



**Syllabus  
SOCS 1210  
Understanding Communication  
Spring 2007**

**Tues. / Thurs. 2-3:50  
Sturm Hall 451**

**Instructor:** Christof Demont-Heinrich

**Teaching Assistant:** Mariana Vazquez (mariana.vazquez@du.edu)

**Office:** Mass Communications Building Room 103

**Office Hours:** Tues. & Thurs. 12:45 p.m.-1:45 p.m. and by appointment

**Office Phone:** 303-871-4699

**E-mail:** cdemonth@du.edu;

**Class Web Site:** We will be using Blackboard

**Required Text:**

Introduction to Mass Communication: Media Literacy and Culture by Stanley J. Baran, 2007, 4th edition

--Available at DU Bookstore (and various online sources)

--Book web site: <http://www.mhhe.com/baran4>

*In addition photocopies from other sources will be posted to Blackboard and students may be asked to read articles off the WWW.*

### Course Description and Goals

At its most fundamental level this course is designed to teach students to become more critical and thoughtful consumers of (mass) mediated forms of communication. Its aim is to inspire students to ask questions about **and of** the mass media. Who are the mass media? What do they do? Who do they influence and how? Who are the mass media's powerful players? What kind of power do they have? Over whom and what? How do they fit into the complex web of contemporary (post)modern culture and society? What is the historical, political and economic basis of the contemporary mass media -- and their power? And how, in what ways, and with what possible implications do we/should we [or perhaps should we not] integrate the mass media into our everyday lives?

In sum, this course aims to equip students with the conceptual and intellectual tools to be able to begin to understand, explain, and critically and intelligently comment and reflect upon contemporary mass mediated communication.

In addition to lectures, discussion, and short in-class group activities and presentations, this class will include video presentations as well as guest speakers with direct experience in and knowledge about a variety of media and communications industries.

Because this class is dedicated to critical media analysis, you will be expected to keep abreast of current events by way of television, radio, print and Internet news sources. Current events will be considered possible testing material for in-class pop-quizzes only (not for exams).

## Grading

Grades will NOT be curved. If you attend class, do the required work and have a reasonable grasp of the information, you should have no trouble earning at least a "C," which indicates satisfactory work.

### **Exams:**

There will be a midterm (25%) and final exam (25% - NOT cumulative). The exam formats will include multiple choice, short answer and short essay questions. All material presented in class -- both by the instructor AND by guest lecturers -- is "fair game" for exam questions.

**Written Assignments:** You will be given two writing assignments (10% EACH) (three to four pages, double spaced maximum length). Specific assignment sheets will be made available on Blackboard. Written assignments will automatically lose a letter grade for every day that they are late. NO papers will be accepted later than four days after they are due [automatic F].

**Short Homework Assignments:** You will be expected to complete a number of short homework assignments over the course of the quarter (10%). I will post the homework assignments to Blackboard. You will be expected to download the assignment sheet yourself, then turn in a printed copy of your homework on the day on which it is due. You will not receive a letter grade for these assignments; they are pass/fail assignments. If you turn in all five assignments and receive a check-mark indicating a passing grade, you will receive a 100%, or 100 points for your total homework grade. If you turn in a failing assignment, or do not do an assignment, you will receive a 0% for it. I will NOT accept late homework assignments. Period. The rationale behind these assignments is to encourage you to consistently critically engage the contemporary mass media.

**Participation/Attendance:** In-class participation and discussion is vital to a healthy and effective learning environment. You may be periodically called upon to ask/answer questions. You may also be called upon to participate in short in-class group activities and subsequent group presentations. The class TA, Mariana Vazquez will take attendance on a regular basis. Those who fail to show up regularly will see their participation grade drop, perhaps radically.

**"Pop" Quizzes:** There will be three pop quizzes. Only your best two quiz grades will count (in other words, your lowest quiz will be automatically dropped). Quizzes will be given at the beginning of class. I will NOT re-administer quizzes for those who arrive to class late! The questions on these quizzes will relate to the readings, lecture AND current events. The pop quizzes will be worth a total of 10% of your quarter grade.

### **Grading Breakdown:**

Participation & Attendance	10% (100 points)
Pop quizzes (2 of 3 count)	10% (100 points)
Homework assignments	10% (100 points)
Two written assignments (10% each)	20% (200 points)
Mid-term exam	25% (250 points)
Final exam ( <u>NOT cumulative!</u> )	25% (250 points)

### **Grading Scale:**

93%+	A
90%-92%	A-
87%-89%	B+
83%-86%	B
80%-82%	B-
77%-79%	C+
73-76%	C
70-72%	C-
67%-69%	D+
63%-66%	D
60%-62%	D-
59% -	F

### **Gradebook:**

I will be using Gradebook. This will allow you to ***generally*** keep track of how you're doing. Be aware that I will **NOT** enter your participation/attendance grade (10%, 100 points) **until after the last day of class!** Also, I will not enter your grade for the final (25%, 250 points) until after the last day of class.

I will use the "weighted" function in Gradebook so that you can see what your quarter average is (a 95%, an 85%, etc.), for example, after you've only completed 40% of the work for the quarter. **HOWEVER**, be aware that a very large percentage of your grade will still be in the balance until **AFTER** the last day of class. In short, just because you're carrying a 90% average into the last day of class doesn't mean that you will end up with a 90% for the quarter. On quizzes, I will enter your first three grades as you take them. I will wait **until after the last day of class** to determine your top two of three quiz grades.

Basically, use Gradebook as a rough estimate of how you're doing during the quarter -- and to make sure I am entering the correct grades on your stories and quizzes.

## **Policies**

1. Every absence will hurt you -- and the class, which benefits from the full and regular participation of all students. Upon the third absence, the *starting* point from which I compute your semester grade will be dropped a full letter grade to a 'B' (85). Upon the fourth absence, the starting point will drop to a 'C' (75), the fifth to a 'C-' (70), and so on.
2. With the exception of documented absences [official doctor's note, etc.] you will NOT be allowed to make up a pop quiz, exam, etc. if you miss class. If you have a legitimate, documented reason for missing an upcoming class [official DU athletic/extracurricular event, etc.], it is your responsibility to inform the instructor beforehand. Some lecture notes will be posted to the class web site. However, it is your responsibility to contact other class members for in-class notes, assignment sheets, etc. if you miss class.
3. Rude or abusive behavior such as talking excessively while the instructor or fellow students are addressing the class and/or personal verbal attacks on another student, groups of

students, or the instructor will not be tolerated. Such behavior will have an extremely negative impact on your participation grade!

4. PLEASE turn off all cell phones/pages, etc. before coming to class.
5. PLEASE do not IM, text message and/or surf the web on your laptop and/or cell phone during class. I can tell when this is going on. I WILL mark you down on your participation grade if you consistently engage in any of these activities in class.
6. Cheating or plagiarizing the work of another will result in an automatic "F" for that assignment. Additionally, university policy permits harsher actions, if warranted. If you have any questions about what constitutes (or does not constitute) plagiarism, ask the instructor before you turn something in.
7. If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please let me know as soon as possible.
8. If you are involved in DU athletics or some other form of extra-curricular activity that will interfere with your attendance, you are required to let me know far ahead of time so that we can make any accommodations that are allowed according to official DU policies.
9. If you have any questions or concerns during the course of the quarter about anything, please feel free to contact me. E-mail (cdemonth@du.edu) is the best way to reach me!