

THE COLLEGE OF SAINT ROSE
SOCIOLOGY DEPARTMENT

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SOC243/COM243

Mass Media as a Social Force

Spring 2003

Tuesday, Thursday 9:30-10:45 a.m. Albertus Hall 311

Required Reading Material:

Ewen, S. & Ewen, E. (2000). Channels of desire: Mass images and the shaping of American consciousness. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Bagdikian, B.H. (2000). The media monopoly, 6th ed. Boston: Beacon Press.

Jamieson, K.H. (1988). Eloquence in an electronic age: The transformation of political speechmaking. New York: Oxford University Press.

Wasko, J. (2001). Understanding Disney: The manufacture of fantasy. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Purpose:

To examine both the mass media as a social force as well as the social forces that act on the mass media. We will begin with a discussion of the interaction of consumerism and capitalism with social life and the media using the volume by Ewen & Ewen. The Bagdikian book will examine the informational media and its structure. Jamieson's volume will focus on the nature of television. Finally, Wasko's book will turn your attention to the Walt Disney Corporation as an exemplar and summary of material discussed throughout the course. In addition to these books, various videos will be shown to illustrate and elaborate class topics, in conjunction with the use of "real life" media events as they happen throughout the duration of this class.

Objectives:

1. To provide a basic understanding of the nature of mass media in today's society
2. To recognize the various social, economic, and political influences which interact with mass media systems;
3. To learn how to distance oneself from and critically analyze the products of media systems;
4. To reinforce the ability to identify in writing the main points of written and video material.

Structure:

This course will use the assigned primarily as points of departure for class discussion. Class time will be treated more as a seminar or discussion section than as lecture, though some lecture time will be used to cover and clarify main points. In class and homework activities will be provided to help facilitate discussion and to engage you in the media you use everyday in new ways. Additionally, you should actively write down points of interest or questions from your reading assignments, video viewing, and daily use of the media as they arise.

Grading and Assignments:

The final grade will be based on a midterm (25%) and final exam (25%), in-class and homework activities (15%) and a final term paper (35%).

Activities will be graded as $\sqrt{-}$, $\sqrt{}$, and $\sqrt{+}$ basis. They will be short, designed to be fun and interactive, and assigned as the semester progresses. For each class period activities are turned in late, the highest grade possible goes down by one level. For this reason, no activities will be accepted if they are one week late.

Exams will be a combination of multiple choice and short answer. It is mandatory that you are present on exam days. If you are not, you must show reason for your absence through documentation from a doctor, clergy, or other authority to take the exam at a different time.

You may take one of two approaches for your term paper: (1) It may be a study and analysis of some particular topic concerning mass media (e.g., representation of particular minorities in TV or film, violence in TV or film or video games, the possible implications of the Internet, the nature and social functions of talk shows or reality shows, etc.); or (2) it may be a study of some event and how it is interpreted locally and in the U.S. versus how it is interpreted by the media in other countries (the Library should have all the resources needed for examining major newspapers and magazines as well as summary sources of foreign material). Depending on the topic, the views and perspectives coming from other nations can be quite different – and may not get any airing at all by U.S. media. ** Please note: These papers should not simply be a summary of what other people have said about your topic. The papers must include some analysis of your own, which you should be equipped to do from class readings and discussions. In other words, you should not simply summarize the various points of view, but make an argument for the point of view you support. For example, if you choose option #1 and believe that violence in the media is not harmful to society and even has benefits, you should be including examples *as you observe them* in the media as well as information from existing literature to illustrate and support the arguments you are presenting.

The term paper is to be about 8-10 pages in length with a bibliography added, conforming to MLA, APA, or another standardized format. (I will provide guidelines for these formats as the semester progresses.) Spelling, grammar, and format do matter and will effect your grade; as a rule of thumb, an average of 2 errors per page will result in the loss of 8 points, with a higher number of errors resulting in a higher loss of points – BE ATTENTIVE. There is no required number of sources for this paper, but typically parts of 2 –3 books would be expected to help provide background and possible theoretical explanations, and, perhaps, 10-15 other references from professional journals in communication and/or sociology, and mass media sources (newspapers, magazines, TV shows, Internet sites, etc.)

You must have the topic for your paper approved by me before you begin work. You should submit your proposal to me in writing no later than 2/27. The paper is due by 5/1.

The numeric system I am guided by for grading on individual assignments and final grades is:

A = 100-93	A- = 92-90	B+ = 89-87	B = 86-84	B- = 83-81
C+ = 80-78	C = 77-70	D = 69-60	F = 50-0	

January

- 14 *Course Introduction*
- 16 *Critical thinking activities.*
- 21 *Ewen ch. 1 (pp. ix-xi; xv-xxii; 1-20).*
- 23 *Ewen ch. 2 (pp. 23-51).*
- 28 *Ewen ch. 3 (pp. 53-73).*
- 30 *Ewen ch. 4 (pp. 75-149). Video: "Pack of Lies."*

February

- 4 *Ewen ch. 4 (pp. 75-149).*
- 6 *Ewen ch. 4 (pp. 149-187). Video: "Killing Us Softly 3."*
- 12 *Ewen ch. 4-5 (pp. 189-220).*
- 13 *Bagdikian Prefaces-ch.2 (pp. viii-45).*
- 18 *Bagdikian ch. 3-4 (pp. 46-89).*
- 20 *Bagdikian ch. 5-6 (pp. 90-117)Video: "Fear and Favor in the Newsroom."*
- 25 *Bagdikian ch. 7-8 (pp. 118-151).*
- 27 *Bagdikian ch. 9-10 (pp. 152-194). Paper proposals due.*

March

- 4 *Bagdikian ch. 11-13 (pp. 195-237).*
- 6 *Bagdikian Afterword (pp. 239-252).*
- 11 *Mid-Winter Break, no class*
- 13 *Mid-Winter Break, no class*
- 18 *Review Day*
- 20 *Mid-Term Exam.*
- 25 *Advisement Day, no class*
- 27 *Jamieson TBA*

April

- 1 *Jamieson TBA*
- 3 *Jamieson TBA*
- 8 *Jamieson TBA*
- 10 *Jamieson TBA*
- 15 *Wasko ch1-3 (pp. 1-55).*
- 17 *Wasko ch. 3-4 (pp. 55-107).*
- 22 *Class cancelled – ECA. Work on Term Paper!*
- 24 *Class cancelled – ECA. Work on Term Paper!*
- 29 *Wasko ch. 5-6 (pp. 108-182).*

May

- 1 *Wasko ch. 7-8 (pp. 183-225). Paper Due.*
- 5 *Final exam, 8:00am – 10:30am.*