

**COM 245 Diversity and the Media: Investigating Underrepresented Audiences**  
Fall 2010

Professor Margaret Evans, M.F.A.

Office Hours: M 7-9 pm; W 1-3 pm; R 3:30-4:30 pm -- Rowland Hall 132

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**COURSE OVERVIEW & GOALS:**

*A primary goal of this course is to assist students to become communication professionals who are prepared to work in increasingly diverse societies.*

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** Communication professionals are often required to traverse symbolic borders of cultural identity, race, religion, age, sexual orientation and socio-economic status. It is important to understand mass communication from the perspective of this list of possibilities and others because careers in the field currently require professionals to work with, portray, and/or represent people of diverse backgrounds. Radio, television, and film producers and writers; broadcast and print journalists; advertising and public relations specialists; teachers, counselors, and general media consumers will all need to understand, communicate with and relate to individuals of diverse backgrounds in an increasingly globalized world. In an effort to prepare students to embark on the journey of understanding and working in a diverse society, this course will investigate underrepresented audiences through reading academic research on the topic of media and diversity, consuming stories produced by underrepresented groups, and experiencing these theories by way of assignments designed for hands-on learning.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:** By the end of the course students should be able to:

1. Discuss basic facts and concepts of the U.S. as a diverse country, including a discussion on the social and psychological effects of the portrayals of underrepresented groups in the media.
2. Identify and challenge portrayals, especially stereotypical representation, of underrepresented groups in the media.
3. Understand concepts of diversity relating to audiences, sources, and issues.
4. Understand the role of the media in translating and shaping cultures.
5. Understand some of the ethical and legal issues related to writing across borders.
6. Investigate and write about underrepresented groups.
7. Strengthen writing and editing skills.
8. Develop strong story ideas related to the above.

**TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS AND TEXTBOOKS:**

This class requires a working knowledge of computer word processing software such as Microsoft Word and Internet access web browser experience, such as Firefox or Internet Explorer. Most course materials will be distributed through the course page on Desire2Learn (D2L).

Several of the assignments will require access to Shippensburg University's electronic databases, which can be viewed at <http://www.ship.edu/library/>.

**Required textbook:** (available from the campus bookstore) *Race/Gender/Media: Considering Diversity across Audience, Content and Producers*, Second Edition, by Rebecca Ann Lind, covers the major ideas and principles that scholars have identified influence the communications environment and the portrayal of non-majority members of society.

Links to contemporary news stories will also be posted throughout the semester for which reading is required. Students should be prepared and expect to discuss late breaking events in class or on discussion boards.

### **Professional Values and Competencies for Communication/Journalism Majors & Minors:**

The Communication/Journalism Department faculty sets the goal of developing within each student the following core professional values and competencies as defined by the Accrediting Council for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC): [competencies addressed in this course are in bold]

- 1. Understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press for the country in which the institution that invites ACEJMC is located, as well as receive instruction in and understand the range of systems of freedom of expression around the world, including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power, and to assemble and petition for redress of grievances.**
- 2. Demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications.**
- 3. Demonstrate an understanding of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications.**
- 4. Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society.**
- 5. Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information.**
- 6. Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity.**
- 7. Think critically, creatively and independently.**
- 8. Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work.**
- 9. Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve.**
- 10. Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness.**
- 11. Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts.**
- 12. Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.**

### **Academic Dishonesty Policy:**

Plagiarism and cheating will be handled according to the University's Academic Dishonesty Policy found on pages 48-50 in the 2007-2009 Shippensburg University Undergraduate Catalog. Penalties for any violation of the Academic Dishonesty Policy include grade reduction, assignment of a failing grade for the course, suspension and expulsion from the University.

### **American Disabilities Act (ADA) Statement:**

Students with disabilities are not required by law to identify themselves to Shippensburg University and the Office of Disability Services. However, if a student desires accommodations, the student is obligated to

complete the necessary forms and provide disability documentation at the time other requests are made. It is the policy of Shippensburg University to accommodate students with disabilities, pursuant to federal law, state law, and the University's commitment to equal education opportunities. Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the Office of Disability Services, which is located in 120 Horton Hall, or via phone at 717-477-1329.

### **Learning Center Resources:**

If you feel you need extra help to improve your academic performance in this course or any of your other courses, please consider making an appointment with a tutor or learning specialist in the Learning Center (LC). The LC is located in Lehman Library, and can also be reached at 717-477-1420. Even if you are off campus, there are resources available to help you.

### **CONTINGENCY PLANNING:**

In case of unforeseen events (such as instructor illness or inclement weather), this syllabus may be modified. If so, you will be provided a dated addendum that will supersede earlier copies of the syllabus. It is the student's responsibility to be familiar with any such addendum to the syllabus.

### **CLASS POLICIES:**

**Attendance.** Class sessions are an essential part of the learning experience and cannot be duplicated by reading another student's notes or through independent work. Regular class attendance is a requirement that must be met if maximum credit is to be obtained. Attendance will be considered in arriving at the final grade and will be taken during every class. Absence from more than two (4) sessions (2 weeks) will be considered excessive and will result in a **final grade no higher than a "C"**. Absence from four (6) or more classes will result in a failing grade. This is not a license to skip classes. All absences count against you in that you miss valuable information that will not be repeated. **Reasons for absences will not be considered:** whether you are sick, have an important field trip for another class, or decide to sleep in. **An absence is an absence. You are allowed the equivalent of two weeks of class before your final grade automatically falls.** Use this allotted time wisely if you must. Better yet, don't miss class. **If you must miss a class, it is required that you inform me of your absence and its reasons,** by telephone, email or a note to my mailbox or under my door, preferably before class begins but certainly before the next class.

**Deadlines:** Assignments are due on the dates indicated on the syllabus and assignment prospectus. Plan to work on your assignments well before deadline. A grade of zero (0) will be posted for missed deadlines.

**Participation:** Participation in this class is key. Participation includes answering questions, asking informed questions and providing insights into class materials. In order to participate fully and do well on the weekly quizzes, read the assigned chapters and all posted materials in advance of class.

#### **Grading A:**

Grading rubrics will be used for assignments.

A one hundred (100) point scale will be used on all assignments.

Excellent work is required for an A: A = 94-100; A- = 90-93.

Good work earns a B: B+ = 87-89; B = 84-86; B- = 80-83.

Satisfactory work earns a C: C+ = 77-79; C = 74-77; C- = 70-73.

Poor work earns a D: D = 60-69.

Failing work earns an F and includes all work numerically scored below a 60.

#### **Grading B:**

The final grade is determined by three factors:

Class Participation (determined by attendance and willingness to participate in class discussion)	20%
Quizzes (quiz each week for 12 of the weeks – two lowest grades dropped)	20%

Six major assignments (some written papers, some projects) 60%

**Assignments:**

The reading for each week is listed in the syllabus. Additional articles, when also included, are posted in the Content section of D2L. Each Tuesday class, beginning with week 2 will begin with a quiz on the reading that was assigned for that week. Reading assignments are listed on the syllabus at the end of the entry for the week before the assignment is due (i.e. August 30/September 1 lists reading for week 2, September 6/8).

There will be six assignments given throughout the semester. The due dates for these assignments are included in the weekly section of this syllabus and on the particular assignment prospectus. The topics and formats for the assignments will be announced at the appropriate time and listed in the Content area of D2L.

**Assigned readings are listed at the conclusion of the headings for the week prior to when each is due for the Tuesday quiz.**

**Semester Class Schedule:**

**Week 1**

Aug. 30/Sept. 2 Introduction of professor, students and class materials; Participatory Activity; introductory presentation by Professor Evans. Presentation of the **first assignment: Due September 13.**  
**Assignments:** Read Chapter 1: Laying the Foundation for Studying Race, Gender, and the Media; AND Part I Audiences: Chapter 2: Considerations of Media Effects.  
 From PoynterOnline: Read 'Journal-isms' That Engage and Inform Diverse Audiences on line at: <http://www.poynter.org/column.asp?id=58&aid=146549> (link also available in the Assignments list on D2L)  
 Be prepared for the first reading quiz next Tuesday and for discussions on the reading on both Tuesday and Thursday.

**Week 2**

Sept. 6/8 Discussion of important points made by the reading regarding Media Effects: stereotyping of gender and race, credibility of reporting based on race and gender, and how reporting on crime, perpetuation of fear and concerns for body image affected by perspective in media coverage.  
**Assignments:** Read Part I Audiences: Chapter 3: 3.1; 3.2; 3.3; 3-4 – pages 55-84 (up to 3.5).  
 From Poynter Online: Making Sense of News:  
<http://www.poynter.org/column.asp?id=136&aid=189056>  
**First assignment (Reflective Essay on Identity) due by noon on Sept. 13,** delivered to the designated digital drop box on D2L.

**Week 3**

Sept. 13/15 Guest speaker on Tuesday. Thursday: Audience Reception and the Interpretation of Content I: Preteen Girls, African American Romance Novels, Bollywood films, and Interpretations of the Movie *Crash*. Introduction of **Assignment 2 – Responsive Media Critique, due by noon on September 27**, D2L drop box.

**Assignments:** Read Part I Audiences: Chapter 3: 3.5; 3.6; 3.7 – pages 84-108.

**Week 4**

Sept. 20/22 Audience Reception and the Interpretation of Content II: Audience Response to Spike Lee Films, Native American Mascots and Race, Relevance of Race in News Story Interpretation. **Assignment 2 (Responsive Media Critique) Due by noon on 9/27**, D2L drop box.

**Assignments:** Read Part II Content: Chapter 4: 4.1; 4.2; 4.3 – pages 112-143 (up to 4.5).

**Week 5**

Sept. 27/29 Journalism, Advertising and Public Relations I: Media Representation—White and Christian Supremacy; Framing the Immigration Story; Confronting Front Page Content Analysis in U.S. News Stories.

**Assignment 4 (Media Project) Due at noon on 10/13**, in a designated box in the dept office.

**Assignments:** Read Part II Content: Chapter 4: 4.4; 4.5; 4.6; 4.7 – pages 143-165.

**Week 6**

Oct. 4/6 Journalism, Advertising and Public Relations II: Portrayal of Women and Girls in Advertising; Native American Self-Identity on Tribal Websites; Images of Asian-American Women in Multicultural Advertising.

**Assignment 3 (Television Program Proposal) Due at noon on 10/18**, D2L drop box.

**Assignments:** Read Part II Content: Chapter 5: 5.1; 5.2; 5.3; 5.4 – pages 166-195.

**Fall Break**

**Week 7**

Oct. 13 Film and Entertainment Television I: Race, Hierarchy and Hyenaphobia in *The Lion King*; Wicked Stepmothers in Hollywood; Hip-Hop Sees No Color; Gonzo Pornography and the Construction of Black Masculinity.

**Assignment 4 (Media Project) Due at noon on 10/13**, in a designated box in the dept office.

**Assignments:** Read Part II Content: Chapter 5: 5.5; 5.6; 5.7; 5.8 – pages 195-222.

**Week 8**

Oct. 18/20 Reality Makeover Television and Post-Feminist Gender Ideology; The Feminist Façade and the Construction of a Female Presidency on Prime-Time TV; Racism on Oprah Winfrey; TV and the Commodification of Queerness.

**Assignment 3 (Television Program Proposal) Due at noon on 10/18**, D2L drop box.

**Assignments:** Read Part II Content: Chapter 6: 6.1; 6.2; 6.3; 6.4 – pages 223-250.

### Week 9

Oct. 25/27 Music to Riot By; Eminem in Mainstream Public Discourse on White Appropriation of Black Masculinity; The Gendered Practice of Music Fandom Online; Representation of Women by Women Rap Artists.

**Assignments:** Read Part II Content: Chapter 6: 6.5; 6.6; 6.7; 6.8 – pages 250-278.

### Week 10

Nov. 1/3 Images of Women in Video Games; Community Blogging as Relational and Identity Resolution; Lesbians in Online Chat; Cyber-Hate and the Disinhibiting Effects of Anti-Gay Speech on the Internet.

**Assignment 5 (Interview/Article with older person) Due at noon on 11/29,** D2L drop box.

**Assignments:** Read Part III Production: Chapter 7: 7.1; 7.2 – pages 281-296.

### Week 11

Nov. 8/10 Politics of Film Distribution; The Struggle to Examine Ethnicity and Gender.

**Assignments:** Read Part III Production: Chapter 7: 7.3; 7.4– pages 296-309.

### Week 12

Nov. 15/17 Female Football Players, Expressions of Masculinity and Participatory Cinema; The *Tom Joiner Morning Show*.

**Assignments:** Read Part III Production: Chapter 8: 8.1; 8.2 – pages 310-325.

### Week 13

Nov. 22 Latinas in Public Relations Organizations; Women in TV and Radio News

**Assignments:** Read Part III Production: Chapter 8: 8.3; 8.4 – pages 325-340.

### Week 14

Nov.29 /Dec. 1 Women in British Broadcasting; American Journalism and the Politics of Diversity.

**Assignment 5 (Interview/Article with older person) Due at noon on 11/29,** D2L drop box.

### Week 15

Dec. TBA **Assignment 6 (Content Analysis) Due at noon on 12/12,** D2L drop box.

Meet as assigned on exam schedule for a short final.