



## media environments

edited by barry vacker

# MEDIA AND SOCIETY

SPRING 2014

MSP/BTMM 1021 • Section 001 • CRN: 5383 • 3 credits

GLADFELTER HALL L024 • 3:30 - 4:50 T-TH

## COURSE SUMMARY

This course and textbook are based two 21<sup>st</sup> 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 course 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

Office Hours: — 2:00 – 3:00 on T; 1:00 – 3:00 on T-TH; or by appointment

bvacker@temple.edu

Office Phone — 215.204.3623

Preferred methods of contact

— 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

Chen Zeng email: chen.zeng@temple.edu

Office hour: Monday, 3:30 – 4:30

Location: Annenberg Atrium

Brian McFadden email: bfadds@gmail.com

Office hour: Tuesday, 1:00 – 2:00

Location: Annenberg Atrium

Jae Jeong email: jeongljy@gmail.com

Office hour: Tuesday, 10:00 – 11:00

Location: Annenberg Atrium

## REQUIRED TEXTBOOK

*Media Environments*, edited by Barry Vacker (San Diego: Cognella Publishing 2011) ISBN: 978-1-935551-34-8  
Available at Temple Bookstore or online: from Cognella Publishing or via Amazon.

## 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: February 27)
Written Critique	= 20%	(Due: March 27)
Video Critique	= 20%	(Due: April 24)
Final Exam	= 30%	(Date: May 13)
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.

**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 May 15, 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, March 27; video critique: April 24.* 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 and one exam day, there will be 25 class meetings. Attend 24 to get the full 10 points. You get *one* free miss.

Classes Attended	Points Earned	Classes Attended	Points Earned	Classes Attended	Points Earned
24	10	22	7	20	3
23	9	21	5	19 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 May 13, to discuss any attendance issues. After May 13, 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 4:50 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 4:50!

#### **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](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 responsibility 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	course introduction; why do you believe what you believe? what is a mind virus? film clips: <i>The Hunger Games</i> (2012); <i>Pulp Fiction</i> (1994).	READINGS Intro: Questions 1, 2 Ch 1: Rushkoff, Brodie
WEEK 2	THE NETWORK	the structure of the network; Moore's Law; expanding media power. film clips: <i>Star Trek</i> (2009).	Intro: Questions 3-5 Ch 2: Kelly, Hawking
WEEK 3	THE SPECTACLE	from information to image and illusion. film clips: <i>Network</i> (1976).	Intro: Question 6 Ch 3: Postman
WEEK 4	THE HYPERREAL	from reality to hyperreality; the deeper meanings of media (and NFL football). film clips: <i>The Matrix</i> (1999).	Intro: Question 8, 9 Ch 4: Irwin, Felluga Ch 11: Sagan

### ENTERTAINMENT AND ENLIGHTENMENT

WEEK 5	DUMBED DOWN	are the media and internet making us smarter? Or shallower? Or dumber? film clips: <i>A Face in the Crowd</i> (1957); <i>Idiocracy</i> (2006).	Intro: Question 6 Ch 6: Jacoby, Bauerlein
WEEK 6	SURVEILLANCE	the panopticon 1; can surveillance provide security? the end of privacy? film clips: <i>Minority Report</i> (2004). <i>February 27: Mid-Term Exam</i> <i>Spring Break: March 2-March 9.</i>	Intro: Question 7 Ch 8: Rheingold, Wolf <i>All readings: weeks 1-6</i>
WEEK 7	CELEBRITY & SPORTS	the panopticon 2; movie stars, athletes, Youtube, sports and stadiums what are the deeper meanings of sports and media? film clips: <i>Simone</i> (2002).	Ch 9: Cashmore Intro: Question 8
WEEK 8	SCIENCE	media change our view of the universe and our place in it. film clips: <i>Contact</i> (1997).	Ch 7: Mooney, Tyson
WEEK 9	SOCIAL MEDIA	pretending to be the center of everything; Google; Facebook, Youtube, etc. film clips: <i>Catfish</i> (2010) <i>March 27: Written Critique due</i> Guest presenter: Angela Cirucci, SMC PhD student.	Ch 8: Fernback Handout: in Blackboard
WEEK 10	COUNTERCULTURE	media celebrates rebellion, individuality; how much of counterculture is "counter"? film clips: <i>Fight Club</i> (1999); <i>The Hunger Games</i> (2012).	Ch 16: Heath & Potter

### MEDIA, DESTINY, AND THE FUTURE

WEEK 11	CATASTROPHE	why so many apocalyptic/doomsday memes in the media? is "The End" near? film clips: several films.	Ch 17: Page, Perkowitz Handout: in Blackboard
WEEK 12	SPACESHIP EARTH	are media technologies helping us understand nature or removing us from nature? film clips: <i>WALL•E</i> (2008).	Ch 19: Fuller, Gore
WEEK 13	ELECTRONIC CONSCIOUSNESS	will your consciousness be uploaded? will computers or the internet become aware? film clips: <i>Vanilla Sky</i> (2001); <i>Waking Life</i> (2001) <i>April 24: Video Critique due</i>	Ch 18: Kurzweil, Bloom
WEEK 14	TRAJECTORIES	controlling your memes and shaping your destiny – virtual and actual. Review for final; screen top 10 video critiques.	Intro: Question 13 Ch 20: Sagan

**FINAL EXAM: Tuesday, May 13, 1:00 - 3:00** The final exam is comprehensive and 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 \_\_\_\_\_