

**COMM 112: Understanding Media and Society**  
**Spring 2015**  
**Dr. Shannon VanHorn**  
**Valley City State University**

**TEXTBOOK:**

Biagi, S. (2015) *Media/Impact: An introduction to mass media* (11<sup>th</sup> ed). Boston, MA: Wadsworth.

**COURSE PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES:**

The purpose of this course is to provide the student with the background and framework of a variety of mediums. This course will cover the history of the mediums, theoretical constructs of mass media, and the issues that surround the changing world of mass media.

Upon successful completion of this course, the student will be able to:

1. Describe the role of media in changing political, social and cultural dynamics on the global stage.
2. Discuss how mass communication technologies originated, adapted and developed.
3. Critique and analyze the variety of relationships between media and their audiences.
4. Describe the ongoing government regulation of the U.S. media, as well as the constitutional principles that guide it.
5. Recognize the ethical and philosophical issues that arise in media culture, and understand the range of viewpoints regarding each issue.
6. Discuss the behind-the-scenes operations and decision-making processes of all major mass communication industries.
7. Recognize the relationships between the mass media and the advertising and public relations industries.
8. Describe the effect of new media on information gathering and filtering.
9. Describe the effect media have regarding cultural beliefs, values, and norms.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

**Blog Entries (240 pts):** Each week, you will be blogging about current events dealing with the media via Blogger or Wordpress. These blogs should be around 300-400 words, with embedded hyperlinks to the event or issue you are discussing. Each blog is worth 10 points. You will also respond to at least two of your classmates' blogs with well thought out and worded paragraphs that extend the discussion, provides questions, or respectfully challenges the assertions of your classmates. Weekly responses are worth 5 points. Blogs are due Thursday nights by 11:59:59 p.m. Responses are due at the same time on Sunday nights.

**Chapter Presentation (50 pts):** With a partner, you will be creatively teaching us one of the chapters. Within this 30 minute presentation, you should provide (a) an overview of the chapter, (b) two-three examples/displays from the media showing your chapter in action (c) an activity to assist in understanding the chapter (d) two discussion questions which you will lead. We will sign up for the chapters on the second day of class. Please come with a first, second, and third choice of chapters. Only one pair per chapter.

**Theory Video (100 pts):** In groups, You will be defining, describing, and providing examples of a media theory via a video and posting the video on YouTube. You will also create a guide to go with the video.

**Movie Responses (80 pts.):** These will be 1-2 page responses and reflections on four videos we will be watching in class.

**Content Analysis Project (150 pts):** In pairs, you will conduct research on a medium via a content analysis. This research will be focused on the use or portrayal of gender or race or socio-economic class or violence via a specific medium. For example, you may wish to explore violence in comic books. Or perhaps gender in Disney movies. Or maybe race in newspaper articles or class in soap operas. We will break this paper into pieces and you will be able to turn in drafts for feedback before your final paper. We'll discuss this more during Week 2. Also, you will be sharing this material at the Scholarship Symposium in May.

**Miscellaneous (up to 200 pts):** These assignments will take place in class and cannot be made up. These assignments include reflections on the readings or videos and clips we watch, questions on chapters, and quizzes.

## TENTATIVE SCHEDULE:

<b>Week</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Chapter</b>
1	Intro to course Mass Media and Everyday Life *Sign up for Chapter Presentations	1
2	Books Industry *Assign Theory Video	2
3	Newspapers	3
4	Magazines	4
5	Recording Industry *Watch <i>DreamWorlds III</i> , Write Reflection *Theory Video Due	5
6	Radio *Assign Content Analysis Project	6
7	Movies	7
8	Television	8
9	Digital Media *Draft of Lit Review and Methodology due	9
10	Advertising *Watch <i>Killing Us Softly IV</i> , Write Reflection	10
11	Public Relations *Watch <i>Thank You for Smoking</i> , Write Reflection	11
12	News and Information	12
13	Society and Political Issues *Watch <i>Tough Guise II</i> , Write Reflection	13
14	Media Law *Results and Conclusions draft due	14
15	Ethics in Media	15

FINAL: Poster Session from Content Analysis