COMM 3263-001 (W), Media Literacy: Decoding Media Images and Messages, Spring 2011
Tues/Thurs; 8:15 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.
Ford Hall B29
Coursekit code: 5M6W4Y

Instructor: Melody Hoffmann
Email: hoffm794@umn.edu (allow 12 hours for a response)
Gchat: Available when online
Office: Ford 271
Mailbox: Ford 250
Office hours: Tuesday and Thursday after class and by appointment
Phone: 414-699-8170

Course overview
This semester we will collectively develop skills for critiquing media objects/images and their messages. We will look at how elements of our society are represented in media, why these representations exist, what power these representations have, and how we can respond to these messages. We will look at how specific media perpetuates, negotiates, and/or challenges representations of society. We will look at the historical, political, and economic background to various media texts. We will ask some challenging questions in this class including:

1. How have media texts and practices intersected with who I am and how I think about myself and the world I live in?
2. How powerful are the media and its representations? What is the relationship between media representations and existing social inequalities?
3. How have media representations changed over time and how have people worked for these changes?
4. What can I do as a media consumer to alert others to the representations I find problematic? How can I alert others to the media representations I find productive?

Your job this semester is to begin looking critically at the media you interact with. I encourage you to bring your experiences with media into the classroom (yes, that means watching TV/listening to music/reading websites critically will now be considered “class work”). This will require you to question much of what we take for granted about the media, our society, our social groupings, and ourselves. Our collective critiques and analyses of media texts will be fun, challenging, and at times uncomfortable.

Required Readings
All the required readings are in two places. 1. Some are hyperlinked in this syllabus online, via Coursekit and 2. PDFs are loaded on Coursekit. I am liberal with the use of the term “readings.” Some days you will read difficult academic pieces, other days you will watch videos or read blogs. No matter the type of reading, you are required to consume it all before you show up to class. Due to the online nature of all the readings, it is up to you whether you want to print them out (those that are literal text). But, you have to come to class prepared to discuss the readings. Taking notes while you engage with the readings is highly recommended.

Class time
This class may be unique to your college experience thus far as it is primarily discussion based. I will often begin class with clarifying key terms and concepts for the day’s readings. We will then transition into small and large group discussions based on the readings. I will often bring in media texts for us to engage with and connect to the class readings. Each of you comes from different backgrounds and experiences. I respect all of your opinions, reactions, and experiences that intersect with media texts; I expect each of you to value and respect each other as well. We all will work together to create a class environment where everyone feels comfortable to express their views even when it is in disagreement with myself or your classmates. I especially encourage you to add to class discussion when you are still working through ideas and/or are puzzled by class content.
Attendance
Attending class on a regular basis is imperative to your learning and success in this class. Because this is not a lecture-based class, it will be very difficult to “catch up” on what you missed when absent. Please contact me as soon as you know you will be missing a class. Because life happens, I allow you to miss two classes without grade consequence. After that, your final grade will be dropped a ½ grade per additional absence. My hope is that you attend class regularly because you are interested and engaged in the class material and discussion. It is your responsibility to talk with a peer about what you miss during class.

Classroom expectations
Laptops are allowed due to our electronic course material. IF I CATCH YOU ON FACEBOOK, TWITTER, EMAIL or any other website I have not OKed during class I WILL ASK YOU TO LEAVE. It is SUPER distracting for other students and you are not paying tuition to update your FB status.
No cellphones, texting (let me know if you are expecting an important call)
No talking while others are talking. If you have something to add, please jot it down and add it to discussion when your classmate or I am done talking
All written work must be turned in at the beginning of class.

Office hours
Students often succeed at a greater rate when they visit a teacher’s office hours. You should not feel nervous to visit my office hours. My office is a relaxed environment where we can discuss your papers, go over any questions you have about class content, or to continue class discussion. I enjoy talking with students about their work. Feel free to just pop in or send me an email that you are coming by. I also can meet outside my office hours. You are not required to come to my office hours but I highly encourage it if you are seeking a high grade in this class.

Documentation of sources
Not documenting your sources is plagiarism. If you are unsure what plagiarism is, please come speak with me. To avoid any possibility of plagiarism you must cite all ideas, words, and theories that are not your own. I encourage you to refer to other people’s ideas, works, and theories—you just have cite them. Please use MLA, APA, or Chicago documentation styles. Google and www.writing.umn.edu/sws will help you learn how to document your sources using these styles. Any act of plagiarism or other forms of scholarly dishonesty (cheating, making up sources, stealing information from the internet) will result in a failing grade for this class and I will submit a formal report with the Office for Student Conduct and Academic Integrity. COPYING AND PASTING without citing it FROM WIKIPEDIA IS PLAGIARISM.

Late work*
I do not accept late work. Exceptions to this rule will be discussed in person on a case by case basis. Seriously, do not slip me a paper late and think all is cool and that I, like, won't notice. Talk to me.
* I understand that girlfriends dump you, landlords kick you out, or your roommate needs emotional support. If you are going through a trying time, please mention it to me ASAP and not two days after a paper is due.

Disabilities
Please speak with me as soon as possible about any arrangements and accommodations you need in conjunction with disability services.

Mental Health
Adjusting to the high expectations of academic life can be difficult and hard to handle. If you are experiencing stress, anxiety, and/or depression do not hesitate to contact Boynton to make an appointment with the Mental Health Clinic (612-624-1444). Talking through your problems is an effective way to get through this challenging time in your life. There is no shame or embarrassment in seeking mental health assistance.
ASSIGNMENTS
Response papers: 100 pts (10 pts each)
Section papers: 200 pts (40 pts each)
Final paper: 125 pts
Participation: 75 pts =
Total Points Possible: 500 pts
(+ Extra Credit: 10 pts)

Grade breakdown (percentage of points earned):

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
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Response papers: Every week by FRIDAY AT 8 PM, you will submit a response paper to Coursekit. Papers should be roughly 500 words. Response papers will grapple with course content for the week. Sometimes I will offer prompts, other times you will respond in whatever way you want. Response papers will be graded on your ability to convey your understanding of the week’s material (including details from the class), your ability to engage with the material in your own words and examples, and the clarity of your ideas in writing. There are 13 weeks of course material. You must write a response paper for 10 of these weeks.

Section papers: You will write five section papers, roughly 3-5 pages. These papers will be focused on analyzing media texts or objects using the theories and ideas presented in class. Detailed assignment sheets will be provided two weeks prior to the papers’ due dates. There is a revise/resubmit option for ONE of your papers. You may choose which one you would like to revise/resubmit (Section Five is excluded from this option). You have one week after you receive your grade and comments to resubmit. Peer review will also be integrated into the section papers.

Final paper: You will write an 8-10 page analytical paper. Details will be given out closer to the end of the semester. I am open to media productions being used in conjunction with this paper as a trade in for some of the writing material (crafting a video, podcast, etc.). Be in touch early about your ideas. A major peer review will be integrated into the final paper.

Participation: You must post 10 discussion questions on our Coursekit stream this semester. You must post a DQ by 9 p.m. the night before class for it to count. Being a part of class discussion every day is imperative to success in this course. While participating vocally in class is preferred, I understand not everyone is able to. Participating on Coursekit once a week is a fine way to participate in class if you are anxious contributing vocally. Add content to our stream, respond to people’s discussion questions, post media examples and explain how it connects to our discussion, etc. I encourage everyone to add content to Coursekit! Your participation grade will be a combination of DQs, class engagement (large and small group discussions), and additional Coursekit activity.

READING SCHEDULE (subject to change)

Jan 17: Intro to course

THEORY AND FRAMEWORKS

Jan 19: Political Economy
Harry Potter and the Commodity Fetish

Jan 24: Hegemony
Lull, “Hegemony”
Hand out Section One Paper assignment
**Jan 26: Ideology**
Nealson and Giroux, “Ideology” (START ON PAGE 10!)

**Jan 31: Ideology, race, and gender**
Hall, “The Whites of Their Eyes: Racist Ideologies and the Media”
Laura, “History, Ideology, and the Woman” (student paper)
*My Mother and My Grandmother Were "The Help***
*Lowe’s Pulls Advertising from Muslim Reality Show After Bigots Complain*

**Feb 2: Semiotics**
Hall, “Encoding/decoding”
*Snoop Dogg "Wet" video*
*No homo*
Screening: *Dreamworlds III*

**REPRESENTATIONS AND IDENTITY**

**Feb 7: Gender, the male gaze, and feminism**
PAPER ONE DUE PAPER ONE DUE PAPER ONE DUE
Mulvey, “Visual pleasure and narrative cinema”
*Bechdel Test*
*Lisa Simpson: Feminist Hero*
*In which we betray our gender*

**Feb 9: Post-feminism**
Douglas, “Girls Gone Anti-Feminist.”
James, “Post Feminism and Seventeen Magazine” (student paper)
*5 Ways to Whore-Up Your Daughter in Time for Halloween*
*Hand out Section Two Assignment*

**Feb 14: Masculinity**
Katz, “Advertising and the Construction of Violent White Masculinity”
*Male geeks reclaim masculinity at the expense of female geeks*
*Dr. Pepper (ad)*
*Dr. Pepper 10 response*
Screening: *Tough Guise*

**Feb 16: Pornification**
Caputi, “The Pornography of Everyday Life”
Levy, “Raunch Culture.”

**Feb 21: Sexual and physical violence**
*Sexual Assault Prevention Tips Guaranteed to Work*
*TEN THINGS MEN CAN DO TO PREVENT GENDER VIOLENCE*
*Love the Way You Lie: Pop culture, Race and Domestic Violence*
*History Lesson for Chris Brown*
*A good year for Chris Brown is a bad year for women*
Feb 23: Kids
Klein, "Culture Jamming: Ads Under Attack"

JCPenney's 'Too Pretty For Homework' Shirt Is A Steal At $9.99
Screening: Consuming Kids
(MELODY GONE)

Feb 28: Class
Ralph, Fred, Archie and Homer
Bettie, "Class Dismissed? Roseanne and the Changing Face of Working-Class Iconography"
Screening: Roseanne

Mar 1: Queer
Queer 101
More than just 'Lip Service'?- Stereotypes in lesbian focused drama
Padva, "Educating The Simpsons: Teaching Queer Representations in Contemporary Visual Media"

Mar 6: Gender and sport
Has the Playing Field Been Leveled? (radio show)
McKay and Johnson, "Pornographic Eroticism and Sexual Grotesquerie in Representations of African American Sportswomen"

Mar 8: Sport, sexuality, and gender
Oates, "The Erotic Gaze in the NFL Draft"

Hand out Section Three Assignment

Mar 13 & 15: SPRING BREAK

Mar 20: Disability
Riley, "Heroes of Assimilation: How the Media Transform Disability"
Jerry, "Avatar and Disability" (student paper)
Wheelchair Dancer, Lady Gaga And The Wheelchair: II
Wheelchair Dancer, Glee

INDUSTRY//MEDIA FORMATS

Mar 22:
PAPER THREE DUE PAPER THREE DUE PAPER THREE DUE
Labor and the media
Roseanne Barr: 'Fame's a bitch. It's hard to handle and drives you nuts'
10 Black Women Making Moves In Film

Mar 27: Reality TV
Pozner, “Resisting Project Brainwash"
Has Reality TV Become Black Women’s Enemy?

Mar 29: Advertising
Williamson, Selections from Decoding Advertisements
Apr 3: Advertising
Jhally, “Image-Based Culture: Advertising and Popular Culture”
About-Face: Gallery of Winners
About-Face: Gallery of Offenders
Hand out Section Four Assignment

Apr 5: Journalism
The Propaganda Model: An Overview
Screening: War Made Easy

Apr 10: Journalism
Democracy NOW!

Apr 12: Audiences
Interactive Audiences?

April 17: Culture Jamming
PAPER FOUR DUE PAPER FOUR DUE PAPER FOUR DUE
Warner, “Political Culture Jamming: The Dissident Humor of The Daily Show With Jon Stewart”

Apr 19: Zines
Duncombe, “Zines”
Hand out Section Five Assignment

Apr 24: In-class work day

Apr 26: Peer workshop day

May 1: Presentations

May 3: Presentations
CULTURE JAM/ZINE DUE CULTURE JAM/ZINE DUE

FINAL PAPER DUE MAY 9, 12:30 P.M. THROUGH COURSEKIT