



SOC 589.001 Clashing Views on the Media Spring 2013

Professor: William E. Thompson, Ph.D.

Office Location: Ferguson Social Science 229

Office Hours: M,W 3:00-4:15 p.m., T,W,R 9:30-11:00 a.m.; other times by appointment

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COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course will examine how the media in all its various forms shapes peoples' perceptions of social reality. It will explore clashing views on controversial topics and how the media influences society and individuals cultural, social, political, economic, and personal lives.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES: This course has the following major objectives/learning outcomes:

1. Encourage students to stay informed of current events and become more informed, engaged, and responsible local, national, and global citizens.
2. Help students develop critical thinking skills and apply them in order to become more intelligent and critical consumers of media in all of its various forms.
3. Help students express their views on controversial issues in logical and rational written and oral formats.

REQUIRED BOOKS: *Taking Sides: Clashing Views in Mass Media and Society* (12th ed.) edited by Alison Alexander and Janice Hanson, 2013, ISBN: 978-0-07-805041-1; *The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains* by Nicholas Carr, 2011, ISBN: 978-0-39-333975-8. These books are available in the university bookstore.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Instructional / Methods / Activities Assessments

CLASS FORMAT: The course will be team taught. This is an undergraduate seminar. The purpose is *not* for the professors to dispense information and the students to try to absorb it. Rather, we all will be reading the same materials and discussing them in class, both teaching and learning from each other.

The environment will be totally open. Your participation in class discussion is not encouraged, it is *demande*d! All ideas, comments, opinions, etc., will be heard. Likewise, all of them will be questioned, analyzed, and critically scrutinized. Do not be timid and do not "wear your feelings on your shirtsleeves." On the other hand, be cognizant of other's feelings and do nothing to interfere with another person's learning opportunities.

STATEMENT OF STUDENT BEHAVIOR : As stated in the student handbook: "All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment." (See Student Guide Handbook, Policies and Procedures, Conduct, for more information.)

THIS CLASSROOM IS A “SAFE SPACE”

All persons who enter this classroom will be treated with dignity and respect regardless of age, race, sex, social class, religion, politics, sexual orientation , and/or lifestyle. There will be “Zero Tolerance” in this classroom for any form of ageism, racism, sexism, sexual harassment, or any other form of prejudice, discrimination, or bigotry.

ATTENDANCE/PARTICIPATION: It should go without saying that attendance at all class sessions is extremely important. The class meets only once a week and there is no possible way to gain the information lost by missing class discussions. It is inevitable that one or two of you will have to miss a session for some very good reason. If this is the case, please check with others in the class to see what you missed. If you anticipate missing more than two class sessions, you probably should drop the course. Each class session you will receive a grade for attendance and participation worth a total of 10 pts.for a total of 150 possible pts.

BOOK CRITIQUE 1: A critique of *The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains* will be due Monday, at the beginning of class. Critiques should be approximately 2-3 pages in length (typed, double-spaced, 12 pt. font). Critiques should follow the basic format provided at the end of this syllabus. Critiques are worth 100 points.

BOOK CRITIQUE 2: Graduate students will select a book on contemporary media approved by the professor and write a critique. Critiques should be approximately 2-3 pages in length (typed, double-spaced, 12 pt. font). Critiques should follow the basic format provided at the end of this syllabus. Critiques are worth 100 points. This critique will be due at the beginning of class on Monday April 22.

CRITICAL THINKING PAPERS: There will be 14 critical thinking papers analyzing what we learned from each week’s reading assignment. They will be worth 10 pts. each with the exception of the final paper which will be written in class on May 6 which will be worth 20 pts. (for a total of 150 pts.)

Grading Rubric for papers:

Does the paper focus on the topic at hand?	0-3 pts.
Does the paper reflect information from reading assignment?	0-3 pts.
Does the paper reflect critical thinking?	<u>0-4 pts.</u>
Total	0-10 pts.
(double values on the final in-class paper)	(0-20 pts)

GRADES: Grades will be based on the critical thinking papers (150 pts), the book critique (100 pts.), and attendance/participation (150 pts.).

- A = 90-100% (360-400 total pts.)
- B = 80 - 89% (320-359 total pts.)
- C = 70 - 79% (280-319 total pts.)
- D = 60 - 69% (240-279 total pts.)
- F = < 60 % (< 240 total pts.)

POLICIES ON ENROLLMENT, "Xs", AND WITHDRAWAL: All policies regarding last day for enrollment, dropping without a grade, withdrawal from class, and the use of "X" will be rigidly adhered to in this course. Students should check the student handbook, current semester schedule, and the appropriate bulletin boards for specific deadlines. Seeing that all university procedures are properly followed is the student's responsibility.

CHEATING AND PAGIARISM: Cheating or plagiarism of any kind will **not** be tolerated. Anyone who participates in either activity will fail the course and the professors will initiate steps for the university to take further disciplinary action.

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

There are no technology requirements for this course per se. Students should have access to a computer, however, to develop Power Point slides, use word processing, and access online materials as well as to check their MyLeo accounts for e-mails from the professors.

ACCESS AND NAVIGATION

This course is taught face-to-face. The publisher of the introductory textbook provides an online site to accompany the textbook. The web address is on the back cover of the textbook.

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

Interaction with Instructor Statement:

The most effective way to communicate with the professors will be to come to class. The professors will be in their offices during posted office hours and by appointment. The best way to make an appointment is to communicate directly with the professors immediately prior to or after class. Appointments can also be made via e-mail.

E-MAIL COMMUNICATION: I will communicate with the class through MyLeo e-mail. I will send out reminders about assignments, changes in syllabus, etc., to the entire class through e-mail using your official "My Leo" university e-mail address. Consequently, it is YOUR RESPONSIBILITY to check your e-mail regularly for messages from me. If you contact me via e-mail, please tell me your name and the course in which you are enrolled as part of your e-mail.

If you send me an e-mail, I will always read it and respond within a reasonable amount of time. Generally, if you send me an e-mail any time between Monday 8:00 a.m. and noon Friday, I will respond within 24 hours or sooner if possible. If, however, you e-mail me after noon on Friday, it will be Monday at the earliest before I respond. Fortunately, I am not a brain surgeon or cardiologist and none of the issues or assignments in this class are life or death matters. If you have a class-related problem or issue, DO NOT PANIC. Any problem that is class-related that occurs over the weekend can wait until the following Monday to be addressed.

Students with Disabilities:

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services
Texas A&M University-Commerce
Gee Library
Room 132
Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835
Fax (903) 468-8148
StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu

COURSE SCHEDULE

Date	Topic	Reading Assignment
M, 14 Jan.	Introductions, syllabus, Overview of Media	
M, 21 Jan.	MLK Day, no classes	
M, 28 Jan.	Values, Social Class, Inequality, and the Media	Issue 1
M, 4 Feb.	Media, Sensationalism, Crises (Gun Control in the USA)	Issue 2
M, 11 Feb.	Race and Ethnicity in the Media	Issue 10
M, 18 Feb.	Sex and Gender in the Media	
M, 25 Feb.	Media and Advertising	Issue 6
M, 4 Mar.	Media, Fake News, “Real” News	Issue 7
M, 11 Mar.	Spring Break, no classes	
M, 18 Mar.	Social Media and Social Change	Issue 9
M, 18 Mar.	The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains (Critique Due)	
M, 25 Mar.	Evolving Forms of Journalism	Issue 8, 14
M, 1 Apr.	Youth, News, and the Media	Issue 16
M, 8 Apr.	Media, Violence, and Aggression	Issue 5
M, 15 Apr.	Taxes, and other Issues	TBA
M, 22 Apr.	Media and Self Image	Issue 4
M, 29 Apr.	Media and the “Information Society”	Issue 18
M, 6 May	Clashing Views on Media	TBA

BOOK CRITIQUE FORMAT

A critique of *The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains* will be due on Monday, November 26 at the beginning of class. Critiques should be approximately 2-3 pages in length (typed, double-spaced, 12 pt. font). In a narrative format, the critique should address/answer the following points/questions:

1. What is the main thesis of the book?
2. How does the author go about developing or supporting this thesis?
3. What aspects of media are addressed in this book?
4. Does the book make an important contribution to the understanding of media in society? If so, what, and how?
5. Comment on the writing style, readability, etc., of the book.
6. What are some of the major strengths and weaknesses of the book?
7. Would you recommend this book to others? Why? Why not?