

# Introduction to US electronic media

Tu Th 9:45-11:00a  
275 Nicholson

Comm 3211  
Spring 2006

Prof. Gil Rodman gbrodman@mindspring.com 612.626.7721 office hours (253 Ford) TuTh 2-3:30p; W 2-3p and by appointment	GTA Rob Baron baro0033@umn.edu 612.626.4316 office hours (285 Ford) MF 10-11a W 1:30-2:30p	GTA Sam Boerboom boer0088@umn.edu 612.626.4316 office hours (285 Ford) Tu 4-6p Th 1-2p	GTA Tony Nadler nadle002@umn.edu 612.626.0574 office hours (275 Ford) Th 4:15-5:15p and by appointment
--	---	---	---

## Course description and objectives

This course provides a basic introduction to critical media studies: the analysis of mass media texts, institutions, audiences, and practices with a focus on the historical, cultural, political, and economic contexts in which those phenomena operate. The mass media play significant -- and powerful -- roles in our daily lives: enough so that trying to understand contemporary US society without a solid understanding of the mass media would be nearly impossible. Our readings and lectures this semester will provide an overview of different analytical and theoretical approaches to the study of the mass media that scholars have taken in the past, as well as a survey of recent shifts in the media terrain that will have (and are already having) significant impact on the future of media studies.

## Readings

There is one required book -- *Mediamaking: Mass Media in a Popular Culture* (second edition), by Grossberg *et al.* -- available at the University Bookstore in Coffman Union. If you use choose to acquire this book from an alternate source, you should make sure to get the second edition.

## Listserv

All students on the official course roster as of 16 Jan have been subscribed to the course listserv, "comm3211," using their listed UMN addresses. Any student who would prefer to access the listserv using some other e-mail account is welcome to do so, but s/he must change his/her own subscription settings. Students can join the listserv and/or change their subscription settings by using the list's web interface: <http://www.comm.umn.edu/mailman/listinfo/comm3211>

The primary use of the listserv will be for course-related reminders and announcements, though you may also use it as a forum for general queries about the lectures, assigned readings, and course business. Listserv participation will not be graded.

## Grading

Final course grades will be calculated using the following schedule:

Quizzes (10 best scores out of 12-18)	10%
Exams (3 best scores out of 4)	90%

Queries about individual grades or quiz/exam questions (e.g., "why is C the correct answer to question #4?") can be directed to any of the GTAs or the professor. Disputes over individual grades (e.g., requests for grade changes) should only be directed to the professor, as the GTAs are not empowered to change grades once they've been assigned.

Final grade point totals will translate to letter grades as follows:

A	93-100	B	83-86	C	73-76	D+	67-69	F	0-59
A-	90-92	B-	80-82	C-	70-72	D	63-66	N	0-59
B+	87-89	C+	77-79	S	70-100	D-	60-62	I	n/a

- “S/N” grades will only be given to students who have registered for the course on an S/N basis.
- “I” grades will only be given under extraordinary circumstances (i.e., major life emergencies).

## Quizzes

Over the course of the semester, there will be 12-18 short quizzes given in class. Neither the exact number of quizzes nor the quiz dates will be announced in advance.

- On quiz days, quizzes may begin at any time during the class period, and will last for 15 minutes. There will be no extra time offered for quizzes, and no make-up quizzes given. If you miss a quiz due to absence, late arrival, or early departure, you will receive a grade of 0 for the quiz in question.
- Each quiz will consist of 10 fact-based questions. Questions will be drawn from the assigned readings and/or the lectures for as many as three consecutive class sessions up to and including the class in which the quiz is given. [E.g., a quiz given at the end of the period on 21 Feb could include questions on the readings and/or the lectures from 14-21 Feb.]
- Each quiz is worth 1% of your final grade, with only your best 10 quiz scores counting towards your final course grade.

## Exams

There will be four exams, one each during our regularly scheduled class periods on 9 Feb, 9 Mar, 6 Apr, and 4 May. Exams will consist of short answer questions and will be “semi-cumulative”: i.e., they will formally focus on material covered in the month’s readings/lectures immediately preceding the exam date, but since that material will often depend on an understanding of the material that has come before it, you shouldn’t simply forget everything we cover in January after the February exam is over. Each exam is worth 30% of your final course grade.

On exam days, our classroom will be cleared prior to the start of the exam. As soon as you enter the room, you will be given your copy of the exam and an answer sheet. You will not be allowed to consult any outside materials once inside. For reasons of exam security, leaving the room for any reason (including bathroom breaks) during the exam means that you are officially done with the exam: your answer sheet will be collected and you will not be allowed to re-enter the room. To be fair to the inevitable latecomers, no one will be allowed to leave the room until 10:00 am (which shouldn’t be a major problem, since you probably won’t be able to complete the exam in such a short span of time and still pass). Latecomers running more than 15 minutes late will simply have to take their chances that they can arrive before anyone else finishes.

Only your best three exam scores count towards your final course grade. There will be no make-up exams.

## Academic integrity

I assume that the vast majority of students are honest, but to help avoid potentially disastrous misunderstandings, the following is a partial list of major examples of academic dishonesty:

- Copying another student’s work on quizzes or exams.
- Having someone else take quizzes or exams for you.
- Attempting to consult notes, books, or other outside sources of information during quizzes and/or exams. [And, for the record, “other outside sources” includes cell phones, pagers, palm pilots, headphones, and other electronic devices.]

The minimum penalty for academic dishonesty is a score of zero (0) for the quiz or exam in question. When in doubt, play it safe. During quizzes/exams, do not allow your gaze to wander in ways that might look like you’ve got crib notes stashed somewhere or you’re “borrowing” answers from a neighbor.

Further information about the University’s official policies with respect to academic dishonesty can be found online at <http://writing.umn.edu/tww/plagiarism/>

## Miscellaneous

- Significant disruptions of the normal flow of course-related business -- e.g., using cell phones in class, excessive side chatter, engaging in premature leave-taking behavior -- may result in grade penalties.
- Students are allowed to may make audio recordings of our class meetings for their personal use, provided they can do so without disrupting the ordinary flow of the class. The purchase and/or sale of either written notes or audio recordings of our class meetings is strictly prohibited.

## Reading/exam schedule

<b>Jan 17</b> no reading	<b>Mar 14</b> no class -- spring break
<b>Jan 19</b> <i>Mediamaking</i> , pp. xiii-xxiii this syllabus	<b>Mar 16</b> no class -- spring break
<b>Jan 24</b> <i>Mediamaking</i> , pp. 3-28	<b>Mar 21</b> <i>Mediamaking</i> , pp. 219-252
<b>Jan 26</b> <i>Mediamaking</i> , pp. 28-51	<b>Mar 23</b> <i>Mediamaking</i> , pp. 253-292
<b>Jan 31</b> <i>Mediamaking</i> , pp. 51-71	<b>Mar 28</b> <i>Mediamaking</i> , pp. 293-315
<b>Feb 2</b> <i>Mediamaking</i> , pp. 72-98	<b>Mar 30</b> <i>Mediamaking</i> , pp. 315-335
<b>Feb 7</b> no reading -- review session	<b>Apr 4</b> no reading -- review session
<b>Feb 9</b> <b>Exam #1</b>	<b>Apr 6</b> <b>Exam #3</b>
<b>Feb 14</b> <i>Mediamaking</i> , pp. 99-126	<b>Apr 11</b> <i>Mediamaking</i> , pp. 339-357
<b>Feb 16</b> <i>Mediamaking</i> , pp. 126-143	<b>Apr 13</b> <i>Mediamaking</i> , pp. 357-377
<b>Feb 21</b> <i>Mediamaking</i> , pp. 143-160	<b>Apr 18</b> <i>Mediamaking</i> , pp. 378-395
<b>Feb 23</b> <i>Mediamaking</i> , pp. 161-192	<b>Apr 20</b> <i>Mediamaking</i> , pp. 395-420
<b>Feb 28</b> <i>Mediamaking</i> , pp. 193-216	<b>Apr 25</b> <i>Mediamaking</i> , pp. 421-455
<b>Mar 2</b> no reading -- catch-up session	<b>Apr 27</b> no reading -- catch-up session
<b>Mar 7</b> no reading -- review session	<b>May 2</b> no reading -- review session
<b>Mar 9</b> <b>Exam #2</b>	<b>May 4</b> <b>Exam #4</b>