

Course Overview: Media Literacy

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Course Description:

This semester course is designed to help students develop an informed and critical understanding of the ever expanding and increasingly dominant digital and mass media in their lives. Students will examine, interpret, and evaluate the social, cultural, and political implications of digital and media messaging. Students will understand the resulting power of media in the manipulation of human behavior. The course will include informational, reflective, analytical, and argumentative writing, and emphasize critical thinking skills. The final project will entail the creation and distribution of a media message in digital or video format centered on one of the social justice or environmental concerns of the Sisters of Mercy.

Major Texts:

There is no designated text for this course. However, we will re-think how we define “text” to encompass any message via any medium including print, broadcast, cable, digital, outdoor, film, still images, etc. And, while the messages we consume and interpret will fall under this “text” moniker, we will also learn to pay attention to the medium through which such messages travel.

Needless to say, we will encounter, explore & examine both the [MEDIUM & THE MESSAGE](#) in all its forms.

Some Essential Questions & Areas of Exploration:

Are we consumers or citizens first & how might these roles interact & shape us?
Do we control media technology or does it control us?
What strengths & weaknesses exist among media tools? Is the [medium the message](#)?
How can we identify biases in media messages?
What is a fact & What is a trustworthy source of information?
Who controls/manipulates information and how?
How does money influence the media landscape?
Is it good that the digital age makes us BOTH consumers AND producers of content?
Should we call the Internet (like Television before it) “A Vast Wasteland”?
How might media & messages be used or abused by altruistic & malevolent actors?
How can we best equip ourselves in this complex digital age?

Homework & Assessment:

At Our Lady of Mercy, we believe that homework is an essential part of the learning process. Purposeful homework tasks help students to build independence, develop and refine skills, and build their confidence as learners. At Mercy, homework is assigned to students in an effort to:

- Help students be READY for the learning that will occur in class
- Engage students in PRACTICE needed to develop fluency in important skills
- Guide students in PROCESSING and reviewing new learning
- Provide students with opportunities to REVISE their thinking
- Help students to BUILD their background knowledge

Assessments will be a collection of individual & team work, written work, oral presentations & tests. Individual & team assignments will involve reading, writing, viewing, research & hands-on/interactive activities. Most reading & viewing assignments will be done outside of class in order to afford students ample class time for interactive pursuits including project-based teamwork, demonstrations & exercises.

NOTE: If our in-class interactions are to be successful, each student must take personal responsibility to complete assigned readings/viewings on time. This is a matter of respect for our fellow learners in our learning community.

Late Work - Deadlines:

You must submit all written work on time or risk losing credit. Deadlines matter outside our classroom walls, so they should matter inside our walls, as well. To be an active citizen in a democracy, you must meet the very important DEADLINE of getting to the polls on election day, or your voice will not be heard. If you have your act together, however, there is an exception called an Absentee Ballot, a concept we will discuss in class & incorporate into this policy to assist you.

You must submit all major written work to pass the course.

The new (2021-22) OLM Late Work Policy is as follows:

- Students are expected to submit all assignments by the date established by the teacher.
- Grades on assignments will reflect student understanding of content, however, 20% will be deducted for all assignments submitted late, with the exception of an excused absence.
- No credit will be given for assignments turned in one week past the due date, unless by prior arrangement with the teacher.
- Teachers will work with students to establish deadlines when late work is the result of an excused absence. If work is not completed by the established deadline, the late assignment guidelines will go into effect.
- It is the expectation that the students and parents/guardians will monitor their grades in the online gradebook.
- Teachers will conference with students and parents when there are multiple occurrences of assignments being turned in late.

Grading:

Quarter grades are calculated as a percentage of total points available for the term, with larger assignments garnering more points (e.g. tests & larger written projects typically = 100 points; lighter written work such as daily homework & quizzes typically = 10 to 50 points). So, if there are 1,000 points available and you receive 900, then you have 90%.

FINAL GRADE FORMULA: Quarter 1= 42.5%, Quarter 2=42.5%, Final Project=15%

Final percentages will be converted to Mercy’s LETTER grade system each term.

End of Course Learning Goals & Classroom Expectations:

Upon course completion, students should be equipped with a keen understanding of the evolution & forces that drive the media landscape, as well as their own internal “radar” attuned to inherent biases, strategies and manipulations of media messages.

Let’s enjoy this journey together!

The Classroom 3 R’s:

Responsibility.....Have it

Respect.....Exhibit it & Earn it

Rip-Roarin’ Fun.....Enjoy it

(Student signature)

(Parent/Guardian signature)