

# Women and Minorities in the Media

JMC 4853/3853  
T/R 1:30 – 2:45 pm  
218 Copeland  
3 credit hours, undergraduate or graduate level

Dr. Norma Parker Wilson, 120 Copeland  
Spring 2000 Office Hours T11:30am-1pm  
325-5372, [nwilson@ou.edu](mailto:nwilson@ou.edu)

**Course Description from Catalog:** Survey of past and present relationships between the media and women or racial and ethnic minorities in the United States. Media portrayal, employment, ownership and access will be studied.

**Course Objectives:** In this study, the student will –

- Generate thinking in gender and ethnic issues as a basis for critiquing media coverage of such issues as well as media coverage and representations in general.
- Develop an appreciation of mass communication products and processes as reflections of and generators of gender and ethnic thinking in a society.
- Establish a base for conducting research on gender and minority issues in mass communication.
- Identify and utilize the developing gender and ethnic literature in mass communication.
- Use professional, scholarly and popular literature and various other sources to become informed on specific gender and ethnic issues in mass communication.
- Practice and refine written and oral expository and argumentative presentation skills.
- Develop philosophical and practical positions on a variety of gender and ethnic issues/problems.

**Resources:** Required Texts: *Multiculturalism and the Media; From Mass to Class Communication*, by Clint C. Wilson II and Felix Gutierrez (2<sup>nd</sup> edition); *Covering the Community: A Diversity Handbook for Media*, by Leigh Stephens Aldrich; and *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with the Mass Media*, by Susan J. Douglas. Recommended: *Taking Their Place: A Documentary History of Women and Journalism*, by Maurine Beasley and Sheila Gibbons and *Pictures of Our Nobler Selves: A History of Native American Contributions to New Media*, by Mark Trahan. In addition: Herbert-Priestley Resources Center (HPRC) periodicals and reserved readings and videos and class handouts. Various professional publications, organizations and online resources (see immediately [www.reporter.org](http://www.reporter.org)). Individuals in the school, the community, the profession and the students' specialty areas.

**Activities:** Students will read the texts, maintain a learner's journal, participate in all class participation in all class discussions, activities and team projects, and plan and carry out one major research project and lead a class session to relate some of the findings from that project. In addition, students are expected to keep aware of and participate in professional or topical meetings, seminars, presentations, etc. that may be arise during the semester. (Examples: OU lecture series, cultural events, Foreign Policy conference)

**Grades:** A third of the course grade will be based on the major research project and presentation and the *Where the Girls Are* project, a third will be based on class activities and team projects (approximately five\*\*\*), and a third will be based on class participation, tests and

quizzes on readings, learner's journal and the final exam, with the final weighted most heavily in that mix. Deadlines: Missed deadlines result in one letter grade reduction for each day the assignment is late. All missed assignments must be completed to pass the course. A for-credit-only grade will be assessed (F). (\*\*\*)Class/team projects: two media literacy analyses, content analysis project, participant in the dialogue, workplace assessment project.)

**Attendance:** Students are expected to attend each class session and to participate in all class discussions, activities, projects and field trip/group opportunities. If you cannot attend because of illness or other emergency personal business, you are expected to notify the instructor *before* class in a professional manner (courtesy phone call, e-mail memo). Only one unexcused absence will be tolerated. More than three absences during the semester will likely result in a lower grade for the course. Designated research hours will be scheduled early in the course, and students are expected to use those as well as conferences with the instructor to discuss options, communicate progress, seek direction, etc.

**Accommodation:** Any student needing special assistance in the part of the course that requires individual research and outreach efforts should discuss this with the instructor immediately. Any student who has disability that may prevent him or her from fully demonstrating his or her abilities should discuss this as well with the instructor so that accommodations can be arranged to ensure full participation and to facilitate the education opportunities of this course of study.

**Teaching Philosophy:** This course is mainly of the students making. You are all advanced level students, professionals and busy human beings and will be treated as such. The instructor's role is more of moderator, facilitator and guide/mentor. You are expected to build on previous knowledge and explore additional areas of interest and importance. Your work is to be presented in acceptable, professional form at the deadlines established. You are encouraged to work creatively, take risks and explore new resources, techniques and presentation forums. You also are encouraged to gather media messages (print, broadcast or online) to share with the class or the professor.

**Key Questions Overall for the Course:**

- How do various media portray women and minorities? Why?
- What implications do these portrayals have for the individual? For those specific groups? For society in general? For the media portraying them?
- Is there a need to change these portrayals? In what way(s)?
- How can these change(s) be accomplished? (ex. tools available, language choice, perspective)
- What are key workplace issues related to women and minorities in journalism?
- Can you be an advocate for a personal cause and a journalist?

**Assignment for Week 1:**

- Establish a learner's journal. Transfer first-day exercises to it and add to the journal as assigned and as appropriate. Aim for two or three entries a week. During the semester, there will be three check-in points.
- Begin to define these key terms: *gender, race, ethnicity, minorities, culture, pluralism, multiculturalism, diversity, inclusion, sexism, racism, prejudice, stereotyping.*

- Read chapters 1 and 2 in W-G text; Nora Ephron and Brent Staples essays; media literacy overview.
- Begin thinking about a project related to Women and Minorities in the Media (content or workplace) that will have a historical component, a contemporary component and a research-base component.
- Consider a workplace diversity/affirmative action/media hiring practices project ideas; you will likely need to request information form media companies and HR people which will take some time.
- Write a brief introduction to yourself, any style. Please include your media career goals, your expectations from this course and general information about your interests in the course subject matters.

#### **Some Possible Project Ideas:**

Media portrayals of Native American and how these have changed through history  
 Media portrayals of women criminals (ABC News portrait, New Times in the early '70s)  
 Women covering the crime beat (Edna Buchanan); advances of women in photojournalism  
 Film portrayals to raise public awareness of women/minority issues and history: ex. *Rosewood*, *Amistad*, *Schindler's List*; real life vs. the movie (*A Civil Action*, *Titanic*, *The Hurricane*)  
 TV or movie portrayals of women as journalists (Katharine Hepburn early roles, Billie on *Lou Grant*, Mary Tyler Moore, *Suddenly Susan*); stereotypical roles in film for women, minorities, men  
 Women reporters bringing different issues to public attention (toxic shot syndrome – NYT Nan Robertson, Channel 5 OKC monthly breast check campaign, menopause)  
 Comic strip portrayals of women, minorities; women/minorities as cartoonists, syndication – Robb Armstrong *Sugar*  
 CNN and other 24-hour news coverage and changing fees of who are journalists; acceptable standards for news anchors – who can deliver the news and how that figures in public belief  
 Semantics and word choice in stories (specific one)  
 Graphic and photo portrayals in stories (ex. child abuse couples OKC, Chickasha; black/white criminals) hiring practices; changing questions in job interview process; survey of industry policies on married couples working for the same media outlet.

#### **Some Resources to Consider:**

Women and Minorities in the Media

Akron Beacon Journal. *A Question of Color / America Coming Together Project*; national Dialogue on Race.

Buchanan, Edna. *The Corpse Had a Familiar Face*.

Cabes, Judith G. ed. *New Guardians of the Press: Selected Profiles of American's Women Newspaper Editors*, Indianapolis: RJ Berg & Company, 1983

The Day, New London, Conn. *Strength in Diversity* project, early 1990s.

Forbes, Malcolm. *Women Who Made a Difference*. New York: Simon-Schuster, 1990.  
Gannett Co. Inc. *Countdown to 2000: Shaping the Future*, 1997

Gilbert, Sandra and Gubar, Susan. *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women*. New York: WM Norton & Company, 1992.

Hamilton Spectator. *The Immigrant Song*. Special Report, Oct. 5, 1990.

Kansas City Star. *Celebrate Diversity: A Report of the Diversity Committees*, spring 1997.

Marzolf, Marion. *Up From the Footnote: A History of Women Journalists*. New York: Hastings House, 1977.

Miller, Jean Baker. *Toward a New Psychology of Women*. Boston Beacon Press, 1986.

Rennert Richard, ed. *Female Writers: Profiles of Great Black Americans*. Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publisher, 1994.

Richardson, Diane and Robinson, Victoria. *Thinking Feminist: Key Concepts in Women's Studies*. New York: The Guilford Press, 1993. (Especially Chapter 7: "Women, Writing and Language: Making the Silences Speak")

Shipler, David K. *A Country of Strangers: Blacks and Whites America*. New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1997.

Showalter, Elaine, Baechler, Lea and Litz, A. Walton. *Modern American Women Writers: Profiles of Their Lives and Works – From the 1870s to the Present*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1993.

Showalter, Eliana. *Sister's Choice: Tradition and Change in American Women's Writing*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991. (Especially Chapter 8: "Common Threads" on quilting metaphors)

Trahant, Mark N. *Pictures of Our Nobler Selves: History of Native American Contributions to News Media*. Nashville: Freedom Forum First Amendment Center, 1995.

Wilson, Theo. *Headline Justice*. 1996.

Williamson, Don. "People & Product: The Business of Diversity in the Newspaper Industry." Presstime supplement, Newspaper Association of America, May 1996.

*Workforce 2000: Work and Workers for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Indianapolis: Hudson Institute, 1987.

- Also Professional Organizations/ Publications: Link through reporter.org and check with student chapters (see Copeland 2<sup>nd</sup> floor bulletins boards). Newspaper Association of American (naa.org), American Society of Newspaper Editors (asne.org), National Women's History Project (nwHP.org), Maynard Institute for Excellence in Journalism Education (maynardije.org), Freedom Forum, First Amendment Center. Also see regular publications of these organizations as well as but not limited to: *American Journalism Review*, *Columbia*

*Journalism Review, Editor & Publisher, Media Week, Brill's Content, Folio, Ad Age, Ad Week, Journal of Broadcasting, Journal of Media Studies, Journal of Media Ethics.* (Also ad and gender studies research journals.)

- Also specialized news Web sites: [tbwt.com](http://tbwt.com), [feminist.com](http://feminist.com)

## **Class Meetings Dates/Deadlines**

### **Week 1 – Jan 11 and Jan 13**

*Introduction to the Course, Class Participants, Methods of Work*

To Do: Read Chpts. 1 and 2 of W-G text, Ephron and Staples handouts, media literacy handout. Establish a learner's journal and begin entries including a definition of key terms section. Consider a major project topic and workplace issues topic. Submit a brief bio that includes background, study interests and info relevant to the course and what you hope to gain from taking it. BIO due, noon Jan.17 by email or at Wilson office.  
Extension: MLK Day activities on campus or in community.

### **Week 2 – Jan. 18 and Jan. 20**

*Journaling, Media Literacy Principles, Introduction to Content Analysis*

To Do: Browse all texts and syllabus. Continue your learner's journal entries. Practice media literacy queries on two or three media messages, including *Equality: A History of the Women's Movement* video. Discussion Ephron and Staples essays. View video of *Sacramento Bee* column by Fahizah Alim on Vietnam War vet.  
Extension: Find a fresh media voice.

### **Week 3 – Jan. 25 and Jan 27**

*Content Analysis and Other Media Research Techniques; Practice with Media Literacy and Content Analysis*

To Do: Browse all texts and read the chapters or segments relevant to your research project interests (example W-G advertising). Turn in a research project proposal by Fri., Jan. 28, 5pm. [nwilson@ou.edu](mailto:nwilson@ou.edu) or 120 Copeland. Begin gathering Read Content Analysis handouts and p.97 in Aldrich. Plan and carry out CONTENT ANALYSIS project. Due first of class Feb. 8.

### **Week 4 – Feb. 1 and Feb. 3**

*Content Analysis (guest speaker); Introduction to Interview Techniques, Background and Contest*

To Do: Begin Douglas, intro and chapt 1. Complete content analysis assignment. First check-in on learner's journal (turn in Feb. 3 or 4 and pick up Feb. 8 in class)/  
Extension: Watch for Black History Month community activities all month long.

### **Week 5 – Feb. and Feb. 10**

*Interview Techniques; Shaping Images: What shapes your view?*

To Do: Have research project question formed, based on feedback from proposal, and submit for final okay. Question and research plan must be approved by Feb. 11. Begin your research on this project. Read Douglas, chpts. 3-5, review W-G, chpt. 2.

**Feb. 8 – CONTENT ANALYSIS Assignment DUE**

**Week 6 – Feb. 15 and Feb. 17**

*Shaping Images cont.; Historical Research Introduction*

To Do: Work on research project. Continue reading Douglas and filling out study guide to it. QUIZ 1 on readings, class material.

**Week 7 – Feb. 22 and Feb. 24**

*Case Studies of Some Groundbreakers in Media; Looking at Current Media Messages*

To Do: Read Douglas, chpts. 6-10. Continue research; required check-in with instructor for research progress report; make an appointment; begin to plan remaining minor projects. NO CLASS Feb. 24 – Research Day. Gather, assess information you have, what else you need, plan presentation format.

**Week 8 – Feb. 29 and March 2**

*Looking at Current Media Messages cont., Media Power and Influence*

To Do: Read Douglas, chpts. 11-12. Complete personal study guide to *Where the Girls Are* for GROUP WGA DISCUSSION, March 2.

Extension: Watch for Women's History Month activities all month long.

**Week 9 – March 7 and March 9**

*Media Power and Influence continued*

To Do: Continue research project gathering. Begin writing. NO CLASS March 9 – Research Day

**Week 10 – March 13 – March 17 Spring Break**

**Week 11 - March 21 and March 23**

*Workplace Issues; Human Resources guest speaker*

To Do: Read Aldrich, workplace issues handouts from API, and W-G, chpt. 9. RESEARCH PROJECT PROGRESS REPORT, March 21. Learner's Journal second check-in (turn in March 21, returned March 23).

**Week 12 – March 28 and March 30**

*Media Literacy Revisited; Personal Action Plans*

To Do: Read W-G, chpts. 10 and 11. RESEARCH PROJECTS DUE 5 P.M. MARCH 31.

**Week 13 – April 4 and April 6**

*Personal Action Plans; Topics from Student Research*

To Do: Review readings and prepare for class presentation. QUIZ 2 on readings, class material.  
\*April 7 – Media Literacy Assignment due

**Week 14 – April 11 and April 13**

*Topics from Student Research*

\*April 14 - Participation in the Dialogue assignment due

**Week 15 – April 18 and April 20**

*Topics from Student Research*

\*April 21 – Workplace Issues assignment due

\*These can come in any order but submit one each due date.

**Week 16 – April 25 and April 27**

*Pulling It All Together; Celebration of Learning; Course Evaluation*

To Do: Learner's Journal final check-in, April 27 (returned at Final Exam)

Final Exam

**Women and Minorities in the Media**

*Where the Girls Are*

**A Personal Study Guide and Group Discussion Starter**

DUE March 2, beginning of class, spend most time on \*items

1. What is your overall assessment of Susan Douglas' *Where the Girls Are* as a media message and why?
2. Which mass medium do you think *most affected* Douglas? Why do you say so? Which mass media message most affected her and why?
3. What aspect of the book did you find most enlightening? Why so? Related this aspect of the book of its value in or relevancy to this course?
4. List an aspect from Douglas' experience that you can relate to and one that you find difficult or impossible to relate to. Briefly explain your choices.
- \*5. Is Susan Douglas a *representative* person in terms of her relationship to the media and its influence on her? Explain why. (Find out brief biographical information about Douglas. What does she do for a living? What else has she written, if anything?)

6. What value is a personal cultural history like Douglas' to those who intend to construct media messages? AND to us as consumers of media messages? (How did critics judge Douglas' work when it first appeared?)

\*7. Share a media experience with Douglas. Listen to a couple of the songs she mentioned, look up and read an article or publication she read as she was growing up, view one of the TV programs. Compare her reaction to the media experience to your own.

8. How did Douglas feel that the mass media treated and portrayed *feminists*? Write the citation for either a quote in the book or for the program of text you drew on to come up with your characterization of her feelings. (How do you think the media portray *feminists* today? Why do you say so?)

\*AND FINALLY

List five or ten media messages that have influenced you throughout your life and briefly tell how they did so.

OR

Using your own style, relate a personal account of how a medium or a media message has influenced you.