

Syllabus
Media and Cultural Diversity
MCOM-5020
Fall 2002

Tuesday
7-9:45 p.m.
Room 421
Warf-Pickel Hall

Instructor: Ebele N. Ume-Nwagbo
Phone: 423-434-0290

Text:

Kamalipour, Yahya R. and Teresa Carilli (eds.). *Cultural Diversity and the U.S. Media*. State University of New York Press, 1998

Objectives:

For the first time in human history, most of the stories about people, life, and values are told not by parents, schools, churches, or others in the community who have their own stories to tell but a group of distant media conglomerates that have something to sell. This is radical change in the way we employ creative talent, the way we cast the symbolic environment, and the way we learn our roles in life.

The role we grow into and the ways others see us are no longer homemade, handcrafted, community-inspired. They are products of a complex image manufacturing and marketing process. The cast of characters and their fate we see every day in the media shape our images of the roles we try to seek or to avoid. The issue of cultural diversity in the U.S. media is at the very core of that process.

Channels multiply but communication technologies coverage, media merge, staffs shrink, and creative opportunities diminish. Fewer sources fill more outlets more of the time with ever more standardized fare. Global marketing streamlines production, homogenizes content, sweeps alternative imagery from the mainstream, and moves cultural policy beyond democratic or even national reach.

There is no historical precedent, constitutional provision, or legislative blueprint to confront the new consolidated controls over the design, production, promotion, and distribution of media content. Informed opinion leading to independent citizen action offer our best hope for meeting that challenge. A movement toward a free, diverse, and fair cultural environment has become a necessity for democracy in the telecommunication age.

This course looks at these issues. We will study and research the areas of stereotypes of women and men, young and old, rich and poor, people of color, various racial ethnic groups, natives and foreigners, and so-called majorities and minorities compete and conflict and occasionally find ways to speak for themselves in the cultural mainstream.

Class Attendance:

Full and punctual class attendance is expected. It has been my experience that students with significant absences tend to perform poorly. In the event of absence or unavoidable lateness, it is incumbent upon the student to get notes, etc., from a fellow classmate. In the case of a verifiable emergency, I will do my best to assist in the process.

Each student is allowed two un-excused absences, beginning from the third week of classes. A student with more than two un-excused absences will lose two percentage points per additional absence. Normally, an excused absence will require independent evidence (a physician's note, for example).

In the event of travel for a university event (sports, etc.), let me know as soon as possible. Such absences will be considered excused.

Assignments, Presentations and other Activities:

All students are required to participate full in class discussions and other activities. Group and/or individual class presentation may also be required, as the instructor sees appropriate.

Evaluations:

Attendance and participation are very important in this class and a good portion of the grade is weighed that direction.

We also will have at least two mini-research papers of 6 to 7 pages due at designated times throughout the semester and a term paper. You will have an opportunity to present and discuss your papers in class.

Final grade will be computed as follows:

Attendance	15%
Participation (class activities)	15%
Mini-papers	20%
Term Paper/Project	25%
Exam	25%

A	93-100%
A-	90-92%
B+	87-89%
B	83-86%
B-	80-82%
C+	77-79%
C	73-76%
F	72-0%

Schedule and Reading Assignments

Week 1

Introduction, U.S. Minorities and the News

Week 2

Minority Representation and Portrayal in Modern Newsprint Cartoons

Week 3

- Disney Does Diversity: The Social Context of Racial-Ethnic Imagery
- Week 4
Beyond Employment Diversity: Rethinking Contemporary Racist News Representations
- Week 5
Hegemony in Black and White: Interracial Buddy Films and the New Racism
- Mini-Paper Due
- Week 6
Black Situation Comedies and the Politics of Television Art
- Week 7
Crawling Toward Civil Rights: News Media Coverage of Disability Activism
- Week 8
Media Stereotypes of Jews: from JAPs to MDs
- Week 9
Still Crazy After All These Years: Italian Americans in Mainstream U.S. Films
- Week 10
Ethnic Humor and Ingroup/Outgroup Positioning: Explicating Viewer Perceptions of All-American Girl
- Mini-Paper Due
- Week 11
Destroying the Past to Save the Present: Pastoral Voice and Native Identity
- Week 12
Ethnic Voices: Afrocentric Public Affairs Television Programming
- Week 13
The Representation of Arabs in U.S. Electronic Media
- Week 14
Moving Beyond the Screen: Hollywood and Mexican American Stereotypes
- Week 15
Projects Reports
Take home exam.