



MEDIA AND SOCIETY

FALL 2014

MSP 1021 • Section 001 • CRN: 16710 • 3 credits
GLADFELTER HALL L024 • 12:30 - 1:50 T-TH

COURSE SUMMARY

This course and textbook are based two 21st century concepts:

- We live in a 24/7, online, all-around-us, global network of media environments.
- We can combine movies with theory to critique and understand these media environments and their effect on society.

This courses acknowledges that virtually all media technologies, industries, content, and usages have converged and work together to shape consciousness and culture as technological environments. From the human mind, we have extended media technologies around the world, and throughout the universe, for the purpose of mapping and representing that world to us. As such, media have changed our views of the cosmos, society, and ourselves.

Almost everyone uses media and media technologies — from cell phones to cyberspace, computers to cinema, iPods to the internet. In so doing, we rarely ever think about the underlying meanings and effects of media on our lives and society. This course explores media in their totality and provides models for understanding and interrogating many universal themes that span media and society. In sum, this course will explore what it means for a society to live amidst *media environments*.

GOALS AND OUTCOMES

The essential goal of this course is for students to comprehend the nature of media and its reciprocal relationship with society. By the end of this course, students will:

- be empowered to analyze media and society from the foundation of a larger and deeper intellectual framework.
- realize that media and media technologies are not neutral — as media expand in power, they change our view of the universe and society, and our place in both.
- view media as expanding technological “environments” that shape our *consciousness* and our *society*.
- understand that people and society are utterly dependent on media environments — from science and ecology to enlightenment and entertainment to personal identity and shared meaning.
- grasp the profound role media have in creating and shaping our sense of the future and destiny, both personal and social.

INSTRUCTOR

Dr. Barry Vacker

Associate Professor

Office: Annenberg 224

bvacker@temple.edu

Preferred methods of contact –

Office Hours: — 10:30 – 12:00 on T-TH; or by appointment.

Office Phone — 215.204.3623

1) interpersonal: come up to me before or after class; drop by during office hours.

2) electronic: send an email; call on the office telephone.

Email response time: Due to the volume of email, please give me and the TAs 24 hours to reply.

TEACHING ASSISTANTS

Smitha Lakshminarayan

Tracy Tinga

Joseph Giomboni

Office Hour: 11:00 – 12:00 M (Annenberg Atrium)

Office Hour: 2:00 – 3:00 TH (Annenberg Atrium)

Office Hour: 3:30 – 4:30 W (Annenberg Atrium)

Email: smitha.lakshminarayan@temple.edu

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REQUIRED TEXTBOOK

Media Environments, 2nd Edition, edited by Barry Vacker (San Diego: Cognella, 2015) ISBN: 978-1-63189-003-1
Available at Temple Bookstore or online: from Cognella Publishing or via Amazon.

- This course requires the **2nd Edition**, which has over 50% new readings and discussions of many new films.

GRADING AND EXAMS

There will be two exams, one written critique (with presentation), and one video critique over the course of the semester. If you miss one of the exams or projects, then your grade for that exam/project will be zero. The breakdown is as follows:

Mid-Term Exam	= 20%	(Date: October 2)
Written Critique	= 20%	(Due: October 30)
Video Critique	= 20%	(Due: December 2)
Final Exam	= 30%	(Date: December 11)
Attendance	= <u>10%</u>	
	100%	

Exams may contain two kinds of questions — short answer, multiple choice. The difficulty of the exam questions will vary, but they are designed to test student reading and comprehension of class materials — readings, class discussion, and films/videos. Exam questions will stress the “big picture” rather than trivial details. Approximately 1/3 of the questions will come from the readings in the text, 1/3 from the powerpoints and class discussions, and 1/3 from the films and videos. The final exam is comprehensive and mandatory. Per Temple policy, everyone must take the exam as scheduled.

Note: If you have any questions about your exam grades, you have one week (7 days) from when the exams are returned to contact Professor Vacker and/or the Teaching Assistants to arrange a meeting to discuss your questions. If you have a question about your final exam or total grade, you must contact the TAs or Professor Vacker within 24 hours of the grade being posted in Blackboard. After December 14, all grades are final; this is the date the grades are submitted to the online grading system.

Make-up exams

NO makeup exams are permitted for the tests, unless you miss class for Temple-approved academic events or sports activities. If you need to miss an exam for one of these reasons, then you need to provide the professor with written and signed (by appropriate school representative) documentation prior to the exam. NO other reasons are acceptable. This is only fair to those fellow students who take the exam as scheduled.

Final Grades

As required by Temple University, final grades will be assigned according to the criteria of:

100-93 = A	89-86 = B+	79-76 = C+	69-66 = D+	59-0 = F
92-90 = A-	85-83 = B	75-73 = C	65-63 = D	
	82-80 = B-	72-70 = C-	62-60 = D-	

Written and Video Critiques

The written media critique will be a written report based on the theories and themes in the class. For the video critique, you and your partner will produce a 3-5 minute video based on theories and themes from this course. Shortly after week 1, you will receive a handout detailing the critiques. *Due dates — written critique, October 30; video critique: December 2.* All critiques are due on these dates; critiques turned in late will earn the grade of zero.

Attendance – 10% of your grade

This class relies on class discussion and student participation. To encourage attendance, I have created an attendance plan. Simply put, the more classes you attend, the more points you earn toward your final grade. Excluding the first week, there will be 26 class meetings. Attend 25 to get the full 10 points. You get *one* free miss.

Classes	Points	Classes	Points	Classes	Points
<u>Attended</u>	<u>Earned</u>	<u>Attended</u>	<u>Earned</u>	<u>Attended</u>	<u>Earned</u>
25	10	23	7	21	3
24	9	22	5	20 or less	0

Note 1: It is your responsibility to ensure you are in your assigned seat, otherwise you will be counted absent. If you need to miss class for a religious holiday, please let the professor know in writing and verbally (before or after class, or in office hours).

Note 2: Your professor and the TAs will take great care to make sure the attendance records are 100% accurate. If you have any questions about your absences and attendance records for the semester, it is **your** responsibility to contact the TAs and clarify your questions or any issues. You must meet with the TAs by December 11, to discuss any attendance issues. **After December 11, all attendance grades are final.**

Academic Dishonesty

Regarding academic dishonesty, this class will abide by the rules of Temple University. Cheating on exams will get you dropped from the class — NO EXCEPTIONS. The Temple Student Handbook states: *Temple University strongly believes in academic honesty and integrity. Plagiarism and academic cheating are, therefore, prohibited.*

There is nothing wrong with citing the works of others, just make sure you give them credit. In return, you get credit for doing so, and citing them can enhance your learning. If you are not certain that you are using or citing materials properly, then please check with the TAs or Dr. Vacker. It is your responsibility to know the Temple policies on these matters, as provided below.

Academic honesty and plagiarism

Adapted from the Temple University policy statement on academic integrity, passed by the Academic Senate on April 19, 1989.

Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of another person's labor: another person's ideas, words, or assistance. There are many forms of plagiarism: repeating another person's sentence as your own, adopting a particularly apt phrase as your own, paraphrasing someone else's argument as your own, or even presenting someone else's line of thinking in the development of an idea as though it were your own. Academic writing is built upon the use of other people's ideas and words — this is how ideas are developed — but appropriate credit must always be given to the originator.

In general, all sources must be identified as clearly, accurately, and thoroughly as possible. When in doubt about whether to identify a source, either cite the source or consult your instructor. Here are some specific guidelines to follow:

a. Quotations. *Whenever you use a phrase, sentence, or longer passage written (or spoken) by someone else, you must enclose the words in quotation marks and indicate the exact source of the material, including the page number of written sources.*

b. Paraphrasing. *Avoid closely paraphrasing another's words. Substituting an occasional synonym, leaving out or adding an occasional modifier, rearranging the grammar slightly, or changing the tenses of verbs simply looks like sloppy copying. Good paraphrasing indicates that you have absorbed the material and are restating it in a way that contributes to your overall argument. It is best to either quote material directly, using quotation marks, or put ideas completely in your own words. In either case, acknowledgment is necessary. Remember: expressing someone else's ideas in your own way does not make them yours.*

c. Facts. *In a paper, you will often use facts that you have gotten from a lecture, a written work, or some other source. If the facts are well known, it is usually not necessary to provide a source. (In a paper on American history, for example, it would not ordinarily be necessary to give a source for the statement that the Civil War began in 1861 after the inauguration of Abraham Lincoln.) But if the facts are not widely known or if the facts were developed or presented by a specific source, then you should identify that source.*

d. Ideas. *If you use an idea or ideas that you learned from a lecture, written work, or some other source, then you should identify the source. You should identify the source for an idea whether or not you agree with the idea. It does not become your original idea just because you agree with it.*

Penalties for violation of Temple University's academic honesty policies can range from a failing grade for the assignment or the entire course to referral to the university disciplinary committee.

Your professor and TAs stand by this policy.

TEXT MESSAGING, EMAILING, AND WEB SURFING DURING CLASS: Your media universe will still exist after 1:50 every day!

Instant access to everything online is surely a permanent feature of a mediated society, especially on college campuses.

Obviously, there are many advantages and benefits to these technologies. However, text messaging, emailing, and web surfing in class are far too often *a detriment to concentrating and learning in a college classroom*, as the latest research is now showing. Yep, multitasking may hinder learning! Why? First, you cannot concentrate on class material when you are texting and surfing online; this will hinder your understanding of complex ideas and reduce your performance on the exams and projects. Second, the glowing imagery on your laptop or cell phone screen is a distraction and discourteous to others around you, especially when we are screening film clips. So, do yourself and your classmates a favor: avoid texting, emailing, and surfing during class. Your mediated world and friends will still exist when the class is over at 1:50!

SLACKERS

If you miss many classes or an exam, then you will have difficulty passing this course. You are expected to actively participate in this course, just like you do with media in your everyday life! Any topic discussed in class will be assumed to have been heard by everyone. If you miss a class, please feel free to ask questions of the professor or TAs; however, do not expect us to recite the class lecture for you.

EMAIL PROTOCOL

Since there are 225 students in this course, the TAs and I receive many emails every day. To ensure efficient responses and clear communication, we have two requests:

- Please provide us *at least* 24 hours to reply to your email; it is much better for all concerned that when you get an email response, we have had time to think about it and gather additional information, if necessary.
- Please compose your emails in clear, concise sentences, keeping the length of the email as brief as needed.

It should go without saying that you should use proper grammar and form in composing your email and addressing the TAs and professor. Emails should be written as a brief letter, not a text message. Short, clear emails make for clear communication and help everything to run smoother!

SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS

At Temple, we want all students to be able to participate fully in class activities, and we will do everything possible to achieve this. Any student who has a need for accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact Professor Vacker privately to discuss the specific situation as soon as possible. Contact Disability Resources and Services at 215.204.1280 in 100 Ritter Annex to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

ACADEMIC FREEDOM

Temple University has requested that the following information be included on all course syllabi:

Freedom to teach and freedom to learn are inseparable facets of academic freedom. The University has a policy on Student and Faculty and Academic Rights and Responsibilities (Policy #03.70.02) which can be accessed through the following link: http://policies.temple.edu/getdoc.asp?policy_no=03.70.02.

CONDUCT CODE

Individuals enrolled in this course are expected to conduct themselves in a civil and respectful manner, both toward their instructor and fellow students. In accordance with Temple's Student Conduct Code (Policy Number: 03.70.12), acts of misconduct for which students are subject to discipline include, but are not limited to, intentional interference with or disruption of class as well as behavior or conduct which poses a threat to the mental, emotional, or physical well being of self or others. Non-compliance, interference or resistance to this code is considered actionable when a student fails to comply with a reasonable verbal or written instruction or direction given by a University employee (e.g. instructor, teaching assistant or staff member). In such cases of violation, it is the University employee's right and responsibly to seek out the appropriate sanctions (e.g. suspension, separation, probation, enrollment restrictions, or expulsion from the University) pursuant to the conduct code policy.

HOW TO DO WELL IN THIS COURSE

The best way to do well in this course is simple: come to class, pay attention during class, avoid texting and web surfing in class, stay up on the readings, study hard, and have an open mind. Also, let your professor and/or TAs know if you have any questions!

CLASS PROTOCOL

In general, I am an easy-going guy and prefer my classes to be open forums for ideas and discourse related to the class topics. However, a few rules are needed:

- Please arrive on time; screenings and discussion begin promptly. Timely arrivals to class are not only courteous to classmates, but many of these films and shows have very important openings, which are important to understanding the meanings and messages to be discussed in class and in your papers.
- You are encouraged to silence all mobile phones and PDAs; if you still use a pager, you need to upgrade.
- Eloquence is the most persuasive form of discourse; insults and "in your face" dialogue persuades no one of anything.
- Show respect and courtesy to fellow students at all times.
- The TAs and I want all of you to do well in this class, so feel free to ask questions before or after class, or during office hours.

COURSE OUTLINE

FOUR MEDIA MODELS

WEEK 1 THE MEME

Aug 26, 28 Course introduction; why do you believe what you believe? what is a mind virus?
Film clips: *The Hunger Games* (2012)
Readings from Chapter 1: Introduction
Douglas Rushkoff, “The Nature of Infection”
Richard Brodie, “Memes”

WEEK 2 THE NETWORK

Sept 2, 4 The structure of the internet; Moore’s Law; expanding media power.
Film clips: *The Fifth Estate* (2013).
Readings from Chapter 2: Introduction
Kevin Kelly, “Hive Mind”
Jose’ van Dijck, “Engineering Sociality in a Culture of Connectivity”

WEEK 3 THE SPECTACLE

Sept 9, 11 The mediated experience of life: from information to image and illusion;
Film clips: *Network* (1976)
Readings from Chapter 3: Introduction
Neil Postman, “The Age of Show Business”
Reading from Chapter 6:
Marty Kaplan, “Welcome to the Infotainment Freak Show”

WEEK 4 THE HYPERREAL

Sept 16, 18 The deeper meanings of media: from reality to hyperreality (and NFL football).
Film clips: *The Truman Show* (1998), *The Matrix* (1999)
Readings from Chapter 4: Introduction
Plato, “Allegory of the Cave”
Dino Felluga, “*The Matrix*: Paradigm of Postmodernism or Intellectual Poseur?”

ENTERTAINMENT AND ENLIGHTENMENT

WEEK 5 MEDIA AND SCIENCE

Sept 23, 25 Science, anti-science, and entertainment; is society getting smarter or dumber?
Film clips: *Gravity* (2013); *Cosmos* (2014): “Standing Up in the Milky Way”
Readings from Chapter 5: Introduction
Chris Mooney & Sheril Kirshenbaum, “Hollywood and the Mad Scientists”

SOCIAL POWER

WEEK 6 CELEBRITY CULTURE

Sept 30, Oct 2 The panopticon; why gaze upon movie stars and athletes?
Film clips: *Simone* (2002)
Readings from Chapter 7: Introduction
Ellis Cashmore, “Answering/The Big Question”
Alice Marwick, “The Fabulous Lives of Micro-Celebrities”

October 2: Mid-Term Exam. All readings: weeks 1-6

WEEK 7 SOCIAL MEDIA

Oct 7, 9 Panopticon 2; micro-celebrities, pretending to be the center of everything.
Film clips: *Her* (2013)
Readings from Chapter 8: Introduction.
Ian Bogost, “Ian Became a Fan of Marshall McLuhan on Facebook and Suggested You Become a Fan, Too”
Angela Cirucci, “Social Media as Video Games”
Guest presenter: Angela Cirucci, Social Media Theorist, PhD, Temple ’14.

WEEK 8
Oct 14, 16
TOTAL SURVEILLANCE
Panopticon 3; privacy and the Fourth Amendment; if you have nothing to hide, do have nothing to fear?
Film clips: *Minority Report* (2002)
Readings from Chapter 9: Introduction
Jan Fernback, "Surveillance Environments"
Glenn Greenwald, "The Harm of Surveillance"

WEEK 9
Oct 21, 23
CAPITALISM AND COUNTERCULTURE
Media celebrates rebellion, individuality; how much of counterculture is "counter"?
Film clips: *Fight Club* (1999)
Readings from Chapter 10: Introduction
Kalle Lasn, "The Revolutionary Impulse" & "Demarketing Loops"
Reading from Chapter 15: Introduction (section: "Fighting the Future in *Fight Club*")

WEEK 10
Oct 28, 30
FREEDOM AND THE INTERNET
WikiLeaks, Occupy Wall Street, open networks, and the First Amendment.
Film clips: *V for Vendetta* (2005)
Readings from Chapter 11: Introduction
Rebecca Mackinnon, "Consent and Sovereignty"
Julian Assange, "A Call to Cryptographic Call to Arms" & "Fighting Total Surveillance"

October 30: Written Critique due

OUR SPECIES, PLANET, AND COSMOS

WEEK 11
Nov 4, 6
MEDIA AND ECOLOGY
Are media technologies helping us understand nature or removing us from nature?
Film clips: *WALL•E* (2008).
Readings from Chapter 12: Introduction
Stephen Rust, "Hollywood and Climate Change"
Robyn Murray and J. Heumann, "*WALL-E*: From Environmental Adaptation to Sentimental Nostalgia"
Reading from Chapter 15: Introduction ("*WALL-E* and *Avatar*")

WEEK 12
Nov 11, 13
COSMIC MEDIA
Media change our view of the universe and our place in it.
Film clips: *Contact* (1997); *Cosmos*: "The Immortals"
Readings from Chapter 14: Introduction
Brian Cox, "Sections from *Wonders of the Universe*"
Neil deGrasse Tyson, "Our Radio Bubble"

WEEK 13
Nov 18, 20
MEDIA FUTURES 1
Who/what will prevail: zombies, rebels, warriors, corporations, hyperreality?
Film clips: *The Walking Dead* (2011-), *The Hunger Games: Catching Fire* (2013)
Readings from Chapter 15: Introduction (sections: "Doublethink;" "*The Hunger Games* and Three Possible Futures")
Lois Gresh, "Repressive Regimes and Rebellions: Could *The Hunger Games* Really Happen?"

Nov 24-30. Fall Break, Thanksgiving Holiday

WEEK 14
Dec 2, 4
MEDIA FUTURES 2
Will we use Gaia, the internet, or space travel to ever unite as a civilization?
Film clips: *Star Trek* (2009, 2013)
Readings from Chapter 15: Introduction (sections: "*Star Trek* and the Future;" "Media and Human Destiny")
Stephen Hawking, "Our Future: *Star Trek* or Not."
Carl Sagan, "Science and Hope"

Dec 2: Video Critique due

Dec 4: We will screen top 10 video critiques in class; your friends, fans, and followers are welcome!

FINAL EXAM: Thursday, Dec 11, 10:30 - 12:30 The final exam is mandatory. Everyone must take the exam as scheduled.

Student Questionnaire (Providing this information is 100% voluntary.)

To help me get to know this class better, we would like some information about your background, life, goals, etc. It will help us understand your life and ideas much better, and aid us in teaching to you as an individual human being.

1. The two books that most *influenced* my life are:

_____ by _____

_____ by _____

2. The two people (not a family member or relative) I most admire are:

_____ and _____

The two *greatest* films I have ever seen are: _____ & _____

The funniest film I have ever seen is: _____

My favorite female actor is: _____ My favorite male actor is: _____

My 2 favorite pieces of visual art (sculpture, painting, building, advertisement, etc.) are:

_____ why? _____

_____ why? _____

My 2 favorite musicians, bands, composers are: _____ & _____

Which city would be your ideal city in which to live? _____

why? _____

My hometown is: _____

My goals in life are to:

Some questions I have about *media and society* that I would like to see discussed in this course are:

OPTIONAL: My name is _____