miss and/or forget information, and limit our creative and problem-solving abilities. You are accountable for yourself and your own decisions. If you allow your devices to distract you from the class and to detract from your learning, that is on you. If your device use is a distraction to others (such as listening to music audible to others, laughing at loud at what you're looking at, sharing entertaining content with others sitting near you, typing when not taking notes, etc.), that is an unacceptable disruption to the class community, and you will be asked to leave and counted as absent.

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[5] https://www.zandax.com/blog/the-importance-of-time-management-to-employers
[6] https://fairygodboss.com/articles/8-sights-that-you-are-setting-yourself-up-to-be-fired
[7] https://www.businessinsider.com/the-13-most-common-reasons-why-employees-get-fired-2011-6
[8] https://learningcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/effective-note-taking-in-class/]
[9] https://www.deledao.com/post/media-multitasking-and-digital-distractions

BRIGHTSPACE/D2L: The entire SUNY system is in the process of adopting Brightspace/D2L as its digital learning management system. SUNY Cortland is currently in the process of transitioning from Blackboard to Brightspace and this class was selected as one of the pilot classes to begin that transition. Class materials are found on Brightspace/D2L and assignments will be submitted through Brightspace/D2L. This syllabus has its own module on Brightspace. Every assignment has its own module on Brightspace with instructions and resources. Other modules are organized chronologically by dates so that you can easily find class materials that correspond with our in-person meetings, which may include copies of textbook-provided notes/slides, copies of PowerPoints used in class, links (if available) to videos or readings engaged in class, and reminders about what is due.

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 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.

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 to learn about all reporting options and resources.

DIVERSITY, INCLUSIVITY, EQUITY, & JUSTICE IN THE COMMUNICATION CLASSROOM: 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[10] or degrades fellow human beings will not welcome, anything that violates ethical responsibilities as speakers by advocating violence or actions that could harm any audience member's pursuit of life and liberty (including such activities as illegal drug use or nonconsensual sexual activity) will not be welcome, and anything that violates the college's commitment to diversity and inclusivity cannot be tolerated. As part of being effective communicators, everyone is encouraged toward ethical use of: trigger warnings when presenting sensitive information (as might be found in speeches dealing with abuse, sexual assault, eating disorders, suicide, etc), inclusive language, and accessible presentations.

Systemic prejudice and oppression, issues of (mis)representation, harm of stereotypes, and necessity of being not just tolerant but also open-minded, are just some of the topics related to concerns of diversity, equity, inclusion, access, and justice that may be discussed in this class. This class acknowledges and respects the validity of each person's standpoint and their lived experiences, and this class expects that every person in it will also acknowledge and respect that diversity. These discussions are

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[10] https://www.un.org/en/hate-speech/understanding-hate-speech/what-is-hate-speech

learning opportunities, not criticisms of individuals or even groups. Learning about racism, sexism, or homophobia is not, for example, an attack on Whiteness, maleness, or straightness.

Communication is a social science; that means it deals with people. Therefore, we will talk about trends common to people as a whole, but there are always exceptions to the trends because people are unpredictable. There are no absolutes; somethings can be real and true for some and not others. In this classroom, you can speak *your* truth but should not assume what the truth of others is. (For example, if you haven't experienced prejudice or oppression, do not assume that means it isn't real.) And no one here is considered a symbol of or spokesperson for their entire social group.

Furthermore, the exploration of these issues is integral to the specific focus of this course. Therefore, in order to learn the course material, be open to trying to understand (not necessarily agreeing with or accepting) new ideas and perspectives. Check your reactions to move beyond denial ("this is not a problem"), disengagement ("this not my problem"), and/or derailment ("there are other, more important, problems"), and try to understand that "privilege" does not mean one's life is free of hardships or obstacles, just that one's gender identity, sexuality, or race does not generally contribute to those challenges via prejudice or discrimination.

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)

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY & AI: ChatGPT and other AI interfaces are proving to be adequate, but bland and generic[11], generators of essays, stories, speeches, blog posts, and cover letters. The study and practice of communication is about participation, art, and ethics. It is about the careful creation of messages that link what is uniquely you to what is uniquely your intended audience. These are things AI cannot accomplish. Therefore, use of AI to create content for assignments in this course (unless specifically assigned to use AI to generate content) is likely to earn a poor grade because it will miss the point of communication and rhetoric; content created by ChatGPT will not have your voice nor speak to the interests of your audience[12], and it will not capture the nuances of class materials and discussion. Content created by ChatGPT also lacks academic and journalistic rigor; it does not provide sources or offer examples. Additionally, the main purpose of class assignments is for you to learn through the process of completing them. Without going through the process, you will decrease the value of the course and will not improve the communication skills, organizational abilities, reliability, or problem-solving seeks that are key to your employability[13].

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.*

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.

COURSEWORK

The main purpose of the assignments and tests in this class is to advance and enhance your learning of relevant content. Readings introduce you to ideas. Tests encourage you to be attentive to those ideas. And projects ask you to explore specific topics in depth.

Readings: You are assigned a textbook in this class for a reason: it is a resource, a reference, a guide. Reading the book and coming to class and making use of optional online resources gives you multiple chances and multiple modes for learning. You will get more out of class if you make an effort to do the readings when assigned. We will also do additional readings as a class to go more in-depth or up-to-date with certain topics. You are encouraged to take notes on these class readings.

Quizzes & Exams: Quizzes and 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

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[11] https://www.postcontrolmarketing.com/top-10-tips-for-successful-social-media-marketing-chatgpt-wrote-that-article-in-less-than-a-minute-then-i-spent-four-hours-writing-the-rest/

[12] https://www.businessinsider.com/chatgpt-job-applications-hiring-managers-job-interview-candidate-2022-12

[13] https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/finding-a-job/employability-skills

way to help you keep up with classwork – they encourage attendance, preparation and review in ways that less traditional or structured means don't. ==Test questions will be taken from both class discussion and from the textbook, so attention to both lecture and reading is vital.==

==Short quizzes are scheduled regularly throughout the semester to encourage you to keep up with the readings and to be attentive in class. They will be multiple choice. Each will cover content (especially chapters due) since the previous quiz.==

There will also be a midterm and final exam. They will be multiple-choice will be based on questions taken directly from the quizzes. The midterm will cover content up to the midterm exam and will be 30 questions. The final will cover content from the midterm up to the final exam; it will be 30 questions, plus bonus/extra credit questions.

==Both the quizzes and the exams will be administered through Brightspace/D2L for accessibility but will be taken *in class*. Please bring a device to the classroom that will allow you to take the test; if you cannot bring a functioning device, bring a pen or pencil to take it on paper.== ==If you have an access plan that provides you with extra time on exams and the regular class start time does not provide you with the additional time, you must request a different time that works for you in advance.==

- If health problems prevent you from attending class on a quiz day, the quiz will still be available to take in Brightspace at the start of class, but time to complete the quiz is limited and you will still be considered absent.
- If health problems prevent you from attending class on an exam day, the test will still be available to take in Brightspace at the designated time, but you must log into WebEx, on camera, to take it.

Group Projects: Some of the learning in this course will happen through "hands-on" engagement with ideas and information. In each half of the semester, you will take part in a large project – the workload for which will be made more manageable by working with a group. Each project is designed to explore the GE12 outcomes of this course.

Groups will be assigned by the instructor, with input from you so that no one has to work with anyone that makes them uncomfortable and no one is in the position of being the odd-person out in a group of friends. Groups will also be empowered to "fire" members who don't fulfill their obligations to the group. Members will also be empowered to quit groups that aren't treating them well, according to the guidelines below.

Member Obligations to Group	Group Obligations to Members
- Attend class and group meetings - if unable to attend, ensure that any materials or information needed by the group is provided to them - Complete work allotted on time	- Work collaboratively, ensuring that each person has a voice that is heard - Be respectful to each member - Be inclusive in both group task & social communication

To fire a group member, groups must first issue a warning and set a condition and timeline by which the member can redeem themselves. If that is not met, and the majority of the group is in agreement, the member can then be fired.

To quit your group, first contact the instructor about your concerns.

If you are fired from or quit your group, you should find another group willing to "hire" you. Groups must be in majority agreement to hire new members.

Groups will be given regular class time to meet and work on the projects every Friday but may also need to meet and/or work outside of class. Everyone is expected to attend class on Fridays to meet with their groups. Groups may choose to let some members attend virtually if illness prevents them from being in class, but the larger group should still be in class; this provides structure and encourages accountability, while also giving you access to live assistance from the professor.

==Group projects will be presented to the class. If cannot attend class for the presentation, you and your group are responsible for ensuring the presentation can continue without you.==

Project 1 – A/V Storymap

Conspiracy theories are ancient, but in recent years they have taken on a new urgency and influence through the speed, malleability, and microtargeting enabled by digital media. Major historic events, such as the Holocaust, the moon landing, and 9/11 – as well as the Sandy Hook school shooting, COVID-19, and even the war on Ukraine - are questioned as to their authenticity.

The deepfake art installation, In Event of Moon Disaster,[14] presents a compelling, yet ultimately false account of the "failed" Apollo 11 mission and its aftermath. The Apollo 11 spacecraft did, in fact, safely land on the moon on July 20, 1969. But how might one draw on primary resources to create a credible narrative of the mission, one that might convince a skeptic or a nonbeliever? … We are going to better understand how conspiracy theories develop, and how they can be countered, by developing our own narratives, based on credible evidence and materials, of recent major news events. The purpose of this assignment is to demonstrate an understanding of how interpretation of technical information can lead to different conclusions.

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[14] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LWLadJFI8Pk

Video footage, news reports, articles, photographs, maps, and eyewitness accounts will provide valuable evidence. The goal is not to construct The Truth about the event, as if there was only one singular truth, nor is it to develop a conspiracy theory or alternative truth or explanation about the event. Instead, the goal is to create a chronological and *compelling* account of the event through the information you present, and the careful selection and arrangement of materials. Below, please find some basic parameters of the assignment.

To develop your narrative, include a blend of media; for example, original text (written by you), diagrams, and still and moving images. These items will help you to design an informative overview of the event. Use Prezi, the ArcGIS StoryMaps platform, or another interactive format (such as creating a vidcast) to format your narrative. Details and instructions are below.

Minimum amount of media necessary
- 500+ words of original text.
- 4+ primary news articles from major outlets
- 3+ photographs (do not alter)
- 2+ other images, such as maps or diagrams
- 2+ video clips

1. *Research the event online*
   When searching for articles, keep in mind a "check list" that will help you to assess the credibility of the source: Does the article have a clearly stated author? Have you heard of the newspaper or media outlet? Is the article in some way connected to an established institution (university, foundation, government organization)? Is the institution operating under a code/practice that dictates professional guidelines? Stay away from sources that appear on their own or hosted in a seemingly neutral way (i.e. appearing in isolation on a social media platform).

2. *Locate still/moving image materials*
   In addition to reading text-based sources, still and moving images will also provide crucial evidence for your account and help you to craft your narrative. These visuals will not simply make the narrative more dynamic, but ground your account in a material historical world and help you to illustrate your claims. When incorporating these items, some of the same "best practices" of research will apply or visuals as for written text. It is not enough to scrutinize the photograph or video clip, you must consider the source's origin as well as the context in which it appears. Thus, a short clip with no attribution that you see on YouTube as part of a sequence of other media might not be the best source for this kind of assignment. There are too many unknowns about the artifact. When unsure or in doubt, ask!

3. *Write your text and constructing your narrative*
   Don't try to give a play-by-play of the event in its entirety, but you want to include key moments that help the audience understand the significance of what happened. Rather than have a huge block of text and then a long sequence of photos, consider more of a flow where you weave together text and image so that each is reinforcing the other and helping to advance your narrative. Be sure to cite all your sources; if using Prezi, create embedded hyperlinks (if you need help with this, ask!); if doing video, provide **oral citations**[15].

★Based on the work you do, your group will also decide one factor or criteria not already addressed in the grading rubric (below) that you would like your work to be assessed on.

Event options
- Damar Hamlin cardiac arrest on the field
- Jeremy Renner snowplowing accident
- Elon Musk takeover of Twitter
- Idaho University murders
- The Will Smith Slap
- Britney Griner exchange
- more possibly tba

Grading Criteria
›	Did your group meet regularly and show progress and focus during class meetings?	(1pt)
›	Were the sources used appropriate and credible/reliable?	(5 pts)
›	Was the narrative compelling and clear?	(5 pts)
›	Did the final product include all the required types of material?	(2 pts)
›	_____ [criteria established by group]	(2 pts)

Project 2 - Synthetic Media for the Public Good

Synthetic media (also known as AI-generated media, generative media, and personalized media) refers to any media created or modified by algorithmic means, especially through the use of artificial intelligence algorithms. Synthetic media is an applied form of artificial imagination. Branches of synthetic media include: image synthesis, audio synthesis, music generation, speech synthesis, natural language generation, and interactive media synthesis. Applications of synthetic media include: education, journalism, entertainment and the arts.

In Fall 2020, the Ford Foundation launched the "CREATIVE FUTURES" initiative:

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[15] https://www.bucks.edu/academics/department/lang-lit/conference/citing/

We stand at a historic crossroads: a social, racial, and economic reckoning laid bare by COVID-19 and a movement for Black lives. It is a moment that demands interpretation and action. Cultural narratives are central to shaping our realities, including how best to ensure justice and equity for all. So how do we grow and change our systems of arts and media—systems, like our larger society, that have never been equitable or sustainable? CREATIVE FUTURES is a reimagining of the fields of arts and culture, documentary film, and journalism, a set of concrete action plans to fuel and shape the transformative possibilities to come.

Inspired by this idea, this assignment asks you to advance innovative thinking surrounding the civic possibilities of synthetic media[16]. Working in your group, craft a "design pitch" consisting of at least 12 slides. The pitch should speak to an original, pro-social work of synthetic media geared towards a civic purpose. Each group will then present their project -their "pitch" - to the class. The purpose of this assignment is to demonstrate an understanding of the issues at the interface of science, technology and society.

To start, each group should explore the options and existing uses of synthetic media in society. Deepfakes. AI art. ChatGPT essays. Chat-bots. And more. What's being done? What's possible? What are the possibilities? The dangers?

Then, to begin your project, start from the perspective of problems, challenges, and shared concerns you see around you, locally – even on campus, nationally, or globally. Reflect on how a work of synthetic media might address a pressing issue that exists at the heart of public life. And create the message that you would want the synthetic media to convey.

From there, consider the sphere of influence:
- How might synthetic media serve as a form of satire, critique, political protest, or savvy deconstruction of the deepfake threat[17]?
- How might synthetic media interpretively recreate or reimagine historical phenomena for an educational purpose?
- How might synthetic media explore identity transformation as an empowering, liberatory, or strategic act?
- How might synthetic media make public and private utilities more safe, equitable, and accessible?

Next, consider the need and purpose
- Why create this work of synthetic media at this time?
- Is the project benefiting a particular individual, community, neighborhood, or region?
- Will your project contribute to a larger movement in civic media or will it chart a new path for AI-enabled technology?

Then, create your conceptual sketch
- Describe the project and summarize its core aims and intentions.
- What are its phases of construction
- Why create this work of synthetic media at this time?
- Use still and moving images, sound clips, and written text to elaborate.

Select your venue
- Where will your project live and how might people encounter it?
- Would it be installed in a museum, displayed in an official government institution (city hall, post office, etc.), curated as part of an online exhibition, or available as part of standalone website? Consider the viewer's experience.

Identify the appropriate technology
- What tool/s might be most useful? For example, RunwayML, ChatGPT…
- Demonstrate their relevance or special value to this project.

Lastly, finalize and deliver your presentation. Don't simply describe your design, craft a narrative about its origin, the context of its uptake, and how you envision its social resonance. In other words, share your vision and the reasons for the decisions you made.

★Based on the work you do, your group will also decide one factor or criteria not already addressed in the grading rubric (below) that you would like your work to be assessed on.

Examples of Synthetic Media Projects in the Real World:
Civic Art and Outreach: In Event of Moon Disaster[18] (MIT/Center for Advanced Virtuality). Malaria Must Die[19] (Malaria No More UK/Gates Foundation 2019).
Entertainment: Deepfake Roundtable: Streaming Wars[20] (Collider 2019); Bill Hader Channels Tom Cruise[21] (Crtl Shift Face 2019)
Political Satire: Better Call Trump[22] (Crtl Shift Face/Stable Voices 2019); Obama PSA[23] (Buzzfeed/Jordan Peele

[16] https://www.synthesia.io/post/the-future-of-synthetic-media
[17] https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2020/jan/13/what-are-deepfakes-and-how-can-you-spot-them
[18] https://moondisaster.org/
[19] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NgWBTC4O9Ew
[20] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l_6Tumd8EQI
[21] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VWrhRBb-1Ig
[22] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ho9h0ouemWQ
[23] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cQ54GDm1eL0

2018); [MIT Deepfake Vladimir Putin](#) (EmTech/Gideon Lichfield 2019); [Imagine by World Leaders](#)[24] (Canny AI, 2019). Public History: [Dimensions in Testimony](#)[25] (USC Shoah Foundation 2016); [Dalí Lives](#)[26] (Salvador Dali Museum). Advertising: [Lil Miquela](#)[27] (virtual Influencer).

Grading Criteria
› Did your group meet regularly and show progress and focus during class meetings? (1pt)
› Did the presentation "pitch" adequately address all the relevant concerns? (issue, message, audience, concept, venue, technology) (5 pts)
› Did the presentation demonstrate the group explored and worked to understand the nature of synthetic media? (5 pts)
› Was the final presentation clear, creative, and well prepared? (2 pts)
› _____ [criteria established by group] (2 pts)

Semiotics Observation: Media messages depend on signs and symbols – images, words, and colors that are easily recognized and quickly interpreted by large audiences. (This is, for example, how memes work.) The sign systems are understood as semiotics and they are **[influential in our mediascape](#)**.[28]

Throughout our day, we notice systems and signs in place. Strolling along the sidewalk, driving down the road, or walking through a building we encounter patterns, colors, shapes, and symbols that have meaning. We recognize and understand them even if we don't actively attend to them. Your first assignment is to mindfully observe and document through photography or video these encounters. You should capture at minimum 10 images or symbols that are part of a meaning system, noting where you saw it and what it means and how you know. You will submit these through Brightspace/D2L and will also choose 2 to share and discuss in class.

Grading Criteria
› Was the assignment complete with at least 10 images? (5pts)
› Did the assignment show evidence of time, effort and thought (ex., images taken from different locations, a mix of types of symbols/signs, thoughtful attention to what it means/how you know (5 pts)
› Did you present and discuss two of your images with the class? (5 pts)

NIFI Class Discussion: For over 20 years, thousands of Americans have met annually through the National Issues Forums to discuss important public issues. They have encouraged Americans to think about the hard choices we face on major questions like AIDS, racial inequality, and health care. In this class, we will use NIFI publications and discussion questions to consider and reconsider the socio-political system. More and more people feel our system doesn't work. "They feel no one cares what they think. Many Americans feel that our system needs to be changed, But they do not know how to fix it" (Scully). We will talk about different actions we can take. "These are called 'choices.' Some of these choices have been suggested before. More than once choice could be right" (Scully). You will think through the choices presented and to consider and develop alternatives.

This assignment supports the Communication and Media Studies department's student learning goal of demonstrating professionalism in communication by generating information and ideas appropriate for public consumption, behaving ethically as communicators, and analyzing information and appeals.

We will use the National Issues Forum's guidebook *News Media and Society: How to Restore the Public's Trust* (available to you as a PDF in Brightspace/D2L) as a starting point for considering different views of and approaches to the confidence crisis of media. The guide is dated, so we have many opportunities to consider ideas beyond it – but it is useful framework and guide for our discussion.

To prepare for the discussion…
▪ you will read the associated NIFI issue guide provided in Brightspace/D2L, *and* find, read, and bring to class two related mainstream, corporate news articles from different sources, noting relevant information and ideas. Consider the approaches presented. What do you like/dislike, agree/disagree with? Can you think of alternatives that are not presented here? What solution(s) would you propose or support? Be prepared to state a position or pose a question during the "Town Hall" discussion in class. Be familiar enough with the information that you can even question, challenge, or defend the comments other people might make.
▪ Outline, in writing, 3 key points/ideas/arguments you think are important for consideration, and bring these materials with you in paper or digital form (you will also submit copies online).
During discussion, you will practice good communication by…
▪ Listening to others and being open to the possibility of having your mind changed
▪ Being respectful to be all participants and all ideas

[24] https://www.fxguide.com/fxfeatured/canny-ai-imagine-world-leaders-singing/
[25] https://sfi.usc.edu/dit
[26] https://thedali.org/exhibit/dali-lives/
[27] https://www.tiktok.com/@lilmiquela?lang=en
[28] https://youtu.be/FeF6O6E9RQ8

- Being efficient in your communication so that you express your thoughts while giving others a chance to express theirs.

Grading Criteria
- › Be fully prepared to participate (3 pts)
- › Remain attentive & focused during the discussion: engage mindful listening & ethical speaking (2 pts)
- › Make at least 1 contribution to the discussion, *demonstrating familiarity w/ the readings* (5 pts)
- › Make at least 2 contributions to the discussion total (2 pts)
- › Show courtesy; pay attention to & try to understand what others have to say (2 pts)
- › Thoughtfully complete the NIFI questionnaire administered after discussion (1 pts)

If cannot attend class for the discussion, you are asked to join virtually (email the instructor prior to class to set it up); you will need to be on camera to do this. If a virtual participation is not possible, an alternative can be arranged IF you notify the instructor prior to the class.

SEMESTER CALENDAR AND DEADLINES ON THE NEXT PAGE!

Spring 2023 Calendar

	Mondays	Wednesdays	Fridays
Jan *Wk1*	23: Introductions & Overview	25: Syllabus Review & Discussion	27: Orientation to first group project
Feb *Wk2*	30: What is Media Literacy-Chap. 1 due	1: Why Media Matter – Chap. 2 due	3: groupwork
Feb *Wk3*	6: Digital Communication- Chap. 3 due Quiz: bring device to take quiz in D2L or pen to take on paper. If sick, you've until 9:25 to complete quiz online.	8: reading & discussing: Social Media Can be Polarizing	10: groupwork
Feb *Wk4*	13: The News-Chap. 4 due	15: reading & discussing Distinguishing Between Factual and Opinion Statements in the News	17: groupwork
Feb *Wk5*	20: Influence Industries- Chap. 5 due watching-*The Persuaders*	22: watching-*The Persuaders*	24: CLASS IS VIRTUAL TODAY! (PROF. @ NCA) do groupwork as usual
Mar *Wk6*	27: Fiction & Narrative Media-Chap. 6 due Quiz: bring device to take quiz in D2L or pen to take on paper. If sick, you've until 9:25 to complete quiz online.	1: Semiotics Observation class share & discussion Semiotics Observation due in D2L	3: groupwork
Mar *Wk7*	6: Midterm exam: bring device to take exam in D2L or pen to take on paper. If sick, log into both Brightspace AND WebEx (on camera) to complete exam	8: Groups present their storymap narrative	10: group presentations cont., if needed Orientation to second group project
Mar *Wk8*	13: Spring Break	15: Spring Break	17: Spring Break
Mar *Wk9*	20: Media Bubbles-Chap. 7 due	22: Media Values-Chap. 8 due	24: groupwork
Mar *Wk10*	27: Media & Trust- Chap. 9 due Quiz: bring device to take quiz in D2L or pen to take on paper. If sick, you've until 9:25 to complete quiz online.	29: CLASS IS VIRTUAL TODAY! (PROF. @ ECA) Read & comment on Fake News: It's Complicated (see this week's submodule in D2L – completion counts as attendance)	31: CLASS IS VIRTUAL TODAY! (PROF. @ ECA) do groupwork as usual
Apr *Wk11*	3: Media Business-Chap. 10 due	5: watching and responding to *Why Big Media Shouldn't Get Bigger*	7: groupwork
Apr *Wk12*	10:Social Media- Chap. 11 due Quiz: bring device to take quiz in D2L or pen to take on paper. If sick, you've until 9:25 to complete quiz online.	12: reading & discussing Gen Z Shocked to Learn Their Digital Footprint Could Ruin Job Prospects	14: groupwork
Apr *Wk13*	17: Stereotypes-Chap 12 due	19:reading and discussing The Importance of Representation in Media	21: groupwork
Apr *Wk14*	24: Media Dependence-Chap. 13 due watching *Digital Nation* Quiz: bring device to take quiz in D2L or pen to take on paper. If sick, you've until 9:25 to complete quiz online.	26: watching *Digital Nation*	28: groupwork
May *Wk15*	1: Becoming Media Literate-Chap. 14 due	3: NIFI class discussion	5: Groups present synthetic media project
May *Wk16*		10: 8:30-10:30, Final exam: bring device to take exam in D2L or pen to take on paper. If sick, log into both D2L AND WebEx (on camera) to complete exam	

IMPORTANT! The number of credits earned for a class is based on the number of contact/meeting hours for the class, which includes all class meetings immediately before and during breaks and the two-hour assigned time during final exam week. Please ensure you make your travel arrangements accordingly; early departures or late returns to campus around these times are not acceptable reasons for missing class, rescheduling exams, or submitting work late.