

cmn 140

Introduction to the Mass Media

MW, 2:10-4, Wellman 6

Professor: Dr. Laramie Taylor, lartaylor@ucdavis.edu.

Office hours Monday from 1-2 in 394 Kerr Hall.

Purpose

The purpose of this course is to provide a foundation for the study of mass communication. This foundation will include background information about those media, both general and specific, as well as diverse perspectives employed in studying and analyzing them. Students will develop a greater understanding of media industries, regulations, and research, and become more informed, effective media consumers.

Assessment

Your grade will be based on three principally multiple-choice tests (two midterms and a final) and the Communication Novel Project. Each test and the project will make up roughly one-fourth of your grade. Exams may be curved at the discretion of the instructor. Each exam will consist of questions drawn, in roughly equal proportions, from the readings and lecture. Questions will test your recall, understanding, synthesis, and application of course material. Exams may only be rescheduled for university-excused absences; the final exam will not be administered at any alternative time for any reason.

Details about the Communication Novel Project can be found at the end of this syllabus.

Any extra credit opportunities will be announced to the entire class either during lecture or through email. There is no "extra" extra credit.

IMPORTANT DATES

October 19: Midterm 1 in class

November 6, noon to midnight: Take Comm Novel Quiz online

November 9: Midterm 2 in class

November 18: Comm Novel Theme Paper due at the beginning of class

November 18: Comm Novel Discussion Event in class

December 10: Final Exam

Class Format

Although principally conceived of as a lecture course, a number of learning activities will make up class. These include lecture, class discussion, watching video clips, listening to music, and so on. Note that tests will be designed to assess your entire class experience, not just what was printed on lecture slides or in the textbook.

Text

Yes, there's a textbook. It's pretty good, and not crazy expensive.

Potter, W. J. (2013). *Media literacy* (7th edition). Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.

In addition to the textbook, a number of videos are part of your assigned "reading". Although links to these are available in the 'resources' section of the course smartsite page, links sometimes go dead. If they do, search for the videos on YouTube and elsewhere online. They're not hard to find if you look.

In addition, you will need to read **one of the following novels**:

***Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury**

***Ready Player One* by Ernest Cline**

***Pirate Cinema* by Cory Doctorow**

Course Policies

- Students must begin tests on time. For test security reasons, any student arriving more than fifteen minutes late for an exam will not be allowed to take the exam.
- Students may review test answers after the exam during office hours or by appointment with the professor. This opportunity is available for one week after each exam.
- Any suspected instances of academic dishonesty will be reported to SJA. This includes, but is not limited to, giving or receiving assistance on a test or quiz and plagiarism on written work. Discussing questions from the Comm Novel Project quiz with another student, for example, is unethical and inappropriate. Buying a term paper online is unethical and inappropriate. Taking one of the sample essays from the Cliff's Notes for *Fahrenheit 451* is unethical and inappropriate, even if you just take the ideas and put it into your own words.

- Students who wish to appeal a paper grade or test grade must make the appeal in writing to Dr. Taylor. Note that if he agrees to consider the appeal, the test or paper will be re-graded independent of the initial grade. The result could be a higher grade, a lower grade, or the same grade. There is no second appeal. It is probably helpful to note that most appeals are based on some version of the assertion, “What I really *meant* was....” Alas, Dr. Taylor cannot read minds. Yet. He has to grade you on what you wrote, not what you meant.
- Many students wish to use a laptop computer to take notes during lectures. Due to research that has demonstrated that just being NEAR a student using a laptop during lecture reduces learning for others, this is discouraged. If you choose to use a laptop computer during class, you need to sit in the section of the classroom designated by the professor for this purpose.
- Disruptive or distracting behavior in class violates the UC Davis Principles of Community, which affirm that “we strive to maintain a climate of equity and justice demonstrated by respect for one another.” Show your respect for your peers and your instructor by avoiding disruptive and distracting behavior.

Schedule

September 28	The Media Environment	chapters 1 & 2
September 30	The Audience: The Individual Experience	chapter 3
October 5	The Audience: The Industry's Ideas; Children as Audience	chapters 4 & 5
October 7	History of Mass Media	How Social Media can Change History by Clay Shirky Inventions that Changed the World: Television
October 12	History & Mass Media Industries	chapter 6
October 14	Mass Media Industries	
October 19		MIDTERM 1
October 21	Mass Media Money	chapter 7
October 26	Ownership	Chapter 15
October 28	Privacy	chapter 16
November 2	Free Speech & Copyright	chapter 17 <i>Steal This Film</i>
November 4	Copyright (continued)	
November 9		MIDTERM 2
November 11	Content: Reality and Realism	chapter 8
November 16	"News"	chapter 9
November 18	Comm Novel Day	
November 23	Advertising & Entertainment	chapters 10 & 11
November 30	Media Effects	chapters 13 & 14
December 2	Media Violence	chapter 18
Thursday, Dec. 10, 1 p.m.		FINAL EXAM

Comm Novel Project

Read one of the following novels:

***Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury**

***Ready Player One* by Ernest Cline**

***Pirate Cinema* by Cory Doctorow**

THE COMM NOVEL READING QUIZ: November 6

On November 6, you are required to take an online quiz about the factual and broad thematic elements of the novel you read. This quiz will be available on Smartsite from noon until midnight November 6 ONLY, but you will have only ten minutes to complete the quiz. Although this quiz is primarily designed to encourage you to complete the reading well in advance of the project due date, it WILL count towards your grade.

A score of 8 or more correct (out of 10) will be considered indicative of mastery of the novel's content and will result in an 'A' for the quiz. A score of 7 or below will not be considered indicative of mastery, and will be scored as a percentage out of 10.

Note that, as with all work completed for class, the UC Davis Code of Academic Conduct applies for this online quiz. Specifically, this code prohibits:

- Receiving or providing unauthorized assistance on examinations
- Using or having unauthorized materials out during an examination

Telling other students about what was on the quiz, taking the quiz while flipping through the book, Googling answers...all of these are violations of the Code of Academic Conduct.

THE COMM NOVEL THEME PAPER: Due November 18

You will write a 3-4 page (roughly 775-1000 word) paper identifying, demonstrating, and developing a single communication-related theme from the novel. Identifying a theme will take the form of a thesis statement. The theme will be demonstrated using facts and brief quotations from the novel, linked together through explanatory prose. The development of the theme will take the form of a discussion of how the theme offers additional insight into elements of the novel such as characters, plot elements, and so on; it addresses the question of how the novel is different if we understand the theme.

The paper will be written using APA format, 1-inch margins, 12-point Times New Roman font, double-spaced, parenthetical citation. The introductory paragraph will be brief--less than ½ of a page. There will be no cover sheet. Your name will appear only as a header in the upper-left corner of each page.

The paper must be submitted in two formats. In order to be on time, the paper must be electronically deposited before class on the due date in the Dropbox on Smartsite, and a paper copy must be brought to class (already stapled) and handed in within 3 minutes of the beginning of class.

THE COMM NOVEL DISCUSSION EVENT: November 18 in class

On the day your theme paper is due, we will devote much of class to the discussion of the novels. Your active, engaged participation is required. Discussion questions will be provided, and you will be expected to both share your own insights and respond to the insights of others. It is expected that you will do so with civility, respect, and enthusiasm. Participation will occur in small groups, dyads, larger groups, and as an entire class. Simply attending is not the same as participating.

Note that you must be in class on the discussion day in order to participate. If you have a university-excused absence for that day (with appropriate documentation), you will need to arrange an alternative discussion event within 48 hours.