

SYLLABUS FOR J359: Minorities and Mass Media

Fall 2000/MW 4-5:30 p.m./RLM 6.122

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TEXT: Facing Difference: Race, Gender and Mass Media by Shirley Biagi and Marilyn Kern-Foxworth (Pine Forge Press, 1997); and a reading packet at Longhorn Copies (across from CMA on the Drag).

CATALOG COURSE DESCRIPTION: Survey of minority communication problems; alienation, fragmentation, media access; criticism and feedback for minority groups based on racial/ethnic background, age, sex, disability, social or economic class and sexual orientation.

GOALS: To develop a deeper understanding of the complicated arguments surrounding how mass media impact (and are impacted by) the areas of race and gender in the United States; students will gain a better grasp of stereotypes, and what it takes to develop one and break one.

ATTENDANCE POLICY: You must attend class. Most class sessions will be devoted to discussing the course material in some way or another; so attendance is vital. Research shows that absenteeism is correlated with grades. Some things to ponder:

- If you must miss class, please arrange with a classmate to borrow notes. I don't have time to tell you what you missed.
- It's distracting if you're late to class; so please be prompt! If you're more than 6 or 7 minutes late, please don't bother to come; it's counted as an absence, since by then the class has been informed of that day's objective and is in the proper frame of mind for the discussion ? neither of which is possible if you are substantially late; thus, the absence. This is my policy and is not negotiable.
- If you have to leave class early, please clear it with me prior to the start of class. Again, this helps maintain my concentration during disruptions.
- When in class, you must be prepared for the discussion; I will interpret any consistent, continued silence as lack of preparation.

- You are entitled to two holidays for the term. Students who use zero holidays get a two-point bonus added to their final grade. Holidays 1 and 2 are penalty-free. For the third and each additional holiday, I subtract one point from your final grade. A 91 and four holidays equals an 89. Missing a guest lecturer or the in-class reports on major projects counts as two holidays per absence.
- Do not schedule class-related work during class meeting time. Doing so will be considered taking a holiday. Legitimate excuses for holidays are medical emergencies; typical or common illness doesn't constitute a legitimate excuse. Be prepared to furnish a physician's written explanation of your absence.

REQUIREMENTS:

- **Dispel Exercise:** Each student is responsible for teaching some component of the course content once during the semester. This involves a 20-to-30-minute presentation with another student or students ("teammates") on a relevant area of the course content. Subjects will be assigned in the first week (an attempt will be made to accommodate student preferences) and presentations will coincide with the pertinent chapter in the course schedule. The overall presentation goal is to apply the chapter content to the area being presented in a way that is interesting and mentally challenging.
- **Participation:** This constitutes assignments based on chapter readings; always have them read by the beginning of class. You're also expected to have read that day's readings since the lecture and planned class discussion assume as much.
- **Exams:** After every three chapters are discussed, an exam will be given to test basic knowledge of the material and the discussion surrounding it, in addition to readings from the reading packet. Exams usually will be of the short-answer, application-type variety. These exams will motivate students to read the text and, more importantly, gauge students' grasp of the material.
- **Major Project:** Students will develop an original case study involving a minority communication issue. This project largely involves original research on the students' parts and is not simply a library research project. The project's purpose is to develop students' data-gathering skills as well as enhance their overall knowledge of mass media and minorities concerns.
- **Term Paper:** This will be the result of the group project. Each student will use data from his/her group's findings and write a persuasive paper. In the process, students increase their contacts with media professionals; some time in the field--interviewing relevant managers, subordinates and consumers--is expected!
- **Conferences:** You must meet with me early in the term; come prepared to talk about yourself. This will improve our rapport and help you think out your ideas (both personal and professional), not to mention helping me get to know you and vice versa. A conference sign-up sheet (and prerequisite informational survey) will be circulated the

first week of classes.

GRADING:

- Dispel exercise: 10 points
- Exams: 40 points (20 points each)
- Group project: 20 points
- Term paper: 25 points
- Participation: 5 points (this grade depends on whether you participate in class discussions and complete assignments)

All late work will be penalized 10% per day each day it's late--no exceptions other than documented medical emergency.

I will use the following grading scale: A = 90-100, B = 80-89; C = 70-79, D = 60-69, F < 60.

Since this course constitutes a substantial writing component (SWC) course, your writing is expected to meet standards of clarity, punctuation, spelling and grammar. Lapses in these areas--particularly on the major project --will result in 2 points subtracted from the overall total for each infraction. So proofread all work prior to submitting it!

DISCUSSIONS ABOUT GRADES:

If you ever have a qualm about your grades, please follow this procedure:

- Wait 24 hours after receiving the grade.
- Submit a memo detailing your complaint to me; state why you think the grade is incorrect, what the grade should be and why; logically explain matters and avoid comparisons with other students.
- Discuss the memo with me; after the meeting, I'll provide you with a memo detailing my decision about your concern; my decision whether to revise your grade will be based on the points of your memo and the basic rules of logic (as they pertain to the class goals and assignment objectives).

PLAGIARISM: Don't do it! Copying or using the material of another author or student without clearly referencing that work is considered plagiarism and in violation of University of Texas rules of student conduct. It will result in an automatic failing grade.

FORMAT: All submitted work must be typed and double-spaced with one-inch margins. Anything else will result in an automatic five-point penalty. No exceptions!

TENTATIVE J359 SCHEDULE (class meetings and graded assignments bold-faced; readings packet assignments in brackets):

Aug. 25 - introduction to course
Aug. 30 - stereotyping [37-41]
Sept. 1 - Chapter 1
Sept. 6 - Labor Day, no class
Sept. 8 - bring a media example illustrating main point of a Chapter 1 reading
Sept. 13 - Chapter 2
Sept. 15 - discussion of/brainstorming on group project
Sept. 20 - Chapter 3; group assignments
Sept. 22 - [14-23]; bring relevant example illustrating main point of a Chapter 3 reading; review for Test 1
Sept. 27 - Test 1
Sept. 29 - discuss project objectives and Content Audit Kit [1-13, 85-100]
Oct. 4 - more on the Content Audit Kit; practice coding
Oct. 6 - Chapter 4
Oct. 11 - [29-36, 47-51] dispel exercises due (Chapter 4 reading); begin coding The American-Statesman
Oct. 13 - Chapter 5
Oct. 18 - dispel exercises due (Chapter 5 reading)
Oct. 20 - Chapter 6
Oct. 24 - last day to code The American-Statesman
Oct. 25 - groups meet to compile coding results, discuss term paper topics
Oct. 27 - [24-28 and 75-84]; dispel exercises due (Chapter 6 reading); review for Test 2
Nov. 1 - Test 2
Nov. 3 - presentation and discussion of project groups' results
Nov. 8 - term paper discussion; bring 1-page proposal for term paper; be prepared to discuss it
Nov. 10 - TBA
Nov. 15 - no class, individual conferences on term papers
Nov. 17 - no class, individual conferences on term papers
Nov. 22 - media diversity & the future [42-46]
Nov. 24 - TBA
Nov. 25 & 26 - Thanksgiving holidays
Nov. 29 - course evaluation & summary (what we've learned)
Dec. 1 - ???????
Dec. 6 - major project report due at noon