First Year Seminar:

Your Entertainment Media Future: Where We Are and Where We’re Going

University of Iowa: School of Journalism and Mass Communication

JMC:1000:0002 (1 semester hour)

Fall 2019 Syllabus

3:00P - 4:15P Thursday, August 29—October 31
E254/AJB

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Office/Drop-in hours: Tuesday and Thursday: 11:30-12:30; Thursday: 2-3
Or by appointment (I can generally be there earlier on Tuesday and Thursday or stay later. I am frequently on campus for meetings on Friday and available through early-mid afternoon.)

STUDENT COURSE OBJECTIVES:

- To participate in a discussion-oriented seminar that anticipates the experience the student might be more likely to have in upper class and graduate courses.
- To understand that how we consume has a profound influence over what we consume. (I stream therefore I am.)
- To explore the changes of technology and demographic consumption (i.e. how different generations consume) that have shaken and revolutionized the entertainment industry.
- To illuminate the practical, ethical, legal and moral implications of how we choose to consume entertainment media.
- To understand the differing perspectives of the creators, the industry and the consumer in the wake of such tumultuous changes.
- To learn the standards and expectations of written work at the university level.
- To have some fun with the entertainment media we will share and discuss.
COURSE OVERVIEW

What is a TV program? It used to be easy to define—a program that you watched on a television set, likely a series that had a half-hour or hour-long episode each week. With plenty of commercials. Now, it’s trickier to decide what is TV and what isn’t, because the program could be much shorter or longer. It might originate from a web streaming site. And you can watch it on your smartphone.

As technology offers challenges and opportunities throughout popular culture, it has transformed pretty much every form of entertainment media. We now consume through new devices, new screens, which offer a whole different experience than the one your parents had with watching movies or TV, listening to music or even reading books.

Change is the only constant in media technology. And that change is accelerating, not only more radically but more rapidly. New media have always challenged old media, since well before the Internet. And old media have two choices: Adapt or die.

So where is it all leading? Who will determine the future of entertainment media? You will. Because the consumer is the one who decides which formats thrive and which ones fail, which innovations change everything and which barely register. You are in the driver’s seat. Are you taking us somewhere so wonderful that we can barely imagine it? Or are you driving us off a cliff?

What do you want? This course will help you find out, as it looks back at the entertainment media of the recent past and dares to predict what’s around the bend in the near future.

I used textbooks the first time I taught a FYS, but technology has been moving so fast that such books are now obsolete before they are even published, maybe while they are still being written. Much of what we will read over the course of this semester has yet to be written; some of what we will discuss has yet to happen. We will treat the syllabus calendar below as, at best, a preview of coming attractions, rather than a rigid plan, chiseled in stone. We will feel free to deviate as developments occur.

We will have regular reading and writing assignments, but those will be made as we go along rather than listed in advance on the syllabus. You can anticipate a series of short responses (500 words or less) and a longer final paper (1000 or so words).

There will be no (or few) lectures or power points, and there will be lots of discussion.

And, just maybe, this course might entice some of you into becoming journalism majors, where the various forms of media that you consume are what we study, analyze and illuminate. Journalism degrees are held in high value throughout the communications professions, not just by news organizations, but for careers in public relations, marketing, social media, corporate communication, event planning and many others.
GRADING
Students will be graded on attendance, class participation and written work, with the final grade to be determined as follows:

Class attendance and participation: 40%
Short written responses: 40%
Final paper: 20%

Because we only meet once a week, attendance is MANDATORY. In case of crisis or calamity, please be sure to notify me well before class (or as soon as possible).

Full attention is common courtesy. Class time and class equipment should be devoted to class activity (not surfing the Net, unless assigned research requires it, or checking your email). Cell phones should be off and away. If you can’t be here, are going to be late or need to leave early, let me know in advance.

This year, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences has designed a form to be used by the student in case of absence, to present to the professor to have the absence excused. The following link explains the CLAS absence policy, with a link to the form. Any absence for which the student does not provide explanation will be considered unexcused:

https://clas.uiowa.edu/faculty/student-attendance-and-absences#absences-illness
Teaching Policies & Resources — Syllabus Insert

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Information for Undergraduates

Absences and Attendance
Students are responsible for attending class and for contributing to the learning environment of a course. Students are also responsible for knowing their course absence policies, which will vary by instructor. All absence policies, however, must uphold the UI policy related to student illness, mandatory religious obligations, including Holy Day obligations, unavoidable circumstances, or University authorized activities (https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/attendance-absences). Students may use this absence form to aid communication; the instructor will decide if the absence is excused or unexcused (https://clas.uiowa.edu/sites/default/files/ABSENCE%20EXPLANATION%20FOR%20RM2019.pdf).

Academic Integrity
All undergraduates enrolled in courses offered by CLAS have, in essence, agreed to the College's Code of Academic Honesty. Misconduct is reported to the College, resulting in suspension or other sanctions, with sanctions communicated with the student through the UI email address (https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/academic-fraud-honor-code).

Accommodations for Disabilities
UI is committed to an educational experience that is accessible to all students. A student may request academic accommodations for a disability (such as mental health, attention, learning, vision, and physical or health-related condition) by registering with Student Disability Services (SDS). The student is then responsible for discussing specific accommodations with the instructor. More information is at https://sds.studentlife.uiowa.edu/.

Administrative Home of the Course
The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) is the administrative home of this course and governs its add/drop deadlines, the second-grade-only option, and related policies. Other colleges may have different policies. CLAS policies may be found here: https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook.

Communication and the Required Use of UI Email
Students are responsible for official correspondences sent to the UI email
address (uiowa.edu) and must use this address for all communication within UI (Operations Manual, III.15.2).

Complaints
Students with a complaint about an academic issue should first visit with the instructor or course supervisor and then with the Chair of the department or program offering the course; students may next bring the issue to the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. For more information, see https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/student-rights-responsibilities.

Final Examination Policies
The final exam schedule is announced around the fifth week of classes; students are responsible for knowing the date, time, and place of a final exam. Students should not make travel plans until knowing this information. No exams of any kind are allowed the week before finals. Visit https://registrar.uiowa.edu/final-examination-scheduling-policies.

Nondiscrimination in the Classroom
UI is committed to making the classroom a respectful and inclusive space for all people irrespective of their gender, sexual, racial, religious or other identities. Toward this goal, students are invited to optionally share their preferred names and pronouns with their instructors and classmates. The University of Iowa prohibits discrimination and harassment against individuals on the basis of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, and other identity categories set forth in the University’s Human Rights policy. For more information, contact the Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity (diversity.uiowa.edu).

Sexual Harassment
Sexual harassment subverts the mission of the University and threatens the well-being of students, faculty, and staff. All members of the UI community must uphold the UI mission and contribute to a safe environment that enhances learning. Incidents of sexual harassment must be reported immediately. For assistance, please see https://osmrc.uiowa.edu/.
COURSE CALENDAR

Week one (8/29)
Introduction and syllabus.

Week two (9/5)
Where we are and what we’re anticipating. What is streaming? How did it come to replace buying and owning?

Week three (9/12)
The “golden age” of television, and why TV is so much better now.

Week four (9/19)
Is Netflix TV or movies? (Answer: Yes.)

Week five (9/26)
How does how and where we watch affect what we watch? Do you prefer Imax or iPhone? Are the movie multiplex and the shopping mall both disappearing?

Week six (10/3)
Popular music and the crumbling of an industry. Where the crisis in downloading started, how that evolved into streaming and why music was the first to feel the challenge of digital technology. What needs to happen for Spotify and Apple to rescue the music industry. Where we stand now. Where does radio fit in all this? Is Pandora radio?

Week seven (10/10)
Videogames as competition for more traditional media. Often using the same technology and screens. Will movies and TV soon be as interactive as videogames? What about virtual reality headsets?

Week eight (10/17)
The publishing industry. When is a book not a book? What do we lose when community bookstores disappear and Amazon rules the world? How books continue to evolve—books with soundtracks and videos.

Week nine (10/24)
The war of the worlds: Amazon, Apple, Facebook and Google compete for domination. How they are different, and where they are similar?

Week ten (10/31)
Connecting all the dots and seeing where the path might lead.
Final papers due.
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