



Spc 333

“Minorities” & The Media

a.k.a Race, Class & Gender in Media

Spring 2010

Dr. Michael I. Niman

BuffaloState

State University of New York

SPC 333 Spring 2010 Syllabus

“Minorities” and the Media

a.k.a Race, Class & Gender in Media

3.0 Credit Hours

Wednesday 6:00-8:40 – Bulger 2NB

Professor: **Dr. Michael I. Niman**

Office Hours: Tuesday / Thursday 12:00 – 1:30 PM / 3:00-4:00

Wednesday 3:00 -5:45PM & by appt. 230 Bishop Hall

Professor’s Website: <http://mediastudy.com>

This course is primarily about access and control – what individuals or groups have or don’t have access to the American media, and who determines the ultimate content of our media. Utilizing the five categories of American experience -- *race, gender, ethnicity, class and religion* -- as starting points, students will learn to employ critical media research methods in an effort to gain a comprehensive understanding of how the media portrays traditionally underrepresented groups in American society. Students will examine and deconstruct all forms of mass media in an effort to critically examine how representations of various groups are constructed and how those constructions impact society. Students will examine how stereotypes, language and visual codes serve to create and maintain an societal definition of “normal” – a definition that marginalizes or excludes major sectors of the American population. Finally, we’ll question whether the media serves to improve or undermine relations between the various groups comprising America’s cultural mosaic.

GRADING

30% Class Participation – Includes preparing reading-based rhetorical discussion questions and participating in class discussions. Discussion questions will demonstrate a reflexive comprehension of the reading material and **must be brought to class**. Students will write **one question for each chapter or article** included as part of that week’s readings. A good question should cite the reading and pose a thought provoking open-ended question based on the issues discussed in the reading. Questions will be collected and graded with an “S” for satisfactory, a “U” for unsatisfactory and a star for outstanding. Students who are not in class are not participating (as in not earning a good participation grade) and

will not be able to turn in discussion questions. **Discussion questions are not accepted late (except with documentable medical absence).**

Discussion questions should be brought to class during the week *after* which they were assigned. On the top of each sheet of questions, write "SPC 333," your name and the number (as per syllabus) of the *week that they are due, which is the week that you are turning them in*. Students will also complete one in-class (CEP week) essay about their experience in this class.

20% Media Deconstruction Project (Due Week 10 → 4/7) – Students will examine print magazine advertisements with common pejorative messages (overt or hidden) regarding gender, class, race, ethnicity or religion, and explain **(1) what the message is, (2) why is it pejorative, (3) how it is conveyed, and (4) what is its potential impact on society.**

Findings will be written as a 3+ page paper which **(a) references similar pejorative media products as well as (b) citing scholarly sources** (see online style guide at mediastudy.com) for an analysis of your chosen 'ism' and how the mass media generally portrays it. Grade will reflect **depth and clarity of ideas** and **quality of research**. Please *include* the ads or copies of the ads with your paper. See note on plagiarism below. Hint: This assignment is easier if you spend research time looking for ads that have a **clear** pejorative message – as opposed to one that only you seem to be able to see.

20% Mid-Semester Exam – Essay (Week 8 → 3/17)

30% Semester Research Paper (Due Last Day of Class → 5/5) –

Choose **one group** (race, class, gender, religion, ethnicity) and **chronicle the history of their portrayal in the American media**. Use examples of **positive and negative** media portrayals and explain the **impact** these portrayals have had on the group's experiences in American society. Off-topic papers automatically earn a failing grade. **Papers must cite scholarly sources *not discussed in class* (including books), AND reference class discussions and readings (must reference at least two readings from the COM 333 Reading Pack)**. Paper should be at least (an honest) 7 pages and **must contain a References Cited** section. No portion of the paper may be recycled from a previous or concurrent class. You must follow the above instructions to earn a passing grade. See note on plagiarism below. My online style guide at <http://mediastudy.com/writingguide.html> outlines how to cite sources etc. Your paper will be graded by the standards outlined in this guide.

Please Note:

All policies articulated in this syllabus supersede Communication Department suggested policies.

Grading of student papers will reflect Standard American English usage. Buffalo State students and faculty generally use Chicago, APA or MLA bibliographic styles. All are acceptable. Students should use one style consistently throughout their paper. I prefer The Chicago Manual of Style for this class. A Chicago style guide is available online (Adobe) at <http://mediastudy.com/AAstyleguide.pdf>.

Plagiarism will result in automatic course failure and departmental or college disciplinary action. Ask around – I firmly enforce this policy w/o exceptions. Plagiarism means passing off someone else's ideas, work or writing (intellectual property) as if it is your own. **Quotes must be inside of quotation marks** and clearly cited. Any other use of a sequence of words, no matter how few, not written by you constitutes plagiarism. Likewise, any series of **ideas** presented by someone else, or any **analytical structure** written by someone else, must be properly cited **even if you present their work in your own words**. Professor reserves the right to upload all papers, minus student names, into an anti-plagiarism database.

Students entering this course **must** possess literacy skills (reading comprehension and writing) appropriate for a college junior.

Cellies must be in silent mode. "Ringing" cellular devices = lowered semester grade and/or public torment and humiliation.

Surreptitiously turning in an absent student's assignment constitutes fraud on the part of both students involved and will result in automatic class failure for both students. A student with an **excused medical or catastrophe absence** may send their paper to class or to my office, with a clear note attached explaining their excused absence.

The use of **electronic recording devices** is prohibited in this class except with specific permission of the professor, or except, after notification of the professor, as provided for under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Course content is protected intellectual property.

3.0 credit courses require at least **9.0 hours of work per week**.

Please remember that grading is never quite fair, so don't expect your grade to always adequately reflect what you have learned. The best strategy to address the injustices inherent in grading is to carefully read the reading material, submit exemplary assignments, show up on time,

participate in class and avoid any possible ambiguity regarding the quality of your work.

By registering for and remaining in this class, students are agreeing to abide by these guidelines.

BSC Disabilities Policy: " *Any student who requires accommodations to complete the requirements and expectations of this course because of a disability is invited to make his or her needs known to the professor and to Marianne Savino, the Coordinator of Services for Students with Disabilities, 120 South Wing, 878-4500*" (BSC Office of Disabilities Services Syllabus Statement).

REQUIRED TEXT

SPC 333 Course Reading Pack – **Available (approx \$24) at Queen City Imaging**, 3100 Main Street. Open M-F 8am-7pm, Sat 10am-2pm thru week 1. Open M-F 8am-5pm after that. Telephone: 832-8100. From BSC, left on Elmwood, right on Amherst or Hertel, left on Main St. Elmwood bus to Hertel bus, get off at Main Street. QCI is one block north of LaSalle subway station. The reading load for this class averages 50 pages per week of upper-division level articles and chapters.

The Heart of Whiteness: Confronting Race, Racism and White Privilege by Robert Jenson. City Lights Books (\$12.95). **Available at the Main Street Talking Leaves Bookstore**, 3158 Main St. (between Hertel and Winspear - 837-8554). Talking Leaves is two blocks north of Queen City Imaging.

Spring 2010 Course Outline

WEEK 1 (1/27)

Introductions. Discuss xenophobia and ethnocentrism. What is racism? What is homophobia? What is social class? Melting pot vs. cultural mosaic. Who are we?

Read Week 2 Readings. Write Discussion Questions Based on Readings. Discussion questions due during week 2.

WEEK 2 (2/3)

The anthropology of race – race as a political construct. Racism as a social disease. Similarities among prejudices. Political uses of polarizing media. Propaganda theory as it pertains to hate speech.

Read Week 3 Readings and Jensen 1-26. Write Discussion Questions Based on Readings.

WEEK 3 (2/10)

Anti-Black racism – America's persistent prejudice. History of Racism in American media. The new "post-racist" racism in American media. {View "Ethnic Notions" }

Read Week 4 Readings and Jensen 26-65. Write Discussion Questions Based on Readings.

Also:

*Find an example of racist media or media that perpetrates stereotypes against any group and **bring it to class on 2/17**. (Hint look at children's books, look at your DVD/video music collections, thumb through magazines or newspapers).*

WEEK 4 (2/17)

Structural impact of racist media. Combating racism. Discuss media artifacts. Discuss "Buddy Films" (Men in Black II etc.).

Read Week 5 Readings. Write Discussion Questions Based on Readings.

WEEK 5 (2/24)

"Orientalism." Anti-Arab and Anti-Islamic images in popular culture – the "acceptable" prejudice.

Read Week 6 Readings. Write Discussion Questions Based on Readings.

WEEK 6 (3/3)

Native American images in the mass media from Columbus to the present day. Persistent cultural myths (Columbus, Thanksgiving). Cowboys and Indians. Anacronizing Native Americans. The sports mascot controversy.

Read Week 7 Readings. Write Discussion Questions Based on Readings. Maybe take next week's Walking Tour.

WEEK 7 (3/10)

Disney. Deconstruct Disney images. The encoding of social messages into children's entertainment.

Read Week 8 Readings. Take "Social Class in Buffalo Walking Tour" (see Angel class site). Write Discussion Questions Based on Readings. Write your reaction to the walking tour. Walking tour may be walked earlier in the semester.

WEEK 8 (3/17) Exam 2nd Half of Class

Class The invisible signifier. Images of the working class in popular culture from Jackie Gleason to Homer Simpson. Why class must be invisible. The digital divide. Media and the new realities of the labor market. Coverage of working class issues in the news. Labor news vs. business news (where's *Buffalo Labor First?*). Discuss Walking Tour.

Read Week 9 Readings. Write Discussion Questions Based on Readings.

WEEK 9 (3/24)

Ethnic images outside of the American "mainstream." Anti-Semitism and Italian-American stereotypes.

Read Week 10 Readings. Deconstruction Assignment Due 4/7. Write Discussion Questions Based on Readings.

SPRING BREAK -- NO CLASS -- 3/31

WEEK 10 (4/7)

Marketing conflicted identities – a feminist deconstruction of the advertising industry.

Also discuss gender-loaded language and the institutionalized marginalization of women. {View "Killing Us Softly 3"}.

Read Week 11 Readings. Write Discussion Questions Based on Readings.

WEEK 11 (4/14)

Mediated images of women cont. – The pornography debate.

Read Week 12 Readings. Write Discussion Questions Based on Readings.

WEEK 12 (4/21)

Popular culture and commodified images of otherness. Is MTV misogynist? Commercial appropriation of Hip Hop. Coolhunters and the theft of black culture. {View "Dreamworlds 3"}

Read Week 13 Readings. Write Discussion Questions Based on Readings.

WEEK 13 (4/28)

Expanding the gender analysis – gay, lesbian and transgendered images in the media. The anthropology of gender.

Read Week 14 Readings.

Final Paper Due 12/3

WEEK 14 (5/5)

Intersectionality Theory. Compound identities.

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About the cover: This is a 2009 photograph of the current village emblem, which appears on police cars and village offices in Whitesboro, NY.

Buffalo State College Diversity Course Outcomes:

Students will demonstrate the ability to:

- **Critically examine the past, current or prospective influences of diverse groups on American society**
- **Analyze the ways in which social and institutional structures can contribute to the privilege and injustice through stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination**
- **Explore systematically the importance or understanding, respecting and valuing diverse people or cultures**
- **Critically reflect on how their values, attitudes and beliefs have developed and affect their perceptions of, and relations with others**
- **Assess the ways in which individuals, acting alone and in groups, can contribute to social justice**