

**SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION  
COMM 201-202 (4040)—MEDIA THEORY AND CRITICISM  
Fall, 2020**

Instructor: Michael Mertz ([mmertz@luc.edu](mailto:mmertz@luc.edu))

**Class Meetings:** Mon, Weds, Fri 12:10 – 1:00 pm. **WE ARE IN THE CENTRAL TIME ZONE. ALL MEETINGS ARE ONLINE.** We will be using **ZOOM** to meet this semester. **The ID for our meetings is 966 6780 3895**

**Office Hours** are by appointment and I am readily available. I will also try to meet with everyone one-on-one as the semester progresses

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** This course is an introduction to the study of traditional mass media and new media from a historical, critical and interpretive perspective. We live in a mediated environment; how the media's messages affect us as individuals and as members of the broader culture are only some of the questions that media theory tries to answer. We want to be able to use structured criticism of the past and present in order to help us envision a more ethical and productive future.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:** This course reviews sociological/ethnographic approach, semiotics, discourse and content analysis and other methods of media analysis; it also surveys those theories that approach media as historical and cultural practices that go beyond technologies and texts to consider the media as businesses with specific political economy and as agents of change. Experiential aspects of media production and consumption will also be considered and analyzed. After taking this course the students will be able to:

# identify major media theories and research methods, their main tenets and application contexts;

# apply the critical and technical vocabulary (media theory as a body of knowledge) to describe, analyze and critique media (to practice media analysis/media criticism);

**Texts; Eoin Devereaux, Understanding the Media 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (UM)  
ISBN: 978-1-4462- 4880-5. Available as a pdf online**

# Any online sources will be posted in the weekly modules in Sakai.

**ATTENDANCE:** In this class we are using the discussion teaching method which includes traditional lecturing but stresses interactive, question and answer, discussion during class time between the teacher and students and among students in small groups and small group projects; therefore, all students are expected to attend the class regularly and to be prepared to actively participate in the discussions and activities after reading the required material. The big part of the **Participation** grade is based on student's class attendance and active contribution to the class's activities and discussions. No show in class means no participation points for attendance—more than three unexcused absences or excessive lateness or leaving class early will affect your grade. Any missed assignments must be made up and in some cases a doctor's letter or other official documentation excusing a missed class may be required.

**CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE:** Attendance is taken at the beginning of the class. Lateness up to 15 minutes is acceptable according to the academic rules but is frowned upon. If you join the meeting after attendance has been taken it is **your responsibility** to check with the instructor after the class to be sure to get the attendance credit.

**PERSONAL TECH POLICY:** Normally I do not allow phones or laptops in my class unless student accommodations require them. Obviously, this semester is different so the use of phones and laptops is not only OK but necessary. However, I do expect students to stay on task and not use phones and laptops to send texts, look at websites, etc.

**ACCOMMODATIONS:** Any student who needs special accommodations during exams or class periods will certainly get them. However, students should provide documentation from the Student Accessibility Center confidentially to the instructor to confirm the need. The instructor will accommodate that student's needs in the best way possible, given the constraints of course content and processes. It is the student's responsibility to plan in advance in order to meet their own needs and assignment due dates.

**GRADING SCALE:**

Participation (attendance, active and critical contribution to the class activities and discussions; class survey; peer teaching, group presentations evaluation...)	200 points
Midterm Exam & Final Exam (125 each)	250 points
Short Papers	250 points
Case Study Group Project and In-class Presentation	300 points

**TOTAL= 1000 POINTS:**

A (EXCELLENT) 950-1000

A-minus 925-949

B+ 875-924;

B (GOOD) 850-874

B-minus 800-849

C+ 775-799

C (AVERAGE) 725-774

C-minus 700-724

D (FAIR) 650-699

F (POOR) Anything below 650

**STATEMENT OF INTENT:** By remaining in this course, students are agreeing to accept this syllabus as a contract and to abide by the guidelines outlined in this document.

## **WEEKLY SCHEDULE**

**This is the plan but the calendar is open to change. You will be informed of any changes as the semester progresses. All specific reading assignments will be announced at the beginning of each week.**

**WEEK ONE (BEGINS MONDAY, AUGUST 24):** Course introduction and overview; Getting to know each other

**WEEK TWO (BEGINS MONDAY AUGUST 31** Media Histories, Media Power - What is media? What is media theory? What is the point of media criticism?

**READ: UM Chapter 1 (excerpts TBA)**

**WEEK THREE (BEGINS WEDS SEPT. 9 - NO CLASS MON. 9/7 – LABOR DAY):** Media Globalization

**READ: UM Chapter 2 (excerpts TBA)**

**WEEK FOUR (BEGINS MONDAY SEPT. 14):** Media Ownership: Concentration, Conglomeration and Regulation

**READ: UM Chapter 3 (excerpts TBA)**

**WEEK FIVE (BEGINS MONDAY SEPT. 21)** Media Professionals and Media Production

**READ: UM Chapter 4 (excerpts TBA)**

**WEEK SIX: (BEGINS MONDAY SEPT. 28)**

**READ: UM Chapter 5 (excerpts TBA)**

**WEEK SEVEN (BEGINS WEDS OCT. 7 – NO CLASS MONDAY 10/5, FALL BREAK):** Media, Ideology and Discourse

**READ: UM Chapter 6 (excerpts TBA)**

**MIDTERM EXAM ASSIGNED**

**PRESENTATION GROUPS FORMED – 6 Groups of 4, more or less!**

**WEEK EIGHT (BEGINS MONDAY, OCT 12)** Media, Ideology and Discourse (continued) plus The How and Why of Media Analysis

**READ: UM Chapter 7 (excerpts TBA)**

**MIDTERM EXAM DUE**

**WEEK NINE: (BEGINS MONDAY, OCT. 19)**

**READ: UM Chapter 8 (excerpts TBA)**

**WEEK TEN (BEGINS MONDAY OCT. 26):** Media “Re-presentations” in an Unequal World

**WEEK ELEVEN: (BEGINS MONDAY, NOV. 2)** Media “Re-presentations” in an Unequal World continued

**READ: UM Chapter 9 (excerpts TBA)**

**WEEK TWELVE (BEGINS MONDAY, NOV 9) Media Audiences and Reception**

**READ: UM Chapter 10 (excerpts TBA)**

**WEEK THIRTEEN (BEGINS MONDAY, NOV. 16) New Media, Social Media**

**READ: UM Chapter 11 (excerpts TBA)**

**WEEK FOURTEEN (JUST MONDAY NOV. 23 - NO CLASS WEDS. NOV. 25 OR FRIDAY NOV. 27 – THANKSGIVING BREAK)**

**FIRST GROUP PRESENTATIONS**

**WEEK FIFTEEN (BEGINS MONDAY, NOV. 30):**

**GROUP PRESENTATIONS ALL WEEK**

**LAST DAY OF CLASSES IS FRIDAY, DEC. 4th**

**OUR FINAL EXAM DATE IS TO BE ANNOUNCED**

**SAKAI** (<https://sakai.luc.edu>) is an online learning tool that allow us to communicate and collaborate with each other during the semester. You will find on it the course syllabus, e-mail addresses of all course participants, announcements, online assignments, online gradebook, etc.

**LOCUS** (<https://locus.luc.edu>) is Loyola's information portal for a wide variety of tasks. The instructor posts on Locus the midterm academic alerts and the final grades.

**ACADEMIC HONESTY:** A basic mission of a university is to search for and to communicate truth as it is honestly perceived. A genuine learning community cannot exist unless this demanding standard is a fundamental tenet of the intellectual life of the community. Students of Loyola University Chicago are expected to know, to respect, and to practice this standard of personal honesty.

Academic dishonesty can take several forms, including but not limited to cheating, plagiarism, copying another student's work, and submitting false documents. Academic cheating is a serious violation of academic integrity. **Cheating** includes, but is not limited to, obtaining, distributing, or communicating examination materials prior to the scheduled examination without the consent of the teacher; providing information to another student during examination; obtaining information from another student or any other person during an examination; using any material or equipment during an examination without consent of the instructor, or in a manner which is not authorized by the instructor; attempting to change answers after the examination has been submitted; unauthorized collaboration, or the use in whole or part of another student's work, on homework, lab reports, programming assignments, and any other course work which is completed outside of the classroom; falsifying medical or other documents to petition for excused absences or extensions of deadlines or any other action that, by omission or commission, compromise the integrity of the academic evaluation process.

**Plagiarism** is a serious violation of the standards of academic honesty; it is the appropriation of ideas, language, work, or intellectual property of another, either by intent or by negligence, without sufficient public acknowledgement and appropriate citation that the material is not one's own. It is true that every thought probably has been influenced to some degree by the thoughts and actions of others. Such influences can be thought of as affecting the ways we see things and express all thoughts. Plagiarism, however, involves the taking and use of specific words and ideas of other without proper acknowledgement of the sources, and includes, but is not limited, to submitting as one's own material copied from a published source, such as Internet, print, CD- ROM, audio, video, etc.; submitting as one's own another person's unpublished work or examination material; allowing another or paying another to write or research a paper for one's own benefit,

or purchasing, acquiring, and using for course credit a pre-written paper. The above list is in no way intended to be exhaustive. Students should be guided by the principle that it is of utmost importance to give proper recognition to all sources. To do so is both an act of personal, professional courtesy and of intellectual honesty. Any failure to do so, whether by intent or by neglect, whether by omission or commission, is an act of plagiarism. A more detailed description of this issue can be found at <http://www.luc.edu/english/aboutthewritingprogram/theuseandmisuseofsourcematerials/#d.en.23.8783>

In addition, a student may not submit the same paper or other work for credit in two or more classes. A student who submits the same work for credit in two or more classes will be judged guilty of academic dishonesty and will be subject to sanctions described below. This applies even if the student is enrolled in the classes during different semesters. If a student plans to submit work with similar or overlapping content for credit in two or more classes, the student should consult with all instructors prior to submission of the work to make certain that such submission will not violate this standard. Plagiarism or any act of academic dishonesty will result minimally in the instructor's assigning the grade of "F" for the assignment or examination. The instructor may impose a more severe sanction, including a grade of "F" in the course. All instances of academic dishonesty must be reported by the instructor to the appropriate area head and to the Office of the Dean of the School of Communication.

The Office of the Dean of the School of Communication may constitute a hearing board to consider the imposition of sanctions in addition to those imposed by the instructor, including a recommendation of expulsion, depending on the seriousness of the misconduct. In the case of multiple instances of academic dishonesty, the Dean's office may convene a separate hearing board to review these instances. The student has the right to appeal the decision of the hearing board to the Dean of SoC. If the student is not a member of the SoC, the dean of the college in which the student is enrolled shall be part of the process. Students have the right to appeal the decision of any hearing board and the deans of the two schools will review the appeal together. Their decision is final in all cases except expulsion. The sanction of expulsion for academic dishonesty may be imposed only by the Provost upon recommendation of the dean or deans.

Students have a right to appeal any finding of academic dishonesty against them. The procedure for such an appeal can be found at:

[http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg\\_academicgrievance.shtml](http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicgrievance.shtml)

The School of Communication maintains a permanent record of all instances of academic dishonesty. The information in that record is confidential. However, students may be asked to sign a waiver which releases that student's record of dishonesty as a part of the student's application to a graduate or professional school, to a potential employer, to a bar association, or to a similar organization.

**STUDENT ACCESSIBILITY CENTER (SAC):** If you have a special circumstance that may have some impact on your course work and for which you may require accommodations, please contact SAC as soon as possible. Formal arrangements must be made through the office before course adjustments can be made. Additional information about the services available at: <https://luc.edu/sac/sacstudents/>

**MANAGING LIFE CRISES AND FINDING SUPPORT:** Should you encounter an unexpected crisis during the semester (e.g., securing food or housing, addressing mental health concerns, managing a financial crisis, and/or dealing with a family emergency, etc.), I strongly encourage you to contact the Office of the Dean of Students by submitting a CARE referral (<https://www.luc.edu/csaa/>) for yourself or a peer in need of support. To learn more about the Office of the Dean of Students, please find their websites here: <https://www.luc.edu/dos/> or LUC.edu/csaa; 773-508-8840; [deanofstudents@luc.edu](mailto:deanofstudents@luc.edu).