

MCOM: 105
Lifestyles in Mass Communications

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DBH 133
Tuesdays & Thursday
1:30 –2:45pm

MCOM 105:Lifestyles, Diversity and the Media (3 units): Identifies and evaluates the impact of ethnicity/culture, alternative lifestyles and gender issues on advertising, television, radio, newspapers, magazines and public relations. Examines attitudes, trends and perceptions which help shape mass communication messages. **Prerequisite:** Upper division standing.

Course Objectives:

After successfully completing this course, students should be able to:

*Detect how ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religious/spiritual perspectives, class and age are identified, portrayed and evaluated in the mass media through words, pictures, new technologies, creative approaches and biases.

*Compare systematically the ideas, values, images, cultural icons/artifacts, economic structures and attitudes of people presented in media messages

*Describe historical, social, political and economic influences on the development of diversity, equality and “structured inequalities” in the United States.

*Explain how cultures change internally in response to external exposure and pressures, actual or perceived, as the result of mass media messages.

*Note contemporary trends of public willingness to accept media portrayals without challenge or questions, even if messages mislead or distort reality.

What is expected of YOU:

This learning process works best through a close examination of a cross section of pertinent online, broadcast and printed media examples, and candid, lively, but respectful class discussions and exchanges of views. Do not expect everyone to agree with each interpretation or opinion. Learn from diversity of thoughts and attitudes. Anticipate how those diverse (and sometimes strong views) have and continue to affect media professionals who create messages targeted for diverse communities and audiences. All students must conduct themselves in a mature and responsible manner, and maintain an open-minded, careful listening approach when reviewing attitudes or opinions different from their own. However, students may not avoid challenging discussions by remaining silent or “posturing”(saying something that sounds good but isn’t candid or truthful). Such conduct works will work to lower that student’s class participation grade.

In short...this class offers you a chance to find out what “the public” really thinks as opposed to what you have assumed they believe. And you may find, at times, that you were completely misinformed on some issues. This form method to education will enable you, in the future, to avoid the professional pitfalls of producing media messages which are poorly researched, ill-informed, have limited impact or generate negative public reactions.

Reading and Media Assignments:

The MCOM 105 primary text-reader **Gender, Race and Class in Media**, by Dines and Humez, 1995. Specific chapters are assigned below. Some are easier to read than others. You are encouraged to stay on top of our readings. Last minute efforts to cram usually results in poor test grades.

Additional readings may also be assigned for class discussions and in-class written assignments. You may be given timely handouts to review or referred to a web page to review materials pertinent to a class topic. Announcements will be made in class about these assignments. So regular attendance is crucial.

In-class Required Written Assignments

Students will be asked to review diversity topic video or handouts, then offer written media analysis. Questions will be offered by Professor Rucker in class to guide your analysis. Students must type a double-spaced, two page maximum analysis and submit it the following class meeting, unless otherwise told. You must attend class to get full details, and ask any clarifying questions. If you must miss class, it is your responsibility to contact a classmate for the necessary information. Due dates for papers are absolute, no extensions or make-ups. By complying with directives, each assignment is checked-off, and students automatically receive full credit for each. Missing assignments, or those not in full compliance, receive no credit and work against your final grade in this area.

Optional*: You may also be asked to go on campus and survey other students faculty or staff, at random, about topics discussed in class. A written analysis of your findings may be required. Follow all directives given in class, and again you receive full credit for your efforts. (*A pro-style eye-opening learning experience.)

Guest Speaker Preparation:

Periodically media professionals will be asked to speak to the class about MCOM 105 topics. Names will be announced in advance, and students are required to research guest, prepare and type a list of five, type-written questions for each guest. This will serve as your attendance marker for the guest lecture class, and enable the speaker to call on any student for input and opinions. Be prepared!

CLASS POLICIES/GUIDELINES:

Remember these are designed and based on professional expectations of conduct, standards and practices.

To get the most out of this class you must be present and participate. Tardiness and other distractions are disruptive and unacceptable. Therefore:

*Students may not enter the classroom ten minutes after the class period has begun. The teacher will restrict access to encourage courteous punctuality.

- *No cell phones, pagers or electronic devices may be left on or used in class.
- *Excused absences, due to illness or other SJSU sanctioned reasons, may require appropriate support documentation.
- *Written assignment specification and deadlines are absolute. Expect no exceptions, extensions or make-ups.
- *No homework assignments may be left in the Journalism Office. No credit given.

Extra Credit Option: (Not required. Directions must be follow precisely for credit)

Students have the option of choosing to review **THREE** media efforts focused on diversity issues covered in this class. The media efforts include movies, videos, designated internal web sites, TV programs, newspapers or magazine reports which have been chosen and approved, in advance, by Professor Rucker. You may not elect to review anything else. Any each one of three reviews must focus on separate diversity areas. (You may not do two or three reviews in one area of diversity.)

To receive extra credit, the student must submit, for each of the three media efforts chosen, a type-written report that offers insightful analysis of how the diversity issue was treated, and may be perceived by the public. Each paper must be double-spaced, two pages maximum length. And during each diversity topic section of the class, Professor Rucker will designate the class date when extra credit papers on those topics will be due. There will be no extensions for those deadlines. Students who successfully comply will all requirements will receive one letter grade increase their overall Class Participation grade. See the preliminary list of extra credit media efforts on the last page.

MCOM 105: GRADINE PROCEDURE

CLASS PARTICIPATION – 40% The exchange of ideas, opinions and attitudes is crucial in this course. But you cannot participate unless you attend class regularly and come prepared. Attendance will be monitored. ALL students should monitor television, newspaper, magazine and internet treatment of diversity issues and bring examples to class for discussions. Pertinent VHS videotape recordings (taped at “SP” speed) are also welcome. The teacher must screen tapes and approve prior to class use. Time permitting, part or all of your video may be used in class.

IN-CLASS WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS – 30% Written response analysis/opinion statements will be requested periodically. Many times these short papers will be shared with other students to read, in class. You will be restricted from participating if you do not submit your homework assignment as required. Full compliance with all specified writing assignments and directions is required or the student receives no credit. This work will be checked-off recorded. No letter grades.

(2) READING EXAMS – 30% Two computer scored, multiple choice-true/false exams of the assigned readings will be given, one roughly at midterm, the other at semester’s end. Exam dates and assigned chapters for each are listed below. Time permitting, some chapters may be reviewed in a class session before test date. Most chapters assigned will not be reviewed. On each exam date, students must bring a number two pencil and a scantron answer sheet. (T&E0200) to class for each exam. Test scores will be posted in class and outside Professor

Rucker's office, DBH 216 the following week. End of semester overall course grades will not be posted.

***EXAM #1 TEXT READINGS:** Test dates are subject to change.

Chapters 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10& 13.

Test Date: October 2, 2001

***EXAM #2 TEXT READINGS:** Test dates are subjected to change.

Chapters 11, 16, 18, 19, 38, 39, 41, 43, 44, 46, 53, 55, 60.

Test Date: December 6, 2001

Check out our School, other classes, and timely student information at our web site:

<http://jmcweb.sjsu.edu/index.html>

Extra Credit Options:

(Not required. See full directions earlier in this green sheet)

Students have the option of choosing to review **THREE** media efforts focused on diversity issues covered in the class. The media efforts include movies, videos, designated internet web sites, TV programs, newspapers or magazine reports which have been chosen and approved, in advance, by Professor Rucker.

MCOM 105 Topics and Media Efforts: (Choose only ONE in any 3 areas)

Area 1. RACE, CULTURE & RACISM.

Some media messages work to identify positive portrayals of race. Some efforts attempt to go in some depth and offer meaningful, helpful insights, history and traditions. Pick ONE:

**Choices: "JOY LUCK CLUB" "SOUL FOOD" "MI FAMILIA"
"AMERICAN HISTORY X"**

Questions for analysis: What responsibility does the media have when addressing issues of race? What more could the media do to help educate the public about various cultures and races? Should more ("no wholes barred") candid discussions about racism be carried in the media? When faced with a professional job assignment where a culture or race would be depicted, and possibly in way that could cause a social conflict or community outcry, what responsibility do you have to that race? And if your employer wanted to stir up controversy to sell "the product" you produce, where do YOU draw the line?

Area 2 GENDER.

Many media messages work to identify positive portrayals of men and women. Some provide sensitive, more in-depth information...other just poke fun... still others are condescending. Pick one...

**Choices: "IN THE COMPANY OF MEN" "WHAT DO WOMEN WANT"
"Disney's THE KID"**

Questions for analysis: What responsibility does the media have when addressing gender issues? Why is it more reluctant to criticize women than men? What traits about men and women do we like but rarely see in media messages? How are the inconsistent media message about sex and relationships affecting children and young adults? There have been “lines you didn’t cross” in the media messages on sex...do they still exist? How far is too far? Or is complete candor the way to go when discussing sex in the media?

Area 3 SEXUAL ORIENTATION.

More and more media messages are incorporating or addressing issues of homosexuality. Historically comedy has been used as a way to introduce this “delicate”...now more direct portrayals are incorporated, especially on television. Pick ONE:

Choices: “HBO: SIX FEET UNDER” “IN&OUT” “LOVE, VALOUR, COMPASSION” “OBJECT OF MY AFFECTIONS” “Showtime: QUEER AS FOLKS”

Questions for analysis: What responsibility does the media have when addressing gay and lesbian issues? How much did shock value and candor play a role in this location? How much attention was given to morality concerns/disapproval? What is the best way to address homosexuality in media messages...straightforwardness? No censorship? Comedy to help ease of avoid the reality of the lifestyles? Or...through humane reality depictions which encourage audiences to see and feel what gays and lesbians cope with as human beings?

Area 4 SPIRITUALITY & RELIGION

The majority of Americans say they have some sort of spiritual belief system or religious culture they are proud of. But few media messages attempt to explain or offer in-depth, meaningful insights into the religious of the world. If the market is there, what’s stopping us? Pick ONE:

Choices: “CBS: TOUCHED BY AN ANGEL” “WB: SEVENTH HEAVEN” “PRIEST”

Questions for analysis: Does a “free press” really have a free hand when addressing religious issues? How does the message affect you? Do the messages go too far or not far enough to explain religious/spiritual beliefs and principles? How might a non-believer react to the choice?

Area 5 DISABILITIES

Disability issues are the newest area of media interest. Caution has always been the work here.

Choices: “SIMON BIRCH”

Questions for analysis: Why are disabled issues so difficult for media people to affectively address? How could we learn more about this group or people and avoid offending them with our naïve media portrayals?