



MASS COMMUNICATIONS 105

SPRING, 2007

Diversity & Lifestyles in the Media

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Office: DBH 216
Hours: TBA in class

Class Meeting:
Mondays & Wednesdays
1:30 – 2:45pm
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Course Description

MCOM 105 is an upper division mass communications interactive class which focuses on advertising, public relations, journalism and online messages which incorporate concepts and issues of ethnicity & race, gender, sexual orientation, religion and disability. Careful consideration is given to the purpose, impact and potential fallout of messages targeting minority groups. This class also looks at media hiring practices and media message decision-making regarding diverse cultures and lifestyles. Upper division standing is required. This class is open to all upper class SJSU students on campus as an elective outside their major. It may also be used to fulfill a requirement for students majoring in advertising, public relations and journalism.

Diversity - Do we take it for granted?

It's been said because we live in a part of America where many cultures live, we think of "diversity" as a given. "It's second nature us, no big deal," one person said. But doesn't that depend on who you're talking to in our community. Some people who feel they go unnoticed most of the time, are regularly ignored or dismissed, or feel stereotyped by society, say "diversity" means nothing if we don't get past "tolerating" people and start "appreciating" what each person has to offer.

Why bother? Here at San Jose State University, we have people from nearly every cultural group on planet Earth. The opportunities are everywhere for media students to learn what's important and how to connect with their future "target market diverse audiences." All you have to do is think beyond the easy, challenge yourself, communicate and then Listen carefully to the answer to your questions: "What am I missing that would help me better understand your culture? Why do people sometimes react differently to the same media message? What offensive to you and why?"

In MCOM 105, students will be constantly asking questions as we explore how public perceptions, attitudes, opinions, generalized beliefs and myths filter into media efforts. By studying the thinking, strategies and techniques being incorporated to connect with diverse cultures, we hope to discern how accurate, fair or appropriate is the media approach. We will also look to see if there is any agenda being forwarded in media messages based on issues of race, gender, sexual orientation, religion or disabilities.

Keep in mind the public expect journalists, advertisers, public relations experts and internet professionals to use new technology in creative ways, but with good judgment, to further attract and hold public attention. People want not only fast and interesting information & entertainment, they also expect the media to take the time, do some research and provide accurate, insightful, meaningful and respectful portrayals of their ethnic, sociological, biological, sexual and religious cultures.

Goals in MCOM 105:

To broaden the limited thinking and study of minorities in the media to **see diversity as a way to better appreciate people** with different values and interests so to better **understand their importance** in our society.

To see diversity outreach as “pedagogy” or ways media teach large populations about cultural groups, their behavior, values and priorities.

To **identify media** efforts which knowingly or unknowingly perpetuate **stereotypes, myths, and false opinions**.

To **develop creative new thinking and strategies** which effectively utilize new technologies to inform and educate accurately about diverse populations.

READINGS & GRADING

www.profbob.com (Online check the left side, top link for Prof. Bob's Bio Information.)

MCOM 105 will utilize a wide range of materials for class study. Pertinent news articles, advertisements, press releases, book excerpts, videos and other materials will be provided, for analysis and class discussion, on Professor Rucker's website. Students will be assigned readings, and be expected to constantly monitor news developments about topics, events and issues discussed in this class.

Look for unique and interesting examples of breaking news, features, websites, ads, and press releases. Always keep our class focus in mind, collect pertinent media materials and be prepared to discuss what you have found. **CLASS PARTICIPATION IS WORTH 50% OF YOUR OVERALL MCOM 105 GRADE.**

You lower your participation grade if you have nothing new, pertinent or substantive to offer to forward our class discussions. Improve your participation grade by “taking the initiative” and researching something that catches your eye that is timely and pertinent to issues being discussed in this class. All students will be asked about current events and encouraged to share life experiences pertinent to our study and understanding of diversity.

TESTING: Read carefully all readings provided or assigned by Professor Rucker in class. You will be regularly tested, **orally and/or with short, written quizzes**. Expect no advance notice of quizzes, No make-ups for unexcused absences. **TEST SCORES ARE WORTH 20% OF YOUR GRADE.**

PROJECT: Interacting with classmates and people on & off campus about a wide range of diversity and media topics is expected. Specific “Action Assignments” will require each student to explore the thoughts, opinions and attitudes of the media and the public on a diversity issue. Students must offer a written analysis and a creative media plan with strategies. **New technology approaches, discussed in class, may be used but must be approved first by Professor Rucker.** Project goal: To demonstrate a student's depth of understanding, thinking, research, skill and creative approach to showcasing a diversity issue in the media. The last day to submit the assigned MCOM 105 project is the last day of class this semester. **PROJECT - 30% OF YOUR GRADE.**

Guest Speakers will be coming in throughout the semester to offer their expertise and points of view. Challenge them with fair and thoughtful questions. **FOR EACH GUEST, BRING FIVE TYPED QUESTIONS FOR THE GUEST LECTURE.** These five questions will be collected, and will be checked off as part of your participation grade. Take notes during the guest lecture. You may be quizzed on their responses.

University Policies

A. Academic Integrity Statement

"Your own commitment to learning, as evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State University and the University's Integrity Policy, require you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the Office of Judicial Affairs." The policy on academic integrity can be found at:

http://sa.sjsu.edu/judicial_affairs/index.html

To plagiarize is to "steal and use (the ideas or writings of another) as one's own." (American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language. 1975). You are committing plagiarism if you:

- Copy phrases, sentences, or passages from electronic or print sources (journal articles, the web, etc.) into your own papers and reports without giving credit by citing the original source
- Quote someone else's exact words without giving credit to the original author
- Use someone else's specific ideas even if you restate them in your own words.

Citing your sources properly helps to avoid plagiarism. (See http://sa.sjsu.edu/student_conduct)

SJSU regards plagiarism as academic dishonesty. Consequences include academic and other sanctions such as "grade modification."

Make clear which ideas are yours and which are someone else's...don't use words or images in a way that violates the creator's rights to them.

(Plagiarism and fabrication are violations of the ethical standards of the journalism profession. In addition to plagiarizing sources, outright fabrication is equally dangerous territory for

journalists. This includes making up sources and attributing information to non-existent people or printed matter.)

B. Campus policy in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act

"If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, or see me during office hours. Presidential Directive 97-03 requires that students with disabilities register with the DRC to establish a record of their disability."

C. You are responsible for understanding the policies and procedures about add/drops, academic renewal, withdrawals, incompletes, classroom behavior, and other policies found at http://sa.sjsu.edu/student_conduct. Also, please read the SJSU catalog thoroughly.

Classroom Policies of the School of Journalism and Mass Communications

To avoid disruptions in the classroom and to foster an atmosphere for learning, the School has established the following classroom policies.

- All cell phones must be turned off (or set to "vibrate") in the classroom. Please be forewarned that, if a cell phone goes off in class, you will be asked to leave the classroom for that particular class period.
- Latecomers may be denied entrance to the classroom. Similarly, do not disrupt the class by leaving early. Do not schedule work, personal appointments (doctor's visits), etc. so that there will be a conflict with the time the class meets.
- When in the classroom, laptops must be used for classroom-related activities only.
- Remove your personal belongings and trash from the classroom after each class.
- No food or drinks allowed in classrooms or labs.

Professor Rucker's Classroom Policies: Professional Conduct

Due to severe allergy reactions, ALL STUDENTS ARE ASKED NOT to wear colognes or perfumes to class.

All students are asked always to be open-minded, listen and learn about other cultures represented in the classroom. It's OK to ask for clarifications. Always be respectful.

10 minutes after the start of each class, NO student may enter the MCOM 105 classroom, even if an assignment is due, a test is underway or a guest is speaking. Tardiness is an unexcused absence.

Late assignments are not acceptable. Unless you have an excused absence for medical or emergency reasons, assignments may not be submitted late. No grade credit for late assignments.

Rude and disrespectful conduct is never allowed. You may be asked to leave the class.

Laptops must stay focused on class related materials and discussions. Surfing is not allowed during class time. You may be asked to leave the classroom and receive an unexcused absence.