



MASS COMMUNICATIONS 105

SPRING SEMESTER, 2008

Diversity & Lifestyles in the Media

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Office: DBH 218
Hours: M – Th 1:15 – 2pm
or by appointment in advance

Class Meeting:
Mondays & Wednesdays
3 – 4:15pm
DBH 225
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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?

This week in American history, as the nation considers an African-American and a woman to be President of the United States, the media keeps asking the question: "Are race & gender a problem for some voters today?" National polls strongly suggest it's not. More than 60% say they could vote for a woman and 72% could vote for a black man. So why is the media asking the question at all? By stirring up public passions about these issues, is the media serving the public interest by questioning if some people lied to pollsters? What role should the news media play during this historic year?

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 in class once 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's 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 online sources, news articles, advertisements, press releases, book excerpts, videos and other materials will be focused on for detail analysis during class discussions/ Sharing differences of opinion is crucial to this dynamic learning experience. Students will be assigned extensive readings, and are expected to constantly monitor news developments pertinent to class topics, events and issues.

* Televised and online streamed presidential debates are required viewing.

Look for unique and interesting examples of emerging attitudes, trends and opinions. Notice how various media source focus in on specific diversity issues and avoid others. Breaking news, feature stories, websites, ads, press releases, movies, television and radio programs which highlight diversity issues will included for careful scrutiny for overt and subtle messages.

Always keep our class focus in mind, collect pertinent media materials and be prepared to discuss what you have found.

CLASS PARTICIPATION IS WORTH 40% 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 volunteer and 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 through written in-class analysis reports or tests.. Expect no advance notice of current event quizzes. No make-ups for unexcused absences. **TEST & EVALUATION EFFORTS ARE WORTH 30% 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. **CLASS ASSIGNED PROJECTS ON DIVERSITY IN MEDIA ARE WORTH 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 thought-provoking 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.

University Policy S01-13, San José State University's *Policy of Commitment to a Campus Climate That Values Diversity and Equal Opportunity*, replaces University Policy S91-1 and affirms that San José State University (SJSU) is committed to maintaining an environment free from discrimination and harassment in compliance with all laws on non-discrimination, equal employment opportunity and affirmative action. Furthermore, the university community has a responsibility to advocate inclusion, respect, and understanding at a level above that which is minimally required by law.

For a full description, view [SJSU Campus Climate Policy](#).

Executive Order 883, *Systemwide Guidelines for Nondiscrimination and Affirmative Action Programs in Employment*, supersedes Executive Order 774. The California State University is committed to maintaining and implementing employment policies and procedures that comply with applicable state and federal nondiscrimination and affirmative action laws and regulations. Discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, pregnancy, age, disability, medical condition, and covered veteran status is prohibited. Additionally, Executive Order 883 prohibits retaliation for filing a discrimination complaint, opposing a discriminatory act, or participating in a discrimination investigation or proceeding.

For a full description, view [Executive Order 883](#).

[NCAA Gender Equity Report](#) details information concerning SJSU's intercollegiate athletics programs under the Equity in Athletics Disclosure Act of 1994.

Presidential Directive 97-03 describes the University's policies and guidelines for securing accommodations for students with disabilities, as well as the procedures for resolving disputes. It is the purpose of this directive to assure that SJSU continues to comply with federal and state legislation and California State University policies regarding the provision of services to students with disabilities.

For a full description, view [Presidential Directive 97-03](#).

Executive Order 926, The California State University Policy on Disability Support and Accommodations, presents policies, procedures, and monitoring for making all CSU programs, services, and activities accessible to students, faculty, staff, and the general public with disabilities.

For a full description, view [Executive Order 926](#).

In order to **observe days of religious significance**, students may occasionally be absent from class. Therefore, to address this issue, the San José State University Academic Council voted to adopt University Policy F68-8. This university policy, in conjunction with [California Education Code 89320](#), addresses campus policy on religious holidays.

For a full description, view [Policy F68-8](#).

Presidential Directive 91-08, *Sexual Harassment and Special Responsibilities of Supervisory and Management Personnel Having Knowledge of Potential Sexual Harassment Situation*, asserts San José State University's commitment to providing all its students and employees with a comfortable and safe environment for learning and working. The President of San José State University issued this memo to clarify for all SJSU supervisory personnel the kind of conduct that is defined as sexual harassment and the responsibilities of all supervisory personnel when they have any knowledge that sexual harassment may be taking place within the campus community.

For a full description, view [Presidential Directive 91-08](#).

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: Based on Professional Standards

All students are asked always to be open-minded, listen and learn about other cultures represented in the classroom. Candor is encouraged in class discussions. It's OK to ask for clarifications and to respectfully challenge viewpoints. Personal attacks and inappropriate language are NOT allowed.

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.

NO e-mailing "I'm Sick" / NO homework may be sent to Prof. Rucker's office e-mail address above.

The 10 Minute Arrival Rule:

No student may enter the classroom 10 minutes after class starts. Such disruptions will result in the late student being asked to leave.

Each class is assigned a separate e-mail address. Prof. Rucker must give permission, in advance, before any correspondence or homework may be sent to the class assigned e-mail.

Deadlines are always absolute. Expect NO extensions.

Call in sick to Prof. Rucker's office phone above before missing class.

Never e-mail-in sick or send word by someone else. Excused absences must meet SJSU policies.

Never expect late assignments to be accepted.

Extra credit may be offered, but never expect it. Prioritize doing your best on all class assignments.

False reporting of information, unacceptable conduct or persistent unexcused absenteeism may result in a course failing grade.

Students are responsible for dropping courses by the SJSU deadline date.