SOCI 250: Sociology of the Mass Media

Created by: Amani Awwad, Ph.D.
Updated by: Amani Awwad, Ph.D.
A. **TITLE:** Sociology of the Mass Media

B. **COURSE NUMBER:** SOCI 250

C. **CREDIT HOURS:** 3 Lecture Hours per Week for 15 Weeks

D. **WRITING INTENSIVE COURSE:** No

E. **GER CATEGORY:** No

F. **SEMESTER(S) OFFERED:** Fall or Spring

G. **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**
   In this course students will explore the component and the basic concepts of mass media. Special emphasis is on the social construction power of the mass media. The positive role of the mass media will be explored as well as the negative impact. The social control function of the mass media will be explained. The course is aimed at providing a critical assessment of the social construction power of the mass media with an emphasis on images, content and context as presented in the mass media. The course will explore the images of various segments of American society as presented in the mass media including racial/ethnic groups, gender and sexual orientation, age and class.

H. **PRE-REQUISITES/CO-REQUISITES:** SOCI 101 or permission of instructor

I. **STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Student Learning Outcome [SLO]</th>
<th>ISLO &amp; Sub-Sets</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Describe the basic components and concepts of mass media.</td>
<td>1 Communication [W]</td>
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<td>b. Explain and assess the various theories of mass media, coming from Sociology and the Social Sciences. Including basic premise, assumptions and limitations of these theories.</td>
<td>2 Critical Thinking [CA]</td>
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<td>c. Examine the role of mass media in constructing appropriate and suitable definitions, as perceived by society, of norms that guide human behavior within the complex arena of gender relations, race and ethnic dynamics, both from macro and micro orientation.</td>
<td>2 Critical Thinking [IA]</td>
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J. **APPLIED LEARNING COMPONENT:** No

K. **TEXTS:** To be determined by the instructor
L. REFERENCES:


M. **EQUIPMENT:** Technology Enhanced Classroom

N. **GRADING METHOD:** A - F

O. **SUGGESTED MEASUREMENT CRITERIA/METHODS:**
   Exams • Quizzes • Assignments • Participation/Discussion

P. **DETAILED COURSE OUTLINE:**

I. What is Mass Media? Components and Basic Concepts
   A. Definition of Mass Media
   B. Components of Mass Media
   C. Basic Concepts

II. Theoretical Perspectives on the Mass Media
   A. The Sociological Paradigm and the Mass Media
      1. The structural functional paradigm
      2. The social conflict paradigm
      3. The symbolic interactionist paradigm
   B. Selected Theories of the Mass Media
      1. Social Learning Theory--observational learning, Modeling Theory: the issue of media violence
      2. Cultivation Theory: extensive exposure to media television
      3. Socialization Theory and prolonged exposure to media
      4. Agenda setting and audience orientation
      5. Uses and Gratification Theory: the role of the active audience
      6. Schematic Theory and information processing

III. Functions of the Mass Media and Audience Orientation
   A. Functions of Mass Media
      1. Manifest vs. latent functions
      2. The mass media as an agent of social control: dysfunctional mass media
   B. Audience Orientation of the Mass Media
      1. Active vs. passive audience
      2. The ideological impact/consequences of active audience and the passive audience

IV. Social Constructionism and the Mass Media
   A. Theoretical Bases
   B. The Social/Historical Context
      1. The intended message
      2. The targeted audience
      3. Content analysis
      4. Contextual analysis
   C. Symbolic and General Impact/Consequences
      1. Negative impact and stigmatization
      2. The media as an agent of propaganda
      3. The role of the media in creating appropriate labels and/or images
V. Minorities in the Mass Media: The Case for Racism, Discrimination, and Exaggerated Stereotypes of Various Minority Groups

A. The Four Stages of Minority Portrayals:
   1. Non-recognition
   2. Ridicule
   3. Regulation
   4. Respect

B. Racial/Ethnic Minorities and the Mass Media: A Sample of Stereotypes, Racism, and Discrimination
   1. African Americans
   2. Hispanic Americans
   3. Native Americans
   4. Jewish Americans
   5. Arab Americans
   6. Asian Americans

C. Gender and Sexual Orientation
   1. Femininity and masculinity within the genre of horror movies and action movies
   2. Femininity and masculinity within the genre of early Western movies
   3. Femininity and masculinity within the genre of the soap opera, romance novels, and the advertising and music industry
   4. The gay and lesbian agenda and the mass media

D. Other minority groups
   1. The elderly and the mass media
   2. Classism in the mass media
   3. The physically challenged and the mass media

VI. Ideological Wars in the Mass Media: Constitutional Challenges

A. Constitutional Debates and the Mass Media
   1. Freedom of speech vs. censorship
   2. Legal implications of the First Amendment
   3. Whose freedom of speech is protected and whose message is censored: ideological implications and consequences

B. Winners and losers in the ideological warfare’s in the mass media: a sample
   1. The rating game
   2. Violence in the media
   3. Pornography
   4. Sex education and the mass media
   5. Hate speech
   6. Rap music