



The mission of Concord University is to provide quality, liberal arts based education, to foster scholarly and creative activities and to serve the regional community (<http://www.concord.edu/academics/>).

Course Prefix, Number and Title: MCOM 321, Media Criticism

Course CRN # and Section: 20294, Section 01

Semester Taught: Spring 2019

Professor: Robert Hoffman

Credit Hours: 3

Office Location: Fine Art M09

Prerequisites:

MCOM 142 Introduction to Mass Communication

Office Hours:

MWF 1:00PM - 1:50PM

TR 2:00PM - 2:50PM

and by Appointment

Course Time: MWF 2:00PM - 2:50PM

Email: rhoffman@concord.edu

Building and Room Number: Library B8

Phone: 304-384-5309

College/Department Website:

<https://www.concord.edu/comm/>

Course Description/Rationale:

This course offers a close examination of the content of electronic media as communication for the dissemination of ideas, and how they affect the cultures in which they are part. During the course, we will focus on interpreting and making sense of media texts. We will also examine several controversial topics in which students may have clashing viewpoints. This course examines how media shapes our awareness of the world and our identities, how perception plays a role in our understanding of media content, and how we evaluate information provided to us. The artistic qualities of media content will also be considered. The main emphasis of this course is learning on how to establish valid critical viewpoints about the media and how to communicate those viewpoints effectively.

Hardware/Software Needed:

Access to Blackboard

Text requirements:

Alexander, Allison and Jarice Hanson. *Taking Sides: Clashing Views in Media and Society*. 14th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill 2014

Kavoori, Anandam P. *Digital Media Criticism*. New York: Perter Lang, 2010. Print

Concord University Educational Goal(s)

Skills: Proficiency in interpreting data, integrating information, formulating ideas, thinking critically, and communicating with others, as demonstrated by the following competencies:

1. An ability to employ appropriate observational, logical, analytical, computational, creative, and critical thinking skills within and across academic discipline; and to apply these skills in problem solving.
2. An ability to analyze, synthesize, and integrated elements, information and ideas
3. An ability to evaluate elements, information, and ideas on the basis of appropriate criteria

Attitudes: Tendencies conducive to self-knowledge, personal growth and development, and responsible citizenship as demonstrated by the following:

1. Habitual reflection on ethical/moral implications of actions when weighing decisions and evaluating outcomes.
2. Respectful attentiveness to differing perspectives and willingness to engage dialogue across differences in order to seek mutual understanding and equitable conflict resolution.
3. Cultivation of and support for attitudes and practices that foster physical, mental, emotional, and social well-being.
4. Appreciation for the creative process and for the rich diversity of artistic achievement.
5. Commitment to social responsibility, including community service and civil engagement.

Specific Learning Outcomes:

- 1) To enhance critical thinking skills through analyzing, evaluating, and forming decisions about complex issues affecting mass media and society.
- 2) To help students improve their communication skills in both the written and oral modes in order to enhance their effectiveness in expressing their views on the issues discussed.

- 3) To encourage students to be more tolerant of ambiguity and diversity as it pertains to the human experience and to increase their ability to deal with multiple viewpoints.
- 4) To gain an understanding of what exactly media criticism is (and is not) as well as four methods of media criticism.

Course Requirements:

- 1) **Exams (300 points)** There will be two exams during the course. The midterm exam will be worth 150 points and the final exam will be worth 150 points. I will provide a review and study guide for both exams.
- 2) **Quizzes (200 points)** To ensure that you are reading the course material and paying attention in class there will be four quizzes worth 50 points each.
- 3) **Homework (200 points)** Homework assignments will be given during the course as we will examine current media issues that are going on in the world. Please stay informed as controversial events happen and pay attention to how the media reports on those events.
- 4) **Thought Paper/Short Essays (200 points)** Periodically, you will be asked to write about course materials that you have been reading. These papers will allow me to gauge your level of understanding, and enhance your written communication skills by training you to defend your arguments and look for weaknesses in arguments made by others.
- 5) **Attendance (100 points)** This is the easy part! If you show up and are an active participant in class discussions, then you will not only make the learning environment more engaging but will also pocket 100 points.

Grading Policy and Scale: This course uses 1000 pt. scale

- A (1000 – 900)
- B (890 – 800)
- C (790 – 700)
- D (690 – 600)
- F (590 and Below)

Course Policies:

- 1) All work completed outside of class must be typed and stapled (if necessary)
- 2) quizzes and exams can't be made up without a university approved excuse.
- 3) Late work will not be accepted. All work must be submitted the day it's due.
- 4) Please use standard fonts when typing assignments
- 5) Do not be late for class
- 6) the only reason you should bring a laptop to class is to take notes. Please do not text or use social media while you are in class. I see you on your device I will ask you to leave.

7) Any behavior that disrupts the class will not be tolerated! Texting, belligerence, personal attacks, demeaning comments, or having emotional outbursts is inappropriate. If I am unable to conduct class due to the type of the disruptions above (or any other kind) you will be asked to leave the classroom. If the disruptive behavior continues you will be dismissed from the course and receive a F. In short, we are all adults, let's be civil.

Course Timeline (Schedule of Assignments/Assessments/Presentations)

Week	Monday	Wednesday	Friday
Week 1	1/14	1/16 First Day of Classes Course Introduction Review of the Syllabus	1/18 Why Study Media Criticism? Key Methods of Media Criticism (Kavoori Ch.1&2)
Week 2	1/21 No Class - Martin Luther King, Jr. Day	1/23 Genre Criticism and Consumer Generated Content (Kavoori Ch. 3)	1/25 Genre Criticism and Consumer Generated Content Continued
Week 3	1/28 Auteur Criticism and Social Media (Kavoori Ch. 4)	1/30 Auteur Criticism and Social Media Continued Review for quiz	2/1 Quiz 1
Week 4	2/4 Cultural Criticism and the Cell Phone (Kavoori Ch. 5)	2/6 Cultural Criticism and the Cell Phone Continued	2/8 Ethnographic Criticism and Video Games. (Kavoori Ch. 6)
Week 5	2/11 Ethnographic Criticism and Video Games. (Kavoori Ch. 6)	2/13 Do Media Reflect Contemporary Family Relationships? Yes: Leigh H. Edwards (Read: TS Introduction pp.8-10 & 13-21)	2/15 No Class
Week 6	2/18 Do Media Reflect Contemporary Family Relationships? No: Sarah Boxer (Read: TS pp.22-26) Review for Quiz Two	2/20 Quiz 2	2/22 Have Media Representations of Minorities Improved? No: Elizabeth Monk-Turner et al. (Read: pp.40-44)
Week 7	2/25 Have Media Representations of Minorities Improved? Yes: Drew Chappell (Read: TS pp.29-37)	2//27 Have Media Representations of Minorities Improved? No: Elizabeth Monk-Turner et al. (Read: pp.40-44)	3/1 Have Media Representations of Minorities Improved? No: Elizabeth Monk-Turner et al. (Read: pp.40-44)

Week 8	3/4 Have Media Representations of Minorities Improved? No: Elizabeth Monk-Turner et al.(Read: pp.40-44)	3/6 Catch-up Day Review for Midterm	3/8 Midterm Exam
	Spring	Break	March 11 th -15 th
Week 9	3/18 Review Midterm Exam	3/20 Homework Presentation: Representation of Minorities on TV	3/22 Homework Presentation: Hank Willis Thomas
Week 10	3/25 Is There Any Harm in Taking Selfies? Yes: Elizabeth Day (Read: TS pp.120	3/27 Is There Any Harm in Taking Selfies? Yes: Elizabeth Day (Read: TS pp.120	3/29 Is There Any Harm in Taking Selfies? No: Jenna Wortham (Read: TS pp.126-127)
Week 11	4/1 Is There Any Harm in Taking Selfies? No: Jenna Wortham (Read: TS pp.126-127)	4/3 Do Media Distort Representations of Islam and Arab Cultures? Yes: Wajahat Ali et al. (Read: pp.60-66) Review for Quiz	4/5 Quiz 3
Week 12	4/8 Do Media Distort Representations of Islam and Arab Cultures? Yes: Wajahat Ali et al. (Read: pp.60-66)	4/10 Do Media Distort Representations of Islam and Arab Cultures? No: Gal Beckerman (Read: pp.67-70)	4/12 Do Media Distort Representations of Islam and Arab Cultures? Yes: Wajahat Ali et al. (Read: pp.60-66)
Week 13	4/15 Do Social Media Enhance Real Relationships? Yes: Zeynep Tufekci (Read: TS pp.267-271)	4/17 Do Social Media Enhance Real Relationships? Yes: Zeynep Tufekci (Read: TS pp.267-271)	4/19 Do Social Media Enhance Real Relationships? No: Sherry Turkle (Read: TS pp.272-274)
Week 14	4/22 Do Social Media Enhance Real Relationships? No: Sherry Turkle (Read: TS pp.272-274)	4/24 Do Video Games Encourage Sexist Behavior Yes: Anita Sarkeesian (Read: TS pp.91-97) Review for Quiz	4/26 Quiz 4
Week 15	4/29 Do Video Games Encourage Sexist Behavior Yes: Anita Sarkeesian (Read: TS pp.91-97)	5/1 Do Video Games Encourage Sexist Behavior No: Kaitlin Tremblay (Read: TS pp.98-100)	5/3 Review for Final Exam Last Day of Class

			Final Exam: Monday May 6 th 2:00PM - 4:15PM
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Accessibility/Accommodations:

Concord University is committed to responding to the needs of students with disabilities as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act. Please inform your instructor at the beginning of the class semester if you have a disability and are requesting accommodations. It is your responsibility to self-disclose that you are requesting accommodations. The University and instructor will provide you with a reasonable accommodation. You should register with CU's Disability Services Office, located in the Athens campus Jerry and Jean Beasley Student Center, Bottom Floor, across from the Campus Post Office. The Disability Services Office phone is 304-384-6086 or you can email the Director, Nancy Ellison, at nellison@concord.edu for assistance.

Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty is morally unacceptable as well as destructive to the learning and teaching atmosphere. Academic dishonesty includes the giving or receiving of improper help on examinations or assignments, falsifying documents, and plagiarism (the act of stealing and using, as one's own, the ideas or the expression of the ideas of another). Such dishonesty can lead to a variety of penalties — including but not limited to failure of assignment, failure of course, loss of institutional privileges, or dismissal from the University. (See University Catalog Academic Policies and Procedures.)

Concord University Honor Code

A Concord University Honor Code was approved by students, staff, faculty, administration, and the CU Board of Governors. The Code states:

"As a member of the Concord University Community I will act with honesty and integrity in accordance with our fundamental principles and I will respect myself and others while challenging them to do the same."

The Honor Code is intended to unite the Concord community behind a culture of honesty, integrity, and civility.

Class/Online Attendance Policy

Regular class attendance is part of a student's academic obligation at Concord. Irregular attendance may affect academic performance adversely and is detrimental to the atmosphere of a class. (See University Catalog Academic Policies and Procedures.)

Emergency Alert System

In an effort to increase safety and security on our campus, Concord University encourages everyone to register for instant text message alerts. Alerts will only be used for security and safety notices. All students, faculty, and staff are eligible to receive text message alerts on their cell phones or email alerts. Please contact the IT Help Desk for further assistance (304-384-5291).

Emergency Information

Emergency/courtesy telephones are located at the main entrance of each residence hall and at various other locations on campus. Emergency telephones can be identified by the flashing blue light and will provide the user with a direct link to Public Safety at the press of a button. To report an on-campus emergency, call 304-384-5357 or 911. The Office of Public Safety is located on the bottom floor of the Rahall Technology Center. For further emergency information go to: <http://www.concord.edu/administration/office-public-safety>.

Inclement Weather Policy

As a general policy, the University will remain in normal operations during adverse weather conditions. In the event of severe weather conditions, the following may occur:

University Closure

No students or employees are to report.

Classes Cancelled

Students do NOT report BUT employees are expected to report to work at their normal time.

Operating on an Inclement Weather Delay

Under this schedule, all 8 a.m. classes will start at 10 a.m. Students and faculty will follow the Inclement Weather Schedule. (See <http://www.concord.edu/emergency-alerts> for Athens/Beckley Inclement Weather Schedules.)

**Announcements invoking the late schedule or other options referenced above are aired on area radio and television stations and are sent as text and email messages to those enrolled for this service.*

Student Conduct

In classrooms, online, laboratories, and during any activities that are part of course requirements, students are expected to observe reasonable rules of conduct.

Sexual Harassment & Assault

Federal law, Title IX, and Concord University policy prohibits discrimination, harassment, and violence based on sex and gender (Including sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic/dating violence, stalking, sexual exploitation, and retaliation). If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can receive confidential counseling support through the Concord University Counseling Center (304-384-5290). Alleged Violations can be reported non-confidentially to the Concord University Title IX Coordinator at 304-384-6327 or titleix@concord.edu. Reports to Campus Security can be made at (304-384-5357). As an employee at Concord University, I am a mandatory reporter which means I must report any sexual misconduct I am made aware of. This includes verbal or written (such as in an assignment) disclosures of sexual harassment or sexual assault.

Technology Services

Contact the CU Help Desk at extension 5291 from campus or 304-384-5291 off campus. You may also e-mail cuhelpdesk@concord.edu.

Syllabus Disclaimer

"This syllabus is subject to change based on the needs of the class. Please check it regularly."

Miscellaneous (for example):

Sources of Help

Glossary of Terms

Related Research/Professional Organizations