

**Mass Communication (COMM 115)  
Fall 2020 (Online)**

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The Mass Communication course provides a generalized exploration of media and culture. We will be learning the history, economic structures, and other issues associated with various media forms and industries. The course will also enhance your media literacy skills, encouraging you to think critically about the role of media in shaping beliefs and values. In general, alternating weeks will focus on developing those skills, whereas the other weeks will provide history and contextual information related to mass communication.

By the end of the semester you should be able to:

- Define the history and contemporary status of mass media print, film, radio, television, the Internet, and new communication technologies;
- Analyze media structures, processes, and their roles in society;
- Recognize the role of culture in communication;
- Evaluate media and media content as they relate to society and the individual; and
- Apply media theories to your understanding of our social world.

**Required Materials:** There are no materials required to purchase for this class. All readings and supplemental content will be uploaded to our course's Canvas page.

**Assignments:**

- Quizzes (100 points)
- Participation (100 points)
- Media Critique (200 points)
- Surveys (40 points)
- Introduction Discussion (25 points)
- Total = 465

**Grades:**

Final grades will be calculated by taking your total points earned and dividing by the possible number of points. The percent calculated will determine your final grade.

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

**A Note on Online Classes and Learning**

Please be aware that online courses are typically more work than face-to-face courses. Some students find it difficult to self-monitor their progress in a course compared to one that meets in person. Online classes require a high level of self-discipline and avoidance of procrastination. To assist you in learning to manage your online learning I have listed a number of resources on our courses Canvas page titled "Online Learning: Best Practices, Suggestions, and Tips."

Unlike some other online classes, this course is not self-paced. There are due dates for graded elements and your participation is assessed each week. Failure to complete work by the due dates will negatively affect your grade in the course. However, it is up to you how you engage with the course materials. You may choose to complete lectures and assignments all at once, or break them up throughout the week.

### **Course Policies**

Class Attendance: My expectations for attendance are different for an online course than one that meets face-to-face. As this class is held asynchronously, in order for you to attend you must watch and take notes on uploaded lectures, complete assignments, and participate in discussions. There is no grade for attendance, but I do assess participation.

Technology: I will upload recordings of each week's lectures, and each week has a dedicated module on Canvas. Modules will open on Sunday evenings by 9pm and, once opened, remain accessible for the remainder of the semester. Please practice good netiquette (i.e., net etiquette) by behaving, writing, and speaking professionally during class. Please also check your email at least once daily.

Since this is an online course, you are expected to have reliable and regular Internet access. It is your responsibility to address any computer problems that might occur. Technology support is always available to you by calling (540) 887-7075 or visiting OIT's webpage (<https://go.marybaldwin.edu/oit/staunton-campus-student/>).

At a minimum, you will need the following to participate in this course:

- Access to a computer with an updated operating system and the Internet.
- Updated Internet browsers compatible with Canvas.
- Media players, such as QuickTime, Windows Media Player or VLC Media Player
- Adobe Reader or alternative PDF readers
- MS Office or OpenOffice

Assignments: Assigned readings should be completed by the first day of the week for which they are assigned. They provide the framework for lecture materials as well as discussions and assignments. Although I recommend completing readings before engaging with other course materials, you may find that your preferred learning style is to take notes on the lecture first then complete the reading(s).

Academic (Dis)honesty and Plagiarism: Be very familiar with the Honor Code and do not violate it. Unless otherwise instructed, students must write all assignments on their own. *Do not let another student write for you, and do not directly copy from the Internet or any other source.* Also, you may **never** turn in the same – or even similar – assignments to instructors for multiple courses without the explicit, written permission of both. In general, any student suspected of plagiarizing will receive a zero for the assignment. Please contact me if this is at all unclear.

Harassment and Hate Speech: These will never be tolerated in class, under any circumstances. Our class is a place where we will speak about many topics and issues that are possibly inflammatory and sensitive. If you have any questions, please ask me.

Email Correspondence: Emails sent to me during the week (M-F) before 5 pm will generally be replied to by midnight. Emails sent after 5 pm on Friday will be responded to the following Monday. I reserve the right to request that you reformat and resend me any emails that: lack a subject heading; lack a salutation; include “text speak”; and/or lack a signature. Part of being a university student is regularly checking your email for course announcements as well as other communications, from me and your peers.

Learning Enhancement: I encourage conferences with me related to course materials and/or assignments. I am happy to look over written drafts prior to due dates, answer questions, and provide clarifications. If there is any ambiguity in your understanding of a particular assignment, it is your responsibility to ask for clarification and assistance from me prior to its due date. The most successful students in this class will think broadly about the assignments, ask for help, complete the readings, contribute to discussions, and demonstrate a solid grasp of language and composition in written assignments.

The Academic Resource Center (ARC): The ARC is your one-stop-shop for writing, math, and all other subject and studentship tutoring. Residential students can meet with tutors virtually or face-to-face in the Center for Student Success, on the first floor of Grafton Library. Online and remote students can work virtually with tutors on papers, assignments, and test-taking strategies. Appointments are scheduled through TutorTrac ([tutortrac.marybaldwin.edu](http://tutortrac.marybaldwin.edu)). For more information, contact Dr. Carey Usher, Associate Provost ([cusher@marybaldwin.edu](mailto:cusher@marybaldwin.edu), 540-887-7064) or [ARC@marybaldwin.edu](mailto:ARC@marybaldwin.edu).

Other Resources: I also recommend utilizing the Writing Center (<https://marybaldwin.edu/academic-resource-center/>) to enhance your quality of writing. Also consider getting in touch with Christina Harris ([cjharris@marybaldwin.edu](mailto:cjharris@marybaldwin.edu)), our librarian. She can help you at every stage of the research process. You can find Christina’s contact information at: <https://libguides.marybaldwin.edu/communication>.

Accessibility Services: Any student with documented accessibility needs, who feels they may need academic accommodations while taking this course, should first contact Dr. Carey Usher, Associate Provost ([cusher@marybaldwin.edu](mailto:cusher@marybaldwin.edu), 540-887-7064) or [Accessibility@marybaldwin.edu](mailto:Accessibility@marybaldwin.edu).

Taking Care of You: For many (if not all) of us, college presents unique challenges. Even the best of us can benefit from working professionals who can help us manage our time, stress, and anxiety. I encourage you to familiarize yourself with the services offered by MBU’s Health and Counseling Services office, and to seek them out if necessary. Your first priority is yourself and your health, so please be mindful of your needs and the resources available to care for yourself effectively. I have linked to the Counseling Center on our Canvas page, but here is their webpage: <https://go.marybaldwin.edu/student/health-counseling-services/>

### **Assignment Information**

**Quizzes:** All quizzes can be accessed via Canvas. They will be in a variety of formats, including discussions, short answers, and multiple-choice quizzes. You will have one week to complete each quiz unless instructed otherwise.

**Media Critique:** This project gives you the opportunity to think about media that are oppressive as well as those which counteract those negative cultural effects. More information on this assignment will be provided soon.

**Introduction Discussion:** You will be asked to introduce yourselves to me and the class on Canvas. See the Assignments tab in Module 1 for more information.

**Surveys:** In order for me to better understand you as a student and what challenges you might experience while taking this course, I ask that you fill out a survey during the first week of the semester. It asks questions about your ability to access the Internet, your interests, and so forth. It will also ask questions about your prior knowledge about materials to be covered in this class. Similarly, at the end of the semester, I will ask you to complete another survey about the knowledge and skills you have gained from this course.

**Participation:** To earn participation points in this course you are required to contribute to discussion threads each week. Your posts can include questions about lecture materials, comments, or responses to your classmates' posts. To receive full points, contribute to the discussion board(s) as specified in that week's Module. See the Assignments tab in Module 1 for more information.

## Course Schedule

Module 1 (Week of August 24) – Course Introduction

Module 2 (Week of August 31) – Overview of Mass Communication Theory & Research

Module 3 (Week of September 7) – Print and Printing, Then and Now

Module 4 (Week of September 14) – Media Literacy: News Literacy

Module 5 (Week of September 21) – Radio, Airwaves, and Regulation

Module 6 (Week of September 28) – Media Literacy: Voice, Identity, and Code Switching

Module 7 (Week of October 5) – Television and Film Part I

Module 8 (Week of October 12) – Television and Film Part II

Module 9 (Week of October 19) – Media Literacy: Representations in Film and TV

Module 10 (Week of October 26) – The Internet

Module 11 (Week of November 2) – Media Literacy: Algorithms and Search Engines

Module 12 (Week of November 9) – New Media

Module 13 (Week of November 16) – Media Literacy: The Quantified Self

Module 14 (Week of November 23) – Media Critiques Presentations\*

Deadline for Media Critique Submissions: December 4, 2020

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\* Your presentations will be asynchronous.