Stephen F. Austin State University
Department of Mass Communication
Communication Studies Program
Advanced Topics in Media Studies: Critical Media Literacy
COM 4300.500, Fall 2023
Online Course

Instructor: Dr. Sudeshna Roy, Professor
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roys@sfasu.edu (only for emergency)

Office: BOYT 205
Office hrs: Tue 12.30-2.30 (f-2-f)
Wed 10-1 (Zoom - instructions in D2L)
And by appointments
(I reserve the right to make any changes to this syllabus during the course.)

Course Description
In this course students will develop an informed, critical, and practical understanding of media communication in order to critically assess media content, media industries, and how they affect us in our ability to function as engaged citizens.

Course Contact Hours and Study Hours
COM 4300 "Advanced Topics in Media Studies" (3 credits) meets twice each week (Tuesday/Thursday) in 75-minute segments for 15 weeks, and also meets for a 2-hour final examination. Students have weekly exercises, readings, assignments, and discussions, regular quizzes, a mid-term exam, two short-papers, and an extensive research paper. Online delivery contains extensive written content as well as audio-visual presentations and exercises that include the same information students in a face-to-face lecture course receive, requiring students to engage with the online modules for at least three hours per week. These activities average at a minimum 6 hours each week to prepare outside of classroom hours.

Course Objectives
This course helps students develop their media literacy and analytical skills. We will explore the goals and methods of various media industries, identify the effects media has on us by focusing on specific areas such as, gender, war & peace, social justice, etc., understand benefits and potential negative effects of media content, and identify techniques to become more media literate as individuals and a society. Aspects of media literacy will be explored through readings, online lectures, and published research.

Required readings

How the course is conducted
This course is modular and conducted completely online. There are no face-to-face
meetings for this course. The course Timeline describes the time frame and activities required for course completion. Activities for each module are due by the ending date of that module.

Program Learning Outcomes

Diversity and Freedom of Expression: Students majoring in Communication Studies will be able to recognize the central role of diversity and freedom of expression in a global community.

Higher Order Communicative Thinking: Students majoring in Communication Studies will be able to demonstrate oral and written competence in logical and critical thinking.

Student Learning Outcomes

• Understand how media messages create meaning
• Identify who created a particular media message
• Recognize what the media maker wants us to believe or do
• Name the "tools of persuasion" used
• Recognize bias, spin, misinformation and lies
• Discover the part of the story that's not being told
• Evaluate media messages based on our own experiences, beliefs and values
• Create and distribute our own media messages
• Become advocates for change in our media system

Academic Integrity (4.1)

The Code of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity outlines the prohibited conduct by any student enrolled in a course at SFA. It is the responsibility of all members of all faculty, staff, and students to adhere to and uphold this policy.

Articles IV, VI, and VII of the new Code of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity outline the violations and procedures concerning academic conduct, including cheating, plagiarism, collusion, and misrepresentation. Cheating includes, but is not limited to: (1) Copying from the test paper (or other assignment) of another student, (2) Possession and/or use during a test of materials that are not authorized by the person giving the test, (3) Using, obtaining, or attempting to obtain by any means the whole or any part of a non-administered test, test key, homework solution, or computer program, or using a test that has been administered in prior classes or semesters without permission of the Faculty member, (4) Substituting for another person, or permitting another person to substitute for one’s self, to take a test, (5) Falsifying research data, laboratory reports, and/or other records or academic work offered for credit, (6) Using any sort of unauthorized resources or technology in completion of educational activities.

Plagiarism is the appropriation of material that is attributable in whole or in part to another source or the use of one’s own previous work in another context without citing that it was used previously, without any indication of the original source, including words, ideas, illustrations, structure, computer code, and other expression or media, and presenting that material as one’s own academic work being offered for credit or in conjunction with a program course or degree requirements.
Collusion is the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing academic assignments offered for credit or collaboration with another person to commit a violation of any provision of the rules on academic dishonesty, including disclosing and/or distributing the contents of an exam.

Misrepresentation is providing false grades or résumés; providing false or misleading information in an effort to receive a postponement or an extension on a test, quiz, or other assignment for the purpose of obtaining an academic or financial benefit for oneself or another individual or to injure another student academically or financially.

Withheld Grades Semester Grades Policy (5.5)
Ordinarily, at the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the coursework because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F. If students register for the same course in future terms the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course to compute the grade point average. For additional information, go to https://www.sfasu.edu/policies/course-grades-5.5.pdf.

Students with Disabilities
To obtain disability-related accommodations, alternate formats, and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, and Room 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services promptly may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/.

Student Wellness and Well-Being
SFA values students’ overall well-being, mental health and the role it plays in academic and overall student success. Students may experience stressors that can impact both their academic experience and their personal well-being. These may include academic pressure and challenges associated with relationships, emotional well-being, alcohol and other drugs, identities, finances, etc.

If you are experiencing concerns, seeking help, SFA provides a variety of resources to support students’ mental health and wellness. Many of these resources are free, and all of them are confidential.

D2L and Online Coursework
ALL students are expected to use D2L in this course to perform and keep up with graded activities and scheduled readings. Students can take Brightspace D2L Tutorials at https://www.sfaonline.info/d2ltutorials. Students are responsible for using the platform correctly, using reliable technology, and using reliable internet services. The University
supplies these tools in the Library and other Lab locations. More information on Brightspace D2L can be found at [https://www.sfasu.edu/d2lsupport](https://www.sfasu.edu/d2lsupport). Should you have technical questions regarding part of the course requirements, please visit [https://www.sfasu.edu/d2lsupport](https://www.sfasu.edu/d2lsupport). If you still need help, please contact SFA Online at 936.468.1919.

**Participation:** Course participation is important for the success of the class. Sharing your experience and perspective with the rest of the class improves the quality of class discussion and makes the class more meaningful and enjoyable for everyone. You are expected to complete all class activities and assigned reading. Late work will NOT be accepted. *At the instructor's discretion, works may be accepted only for unavoidable and extenuating circumstances that can be backed-up by written evidence, and only within one week of missing the assignment.*

Grades are not negotiable. Every student is graded by the same rubric, so never ask me to raise a grade, as it would create an issue of discrimination. See grading criteria later in this syllabus.

**Learning Assumptions and Expectations**

I have a number of assumptions about your participation in this course.

- **It is my belief that what you as a student get out of this course depends upon what you put in it as well as the extent to which you are willing to **critically assess your own beliefs and assumptions**.**
- **Respect** is one of the foundations of an environment conducive to learning. In this class, I have a commitment to creating a positive and respectful learning environment. I expect all of us to contribute to a productive and thought-provoking learning environment, valuing each of our strengths and differences. In discussions, everyone should be courteous and respectful of others; no rude, sexist, racist, or other disrespectful or offensive comments or behavior will be acceptable.
- **I have high standards** for excellent work. To earn good grades you will need to work hard and do excellent work. Hard work is necessary, but not sufficient to receive good grades.
- **The assignments in this course are designed to challenge** you and help you learn. **PLAGIARISM, USE OF ONLINE TOOLS, OR USE OF CHAT GPT/AI-ASSISTED work/writing IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED.** There are significant consequences for failing to maintain academic integrity.
- **Discussions will build from the module lectures and included readings.** So it is necessary that you complete the readings by the date due. You will be responsible for the content at all times.
- **I am committed to helping you to learn. Please ask questions** and let me know how I can support you. However, also recognize that there is some inherent ambiguity in education - there is no one right way to do most things! I may not always give you a concrete definitive answer to your questions.
Modules

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<tr>
<th>Modules</th>
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<tr>
<td>Getting Started: Introduction to the course</td>
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<tr>
<td>Module 1: Increasing Media Literacy and Approaches</td>
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<td>Module 2: Media Effects</td>
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<td>Module 3: Audiences</td>
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<td>Module 4: Entertainment and News</td>
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<td>Module 5: Social Networking and Media Ownership</td>
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<td>Module 6: Media Violence and Literacy Competence</td>
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Course requirements – Maximum Points

*All assignments are subject to revision, deletion, change as per the instructor’s discretion as and when needed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Required Activities</th>
<th>Possible Points per activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discussion board posts (5 total)</td>
<td>6 x 10 points = 60</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quizzes (2 total) (MCQ)</td>
<td>2 x 20 points = 40</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignments (5 total)</td>
<td>3 X 10 = 30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short Paper</td>
<td>1 X 25 points = 25</td>
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<td>Final Paper</td>
<td>1 X 45 points = 45</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exams (2 total) (Short Answers)</td>
<td>2 X 25 points = 50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>250 points</td>
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Grading Guide

250-225 - A
224-200 - B
199-175 - C
174-150 - D
149 or less – F

ALL ASSIGNMENTS SHOULD FOLLOW APA 7th EDITION FORMATTING, CITATION, and REFERENCES (unless otherwise mentioned)

All papers must be double-spaced, 12 font, Times New Roman

Guide to writing discussion posts

There are five things I look for in the discussions.

1. The discussion posts address the questions raised in that discussion adequately including relevant definitions and examples from the course perspective - Remember, whenever you are talking about an issue in the discussions, you are always doing so in the context of this course – intercultural communication.

2. Whether the student is responding to other students' posts in a meaningful manner - If the student simply agrees with another student, then that is not meaningful. The student needs to demonstrate understanding of the issue raised by fellow student
and has to make clear WHY he/she agrees or disagrees with the post of fellow student. At least two responses other than your own post is required.

3. Whether the example given is creative, relevant and demonstrates outside research to the issue or tangential - Sometimes, students would give examples that are far-fetched and don't really address the question or issue being discussed. You need to show that you are bringing in your own experiences and other researched material to the discussion.

4. How does your post compare with those of your group's posts - If you write a post that satisfies all the things I have mentioned in the first three points and yet falls far below the depth and quality of posts by members in your group, those members will earn higher grades than you would.

5. In order for your group members to respond to your posts, you need to post in a timely manner – Your first post should be at least a day before the deadline. If you post your first post on deadline day before noon, there will be a 20% deduction. If you post your first post on deadline day after noon, there will be a 50% deduction. If you respond to only one classmate, there will be a 20% deduction.

Note: If no one else posts, you'll be graded on the quality of your own post. Your grades will not suffer due to the non-participation of other group members. :)

Also, make sure you type the post in a .doc file and then copy and paste it on the discussion board. This practice protects you from losing your work in case of any technology failure.

Success in Assignments, Papers or Essays

All papers must be double-spaced, 12 font, Times New Roman

As you go through the modules, the instructions for the assignments/reflections will be embedded in those modules. For example, in module 4, the reflection assignment instruction will have its own page. Then there will be a link to the reflection assignment. For these assignments, you need to make sure that

- you read the instructions carefully,
- provide adequate definitions and explanations of the concepts you are writing about or identified, referencing the module lectures and your textbook, as well as outside research
- provide adequate examples of the concept and their relevance for the topic being discussed (remember that your examples must relate to communicative phenomenon), and,
- identify outside research about the topic. What are other scholars/experts talking about regarding this issue/concept?
- provide in-text citations and references in APA style format.

I also look for how your assignment compares to the standards set by your peers in the course.
Make sure you type the assignment/reflection in a .doc file and then upload that document to Dropbox. This practice protects you from losing your work in case of any technology failure.

**Short and Final Paper Instructions can be found in D2L Modules.**

**On-campus Resources**

The Dean of Students Office (Rusk Building, 3rd floor lobby)  
[www.sfasu.edu/deanofstudents](http://www.sfasu.edu/deanofstudents) 936.468.7249  dos@sfasu.edu

SFA Human Services Counseling Clinic Human Services, Room 202  
[www.sfasu.edu/humanservices/139.asp](http://www.sfasu.edu/humanservices/139.asp) 936.468.1041

The Health and Wellness Hub “The Hub”  
Location: corner of E. College and Raguet St. ([www.sfasu.edu/thehub](http://www.sfasu.edu/thehub)) 936.468.4008  thehub@sfasu.edu

To support the health and well-being of every Lumberjack, the Health and Wellness Hub offers comprehensive services that treat the whole person – mind, body and spirit. Services include:

- Health Services
- Counseling Services
- Student Outreach and Support
- Food Pantry
- Wellness Coaching
- Alcohol and Other Drug Education

**Crisis Resources:**

- Burke 24-hour crisis line: 1.800.392.8343
- National Suicide Crisis Prevention: 9-8-8
- Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1.800.273.TALK (8255)
- Crisis Text Line: Text HELLO to 741-741