COMM 1154
INTRODUCTION TO MASS COMMUNICATIONS
FALL 2004
TLC 1-305
Tuesday/Thursday 5:30-6:45
[Located at http://www.westga.edu/%7Evpa/COMM1154Fall2004]

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Office: Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs
Sanford Hall
Phone: 770-836-6445
Email: thynes@westga.edu you may also reach me through the instructor
e-mail for this class in WebCT
Office Hours: By appointment—these can be made by contacting my secretary at 6445

TEXTS

You will also be responsible for readings posted to the class website during the semester.
Make certain you read vital information for UWG WebCT users
http://webct.westga.edu/students.htm

COURSE OVERVIEW

Communication 1154, Introduction to Mass Communications, is a study of the origin,
development, and paramount ethical, legal/policy, economic, social, and effects issues facing the
electronic, print and telecommunication media as well as advertising and public relations
industries. In many ways, mass media influence, or even dominate critical elements of our every
day lives. This panoramic view will provide a picture of the changing landscape of Mass Media.
Your goal should be to expand your knowledge of media issues under these changing conditions.

Learning Goals

There are several ideas/concepts that you are expected to learn, and for which you will be
assessed. As a General Education Course fulfilling area C, the course will develop, especially in
our discussions of film, music, and television, abilities to recognize and identify aesthetic
achievements, and to apply those aesthetic judgments to those areas of achievement (or lack
thereof)

Moreover, since the course serves as an introduction to the ways in which various members of
the communication discipline come to understand mass communication, we will consider four
reoccurring lens for viewing the mass media, about which you will be expected to gain
considerable understanding. Moreover, you will be asked to apply routinely these lens to the
mass media with which you interact in your daily life. These lens are as follows:
First, mass media involves business. Those involved in mass media usually do so to make money—or at least to cover the costs, large or small, of using some form of media to communicate. You will be expected to understand the implications of economics on the kinds of messages communicated, the communicators with access to the channels of communication, and the effects on individuals and society resulting from those economic conditions. Or why does Rupert Murdock make so many people happy or mad?

Second, mass media are influenced by technology. Beyond the obvious use of technology to transmit information, you will be expected to understand the ways in which technology has influence on the effects of the media, as well as the business environment in which those effects take place. You will also be asked to demonstrate some understanding of historical changes in the technology of mass communication as a way of providing specific examples of how changes in technology change mass communications. Or how has Bill Gates changed everything?

Third, mass media exist within social, political, and cultural contexts. The media affect, and are affected by, these contexts. You will be asked to identify some of those social, political, and cultural contexts, as well as to demonstrate a general understanding of how these interactions take place. Or, why would anyone watch “Big Brother Five”, or should we be worried that the Federal Communication Commission fined Howard Stern?

Fourth, mass media and the messages communicated through such media have effects on receivers of these messages. You will be asked to demonstrate your understanding of some key examples of the effects of media. Or, do presidential campaign ads make you vote for or against certain candidates?

In meeting these objectives we intend to assist you in meeting departmental objectives.

Mass Communications Program Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will be able to understand critically the origin, development, and paramount economic, legal/policy, social, and effects issues of mass media.
2. Students will be able to understand critically structure and process of mass media industries within economic, legal, and ethical considerations.
3. Students will develop the ability to write mass media messages with accuracy, clarity, and brevity on deadline and within varying style, ethical, and legal considerations.
4. Students will develop proficient use of technology to produce visual and audio messages for mass media within varying aesthetic, style, technical, ethical, and legal considerations.
5. Students will be able to gain practical experiences to apply and test knowledge and skills, and to network with professionals.
6. Students will be encouraged to engage in interdisciplinary scholarship.
7. Students will be provided a foundation for graduate study in communication.

By mastering the learning goals of this course, you will contribute to meeting for yourself program goals 1, 2, and 6.
Conditions for Achieving Student Learning Goals

As instructor of the course, my responsibility is to provide you the opportunity to learn. As students, you are responsible for making efforts to learn. The following can enhance this:

1. Read all assigned chapters in your text no later than the date posted in this syllabus. If you accept responsibility for learning the content of each chapter it will increase your chances to learn to your potential. Much of the material on examinations will come directly from those chapters.

2. Your text contains excellent web based sources that will allow you to go beyond the minimum requirements of this course. By using them you can attain the goal of developing a deeper understanding and critique of the mass media. You are encouraged to carry out many of those assignments. Whether or not it will add to your “score” in this class is not nearly as important as the fact that your ability to participate in reasoned dialogue about the mass media will be enhanced. We will try to provide a vehicle for you to share some of what you learn.

3. Remember that learning requires your active interaction with the lecture material and the course material. While in some sense a student can be called “consumer,” the student is more like the consumer of the services of a health club or gym. (Since the customer metaphor is a challenge under the best of circumstances, the application of the metaphor to a gym does not seem all that inappropriate). One can simply look around the gym and see other people there—and believe that such activity is enough to justify the payment for belonging to the club. That would seemingly be silly. To get stronger you must exercise, use the equipment/material provided, and follow the instructions trainers give to improve your general physical fitness. The same is true in a class—you can come to class to see other students—period. Or, you can work hard with the material—regularly coming to class, following readings, completing assignments, and following the instructions of the instructor. Only in these ways can you receive the full benefit of this intellectual exercise.

4. Begin now to seek out other students in this class with whom to prepare for examinations and exercises. There is an impressive body of evidence to indicate that students who prepare for classes in such groups can significantly improve their chances for class success. By the second assigned exercise, you will have to demonstrate that you are involved in such a study/preparation group. By August 31st, you may identify up to five other people in the class with whom you wish to interact and work during the term.

5. You are responsible for the learning environment of others. This means that during class, you must turn off your cell phone, and beeper. You must keep conversation to a minimum while class is in session. This action respects the efforts of others attempting to learn. If you cannot restrict your conversations during the 75 minute class period to those with me, you may be asked to leave so that others may learn. Please arrive before the start of class. Late arrival is disruptive to others (and you may not be counted as “in
6. WebCT is an essential tool for learning in this course. Follow the procedures outlined at the distance web site (see page 1 of the syllabus) to get access. If you have registered recently for the course, it may be a day or two before your name is entered on the class list. If you have not already used WebCT, you should find it fairly easy to master.

EXAMINATIONS

We will have three examinations (multiple choice/true-false) based on readings/class discussions. You will receive study questions highlighting those areas central for your learning one week prior to the scheduled exam. You are encouraged to use the “Media Review” sections at the end of each chapter to test your understanding of some of the key points covered in each chapter. This should be done as you are reading the chapters, and should not be delayed until just prior to an examination. The dates for each exam are noted in the class schedule section of the syllabus. Should the dates need to be changed for any reason, this will be communicated in class.

You should check your schedule now to make certain that you have no conflicts with the examination dates. Your failure to show up for a scheduled examination creates more problems than you wish. The presumption will be that you will be there and the burden of proof will be on you to overcome that presumption. Here are some things to consider:
1. The instructor will have to approve a make-up exam
2. An extreme circumstance along with appropriate documentation will be the minimum requirement for a make-up to be considered.
3. If your employer would think that your excuse is “thin”, so will I.
4. We require prior notification for any exam you miss. This can be done via e-mail or a call to 770-836-6445.

ASSIGNED EXERCISES

At regular intervals—each ten days to two weeks—you will receive an assignment via the WebCT email function. These assignments will require you to reflect on some issues associated with Mass Communication, and ways in which you react to those issues. For example, the first assignment will ask you to report on your interactions with various kinds of mass media—radio, TV, film, newspapers, internet sources—over a 24 hour period. The assignments will also serve as a means for us to assess whether you have achieved some of the learning goals noted at the start of this syllabus. The purpose of these assignments is to give some application of the material we discuss during the physical class meeting. The successful completion of these items will provide us with a way to assess your understanding of the material in the reading and the lecture. In most instances, you will have approximately one week to respond to this assignment. At the time the assignments are received, you will be given a time and date after which the assignment will not receive credit. These exercises will be graded on a pass fail basis—meaning that you can earn approximately 15% of your final grade simply by writing a brief (usually no
more than 2-3 paragraphs) response to what I hope will be always interesting and largely fun exercises.

**ONE-MINUTE PAPERS**

Periodically you will be asked to produce a one-minute response on webct. This paper requires you to do the following two things: 1) what, to your mind, was the most important concept discussed in the class that day? 2) What is one item that you do not fully understand and wish the instructor to clarify at the beginning of the next class period? Together with the bonus points for attendance, this will allow the instructor to better explain concepts, as well as to determine whether the learning objectives for the lecture were in fact reached.

**EVALUATION**

Grades will be weighted as follows:

- **Exam 1**: 40 pts.
- **Exam 2**: 40 pts.
- **Exam 3**: 40 pts.
- **Assigned exercises**: 20 pts.

Total: 140 pts.

The following indicates the point’s necessary for certain grades:

- 126+ = A
- 112+ = B
- 98+ = C
- 84+ = D
- 83- = F

**Attendance:**

Any student missing 3 or fewer classes will receive the benefit of a 10 extra points added to their total. There are no make-ups. Since attendance is only associated with extra credit, there are no distinctions between “excused” and “unexcused” absences. On Thursday, August 20th, when you sit down, you will be staying in the seat that is yours for the semester. Your attendance will be recorded based on a seating chart reflecting that information. So come early on August 20th if you are partial to a particular seat or seats if you wish to be near friends. Changes in seats after that must be discussed so as to be approved.

**Academic Honesty**

This course operates under the assumption that you will not violate any aspect of the student conduct code, especially sections 2.0 and 3.0, sections concerned with academic honesty and appropriate classroom behavior. As noted on page 112 of the Student Handbook, in completing
the application for admission to the State University of West Georgia, you agree to abide by the rules and regulations of the University. Violations of the conduct code subject violators to sanctions up to and including those noted on page 112 of the Student Handbook, as well as class sanctions deemed appropriate by the instructor.

**Final Note**

Mass Media change daily. They are a part of our daily life. Please join in the excitement of learning about this essential feature of our contemporary existence.
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Weekly Reading</th>
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<td>August 24</td>
<td>Introduction to the course</td>
<td>Biagi, Pages 1-25, &amp; course syllabus</td>
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<td>August 26</td>
<td>Introduction to the course</td>
<td>Biagi, Pages 1-25</td>
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<td>August 31</td>
<td>Books</td>
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<td>September 2</td>
<td>Newspapers</td>
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<td>September 7</td>
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<td>September 9</td>
<td>September 11&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; and Media</td>
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<td>September 14</td>
<td>Recording</td>
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<td>September 16</td>
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<td>Biagi, Pages 128-150</td>
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<td>September 23</td>
<td>Television</td>
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<td>September 28</td>
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<td>Television</td>
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<td>October 5</td>
<td>Digital Comm and the Web</td>
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<td>October 7</td>
<td>Digital Comm and the Web</td>
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<td>October 12</td>
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<td>October 14</td>
<td>Advertising</td>
<td>Biagi, Pages 204-225</td>
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<td>October 19</td>
<td>Public Relations</td>
<td>Biagi, Pages 226-241</td>
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<td>October 21</td>
<td>News and Information</td>
<td>Biagi, Pages 242-265</td>
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<td>October 26</td>
<td>News and Information</td>
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<td>October 28</td>
<td>Social, Cultural Political Effects of the Media</td>
<td>Biagi, Pages 266-287</td>
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<td>November 2</td>
<td>Media and American Election</td>
<td>Biagi, Pages 266-287</td>
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<td>November 4</td>
<td>Test #2</td>
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<td>November 9</td>
<td>Social, Cultural Political Effects of the Media</td>
<td>Biagi, Pages 266-287</td>
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<td>November 11</td>
<td>Regulation of Media</td>
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<td>November 16</td>
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<td>November 18</td>
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<td>November 23</td>
<td>Media Ethics</td>
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<td>No Class/Thanksgiving</td>
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<td>November 30</td>
<td>International Communication</td>
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<td>December 2</td>
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<td>December 7</td>
<td>The Media in Perspective</td>
<td>Biagi, Pages 288-323</td>
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<td>December 14</td>
<td>Test #3 5:30-7:30</td>
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