

MCOM 101
INTRODUCTION TO MASS COMMUNICATION
Sections 002, 003 & 004

Spring 2011

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Department of Mass Communication and Communication Studies

Meets Tuesdays & Thursdays in VB #200

Section 002 @ 9:30 - 10:45 a.m.
Section 003 @ 11 a.m. - 12-15 p.m.
Section 004 @ 12:30 – 1:45 p.m.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Office Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays @ 5-6 p.m.
Wednesdays @ 3-5 p.m.
Other times by appointment

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COURSE INFORMATION

Course Description: “Issues, theories and structures of mass communication and careers in the mass media” (*Towson University Undergraduate Catalog*).

This course is designed to introduce you to the history, models, theories, concepts and terminology of mass communication, specifically focusing on journalism, advertising and public relations. It will enable you to understand the complex interactions between media and society, and think critically about the ways in which mass media inform our everyday lives. It will introduce you to mass communication theories and concepts to help explain and/or predict causes and effects of mass communication. It will also introduce you to the various careers in mass media to help prepare you for the professions.

Please note that students may not attempt a course for the third time without prior permission from the Academic Standards Committee. Information regarding this policy may be obtained through Enrollment Services.

Course Objectives: After successfully completing the course, you will be able to:

- Understand the history and development of mass communication;
- Identify major technological developments in modern mass communication;
- Describe how basic concepts of media law and ethics are applied;
- Use the vocabulary of mass communication to effectively communicate key concepts;
- Think critically about the mass media as an integral part of our culture;
- Recognize the effects of mass media upon society;
- Apply prominent theories to explain and/or predict effects of mass media;
- Understand the complex role media economics play in shaping media practices and consumption;
- Understand key developments in media ownership and their impact on democracy;
- Become a better citizen and discerning media consumer;
- Describe typical careers in various mass media fields; and
- Have a clearer idea of your aptitude for a career in the field of mass communication.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

Required Textbooks: The following are required material for the course:

- *Media & Culture: Introduction to Mass Communication* (8th Edition), by Richard Campbell, Christopher R. Martin and Bettina Fabos. (Bedford/St. Martin's).
- *Media Career Guide: Preparing for Jobs in the 21st Century* (8th Edition), by James Seguin.

Recommended Resources: The following is not required, but is highly recommended as an additional resource to improve your ability to write and, thus, excel in the course:

- *The Little, Brown Handbook* by H. Ramsey Fowler and Jane E. Aaron

Blackboard: Each student is required to enroll in Blackboard, as this course relies on the teaching tools provided by this resource. More information about the use of Blackboard will be discussed in class.

Social Networking Site: Each student is required to sign up as a member and begin actively participating in this online community of students in my MCOM 101 courses. More information on your participation, activities, assignments and grading criteria will be provided in separate course handouts. To register for this site, go to: <http://mcom101-slnichols-fall11.ning.com/?xgi=4OJ09MVYfaCWaT>.

Please note: I will use both Blackboard as well as the website for announcements, assignments, etc., so it is strongly recommended that you check each site regularly and frequently.

Readings: You are expected to complete reading assignments before they are discussed. This syllabus specifies the readings that are to be completed prior to each class meeting. Being prepared will not only allow you to clarify the questions you may have about the reading material, but it will also enable you to offer constructive ideas during class.

Media: You are also expected to be a regular consumer of mass media, including newspapers, magazines, television, radio, film and the Internet. Occasional quizzes on current events, lecture notes and assigned readings will be given throughout the course to assess your understanding of the course content as well as to encourage your media consumption.

Attendance: You are expected to attend all classes. Consistent attendance helps you understand the material covered in this course and successfully complete its requirements. I will, therefore, abide by the University attendance policy, which can be found in the *Towson University Undergraduate Catalog*.

Absences may be excused if you: (1) have an illness or injury precluding you from attending class; (2) observe a religious holiday that prevents you from class attendance; (3) are required to participate in a university activity by a recognized authority; or (4) experience a compelling, verifiable emergency beyond your control.

If you encounter any one of these circumstances, you must contact me by telephone, e-mail, or in person at least two weeks in advance, or in the case of an emergency, on the same day of the absence, to let me know you will be absent during a class session. You must also provide acceptable written documentation of the reason for your absence within five business days of the absence. Some examples of acceptable documentation would be a physician's note, traffic accident report, hospital bill, etc., all of which must be dated and signed. Providing documentation does not guarantee an absence will be excused. Other absences (funerals, weddings, etc.) will be addressed on a case-by-case basis and may not be considered excused.

Work missed for a known, excused absence must be turned in prior to the absence in order to receive credit. Work missed for an unexcused absence will not be accepted and, thus, will receive no credit. If you come to class late and miss an in-class exercise, quiz or assignment, you will not be allowed to make up the work, unless we have made some previous arrangements.

Also, please remember to back up your written work, to protect both of us if there are problems uploading it to the website and/or your blogs. Also, when working on a computer, save your work often. I will not accept excuses for late assignments because the computer crashed and you lost all of your work.

Quizzes and Examinations: There will be periodic quizzes given over the course of the semester, which will begin within the first 5 minutes of class. If you are late, you will receive a zero.

If you are unable to take a quiz or exam on the scheduled date, it is your responsibility to notify me at least two weeks in advance of the scheduled exam to make other arrangements. In the event you miss a quiz or exam, it is imperative that you provide written documentation of the reason for the absence within two days of the scheduled date. A make-up quiz or exam will be administered only if legitimate written documentation is provided to me within two days of the scheduled exam. Otherwise, students who miss a quiz or exam will receive a zero.

Any make-up work will be more difficult than the regular assignment, so you are strongly advised to complete the work when as scheduled. Also, if you are late for an exam, you will not be allowed additional time to complete the exam, so please be sure to arrive on time. Finally, any *unexcused* absence will affect your grade because you will not be allowed to make up the work missed, including tests.

Student Athletes/University Activities Participants: You must provide a letter from your coach that explains your place on the team as well as a schedule of games/competitions during the semester. You must take any tests and prepare any assignments that conflict with this schedule before the test or due date, not after. In addition, you must provide a Notification of Absence from Class Form to verify the reason for your absence.

Students with Disabilities: Individuals with physical, psychological or learning disabilities must be registered with the Disability Support Services Office (<http://www.towson.edu/dss/index.asp>) to receive auxiliary aids and services and reasonable accommodations. It is strongly recommended that students with disabilities contact me early in the semester to discuss and arrange accommodations. “Students who suspect they have a disability, but do not have documentation, are also encouraged to contact DSS for advice on how to obtain an appropriate evaluation” (*Towson University Undergraduate Catalog*).

Cell Phone Policy: All cell phones MUST be turned off prior to class. If your cell phone rings/vibrates, or you are texting during class, I will deduct 5% from your class participation grade for the first time, 10% the second time, 25% points the third time, and 50% for the fourth time. Cell phones and texting are not only annoying and disrespectful to the professor, but they also disrupt class and distract other students from their work. I ask that you be respectful of my efforts to manage the classroom for an effective and worthwhile learning experience.

Please note: If you are a continual abuser of this policy, as some students choose to be, you will lose all participation points, which is 10% of your overall grade, so the highest grade you could earn for the course is a B+, even with perfect performance on all aspects of the course.

Laptop Computer Policy: Laptop computers are allowed in the classroom and can be used ONLY for class work. That is, they can be used to take notes during lecture and conduct research during class projects. They also can be used to access our social networking site during class if necessary for class work. However, they are NOT allowed for personal use, such as shopping on the Internet, sending or receiving emails, or logging onto your Facebook and Twitter accounts. Penalties will be the same as those for cell phones.

Plagiarism/Academic Dishonesty: Plagiarism, cheating and/or fabrication will not be tolerated and carry serious consequences in this course and in media careers. You must properly attribute information used in your assignments to the appropriate source. If you use a publication as a source, you must credit the publication. Making up quotations or information is forbidden. Presenting another person’s work as your own, copying a classmate’s assignment, failing to attribute information to the appropriate source, recycling material or assignments from concurrent or previous courses, and/or making up quotations/information will result in failure of the assignment and may lead to failure in the course. It will also result in a referral to Judicial Affairs.

In all assignments, students must comply with all laws and the legal rights of others (e.g., copyright, obscenity, privacy and defamation) and with all Towson University policies (e.g., academic dishonesty). Towson University is not liable or responsible for the content of any student assignments, regardless of where they are posted.

If you are unsure of what constitutes academic dishonesty, please read the *Towson University Undergraduate Catalog*. Also, the departmental policy on plagiarism and cheating is attached to this syllabus for your reference.

QUIZZES AND EXAMINATIONS

Quizzes (10%): There will be periodic quizzes given in this class, as indicated below on the Course Schedule. They will follow a specific format, each with seven questions on the material and three on current events.

Examinations (45%): There will be three exams given during the semester that will contain objective and short answer questions about the material covered in class, including all readings and lectures.

Exam #1 (15%): This exam will take place on **Tuesday, Oct. 4**, and will cover material from weeks 1-5.

Exam #2 (15%): This exam will take place on **Thursday, Nov. 3**, and will cover material from weeks 6-10.

Exam #3 (15%): This exam will take place during the final exam period and will cover material from weeks 11-16.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

Blog Writing Assignments (25%): You will be expected to participate in the social networking community developed for this course. This will involve designing your own MyPage for the course website, creating a separate blog site linked to your page, completing blog assignments, participating in various online discussions relevant to course content, and engaging in group activities throughout the semester. More information on the various online activities and grading criteria will be provided in course handouts.

Career Assignment (5%): You will participate in a class presentation (**Group Presentation**) on an aspect of your chosen career during the last week of the semester. This is your opportunity to demonstrate your knowledge and creativity about an aspect of careers in our field. The three basic criteria for this part of the assignment are that the presentations must be: (1) informative, using sufficient and appropriate course concepts; (2) creative, by thinking outside the box; and (3) entertaining and fun for everyone in the class. More information will be provided in course handouts later in the semester.

Please note: If any assignment is not turned in by the last day of class, a zero will be earned for that assignment. A zero is earned for missing a group presentation because of an unexcused absence. Five percent (5%) will be deducted from the earned grade for each week day an assignment is late because of an unexcused absence. For an excused absence, work assigned before the absence (e.g., blogs, quizzes, career exercises) is due on the first day a student returns. A student with an excused absence will have up to one week to complete assignments assigned during his or her excused absence.

PARTICIPATION AND PROFESSIONALISM

Participation/Professionalism (10%): College is a training ground in which students prepare for the full-time work environment. As such, all students in this class will be expected to act in a professional manner. You will be expected to be an active, courteous participant in class discussions and other activities. In addition, you will be expected to have an excellent attendance record, to arrive early or on time, to be alert and attentive throughout the class session, and to be prepared for the day's work. Disruptions of any kind to the class environment, including unnecessary talking, texting, chronic lateness and leaving the room during class, are all examples of unprofessional behavior that will lower your grade. Students who do not adhere to professional standards of conduct will receive zero participation points.

GRADING

Grading Distribution: Your final grade will be determined as follows:

Quizzes:	10%
Exams:	45%
Online Community Participation:	30%
Career Assignments:	5%
Participation/Attendance:	10%

Extra Credit: Information on ways to earn extra credit will be provided at various points during the semester.

Grading Criteria: The following criteria will determine the grade you receive on individual assignments, as well as the overall grade you receive for the course.

90%-100% (A+, A, A-) (√++): The work meets and exceeds assignment objectives. It is exceptionally clear, well written, thorough and free of errors. It is organized well and contains effective transitions, quotations, citations, descriptions and anecdotes. It also is an effective discussion of the topic. In terms of the course, this means you have almost perfect attendance, scores in this range on assignments and tests and make constructive, insightful contributions to discussions.

80%-89% (B+, B, B-) (√+): The work meets assignment objectives, and is adequate but not exceptional. It is well organized, with appropriate citation usage. However, the assignment contains a few minor errors and might be more interesting, thorough or cohesive. In terms of the course, this means you have good attendance, scores in this range on the assignments and tests, and make constructive, insightful contributions to class discussion.

70%-79% (C+, C, C-) (√): The work minimally meets assignment objectives; however, it may omit important information or require extensive editing. The assignment may be disorganized, and/or contain several minor errors. Some sentences may be, for instance, vague, complicated and use passive rather than active verbs. Some sentences may have to be rewritten because they are awkward, wordy, or confusing. Citations are used, but may be used inappropriately or inadequately. In terms of the course, this means you have poor attendance, scored in this range on the assignments and tests, and have not participated in class discussions.

60%-69% (D+, D, D-) (√-): The work does not meet assignment guidelines and is superficial, confusing or requires extensive rewriting. It also may contain an unacceptable number of punctuation, spelling, and/or grammatical errors. Citations are used inappropriately or not at all. In terms of the course, this means you have missed more classes than you attended, scored in this range on the assignments and tests, and have not participated in class discussions. Students may receive upper level elective credit with a D, but this course will not count among MCOM credits.

Below 60% (F): The work may be so poorly organized, ineffective, or outside assignment objectives that it cannot be revised effectively. The information presented is completely incorrect. It does not meet the requirements in page length, focus or format. It may also contain significant misspellings and/or grammatical and/or factual errors. Citations are not used. In terms of the course, this means you have missed more classes than you have attended, scored in this range on the assignments and tests, and have not participated in class discussions. If you are caught cheating in any way, you will automatically receive an F in the course. If you attend the final exam and your average is below 60, you will receive F rather than an FX.

("FX"): This is an administrative failure for non-attendance or failure to withdraw. If you stop attending class and do not withdraw from the course by the University's present deadlines for the semester and stop attending the class, this is the grade you will receive.

("I") Incomplete: Students may receive an incomplete only when "verifiable medical reasons" or "documented circumstances beyond their control" "prevent students from completing a course within the term" (*Towson University Undergraduate Catalog*).

Final grades in this class will follow the above scale for percentages with the following exceptions: No A+ or D- can be awarded as a final grade in this class. Please note you must earn at least a C to progress in the major.

If you receive an F or FX, you may only repeat the course once. After repeating the course, students will only receive credit for the course once and the highest of the grades will be calculated. The lower grade will remain on the transcript with an "R" before it to indicate the course was repeated. For the transcript to reflect the repeated course, students MUST submit a Repeated Course Form to the Records Office. Transcript adjustments are NOT automatic (*Towson University Undergraduate Catalog*).

Please note: If any assignment is not turned in by the last day of class, a zero will be earned for that assignment. A zero is earned for missing a group presentation because of an unexcused absence.

Final grades will be based on the following grading scheme. The points per credit hour are consistent with the Academic Regulations Section of the *Towson University Undergraduate Catalog*.

Percentage	Letter Grade	Points per credit hour
93-100%	A	4.00
90-92%	A-	3.67
87-89%	B+	3.33
83-86%	B	3.00
80-82%	B-	2.67
77-79%	C+	2.33
70-76%	C	2.00
67-69%	D+	1.67
60-66%	D	1.00
Below 60%	F	0.00
Adm. Failure	FX	0.00

COURSE SCHEDULE

[PLEASE REFER TO THE “COURSE SCHEDULE” ON BLACKBOARD AND OUR WEBSITE]