POPULAR MEDIA CULTURE
JMC:3185:0001
FALL 2016
Tuesdays & Thursdays, 9:30-10:45AM
E126 Adler Journalism Building
Prof. David Dowling
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Office hours: T/Th. 12:30PM-2PM, or by appointment

Course Description and Objectives

This course examines three of the most powerful and profitable areas of today’s popular media culture: sports media, video games, and digital publishing. Rockstar Games (the company that produces the Grand Theft Auto video games), the formation of ESPN’s sports media empire, and digital publishers’ race for mobile audiences and revenue despite the rising use of ad-blocking technology will be covered. Topics include fashion and food journalism in the transmedia digital ecosystem dominated by YouTube and new digital cinema. Two midterms and a final exam are required along with participation in in-class multimedia activities and debates.

Required Texts Available at University Bookstore

- David Johnson, Everything Bad is Good For You: How Popular Culture is Making Us Smarter $9.28 ISBN 978-1594481949
- Optional text: Michael Shapiro, Anna Hiatt, and Mike Hoyt, Tales from the Great Disruption: Insights and Lessons from Journalism’s Technological Transformation $17.99 ISBN 978-0-9961305-0-9

SJMC Learning Outcomes

The School of Journalism and Mass Communication is committed to your academic and professional success. In line with this commitment, we have identified particular learning outcomes that every student should obtain by the time they earn a JMC degree. You can find more information about these learning outcomes here: http://clas.uiowa.edu/sjmc/undergraduate-programs/assessment. We regularly assess the curriculum to determine whether students are achieving these outcomes.
This course contributes to these learning outcomes in the following areas:

- **Media Law and Ethics**
  Students will demonstrate an ability to explain their ethical approaches and reasoning about a particular dilemma in terms that can be understood by a diverse group of people. (Learning Objective 4.)

- **Media Literacy**
  All objectives under media literacy, including understand the principles of media literacy and develop the skills necessary to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media messages across multiple media domains.

- **Multiculturalism**
  To demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of groups (including communities defined by gender, race, ethnicity, age, religion and sexual orientation) in a global society in relationship to communications.

- **Media History**
  Understand the history of media in the context of industries and identify transformations in audiences, engagement, and business practice over time. Grasp the significance of advances in mass communication technology for cultural production in domestic and global media markets.

**Policies:**

- **Please stay focused; no devices in class unless the assignment requires it.** Come to class on time and remain for the full class period. Do not pack your bags until class is over.

- **No emailed or electronically submitted assignments please.** Submit all written assignments **in print** in discussion section.

- **Attendance** will be taken at each meeting. Missing more than 10 percent of classes (3) will result in a proportional reduction in grade. That means four unexcused absences drops 67 points from the 500 points possible; 5 absences reduces the grade by 83 points, and so on. Weddings, plane reservations, and nonmedical illness are not excused. Advanced notice and official (not self-signed) documentation are required for excused absences. Quizzes will only take place in class on the date designated; no make-ups please.

- **Late papers** will be penalized one letter grade for each weekday after the deadline. For example, a paper assessed as a “B,” which is due on Thursday and turned in on Monday is two weekdays late and would therefore receive a “D.” Students with legitimate difficulty in meeting a deadline should make advance arrangements with the professor for an extension; this may require turning in work before the due date.
• Make up work is only accepted for excused absences. It is the student’s responsibility to obtain the content of classes missed through classmates who were in attendance. Exchange contact information with a partner who will agree to give you the class notes in case you are absent. Never ask if you missed anything important; assume that it was important, and contact your partner for the notes.

Assignments and Grades

• Participation: 60 points
• 7 quizzes: 20 points each/140 total
• 2 Midterms: 100 points each/200 total
• Final Exam: 100 points

Total: 500 points

Quizzes will consist of five questions on the readings listed for that day. Each question is worth 4 points, each quiz is worth 20 points, and the quizzes altogether are worth 140 points. You will receive a bank of questions in class at the meeting prior to the quiz. From that bank, your five questions will be drawn.

The first midterm will be in-class. A review sheet will be available one week before each exam. To help you prepare, the class period before the exam will be a midterm review. This midterm is worth 100 points.

The second midterm will be a take-home exam that asks you to write a 5-7 page essay on one of three topics (consumer culture, sports media, or video games). I will hand out the topics one week in advance. This midterm is worth 100 points.

The final exam will cover weeks 7-15. You will trace the course’s themes in response to a series of short and long essay questions. A final exam review guide with passages and identifications will be available during the last week of class. The final exam is worth 100 points.

Grading Scale

Whole number percentages; no rounding:

A   93% and above (461 points and up)
A-  90-92% (450-460 points)
B+  87-89% (435-449 points)
B   83-86% (415-434 points)
B-  80-82% (400-414 points)
C+  77-79% (385-399 points)
C   73-76% (365-384 points)
C-            70-72% (350-364 points)
D+            67-69% (335-349 points)
D             63-66% (315-334 points)
D-            60-62% (300-314 points)
F             59% and below (299 points and under)

COURSE CALENDAR

Weeks 1-3: DIGITAL PUBLISHING

Week 1: Getting Started

First Session (Aug. 23): Introduction

Second Session (Aug. 25): The Origins of the Multimedia Feature

Week’s Reading:

Week 2: The Digital Magazine

Third Session (Aug 30): Quiz 1; Exploring Narratively

Fourth Session (Sept 1): Amplifiers and Aggregators

Week’s Reading:

Week 3: Business Models

Fifth Session (Sept 6): Ad Blockers and Content Marketing

Sixth Session (Sept 8): Branding and Multimedia Features

Week’s Reading:

### Weeks 4-9: THE AUDIENCE

**Week 4:** Participatory Culture

Seventh Session (Sept 13): **Quiz 2**; Youth Culture

Eighth Session (Sept 15): Media Consumption

**Week’s Reading:** Jenkins, H., et al. (2016). *Participatory Culture in a Networked Era*, Chapters. 2 & pp. 104-119.

**Week 5:** Online Communities

Ninth Session (Sept 20): Commercial Culture

Tenth Session (Sept 22): Political Activism

**Week’s Reading:** Jenkins, H., et al. (2016). *Participatory Culture in a Networked Era*, Chapter 5 (6, & 7 are optional).

**Week 6:** Recap

Eleventh Session (Sept 27): Review

Twelfth Session (Sept 29): **Midterm I** (Passage analysis and IDs, 100 points)

**Fashion, Food, and YouTube Celebrities**

**Week 7:** Fame Online

Thirteenth Session (Oct. 4): **Quiz 3**; YouTube Celebrities

Fourteenth Session (Oct. 6): Style, Fashion, Humor

**Week’s Reading:**

**Week 8:** From Small Screen to Big Screen

Fifteenth Session (Oct. 11): Amateur Videographers


**Week’s Reading:** Friend, “Hollywood and Vine” http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/12/15/hollywood-vine

**Week 9:** Food

Seventeenth Session (Oct. 18): **Quiz 4; Food Journalism**

Eighteenth Session (Oct. 20): “Egotarian” Cuisine

**Week’s Reading:**
- View “Behind the Counter: Inside Chipotle” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uERmpNGgaJA

**Weeks 10-12: POPULAR MEDIA’S COSTS AND BENEFITS**

**Week 10:** Is Popular Culture Bad For Us?

Nineteenth Session (Oct. 25): Surfing vs. Deep Reading

Twentieth Session (Oct. 27): Google and the Attention Economy **Midterm II Due (Take Home)**

**Week’s Reading:**
- Nicholas Carr, *The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains*, chapters 7 & 8
• Watch Digital Nation
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/digitalnation/view/

**Week 11: Facebook**

Twenty-first Session (Nov. 1): **Quiz 5; Facebook’s Impact on Society**

Twenty-second Session (Nov. 3): FB Live Video; Impact on Psychology

**Week’s Reading:**


• View: Sesame Credit: Gamification of Chinese Citizenship https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lHcTKWiZ8sI


**Week 12: Popular Culture’s Benefits**

Twenty-third Session (Nov. 8): Digital Reading and Video Games

Twenty-fourth Session (Nov. 10): TV, Internet, Film

**Week’s Reading:** Johnson, *Everything Bad For You is Good*, pp. 17-62; 116-124; Optional: 116-136

**Weeks 13-15: INDUSTRIAL TITANS: ROCKSTAR GAMES AND ESPN**

**Week 13: Rockstar Games**

Twenty-fifth Session (Nov. 15): **Quiz 6; Immersive Gaming**

Twenty-sixth Session (Nov. 17): Origins of the GTA Franchise

**Week’s Reading:** Kushner, D. (2012). *Jacked: The Outlaw Story of Grand Theft Auto*, prologue-Ch. 12

*Thanksgiving Break: Nov. 20-27*
**Week 14:** Rockstar Games, II

Twenty-seventh Session (Nov. 29): Cinematic Convergence

Twenty-eighth Session (Dec. 1): Legal and Ethical Pressure

**Week's Reading:**


**Week 15:** Sports Media and TV

Twenty-ninth Session (Dec. 6): **Quiz 7**; The On Demand TV Revolution

Thirtieth Session (Dec. 8): ESPN and Cable

**Week's Reading:**


**Final Exam:** Covers all material from Weeks 7-15 and takes place during scheduled final exam period.

**Maintaining a Professional Environment**

- Be courteous and professional in your correspondence for this course, using proper grammar and proper modes of address.
• Come prepared and be ready to contribute. Do not skip class meetings. Focus on the material when in class.

• Do not read the newspaper, text, sleep, surf the web, pass notes, or otherwise engage in behavior that distracts your (and possibly others’) attention from the course.

Media scholarship is founded upon the use of evidence and logic to formulate forceful and convincing claims. Insights and comments will be judged strictly on the merit of their content and use of textual support without regard to the individual who asserts it. The assertion of any personal, or “editorial” values beyond the scope of the course content is not required, and should be made only at the student’s discretion.

In addition to respecting one and other in class, students will approach the course’s readings and films as academic material for active study rather than passive entertainment. The study of journalism and mass communication, like the work of anthropology, involves examining texts to discover how a culture thinks about itself. In an exciting, safe classroom environment, in which the student’s social class, ethnic background, gender orientation or other personal attributes will not come under scrutiny or judgment, satisfaction will derive from finding profound meaning in the world of mass communication. It is in this spirit of mutual respect for classmates, professor, and subject matter that we begin our intellectual journey.

Expectation of Time Allocation

In a 3 semester hour course, students should expect (on average) 6 additional hours of outside work per week or a total of around 9 hours per course per week if classroom time is included. A student taking 5 courses (3 s.h. each) should expect to spend around 45 hours a week on academic work.

Administrative Home

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences is the administrative home of this course and governs matters such as the add/drop deadlines, the second-grade-only option, and other related issues. Different colleges may have different policies. Questions may be addressed to 120 Schaeffer Hall, or see the CLAS Academic Policies Handbook at http://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook.

Electronic Communication

University policy specifies that students are responsible for all official correspondences sent to their University of Iowa e-mail address (@uiowa.edu). Faculty and students should use this account for correspondences (Operations Manual, III.15.2, k.11).
Accommodations for Disabilities

A student seeking academic accommodations should first register with Student Disability Services and then meet with the course instructor privately in the instructor's office to make particular arrangements. See www.uiowa.edu/~sds/ for more information.

Academic Honesty

All CLAS students or students taking classes offered by CLAS have, in essence, agreed to the College's Code of Academic Honesty: "I pledge to do my own academic work and to excel to the best of my abilities, upholding the IOWA Challenge. I promise not to lie about my academic work, to cheat, or to steal the words or ideas of others; nor will I help fellow students to violate the Code of Academic Honesty." Any student committing academic misconduct is reported to the College and placed on disciplinary probation or may be suspended or expelled (CLAS Academic Policies Handbook).

CLAS Final Examination Policies

The final examination schedule for each class is announced by the Registrar generally by the fifth week of classes. Final exams are offered only during the official final examination period. No exams of any kind are allowed during the last week of classes. All students should plan on being at the UI through the final examination period. Once the Registrar has announced the date, time, and location of each final exam, the complete schedule will be published on the Registrar's web site and will be shared with instructors and students. It is the student's responsibility to know the date, time, and place of a final exam.

Making a Suggestion or a Complaint

Students with a suggestion or complaint should first visit with the instructor (and the course supervisor), and then with the departmental DEO. Complaints must be made within six months of the incident (CLAS Academic Policies Handbook).

Understanding 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 have a responsibility to uphold this mission and to contribute to a safe environment that enhances learning. Incidents of sexual harassment should be reported immediately. See the UI Comprehensive Guide on Sexual Harassment for assistance, definitions, and the full University policy.

Reacting Safely to Severe Weather
In severe weather, class members should seek appropriate shelter immediately, leaving the classroom if necessary. The class will continue if possible when the event is over. For more information on Hawk Alert and the siren warning system, visit the Department of Public Safety website.