

Welcome To COM 160 ONLINE

INTRODUCTION TO

MASS MEDIA

FALL 2025

MASS MEDIA DEVELOPMENT AND FUNCTION IN MODERN SOCIETY: TECHNOLOGICAL BASIS, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL FOUNDATIONS, SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS. FORMERLY INTRODUCTION TO MASS COMMUNICATION.

ONLINE

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WHY ARE WE HERE?

The media is not a natural phenomenon, and therefore should not just be accepted; it requires a more critical response.



WHAT WILL WE DISCOVER?

We are surrounded by the media and interact with it almost constantly from the time we wake up until the time we go to bed. It's easy to think that it has been around forever. Not so! Historically speaking, the media is a relatively young phenomenon. To best understand it now, we learn about how it developed and what influences and shapes it today. We also learn to be critical consumers of the media by becoming exposed to many different aspects of it. This will require that we get outside of our own preferences. For example, we may dislike a particular genre of music or film, but if we want to criticize the genre intelligently (which is an outcome of our course), we should understand what the various types of music or film have to say and why their messages appeal to particular audiences that may be different than us. We need to understand how the images and words make sense and create meaning, and what influences that creation. This is what the media is all about!

WHAT CAN I EXPECT?

You get to examine how each of the mass mediums developed. You will explore the impact these forms of mass media have on society and on you, personally. Ultimately, this course will make you a more sophisticated media consumer.



COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

LearnsMarts 📱 NearPods 📱 Journals 📱 Project 📱 Videos 📱



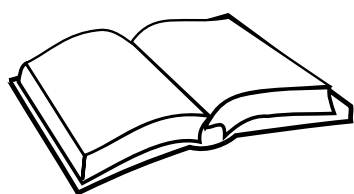
REQUIRED MATERIALS

Access to Achieve on macmillanlearning.com (\$80). (See LMS)
You are required to be able to access Nearpod, Canvas, and Web browsers. Access to a computer with reliable internet is required

TRIGGER WARNING ON COURSE MATERIALS

Our class content includes a required video on the food industry. We cover the topics of food, food marketing, food policies, obesity, and weight loss/gain. An alternate assignment is not an option.

Our class may require a films which discusses the media and sexual assault and films about social media and the negative effects on mental health including depression, anxiety, and suicide. Alternatives to these assignments are not available.



SO WHAT? WHAT WILL I GET OUT OF ALL OF THIS?

You will become a media mogul! (Ok...maybe not quite, but...)

On an academic level, after passing this course I anticipate you will:

- Demonstrate an understanding of influence of the media on contemporary society
- Apply critical thinking skills to various news media
- Comprehend the historical development of various media forms
- Distinguish media functions: information, persuasion, entertainment, and transmission of culture.
- Comprehend methods of media organization, finance, and regulation.
- Recognize the role historical media play in contemporary media
- Describe the impact of social media on individuals



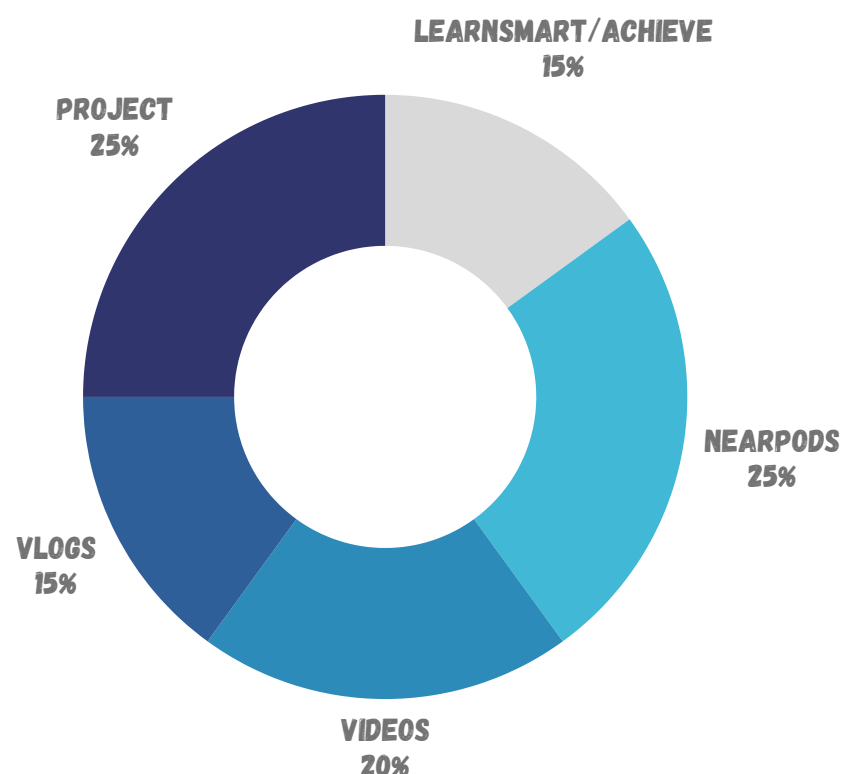
WHAT TOOLS DO I NEED TO SUCCEED IN THIS COURSE?

I am so glad you asked! Your genuine interest in success is a necessary tool for you to succeed in this course. You also need:

- an open mind with an eagerness to learn and recognition that learning in college is not a passive endeavor
- a demonstrated willingness to engage in academic honesty in all class assignments and exams.
- a demonstrated willingness to complete the course assignments with good faith effort



GRADE BREAKDOWN



There are no extra credit opportunities in COM 160



A NOTE ABOUT TIMING

Please know that it's a hopeless endeavor to come to me on or after week 14 because you're "concerned about your grade." Around 80% of the coursework has been completed by then, so the only advice I can offer you at that point is to work to acquire every point still available, and do your very best on it. (Make-up work is not an option.) Thank you for understanding this.

THINGS WE NEED TO AGREE ON TO CREATE AN AWESOME LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR ALL OF US

I love to hear from you. When I do, I ask you to use appropriate professional format: a greeting, appropriate grammar/ spelling/ punctuation, a closing statement, and be signed with your name. Please do not regard me in the same manner you text your friends. Thank you.



I am often willing to work with you ahead of time if you're having any situations preventing you from meeting assignment/exam deadlines. Without advanced notice, however, work cannot be made up; late work is not accepted.

Anything on Power point/Nearpod/Canvas etc. that I provide to you as learning materials in this class belongs to ME. It is MINE. It is NOT yours. You may use it to as a resource, but you DO NOT HAVE PERMISSION TO SHARE IT ANYWHERE. If you choose to post any material from this course anywhere online you run the risk of my finding it, having the ISU IT department trace it to your IP address, and being reported to the Dean's Office for violation of the Student Code of Conduct, Section VI - A7. Use what I provide you, but don't share it with anyone; it's not yours to share. I'm crazy serious about this. (If I loaned you my car for a week, you'd respect that. You'd take care of it; you would return it as you found it. You would never leave the keys hanging by an elevator in Watterson with a sign that said "help yourself." My intellectual property is as personal to me, and as valuable to me, as my car. Please treat it as you would my car, okay?)



Academic dishonesty (cheating) can occur both inside and outside of the classroom and is not merely limited to the use or attempted use of any unauthorized assistance in any academic exercise, or even of knowingly or intentionally assisting another in committing a violation of this or the larger university academic code of conduct. Regardless of the intentionality, cheaters will immediately fail this course and will be reported to the office of Community Rights and Responsibilities. In short, if you think you might be in a place where cheating is happening; leave. If you wonder if you're cheating, you probably are: stop. (Here's the scoop - if you're in a place where people are sharing course information and if the prof found out, it wouldn't be cool, then it's academic dishonesty. Even if you didn't ask for that information, your presence there means you benefitted from that information, and you are therefore participating in that dishonesty and can suffer the same consequences as those who are both seeking and giving the information. This happens w/ GroupMe-type message boards all the time. Don't join them, or if you choose to and you see it going south, delete your account immediately.

Your use of AI generated content = cheating. DoNotUse.

ISU'S COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY

ISU remains committed to creating and maintaining a working, learning and living environment that is welcoming, supportive, respectful, inclusive, diverse and free from discrimination and harassment. I know it's hard to call out or correct a teammate, TA or instructor, but I promise we are here to help and will be open to feedback and will commit to improvement. Thank you in advance for making the class a welcoming, inclusive class and team culture. If you have experienced or witnessed a bias-related incident, you can report to the Inclusive Community Response Team at the Dean of Students office. More info and a link to report are available at: <https://studentaffairs.illinoisstate.edu/who/diversity/icrt/>



WE GET BY WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM OUR FRIENDS

If you or someone you know needs a bit of encouragement, request a letter through Redbirds Reach Out. Redbirds Reach Out is a new program on campus with the goal of connecting students who may be struggling via a letter of encouragement from a student peer. To request a letter, fill out the Redbirds Reach Out Letter Request. Learn more at: <https://studentaffairs.illinoisstate.edu/keepthriving/>

YOUR WELL-BEING

It's hard to learn if you're hungry or couch surfing. If you are having difficulty affording groceries, accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or securing a safe and stable place to live, help may be available. I urge you to contact the Dean of Students Office to learn more. Also check out the School St. Food Pantry if you just need to pick up some groceries. For more tips and campus resources for taking care of yourself please visit: <https://studentaffairs.illinoisstate.edu/keepthriving/>



ISU BEREAVEMENT POLICY

Students who experience the death of an immediate family member or relative as defined in the University Student Bereavement Policy will be excused from class for funeral leave, subsequent bereavement, and/or travel considerations. Students are responsible for providing appropriate documentation to the Dean of Students office and for contacting the instructor as soon as possible to make arrangements for completing missed work. More information is available in the Student Bereavement Policy at <http://www.policy.illinoisstate.edu/2-1-27.shtml>

ISU STUDENT ACCESS AND ACCOMMODATIONS

Any student needing to arrange a reasonable accommodation for a documented disability and/or medical/mental health condition should contact Student Access and Accommodation Services at 308 Fell Hall, Office Phone (309) 438-5853, Video Phone (309) 319-7682 or visit the website at StudentAccess.IllinoisState.edu. We recommend taking some time to review this statement with your class as it may help students feel more comfortable approaching you with proactive requests.



EXCUSED ABSENCES

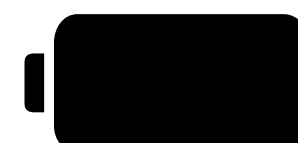
I understand that life happens and so I will follow ISU's policy on university excused absences. My expectations are below.

Prior to an excused absence you must:

- Email me personally (not in a group of your professors) with a greeting that includes my name. (It's not "Professor"; that's my role)
- Indicate which course you're enrolled in.
- State your excuse and attach documentation.
- Clearly identify the assignments you will be missing.
- Provide a reasonable date by which you will complete the assignments you didn't submit on time. Be sure to name each assignment you will miss.

I always appreciate the Dean's Office mass-emails sent about student absences, but you still need to email me personally.

If you don't follow these steps, your absence will be considered unexcused and you will not have the opportunity to make up missed work.



MENTAL HEALTH EXCUSED WORK

Life can sometimes be very difficult. Still, it's important in this class (and in all of your classes!) to be present and participating and mindful of deadlines. Mental health is important, and what's definitely not good for it is missing due dates. Getting behind makes it harder to catch up, and your stress only gets worse as you fall behind. There are folks on campus who can help you manage whatever you've got going on and help you devise strategies for staying on top of your obligations. Use them; they're here for you.



Please take care of yourself **and** still remain successful in your academic endeavors by taking the initiative to find a campus mental health resource if you need one (listed on the previous page) so you can work through whatever is challenging you. (Take a day off if you need it!)

But - know that mental health issues are never an accepted excuse for turning in work late, missing assignments, or missing a test. Once you graduate, your employer won't alter deadlines or just give you free days off because you're struggling with a mental health issue. Practice finding resources and support while continuing to fulfill your responsibilities **now** while the stakes are still low (because realistically, in five years, the points lost from missing one test or a few assignments in one college class because you were struggling or working through finding resources are meaningless consequences in your life in the big picture - whereas in the real world, if you miss work or fail to complete work-related-tasks, you'll lose your income because you were fired)

STUDENT COUNSELING SERVICES

Life at college can get very complicated. According to recent research, nearly 44% of college students suffer from generalized anxiety disorder and are less likely to seek help for it compared to other mental health issues. Students also sometimes feel overwhelmed, lost, experience depression, and struggle with relationship difficulties or diminished self-esteem. However, many of these issues can be effectively addressed with a little help. Student Counseling Services (SCS) helps students cope with difficult emotions and life stressors.



Student Counseling Services is staffed by experienced, professional psychologists and counselors, who are attuned to the needs of college students. The services are **FREE** and completely confidential.

Find out more at <https://counseling.illinoisstate.edu/> or by calling (309) 438-3655.

HARASSMENT & BULLYING

ISU provides support and resources to students, faculty, staff, and visitors to campus to address concerns relating to: gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual assault/misconduct, dating/ domestic violence or stalking. Misbehavior will not be tolerated in this class or in group work. To report instances or problems (in or out of class) please visit: https://ilstu-advocate.symplicity.com/public_report/index.php/pid987165



NEW CAMPUS MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS

Timely Care has been added to the options for mental health support for students.

(<https://counseling.illinoisstate.edu/services/timely-care/>)
This virtual 24/7/365 platform has both an app and desktop version and includes the following:

- Scheduled Counseling - students can choose providers and 45-minute appointment times based on their preferences, with access to confidential, culturally competent care, as well as multiple language options.
- Health Coaching - students can learn strategies for optimal sleep, nutrition, exercise, and stress management for a holistic well-being approach.
- Digital self-care - students can access resources for health, well-being, and self-care, along with an online peer community for connection and support nationwide.
- 'TalkNow' - students can access on-demand support for common non-crisis issues, such as stress, anxiety, and academic pressures.
- More information, including a short demo, is available on the Student Counseling Services website or by clicking the link above.
- Redbird Well is ISU's centralized hub for on-campus well-being and recreation resources, finding help, and getting involved. Through Redbird Well students have access to: information pertaining to scheduling Counseling appointments through Student Counseling Services, virtual counseling through Timely Care, medical appointments with Student Health Services, personal training, wellness coaching, and more.

<https://redbirdwell.illinoisstate.edu/>



EMERGENCY MENTAL HEALTH HELP

For students facing a mental health emergency, call SCS at (309) 438-3655. For after-hours help, press "2" to speak with a counselor immediately.

SAME DAY CRISIS MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

If you're facing life-threatening situations, traumatic crises, or serious mental health challenges, we offer Same-day Crisis Walk-in Services, Monday through Friday, 10am through close. Some examples of mental health emergencies may include: suicidal/homicidal thoughts or actions, a recent incident of sexual assault, or the death of a significant person in your life. For same-day crisis appointments, please visit us in room 320 on the third floor of the Student Services Building or call (309) 438-3655.

LEARN RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

Need some guidance on relaxation and stress reduction? Contact Student Counseling Services and schedule an appointment. SCS offers a Relaxation Room where you can discover relaxation techniques in their cozy space for stress relief. With comfy chairs, bio-feedback tools, soothing music, art supplies, yoga mats, pillows, and gentle lighting, it's designed for your comfort. Let their staff guide you through a personalized journey, including deep breathing, mindfulness meditation, art therapy, full-body relaxation, and more.

(309) 438-3655

HOW OUR COURSE WORKS (DETAILS ON CANVAS)



Our course is divided into units that are topically oriented. You work on your own time to complete the given content in a unit.

Unit 1: Basic Broad Understandings of the Media

- We orient ourselves to the class and then cover topics like Media & Our Culture, Media & Money, Media and the 1st Amendment, Advertising, Representations of People/Groups, and Media Effects

Unit 2: Social Media and the Internet

- We learn the history of the internet and social media and how they impacted contemporary ideas about both. We dive deep into contemporary issues in social media and explore how it impacts our lives and our democracy.

Unit 3: Print Media

- We learn about the history of newspapers and magazines and their importance today, including the issues they currently face

Unit 4: News Media

- We learn about fake news and media bias, their consequences in our lives and our democracy, and become far more critical consumers of news and social media

Unit 5: Entertainment Media:

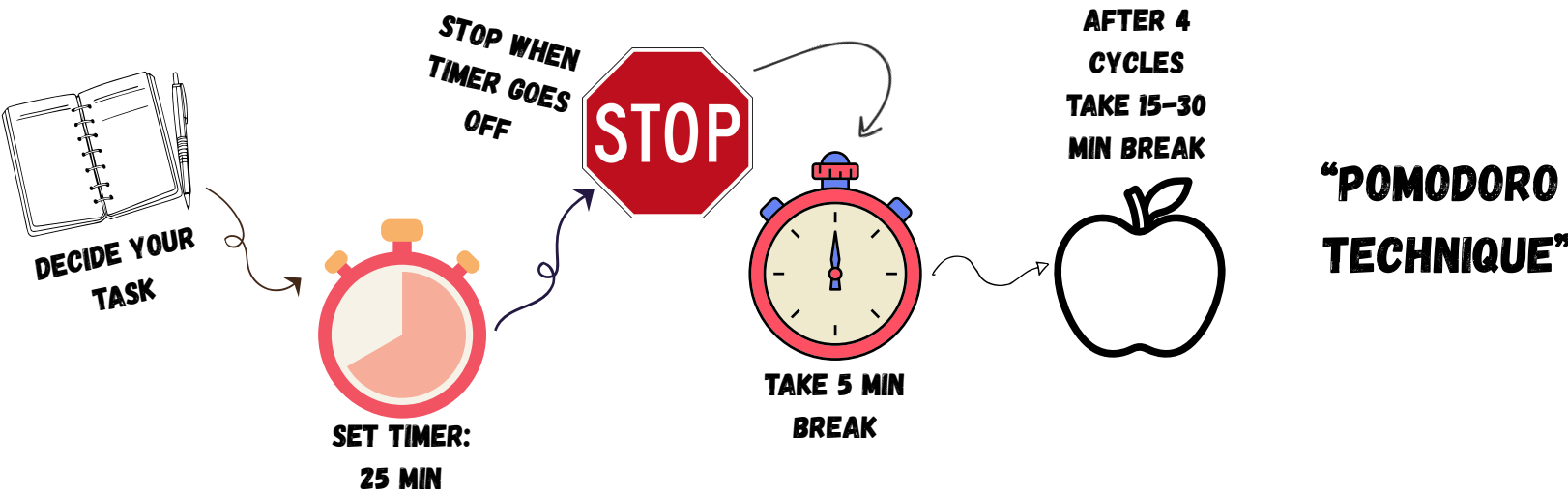
- We roll through a quick history of radio, music recordings, film, and video games to understand how the history of each impacts today's media landscape, consider the role of technology in each medium today, and examine the role of each in our democracy. We explore current issues in each medium and look to the future of all. Finally, we spend some extra time on the origins of television programming: late night TV, variety shows, sitcoms, and even the game show genre.



HOW TO SUCCEED IN COM 160



Avoid procrastination. It's that simple, but for most students, it's the hardest challenge of all. Here are some methods to master your time:



"EAT THE FROG"

Do your hardest tasks first - as early in the day as possible.

"ELIMINATE DISTRACTIONS"

Control a workspace that minimizes distractions. Use tools to block digital interruptions when working.

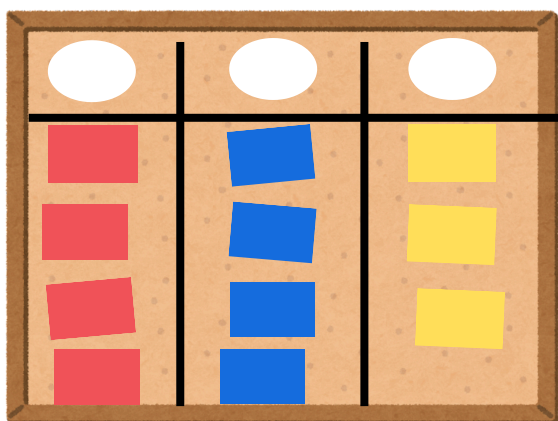


"3-MINUTE RULE"



If a task takes 3 minutes or less - do it RIGHT NOW.

"KANBAN BOARD"



Categorize Tasks:
Left: To Do
Middle: Working On
Right: Completed

Works great to visualize and optimize your tasks.

COURSE DEMONSTRATIONS OF KNOWLEDGE AND ASSESSED LEARNING EXPERIENCES EXPLAINED

VIDEO ASSIGNMENTS IN THIS CLASS

While you watch videos in this class, you'll be required to complete a Canvas Quiz. Far from "busy work," these assignments allow you to demonstrate your comprehension of the video materials, synthesize the ideas presented and analyze them, and critically think about how the arguments presented relate to the other ideas in the unit and in the larger course.



READINGS IN THIS CLASS

Not all students easily comprehend what they're reading. And, some students just struggle in general to focus on reading materials (I do: focusing on content is tough if I'm not interested in what's in front of me!). For this reason, when you read a chapter there will be a comprehension-based activity called "LearningCurve" that accompanies it, found on the Macmillan website. Research reveals these help students with reading comprehension and recall. Ultimately these will help you be successful as a media mogul, but truly will help you be a smarter, more critical consumer of our media and society.

NEARPOD LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Nearpod lessons have been created to give you quick-and-easy lessons on material related to what you're reading. Be sure to follow the instructions carefully and complete them with good faith effort. You can only take Nearpod experiences one time; each one offers opportunities to be assessed so be prepared to pay attention and thoughtfully respond to each assessed item for full credit.

PROJECT

The project in this course is designed to help students explore one course topics as it personally relates to student individual lives while they demonstrate their knowledge on the topic. This topic is creative in nature and designed to be as enjoyable and personally valuable as an assessed project can be for students.

Students will deeply dive into the topic of social media. They will be given the opportunity to critically examine their own social media use, and even devise a plan to make changes to it if they so desire. They will also be communicating some aspect of their knowledge of the topic to a target audience of their choice in an infographic. This is part of the portfolio assignment

VLOG/JOURNALS

Journals allow students to engage with ideas and experiences from course content. In them, students are asked to construct coherent narratives that bring about questions, comparisons, criticisms, questions, speculations, and tentative conclusions about readings, Nearpods and videos, citing them as they discuss. They are recorded electronically on Canvas.

