



## **SOC 204A: Sociology of Mass Media and Popular Culture**

Breidenbaugh Hall 311 • Tuesday & Thursday • 2:35 - 3:50 pm  
*Fall 2021*

### **Professor Alecea Ritter Standlee**

Department of Sociology

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*In Person Office Hours:* Tuesday & Thursday 1:30 - 2:30 pm, and by appointment

*Zoom Office Hours:* Wednesday 1:00 - 3:00 pm (<https://gettysburg.zoom.us/j/96302555997>)

**Prof. Standlee reserves the right to alter this syllabus and the assignments at any time. Changes may be made to accommodate the specific needs of this class.**

### **Course Description**

This course explores two of the most transformational and interconnected social institutions in contemporary society, mass media and popular culture. We will examine the role they play in society, paying particular attention to the following questions: What does it mean to live in a mass media and popular culture driven society? How do the diverse forms they take shape how we experience our social world and our sense of collective identity? What does this mean for our future?

We will consider the implications of existing and emerging forms of mass media that are transforming not only our daily lives, but our collective experience as well. This semester we will focus our study on the power of media driven narratives and discourses.

### **Required Course Materials**

- *Understanding Media and Culture: An Introduction to Mass Communication*
  - This is an Open Access Textbook, available as a FREE download at <https://open.lib.umn.edu/mediaandculture/>.
- Additional readings and links to videos will be posted on Moodle.

### **Moodle**

You will need to access the course Moodle site for this class. Moodle will offer access to course materials including the syllabus, supplemental readings, links to videos, discussion board resources, and be used to submit assignments.

## Learning Objectives

Upon the completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Apply sociological concepts, theories and research methods to the study of mass media and popular culture.
- Demonstrate a strong ability to evaluate media, news, popular culture, and digital information using digital literacy techniques.
- Evaluate and critique their own media and popular culture consumption and those of their peer groups.
- Identify and analyze the role of mass media and popular culture in both addressing and contributing to existing social inequalities and social problems.

## **Gettysburg Curriculum**

This course fulfills the Gettysburg Curriculum requirements of *Multiple Inquires Social Science* and *Science, Technology and Society*.

## Grading Scale

A	93-100%	C	73-76%
A-	90-92%	C-	70-72%
B+	87-89%	D+	67-69%
B	83-86%	D	63-66%
B-	80-82%	D-	60-62%
C+	77-79%	F	59% and below

## Course Assignments and Grading

### **In Class Activities (10%)**

We will engage in a series of in class discussions and activities throughout the semester. These will count toward your participation for the class and cannot be made up if missed.

### **Online Discussion Boards (15%)**

Each week you will post a summary of the weekly readings and videos (200-300 words) and a discussion question on the Moodle site. This will be due before class on Tuesday. You will then respond on Moodle to the discussion question posted by at least 2 of your classmates by Friday.

### **“Your Narratives” Individual Presentation (20%)**

I will give you the opportunity to select the category of media you wish to present on. Identify an artifact of mass media or popular culture in that category that is meaningful to YOU (e.g., a song, a film clip, a TV show [broadcast or streaming], a video game, a meme, your favorite sport, etc.).

Once you have selected your artifact, you will evaluate it to answer the following questions: What narrative or story does it tell? What existing social norms does it gesture too? Who produced this media, and why? What is its primary goal? What role does it play in resisting, reinforcing, reshaping, or otherwise engaging with social norms and larger social issues? Present a 10-minute discussion of your artifact that addresses these questions to the class.

**Take Home Essay Exams (25%)**

We will have two Take Home Essay Exams this semester. You will be given a selection of essay questions to choose from.

**Final Research Project (30%) \***

For your final paper, select a mass media or popular culture artifact that you consider having had a significant impact on contemporary society. This cannot be the same artifact that you used for your individual presentation. You will write an argumentative essay that examines the artifact and provides an effective, well supported analysis of its impact (e.g., you could select a film, TV series, music style, social media post, etc.).

**\*This final research paper is designed to meet Gettysburg College's 4th hour requirement.**

**Course Policies****Gettysburg College Honor Code**

All students of Gettysburg College are required to adhere to the College's Honor Code. Academic dishonesty, including (but not limited to) cheating and plagiarism, will not be tolerated. If you have any questions or concerns regarding whether or not something is plagiarism, please contact me. Further information and the complete Honor Code can be found at <https://www.gettysburg.edu/offices/academic-advising/honor-code/>

- **All submitted work must include a signed copy of the Honor Code pledge:**  
*I affirm that I have upheld the highest principles of honesty and integrity in my academic work and have not witnessed a violation of the Honor Code.*

**Attendance**

Attendance is essential for this course! It is important that you attend class every day. However, if you are ill or there is an emergency, missing class may be unavoidable. Students are **required** to notify me that they will be missing class, if at all possible, before the start of the scheduled class period. Absences of students who do not notify me will be counted as unexcused. This will impact their final grade. Students are responsible for making up all missed work.

**Academic Resources**

This is a writing intensive course. If you feel that writing is not your strongest ability, I encourage you to contact the Gettysburg Writing Center. The Writing Center's tutors can help you develop and organize ideas, revise and edit drafts, and share writing strategies for this and other classes. The center is open Sunday through Thursday from 4:00 - 10:00 pm on the ground floor of Breidenbaugh Hall and in the Annex on the lower level of Musselman Library. They are also available online by appointment. Visit the Writing Center at <https://www.gettysburg.edu/academic-programs/english/student-opportunities/the-writing-center.dot> for more information.

### **Late Papers and Make-up Exams**

Assignments are due by the beginning of the scheduled class. Students must contact me **before** the due date to negotiate any extensions. Make-up exams will only be given in extreme (and documented) circumstances. If you cannot begin an exam at the scheduled time, you must contact me **before** the exam starts.

### **Citation Format**

Students in this course are required to follow ASA (American Sociological Association) guidelines for citation and style. Sociology Department's Style Guide and additional resources are available at <https://www.gettysburg.edu/academic-programs/sociology/current-students/writing-guides.dot>

### **Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

If you have a documented disability and need special accommodations for any aspect of this course, contact me by the end of the 2nd week of class so that we can make any arrangements.

### **Religious Holidays**

Gettysburg College is fully committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Students have the right to engage in essential practices of their faith while minimizing conflict with the course requirements. Contact me to make accommodations for your Religious Observances.

### **Classroom Conduct**

A core tenant of Gettysburg College's mission is "the worth and dignity of all people." I consider this one of the most important things that you will learn in this class. The nature of the material we are going to cover may include difficult discussions and challenging ideas. Throughout this course, students are expected to treat one another and the professor thoughtfully and with respect. Above all, it is your responsibility to acknowledge the worth and dignity of all your classmates, yourself, and your professor. To help everyone accomplish this, **hate speech is unacceptable, and racist, sexist, homophobic, Anti-Asian, Islamophobic, transphobic, classist or other pejorative or discriminatory language will not be tolerated!**

### **Pronoun and Name Usage**

This course affirms people of diverse identities, including all gender expressions and gender identities. If I refer to you by the incorrect pronoun ("s/he"), please tell me of your desired pronoun (she, he, they, ze, etc.). Additionally, if you prefer to be called a different name than what is on the class roster, let me know. Feel free to ask me any questions or share concerns.

## SOC 204A: Sociology of Mass Media and Popular Culture - Course Schedule

### Week 1: August 31 & September 2

#### Welcome

- Lecture: Mass Media as Discourse

#### Readings

- *Understanding Media and Culture*, Chapter 2.1, 2.2 and 2.4 <https://tinyurl.com/sw2acrys>

### Week 2: September 7 & 9

#### Methods and Media Analysis

- Lecture: Analyzing Media and Popular Culture Through the Lens of Media Literacy
- Activity: Doing Media Analysis

#### Readings and Video

- *Understanding Media and Culture*, Chapter 2.3 <https://tinyurl.com/27x3a3kk>
- Video: *Media Literacy Basics*, Pace University <https://tinyurl.com/rxx9xnsu>

#### Assignments

- Readings/Video Summary and Discussion Question Due Tuesday, September 7
- Responses to Discussion Questions Due Friday, September 10

### Week 3: September 14 & 16

#### History of Media

- Lecture: Mass Media Through Time
- Student Presentations: *Your Narratives in “New” Media*

#### Readings and Video

- *Understanding Media and Culture*, Chapter 1.3 <https://tinyurl.com/mz67ae8>
- Video: *Media History*, Films on Demand <https://tinyurl.com/2mxd3sn6>

#### Assignments

- Readings/Video Summary and Discussion Question Due Tuesday, September 14
- Responses to Discussion Questions Due Friday, September 17

### Week 4: September 21 & 23

#### Music: Narratives of Resistance and Activism

- Lecture: Music as Means to Create Social Solidarity
- Student Presentations: *Your Narratives in Music*

#### Readings

- *Understanding Media and Culture*, Chapter 6 <https://tinyurl.com/32ayu7ee>
- Excerpts from *Sounds of Resistance: The Role of Music in Multicultural Activism* <https://tinyurl.com/y2ekmnu7>
  - “Toward a Truer World: Overt and Implied Messages of Resistance from Slave Songs to Rap”
  - “Anti–Vietnam War Protest Music”

#### Assignments

- Reading Summary and Discussion Question Due Tuesday, September 21
- Responses to Discussion Questions Due Friday, September 24

**Week 5: September 28 & 30****Film and Narratives of Power, Status and Control**

- Lecture: Minority Representation and Absence in Film
- Student Presentations: *Your Narratives in Film*

## Readings

- *Understanding Media and Culture*, Chapter 8 <https://tinyurl.com/f9wu3y4s>
- Excerpts from *The Myth of Colorblindness* <https://tinyurl.com/2d9rxzk4>
  - “The Paradox of Post-racialism: Black Hollywood’s Voice in Post-racial Discourse”
  - “Latinas/os in Hollywood: Contemporary Representations in Black and White”

## Assignments

- Readings Summary and Discussion Question Due Tuesday, September 28
- Responses to Discussion Questions Due Friday, October 1

**Week 6: October 5 & 7****Television as Defining Narratives Past and Present**

- Lecture: Gender Roles, Conformity and TV
- Student Presentations: *Your Narratives in Television*

## Readings and Video

- *Understanding Media and Culture*, Chapter 9 <https://tinyurl.com/2jzwejkz>
- “#MeToo In the Kitchen,” *Context* <https://tinyurl.com/3389b37j>
- “#metoo and Twitter: The Feminist Movement on Social Media” <https://tinyurl.com/n59v5325>
- Video: *Gender Roles in Cartoons and Toy Commercials: Its Effects on Children*, Majestic Pictures Television <https://tinyurl.com/urhd5h7t>

## Assignments

- Readings/Video Summary and Discussion Question Due Tuesday, October 5
- **Take Home Essay Exam 1: Passed Out Thursday, October 7**
- Responses to Discussion Questions Due Friday, October 8

**Week 7: October 12 & 14****Mid-term and Reading Days**

- **No Class Tuesday, October 12 - Reading Days**
- Take Home Essay Exam 1 Work Day, October 14

## Assignments

- **Take Home Essay Exam 1: Due Friday, October 15 by 5pm. Submit via Moodle.**

**Week 8: October 19 & 21****Advertising in TV and Beyond**

- Lecture: Reinforcing Hierarchies of Race and Gender
- Activity/Discussion: GenderAds Discussion and Group Activity

## Readings

- *Understanding Media and Culture*, Chapter 12 <https://tinyurl.com/krj64uuu>
- “Memes” <https://tinyurl.com/d5fcmk4j>

- Excerpts from *Food Is Love: Food Advertising and Gender Roles in Modern America* <https://tinyurl.com/4yhz32xv>
  - Chapter 2: “Love, Fear, and Freedom: Selling Traditional Gender Roles”
  - Chapter 3: “Women’s Power to Make Us: Cooking Up a Family’s Identity”

Assignments

- Readings Summary and Discussion Question Due Tuesday, October 19
- Responses to Discussion Questions Due Friday, October 22

**Week 9: October 26 & 28**

**Journalism and Information Distribution**

- Lecture: Politics, Partisan News and Echo chambers
- Activity: SIFT, Fact Checking and Echo Chambers

Readings and Videos

- *Understanding Media and Culture*, Chapter 4 <https://tinyurl.com/59sxbrrt>
- “Inside the Echo Chamber,” *Scientific American* <https://tinyurl.com/642pn69f>
- Video: *Beware Online “Filter Bubbles,”* TED Talk <https://tinyurl.com/4bw3hdcu>

Assignments

- Readings/Video Summary and Discussion Question Due Tuesday, October 26
- Responses to Discussion Questions Due Friday, October 29

**Week 10: November 2 & 4**

**Sports, Media and Culture**

- Lecture: Athletics in Contemporary Culture and Current Events - Guest Speaker
- Student Presentations: *Your Narratives in Athletics and Media*

Readings and Video

- “Making Sports More Sporting,” *Contexts* <https://tinyurl.com/j3e25d6d>
- “‘Real Men Stand for Our Nation:’ Constructions of an American Nation and Anti-Kaepernick Memes,” *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* <https://tinyurl.com/s2wknvzn>
- Video: *Sociology of Sports*, Castalia Media <https://tinyurl.com/44s33m6b>

Assignments

- Readings/Video Summary and Discussion Question Due Tuesday, November 2
- Responses to Discussion Questions Due Friday, November 5

**Week 11: November 9 & 11**

**Video Games and Narratives of Belonging**

- Lecture: Gaming and Insider/Outsider Culture
- Student Presentations: *Your Narratives of Gaming*

Readings

- *Understanding Media and Culture*, Chapter 10 <https://tinyurl.com/2s9pjhcm>
- Excerpt from *The Queer Games Avant-Garde: How LGBTQ Game Makers Are Reimagining the Medium of Video Games* <https://tinyurl.com/4b2p24a8>
  - Chapter 1: “Nonbinary Characters, Asexuality, and Game Design as Joyful Resistance”

- Excerpt from *Future Gaming: Creative Interventions in Video Game Culture*  
<https://tinyurl.com/vfcfvmad>
  - Chapter 5: “GamerGate: Becoming Parasites to Gaming”

#### Assignments

- Readings Summary and Discussion Question Due Tuesday, November 9
- Responses to Discussion Questions Due Friday, November 12

### **Week 12: November 16 & 18**

#### **Narratives of Interconnection and Privacy**

- Lecture: Privacy and Social Media
- Student Presentations: *Your Narratives of Social Media*

#### Readings and Video

- *Understanding Media and Culture*, Chapter 11 <https://tinyurl.com/byjsbnpn>
- “Privacy and Publics,” *Humans R Social Media* <https://tinyurl.com/fy6fs934>
- “Relationships,” *Humans R Social Media* <https://tinyurl.com/29h5ky7j>
- Video: *Tim Cook at the 2021 Computers, Privacy & Data Protection Conference: Enforcing Rights in a Changing World* <https://tinyurl.com/24yvk7eb>

#### Assignments

- Readings/Video Summary and Discussion Question Due Tuesday, November 16
- **Take Home Essay Exam 2: Passed Out Tuesday, November 16**
- Responses to Discussion Questions Due Friday, November 19

### **Week 13: November 23 & 25**

- In Class Activity Tuesday, November 23
- **No Class - Thanksgiving Break Thursday, November 25**

#### Assignments:

- **Take Home Essay Exam 2: Due Tuesday, November 23 by 5pm. Submit via Moodle.**

### **Week 14: November 30 & December 2**

#### **Digital Media and Narratives of Civil and Un-civil Discourse**

- Lecture: Trolling, Abuse and the Internet
- Activity: Where Does Digital Media Go Wrong?

#### Readings and Video

- *Understanding Media and Culture*, Chapter 8 <https://tinyurl.com/yj9dxv4m>
- “Terrorism and the Digital Right Wing,” *Contexts* <https://tinyurl.com/5x6t222y>
- Excerpt from *It’s Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens*  
<https://tinyurl.com/4ef4huyc>
  - Chapter 5: “Is Social Media Amplifying Meanness and Cruelty?”
- Video: *The Moderators*, Field of Vision <https://fieldofvision.org/the-moderators>

#### Assignments

- Readings/Video Summary and Discussion Question Due Tuesday, November 30
- Responses to Discussion Questions Due Friday, December 3



**Week 15: December 7 & 9**

**Emerging Technology and Narratives of the Future of Mass Media and Popular Culture**

- Lecture: Living Technological Lives
- Activity: The Future of Us

Readings

- *Understanding Media and Culture*, Chapter 16 <https://tinyurl.com/48n6zb8u>

Assignments

- No Reading Summary or Discussion Question Due

**Final Comprehensive Paper**

- **Final Paper is due by Tuesday, December 14 at 11:30 am via Moodle**
- The paper replaces a final in-class exam.
- **LATE PAPERS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED!**