

COM235 Introduction to Media Literacy, Fall 2021

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Class Meetings: TuTh 1:15-2:30, 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:

●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 & media. • use & analyze 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.

Required Materials:

- *Media Literacy*, 10th edition (2021) & *7 Skills of Media Literacy* (2019), both by W.James Potter [Sage]
- Notebook recommended
- 4x6" index cards or pieces of paper recommended

Assignments & Grade Distribution:

-Project Censored Verified Independent News [VIN] Story:	35%
VIN proposal (5%) VIN first draft (10%) VIN final draft (20%)	
-Playing with Food Photography Fakery:	10%
-Culture Jam:	10%
- <i>Media Literacy</i> "Intro to the Issues" Group Presentation:	10%
-Quizzes (12 total quizzes. Lowest 2 grades dropped [no makeups]. Each quiz effectively 2%)	20%
-Final exam (based on quizzes)	15%

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 possible only by regularly attending class and completing regular coursework. Extra credit is **not** available to replace for missed 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.

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 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 problems with relationships, family worries, loss, a personal struggle or crisis, or food or housing insecurity are negatively impacting your health and/or interfering with your academic success, SUNY Cortland offers resources to help.

- Counseling Center: 607-753-4728
- Substance Abuse & Prevention Education: 607-753-2066
- Associate Vice President of Student Affairs 607-753-4721).

Coursework

Readings

Reading is a fundamental part of the course. It is how you will be introduced to key concepts. Reading, in conjunction with attending class, not only reinforces central lessons but also gives you more exposure to examples and ideas than you get by only reading or only attending class. Reading before attending class lets you engage with discussions in more meaningful ways. But none of this is true if you *just* read or skim through to get it done (that really is a waste of time). 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 quizzes and the final exam. 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." They can also earn extra credit points, if cards are submitted for at least 20 of the 25 assigned chapters. If you choose to do notecards:

- 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.
- Your **name** must be on the card.
- **Submit it on or before the day the chapter is due**

Quizzes & Final Exam

There will be weekly quizzes of roughly 5-10 multiple-choice, matching, and/or fill-in-the-blank questions. They will focus on the readings, lectures, and discussions from the previous week. (See course calendar for specifics.) In cases of college-sanctioned activities or religious observances, quizzes must be rescheduled *in advance*. Otherwise, missed quizzes cannot be made up because the lowest two grades will be dropped anyhow.

Quizzes 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. Many quiz questions will be tied directly to the learning outcomes identified at the top of this syllabus.

But weekly quizzes alone won't help with long-term retention. We've all studied for a test only to forget it all the day after. So the weekly quizzes will be revisited with a cumulative final exam. (Don't throw out those graded quizzes: keep them as your study guide for the final).

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.

Doing Project Censored reporting is challenging and time consuming. This cannot be put off until the night or morning before the assignment is due. Accordingly, you get the whole semester to work on the final project (though early submission is encouraged and *might* result in extra credit) – but there are a couple smaller deadlines to meet along the way.

- 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 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 be given a deadline 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. Basically, you're writing a news article about the story, after doing a little extra investigating of it. The length is 400-600 words. 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 has addressed all the concerns identified after its first review, the higher grade will count for both the 10% first draft and 20% final draft. And, 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 with one other classmate on the assignment. Both partners will earn the same grade, so choose your comrades carefully.

See Blackboard for lots of additional information, explanations, instructions, and examples for Project Censored.

Project Censored 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 2021
- 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

Playing with Food Photography Fakery

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 using any manipulative tricks available, including photo editing software, staging, lighting, etc. This assignment relates to the

GE12 SLOs engaging technology and judgement.

* See Blackboard for industry articles describing different approaches to food photography. *

Your final submission must include: a “before” picture and an “after picture” and a brief written description of what you did to make the food look better.

Food Photo Rubric

- Creativity in approach (3 = well done, 2 = satisfactorily done, 1 = needs improvement)
- Clear explanation of manipulation process (3 = well done, 2 = satisfactorily done, 1 = needs improvement)
Typed, in full sentences, using appropriate grammar, spelling, and punctuation for academic or professional writing.
- “Professional” looking final photo (3 = well done, 2 = satisfactorily done, 1 = needs improvement)
- All parts of the assignment complete, submitted, and on time. (0= no, 1= yes)

Total = ____ /10

Culture Jam

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. You will create a “culture jam” project, where you will “deconstruct” a media message in order to unpack its meanings, construct a new media message, and imagine some form of resistance. This is a creative assignment. 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 (a culture jam). Jammers want to disrupt the unconscious thought process that takes place when most consumers view popular advertising. Activists that utilize this tactic are counting on their meme to pull on the emotional strings of people and evoke some type of reaction. The reactions that most cultural jammers are hoping to evoke are behavioral change and political action. Activists often want viewers to feel an emotional reaction like shock, shame, fear, and/or anger, as they are believed to be the catalysts for social change. This assignment relates to the Media Literacy SLOs.

The completed culture jam assignment will include: a copy of the original ad or issue-related materials, your jammed version, and a typed two-part written analysis.

Your task

1. Choose an advertisement or a social or political issue
2. Write a short analysis of the ad or issue & your rationale for choosing this particular ad or issue. Be sure to address the following, using concepts from class where appropriate.
 - What kind of product(s) or issue is being promoted?
 - Who is the target audience of the advertisement?
 - What message (text, copy) is used in the advertisement?
 - How are the elements and principles of design used to convey a message?

3. “Jam” your ad or issue. Using whatever media and techniques are appropriate to you and the ad, create your subverted version.
4. Write an additional explanation of your approach to the jammed ad or resistant meme. Be sure to address the following, using concepts from class where appropriate.
 - Who is the target audience of your jam?
 - What company or issue does the advertisement represent/subvert?
 - What imagery or text is used to subvert and how?
 - What aspect of your culture jam do you find most successful and why?

Tips: BRAINSTORM possible corporate entities, logos and advertisements that you can use to create your own cultural jam advertisement. SAVE the original advertisement and create at least 3 different CONCEPTUAL SKETCHES displaying 3 different possible ideas first on paper. Consider humor, slogans, imagery and overall composition. (color scheme, typeface etc.) CREATE in your own cultural jam advertisement, video, Web site or audio jam based on one of the conceptual. REFLECT on your work once it is finished through the written portion of the assignment.

Culture Jam Rubric

Aesthetics/Craftsmanship

- The jam looks thrown together at the last minute. (1)
- The jam looks well planned, but in need of a little more polish. (2)
- The jam looks well planned & professional finish, suggesting particular time or care was given. (3)

Message

- No change was made to the original or it is very hard to tell what the jam is trying to say. (1)
- Jam seems to subvert the original, but is confusing, vague, or unoriginal. (2)
- Jam clearly and cleverly subverts the original message. (3)

Analysis

- Written portion is lacking insight or explanation. (1)
- Written portion adequately analyzes and addresses the original message and the jam approach. (2)
- Written portion clearly analyzes & addresses the original and jam, and applies course concepts. (3)

Style

- Work is neat and complete and appropriate for academic or professional work (1)

Total = ___ /10

Media Literacy “Introduction to the Issues” Presentation

The final four chapters of *Media Literacy, 10th Edition*, present key issues about mass media that have generated a bit of debate. This offers you a chance to apply what you know and what you’ve learned. The last four class meetings of the semester will be dedicated to these four issues. About halfway through the semester, the class will be divided into four teams and each team will be assigned to one of the four issues. Working together, your team will prepare and present a seminar on your issue. It will be up to your team to learn about the issue from the textbook *and* from additional research and to identify examples that help to illustrate the key ideas or arguments at stake. Presentations should be no shorter than 20 minutes. They can take whatever format your group decides, but should address the elements presented in the rubric below. On the day of the presentation, each team member should also submit a one-page summary of what they contributed to the project and their assessment of what other teammates contributed (this will be confidential and is meant to ensure that everyone sees themselves as part of and accountable to their team).

This project intersects all course SLOs

Issues Presentation Rubric

Content

- Identifies and explains some part of the chapter (1)
- Identifies and explains most of the key ideas from the chapter. (3)
- Identifies and explains all the key ideas from the chapter. (5)

Presentation

- Disorganized and unclear (1)
- Most content was clearly presented individually, but as a team whole was lacking (3)
- Content was clearly presented individually and as a whole (5)

Examples

- Offered no examples or information beyond what was included in the chapter (1)
- Some research into the issue with acceptable examples (3)
- Excellent research into the issue with interesting and relevant examples (5)

Engagement

- Little to no attempt to engage classmates in the presentation (1)
- Some attempt to engage classmates in Q&A or discussion (3)
- Excellent use of an activity, game or discussion questions to engage classmates (5)

Total = ___/20 ÷ 2 = ___ / 10

☑ = quiz/test

✍ = assignment due in/by class

🎧 = special class topic

🎮 = tentatively planned game/activity for class

📺 = tentatively planned media for class

📖 = reading due for class (ML: *Media Literacy*, 7S: *7 Skills for Media Literacy*)

Wk	Tuesday	Thursday
1	8/31: 🎧 course overview	9/2: 📖 ML ch 1 📖 7 Skills, ch 1 🎧 Project Censored
2	9/7: 📖 ML ch 2 ☑ Quiz – ML & 7S chs 1 🎧 Media Ecology 📺 Space Times Square	9/9: 📖 7S ch 2 🎮 photojournalism on the scene
3	9/14: 📖 ML ch 3 ☑ Quiz - ML & 7S chs 2 🎧 Cognitive Dissonance 📺 Thank You For Smoking	9/16: 📖 7S ch 3 ✍ Food photography assignment due
4	9/21: 📖 ML ch 4 ☑ Quiz - ML & 7S chs 3 🎧 Uses & Gratifications Theory 🎮 self-analysis 📺 Disturbia	9/23: 📖 7S ch 4 🎮 The News Game
5	9/28: 📖 ML ch 5 ☑ Quiz - ML & 7S chs 4	9/30: 📖 7S ch 5 ✍ Project Censored story proposal due
6	10/5: 📖 ML ch 6 ☑ Quiz – ML & 7S chs 5 🎧 Critical Theory 📺 The Devil Wears Prada	10/7: 📖 7S ch 6 🎮 MasterMind 🎮 Whodunit?
7	10/12: 📖 ML ch 7 ☑ Quiz - ML & 7S chs 6 🎧 Elaboration Likelihood Model 🎮 perusing political propaganda 📺 Footloose	10/14: <u>VIRTUAL asynchronous CLASS on Blackboard</u> 📖 7S ch 7 ✍ Culture jam assignment due
8	10/19: Fall Recess – no classes	10/21: 📖 7S ch 8: 📖 ML ch 8 ☑ Quiz - ML & 7S chs 7 🎧 Standpoint Theory 📺 Cider House Rules
9	10/26: 📖 ML ch 9 ☑ Quiz - ML & 7S chs 🎧 Cultural Studies 📺 Insider	10/28: 📖 7S ch 9
10	11/2: 📖 ML ch 10 ☑ Quiz - ML & 7S chs 9 🎧 Semiotics 🎮 symbols worksheet	11/4: 📖 7S ch 10 ✍ Project Censored VIN draft due
11	11/9: 📖 ML ch 11 ☑ Quiz - ML & 7S chs 10 🎧 Agenda Setting Hypothesis 📺 Wag the Dog	11/11: 📖 ML ch 12 🎧 Cultivation Theory 📺 Bowling for Columbine
12	11/16: 📖 ML ch 13 ☑ Quiz – ML chs 11 & 12 🎧 Social Judgement Theory 🎮 Water experiment 📺 The Blind Side	11/18: <u>VIRTUAL asynchronous CLASS on Blackboard</u> 📖 ML ch 14 ~work with teams for Issues presentation
13	11/23: 📖 ML ch 15 ☑ Quiz - ML chs 13 & 14	11/25: Thanksgiving, no classes
14	11/30: ✍ <i>Media Lit, Issue 1</i> – pres by Red Group	12/2: ✍ <i>Media Lit, Issue 2</i> – pres by Orange Group
15	12/7: ✍ <i>Media Lit, Issue 3</i> – pres by Yellow Group	12/9: ✍ <i>Media Lit, Issue 4</i> – pres by Green Group ✍ Project Censored VIN due no later than today
16		12/15 (Wednesday): ☑ 11:00am-1:00pm Final exam

Make your travel plans according to the exam schedule. Exam times are set by the college.