Description:
This is the first of two required courses in the media studies concentration of the JAMS major. It is designed to offer you an overview of the most important issues in the field of media studies.

This field seeks to understand the importance of media in our everyday lives and the pleasures we derive from media. But it also takes a critical perspective on media, questioning why and how media industries, media products, and media audiences function as they do. Central to this course is the idea that media matter, both to societies and to individuals in their everyday lives. Thus we will treat all kinds of media seriously, even stuff many people consider trash. And even when a media product seems to be pure “entertainment,” we will consider its formal design, its social significance, and the kinds of pleasure it offers.

We will consider media in terms of three key aspects -- media production, media texts, and media audiences -- and will explore the central issues in each of these key areas.

Objectives:
This course has one central objective: to increase the student’s knowledge and understanding of media’s social significance. It aims to reveal the workings of the media industries, the ways media texts convey their meanings, and the ways audiences engage with media. At the end of the course, a student should have gained a more extensive and critical appreciation of media’s function in people’s lives and as one central institution in contemporary society which helps us make sense of our world. As a way of practicing this critical appreciation, the student will produce media analysis that demonstrates mastery of the basic principles of media studies taught in the course.

Required readings:
Croteau and Hoynes, Media/Society 5th edition (SAGE, 2013). Amazon
Thompson and Mittell, eds., How to Watch Television (NYU, 2013). Amazon

Online component:
Many of the assignments for this class will require you to use D2L. Please ensure that you have access to a computer with a good/fast internet connection when completing these assignments.

Assignments and Grades:

Reading Questions (10x2=20%):
You are required to respond to 10 reading questions. Reading questions are always due by the beginning of class, but they may be completed any time before that (doing them early is fine). Late reading questions will get a maximum of half credit. There will often be more than one question, but the total minimum number of words will be 300 for all of the questions, no matter how many are given. Reading questions will be submitted to the D2L Dropbox as .txt files. Formatting requirements are subject to change.

Exams (2x15+20=50%):
- Midterm exam #1 (15%).
- Midterm exam #2 (15%).
- Final exam (20%). The final exam is optional. If you opt not to take the final exam, the average of your two midterm exam grades will become your final exam grade. If your final exam grade is lower than the average of the two midterms, your midterm grade average will take the place of your final exam grade.

Exams will be a combination of identification and essay questions. The final exam will not be cumulative, but will require knowledge of basic concepts from the whole semester.

TV Criticism Paper/Presentations (10x2=20%):
For this assignment, you will choose a chapter from How to Watch Television that we are NOT reading for class. You will watch the show analyzed in that chapter or, with the instructor’s guidance and permission, another similar show (e.g., same genre or period). The assignment has two components: (1) a 1000-1500 word paper that is both a response to the chapter AND your own analysis of the text (TV shows), and (2) a brief presentation in class in which you speak informally about your topic for 3-5 minutes. This assignment will have different due dates for different students, and you will sign up for these in the first two weeks of class. These papers will be submitted to the D2L Dropbox as Word documents.

Presentations are graded pass/fail and are worth 2 points out of 10. No credit will be given for presentations longer than 5 minutes, and no makeup presentations will be allowed if you are absent on the day of your presentation.

Attendance and Participation (10%):
The attendance and participation component will be split into two separate grades, each worth 5 points. The first grade will be calculated at the halfway point of the course. The final grade will be calculated at the end of the semester.

Attendance is mandatory. Students may one class during each half of the semester for any reason without penalty (for a total of two absences total), but these absences are meant to cover unusual instances such as illness or a death in the family. Each additional absence will lose you 1 point off of your attendance and participation grade. Students who are habitually absent or late will get 0 for this grade.
These two allowed absences will be split up into one per half of the course. This means that if you are absent more than once in the first half, your grade will be penalized 1 points per absence at this time. You may still be penalized again in the second half of the course.

**Course Policies:**

*Late work.* Reading questions submitted after the beginning of class will get maximum 50% credit (1 out of 2). Late papers will be penalized 1 point out of 10 per day, including weekends.

*Other grade penalties.* For reading questions and papers, there will be automatic grade penalties if your writing does not meet the minimum (or maximum) word length. Reading questions will be graded out of 2, and you will get 1 point off (50%) for answers that are too short. Other penalties will be specified in the assignments.

*If you are absent.* Please do not ask the instructor what you missed if you are absent. You should ask a classmate to borrow notes, and after reviewing these along with readings if you have questions please see the instructor during office hours. It is not necessary to contact the instructor if you are absent, and there are no “excused” absences in this class - the two free absences are meant to cover unexpected situations such as illness. However, if a serious situation requires you to miss more than two classes, please discuss it with the instructor as soon as you know about it.

*Makeup exams.* No early or late exams will be given for any reason other than a religious observance. Please do not take this class if you cannot be take all three of the exams on the date given in this syllabus.

*Videos screened in class.* We will often watch videos of television shows, movies, commercials, amateur media, and other texts in class. In some instances these videos are freely available online, for instance on YouTube. In many instances, however, the videos are discs from the instructor's personal collection. If you are absent for the screening of a video, it is your responsibility to track it down and view it on your own, whether on YouTube or some other way.

*Electronic devices in the classroom.* You are welcome to use laptops and other electronic devices if they help you engage with readings and discussions. If they are distracting others, or if they seem to be getting in the way of our work, I will ask you to stop using them. If you are texting during class, everyone around you will know and it will be embarrassing and sad. You are responsible for your own attention.

*Accommodations.* If you need special accommodations in order to meet any of the requirements of this course, please let me know. Students with an visa will receive whatever accommodation is recommended on it. Students will be allowed to complete examinations or other requirements that are missed because of a religious observance.

*Academic misconduct.* Academic misconduct, including plagiarism, will be treated severely.
Students are responsible for the honest completion and representation of their work and for the proper citation of sources. Please familiarize yourself with the university's policies and procedures regarding academic misconduct.

Extra credit. No extra credit assignments will be given for any reason. Please do not even ask about extra credit.

University policies:
Please familiarize yourself with the university’s policies on students with disabilities, religious observance, students called to active military duty, incompletes, discriminatory conduct (such as sexual harassment), academic misconduct, complaint procedures, grade appeal procedures, and final examinations. Go to http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/SyllabusLinks.pdf for more information about these policies.

Schedule:
M/S refers to Media/Society.
HTWTV refers to How to Watch Television.

Please complete these reading assignments before coming to class and always bring them with you.

Unit I: Media Production

Introduction
W Sept 3 course intro

M Sept 8 M/S ch 1; reading questions #1
W Sept 10 HTWTV Gray, “The Amazing Race: Global Othering”

Media Industries
M Sept 15 M/S ch 2; reading questions #2

Regulation of Media Content & Ownership
M Sept 22 M/S ch 3; reading questions #3
W Sept 24 HTWTV Holt, “NYPD Blue: Content Regulation” + presentations 1

Topics in Media Industries
M Sept 29 HTWTV Johnson, “Monday Night Football: Brand Identity” + presentations 1
W Oct 1 HTWTV Sandler, “Modern Family: Product Placement” + presentations 1

Routines of Media Work
M Oct 6 M/S ch 4; reading questions #4
W Oct 8 HTWTV Scott, “Battlestar Galactica: Fans and Ancillary Content” + presentations 1

M Oct 13 Midterm exam #1 online -- NO CLASS

Unit II: Media Texts

W Oct 15 no reading, in class screening

Basics of Media Criticism: Textual Analysis
M Oct 20 discussion of Oct 15 screening + presentations 1
W Oct 22 M/S ch 5; reading questions #5

Halfway point: attendance/participation grade #1

Media, Ideology, and Representation
M Oct 27 M/S ch 6; reading questions #6
W Oct 29 HTWTV Alsultany, “24: Challenging Stereotypes” + presentations 1

M Nov 3 Acham, “The Cosby Show: Representing Race” + presentations 2
W Nov 5 Levine, “Grey’s Anatomy: Feminism” + presentations 2

Unit III: Media Audiences

Media Influence and the Political World
M Nov 10 M/S ch 7; reading questions #7
W Nov 13 HTWTV Jones, “Fox & Friends: Political Talk” + presentations 2

Active Audiences and the Construction of Meaning
M Nov 17 M/S ch 8; reading questions #8
W Nov 19 HTWTV Hendershot, “Parks & Recreation: The Cultural Forum” + presentations 2
M Nov 24 Midterm exam #2 online -- NO CLASS

---- Thanksgiving ----

Media Technology and Social Change
M Dec 1 M/S ch 9; reading questions #9
W Dec 3 HTWTV Gurney, “Auto-Tune the News: Remix Video” + presentations 2

Media in a Changing Global Culture
M Dec 8 M/S ch 10; reading questions #10
W Dec 10 HTWTV Ahn, “Samurai Shampoo: Transnational Viewing” + presentations 2

Final Exam Thursday, December 18 12:30-2:30 online
Grade breakdown:

A: 93-100%
A-: 90-92%
B+: 87-89%
B: 83-86%
B-: 80-82%
C+: 77-79%
C: 73-76%
C-: 70-71%
D+: 67-69%
D: 63-66%
D-: 60-62%
F: 0-59%

Time allocation (this section of the syllabus is required by the Higher Learning Commission):

The average student will be expected to invest the following amounts of time in order to achieve the learning objectives of JAMS 262.

Time in the classroom (face-to-face instruction): 28 meetings x 75 minutes = 2100 minutes or 35 hours

Time spent reading: 3 hours per week x 15 weeks = 45 hours

Time taking exams: 5 hours

Time completing assignments: 3 hours per week x 15 weeks = 45 hours

Time for preparation and study: 8 hours for midterms + 6 hours for the final = 14 hours

Total=144 hours

This syllabus is subject to change at the instructor’s discretion: readings may be subtracted or added, and dates may change. Any changes will be announced in class and on D2L