

COM235 Introduction to Media Literacy, Spring 2021

Instructor Contact: Name: Dr. Knopf ["nope"] (she/her/hers) --you can also call me C.K.

Drop-in office hours: M/F 11:30-1:30, W 12:30-1:30

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Class Meetings: MWF 10:20-11:10am Meets in WebEx, link available on Blackboard

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:

GE 12: Science, Technology, Values and Society

This course fulfills the GE 12. 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 and understanding of the manner in which value judgments are justified and how interpretation of technical information can lead to different conclusions.
- demonstrate and 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.

SLO 2: Communication & Media Studies

This course fulfills the CMS SLO 2, the goal of which is to demonstrate professionalism in communication. Students will identify and conduct themselves as members of the profession, knowing and using ethical guidelines and other professional standards related to the practice of communication. Through this course, students will

- analyze ethical issues relating to communication and the media.
- use and analyze information sources and evidence.

Course outcomes: Media Literacy

Through this course, students will be able to demonstrate an understand of

- the message – literacy.
- semiotics – the meaning behind media messages.
- ideology in the context of our media system
- the media in terms of its representation.
- the commercial nature of our media systems.

Online Course Structure/Overview:

Because of widespread discontent with online learning, this course has been designed to recreate the classroom experience as much as possible.

- Class meets at its scheduled time through WebEx (link on Blackboard): Class meetings will be a combination of lecture/discussion and activities.
- Work will be due at regular class times (no midnight/end of day submissions), though submitted through Blackboard rather than “handed in” as physical copies
- Asynchronous online materials, such as readings and videos, will be available as additional support to students who may need extra help or who experience learning interruptions due to the pandemic obstacles

Required Materials:

- *The Influencing Machine*, by Brooke Gladstone & Josh Neufeld -any format
- Web access to Blackboard, the WWW, and WebEx (app recommended)
- Access to a web-ready camera & microphone

Assignments & Grade Distribution:

Four tests (12% each)	45%	Project Censored VIN	20%
Food photography	15%	Media Logs – 2 (5% each)	10%
		Conspiracy Theory or Culture Jam	10%

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>)

Grade Policies: If you *find an error* in grading, bring it to the instructor's attention immediately so it can be corrected. If you have a question about assignment feedback, exam answers, etcetera - ask. It will help you learn. If you *disagree* with a grade earned on written work, you can file a request for reconsideration no sooner than 24 hours after receiving the grade and no later than 1 week after receiving the grade. The original work with all evaluation forms should be re-submitted to the instructor 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 built into the course through the four tests, giving you a chance to earn more than 100% in the class. Extra credit work/assignments are **not** available to serve as replacements for missed course 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 7. Late work is not accepted.

Attendance: As a synchronous online course, active attendance is vital to your success. Attendance is recorded but attendance itself is not graded. 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 and the Blackboard folder to see what you missed. You can watch any provided videos to keep up on instruction - and make sure you keep up with the readings.

If you're absent on a test day you need to contact CK as soon as you know you will not be in class. If you are having technical problems connecting to class, call in or email. Alternative accommodations will be made with reasonable notice of illness or other emergency. *-If you don't notice you've missed test until after grades are recorded, it is much too late to make up that work.-* 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)

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.

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)

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)

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.

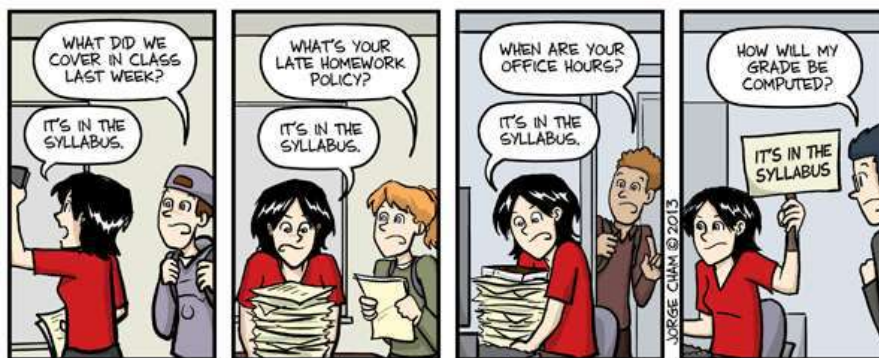
Mental, Emotional, & Physical Wellbeing: Diminished mental health, including significant stress, mood changes, excessive worry, alcohol and/or substance abuse, or problems with eating and/or sleeping can interfere with optimal academic performance.

If symptoms are related to your course work, please speak with the instructor. If you have communication apprehension (also known as "stage fright") to a degree that can interfere with your success in a communication course that depends on public speaking, speak to the instructor *immediately* to learn management techniques and to discuss possible options to ensure you can complete the course.

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: Van Hoesen Hall, Room B-44 * 607-753-4728
- Substance Abuse & Prevention Education Van Hoesen Hall, Room B-1 * 607-753-2066
- Active Minds student club

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).



IT'S IN THE SYLLABUS

This message brought to you by every instructor that ever lived.

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Coursework

Readings

Throughout the semester you will be assigned online articles (found through Blackboard) and chapters in the required course text. You are expected to have completed these readings prior to the class in which they are due. This will allow for more interactive class sessions – which makes any class better, and online classes even more so. If you don't do the readings and don't have anything to say in class, you are *partly* responsible if you find classes dull, lacking in interaction, or confusing.

Tests

There will be four tests in this class, each administered through Blackboard (at class time, unless other accommodations are made in advance accompanying an Access Plan).

Each test will ask you to demonstrate media literacy comprehension and skills by applying course concepts to real media texts. They will be open book, open note, and open Web. The goal is not to prove you can memorize terminology and dates, but rather to show that you can be a critical media user. Each test will focus on a different skillset, learning outcome, and contemporary topic. Questions will be primarily short answer, perhaps with some multiple choice or matching questions. Tests will be about 10-15 questions long.

Test 1: You will be provided with real media examples to analyze for their veracity and type (news, opinion, sponsored content, and fact or opinion) using the tools of verification provided in class (such as doing reverse image searches, analyzing photos or videos for inconsistencies, and doing background research on sources). This assessment aligns with the GE12 SLO of demonstrating an understanding of the manner in which value judgments are justified and how interpretation of technical information can lead to different conclusions because students will need to be able to explain why something is or is not trustworthy, is or is not fact, is or is not opinion. Additionally, it addresses the course SLO of demonstrating an understanding of the message (literacy).

Test 2: You will be given real media examples drawn from the misinformation circulated during the COVID-19 pandemic and will be asked to spot the misinformation and explain how such information spreads. Questions will align with the GE12 SLO of demonstrating 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. It also addresses CMS SLO 2 analyzing ethical issues relating to communication and the media.

Test 3: Looking at coverage of race-related news from 2020-2021, you will be asked to discuss and address issues of representation, bias, and hegemony in the news, explaining how photos and headlines may reflect and reinforce dominant narratives and shape public perception. This assessment addresses course SLOs of demonstrating an understanding of the meaning behind media messages, of ideology in the context of our media system, and of the media in terms of its representation. It also addresses CMS SLO 2 analyzing ethical issues relating to communication and the media.

Test 4: You will be given a real news item about which to create new media content. You will be asked to create a Tweet, snap, post, or other social media content about the news item for different purposes or media goals (and to explain the decisions you make). This assessment will place in the role of media creator rather than consumer and reflects the GE12, CMS SLO 2, and course outcomes about how information can lead to different conclusions, ethical considerations, message literacy, representation, and commercial interests.

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 has demonstrated that the act of preparing for a test and actually taking the test and retrieving information is a great boost to memory. Exams are not just a measurement instrument, they are also an important learning instrument. Exams are a clinically 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.

Media Logs

Twice during the semester you will record your media engagement over a 24-hour period. The first media log will focus on your media consumption – what do you read, watch, listen to. The second media log will focus on your media creation – what texts, images, or sounds do you create for others to consume. Accompanying each log you will provide a short 2-4 paragraph reflection in which you consider how your interests, background, worldview, identity, and social networks shape your media use. (For example, if you read news from sites with political leanings like yours, or if you spend a lot of time on ESPN and are an athlete yourself, etc.) This relates to the goals of GE12 by asking you to make connections among technology, values, and social contexts. Grading based on complete/incomplete/missing.

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 made available through Blackboard you 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. This activity assesses CMS SLO2 with students using and analyzing information sources and evidence.

VIN Grading Rubric

1) Story Selection (8 points possible, 2 each)

- Reports ignored or under-reported news story from independent (not corporate) news source.
- Reports timely news story, published since March 2020
- 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. It has not been conclusively or near-conclusively debunked by credible sources.

2) VIN Summary: (10 points possible, 2 each)

- Gives clear, brief, and compelling title
- Uses Summary-Lead to tell story's most important point (i.e., what, where & when)
- Provides supporting detail
- Identifies any corporate news coverage and, if so, what VIN adds to our understanding
- Employs clear writing, including correct grammar, spelling and punctuation

3) Format (2 points possible)

- Gives complete story reference (for all sources, if more than one) in correct format
- Identifies student researchers and faculty evaluator by name and academic affiliation

Total = ___ / 20

Food Photography

Every image in every magazine is tweaked and edited. Influencer photos on Instagram and Snapchat are carefully staged. This activity asks you to create photographic magic. Cooking shows and food blogs have long been popular, and are even more so since the pandemic quarantines – and these also include a lot of carefully manipulated imagery. Your task is to create your own tantalizing food photo – along with a photographic or videographic essay of your process. Readings and links are on Blackboard to help guide you. You can use any manipulative tricks available, including photo editing software, staging, lighting, etc. Images will be shared in class on the due date (see calendar) and we will have a discussion about the ethical questions surrounding photo manipulation across media and genres, in accordance with CMS SLO 2.

Photo Grading (3 points each: 3 = well done, 2 = satisfactorily done, 1 = needs improvement, 0 = missing)

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Creativity in approach | <input type="checkbox"/> Clear & complete record of manipulation process |
| <input type="checkbox"/> "Professional" looking final photo | <input type="checkbox"/> Present to share with class |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Participated in class discussion | Total = ___/15 |

Conspiracy Theory (option) / Culture Jam (option)

The current socio-political media landscape in the United States is complicated by increasingly visible, increasingly mainstream, conspiracy theories. To better understand how these theories work and spread, you will develop your own SUNY Cortland conspiracy narrative or concept. Through required readings available on Blackboard and recommended media viewing, create a feasible conspiracy connected to the college. A place to start would be with shared experiences, myths, legends, rituals, or inside jokes.

OR: Practitioners of culture jamming argue that culture, politics, & social values are shaped by saturated commercial environments. Many issues & voices are pushed to the margins by market values & commercial communication. Culture jams use creative communication strategies to play with branded images & icons of consumer culture to make consumers aware of surrounding problems & diverse cultural experiences. Design your own culture jam for dissemination over social media – just be careful to not violate any community standards that could get you banned from a platform, or in trouble with the law or college. *See examples of both on Blackboard.*

Grading: Develop your own rubric totaling to 15 points, establishing the criteria by which you believe your work should be evaluated.

This calendar presents an overview of due dates, readings, and tentative topics (underlined)

Wk	Monday	Wednesday	Friday
1 Introductions	2/1 Course overview, meet & greet	2/3 Online class set-up, OL learning, tech tutorials	2/5 Syllabus discussion + What is media literacy?
2 Project Censored	2/8 24-hr Media Log I due <u>VIN assignment introduction</u>	2/10 <u>How to do a VIN</u>	2/12 <u>Guided group exploration for VINs</u>
3 Critical Thinking	2/15 <u>Facts vs. opinion</u> <i>Article: Distinguishing Between Fact & Opinion</i>	2/17 <u>News vs. opinion</u> SIFT	2/19 The 2-sides fallacy
4 Fake News	2/22 <u>Satire</u> <i>Article: Fake News, It's Complicated</i>	2/24 <u>Disinformation</u>	2/26 <u>Fauxtography & deep fakes</u> <i>Article: What Do We Know about Deepfake Videos?</i>
5 COVID & Misinformation	3/1 Test 1	3/3 <i>Article: Can You Spot COVID19 Misinformation?</i>	3/5 <i>Article: The Epic Battle Against Coronavirus Misinfo.</i>
6 COVID & Conspiracies	3/8 <i>Article: A Game Designer's Analysis of QAnon</i>	3/10 <i>Article: Belief in Conspiracy Theories</i>	3/12
7 Media History	3/15 <u>"In the Beginning"</u> <i>Influencing Machine: pp 3-8</i>	3/17 VIN due <u>VIN discussion/share</u>	3/19 <u>"American Exception"</u> <i>Influencing Machine: pp 9-21</i>
8 Journalism & Duty/Civics	3/22 <u>"Canis Journalisticus" watchdog</u> <i>Influencing Machine: pp35-42</i>	3/24 <u>"Birds on a Wire"</u> <i>Influencing Machine: pp43-46</i>	3/26 R&R day, No Class
9 Accuracy & Advocacy	3/29 Test 2	3/31 <u>"News You Can't Use"</u> <i>Influencing Machine: pp47-56</i>	4/2 "The Great Refusal" <i>Influencing Machine: pp57-59</i>
10 Hegemony & Representation	4/5 <u>"Bias"</u> <i>Influencing Machine: pp60-70</i>	4/7 <u>Hegemony</u> <i>Article: 8 Journalists on Reporting While Black</i>	4/9 <u>"War"</u> <i>Influencing Machine: pp71-95</i>
11 Journalistic Norms	4/12 <u>"Objectivity"</u> <i>Influencing Machine: pp96-110</i>	4/14 Pacing Day, No class	4/16 Conspiracy or Jam Due <u>"Disclosure"</u> <i>Influencing Machine: pp111-16</i>
12 Public Responsibility	4/19 Test 3	4/21 <u>"Matrix" in Me</u> <i>Influencing Machine: pp117-28</i>	4/23 "Influencing Machines" <i>Influencing Machine: pp129-36</i>
13 Public Participation	4/26 <u>"Um, Panic?"</u> <i>Influencing Machine: pp137-44</i>	4/28 <u>"I, Robot"</u> <i>Influencing Machine: pp145-49</i>	4/30 <u>"I, Media"</u> <i>Influencing Machine: pp150-58</i>
14 Making Media	5/3 24-hr Media log II due <i>Article: How to Be a Better Food 'Grammer</i>	5/5 <u>Social media strategies</u> <i>Article: The Wired Guide to Influencers</i>	5/7 Food photography due
Fin			5/14, 8:30-10:30 Test 4