Loyola Marymount University
First Year Seminar – FFYS 1000-53
Our Media, Ourselves: Representations of Diversity in Mass and Self-Produced Media
Fall 2013

Course and Instructor Information

**Professor:** Christopher J. Finlay, Ph.D
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**Office Hours:** MW 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM
MW 4:30 PM – 6:00 PM

**Class Days/Time:** MW 3:00 PM – 4:15 PM
**Classroom:** Pereira Hall 207

**Writing Instructor:** Robert Haas, Ph.D
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**Office Hours:** F 11:00 AM -12:00 PM and by appointment

Course Description

This course offers students the opportunity to develop two skills concurrently: 1) academic writing, and 2) media literacy. Students will develop their academic writing by completing a series of written assignments and a term paper that will collectively examine the role of traditional media (film, television, music) and new media (video games, social media, user generated content) in constructing representations of our individual and group identities including, race, gender, sexuality, religion, and class. Students will learn how to critically analyze the often-subtle ways in which media representations work ideologically to contribute to our understanding of these indices of identity. They will develop critical media literacy skills through active engagement with key theoretical and methodological traditions that inform contemporary approaches to the study of media and culture.
Student Learning Outcomes

1) Students will understand how media representations are produced not just in an American context, but also in a global context.
2) Students will identify and demonstrate how unfair or ill-informed media representations of identity can negatively impact individuals and our public sphere.
3) Students will be able to identify, evaluate and apply basic communication studies research methods.
4) Students will cooperatively build a safe learning environment, both in the classroom and in online activities, through sharing and listening in a respectful manner to how each other's diverse identities and experiences inform their perspectives on course topics and themes.
5) Students will develop information literacy skills, including the ability to evaluate sources for quality (e.g., by learning to differentiate between scholarly and popular sources).
6) Students will acquire research skills including use of the library catalog and electronic databases to retrieve books or articles, whether in print or online.
7) Students will engage in the academic writing process and demonstrate an understanding of the:
   a) Argumentative essay
      i) Synthesizing information from multiple sources
      ii) Analyzing and drawing conclusions from evidence to advance a claim
      iii) Importance of establishing their own academic voice.
   b) Revision process as the key to formulating coherent ideas and a logical narrative.

Required Texts

Textbooks


Other readings
Additional assigned readings will be available via MyLMUConnect or via the library’s digital collections.

You are responsible for **ALL** assigned readings, and they must be completed **BEFORE** the class for which they are assigned. There will be surprise quizzes, so be sure to come prepared.
Grade Composition

Term Paper: 45 points  
Proposal (1 page): 5 points  
+ Literature Review (4-5 pages): 10 points  
+ Analysis (6-7 pages): 15 points  
+ Final Paper (approx. 15 pages): 15 points

Final Oral Presentation: 15 points

Comparative Online Media Assignments: 2 * 5 points = 10 points

Mediated Identities Personal Reflection (2 pages): 5 points

Active Participation & Blogs: 10 points  
+ Engaged Reading Exercises: 2 * 2.5 = 5 points

Library Tutorials: 10 points

TOTAL: 100 points

Grade Distribution

Generally in this course, “excellent” work earns “A” grades, “good” work earns “B” grades, “average” work earns “C” grades, “poor” work earns “D” grades, and “unsatisfactory” work earns “F” grades. More specifically, I employ the following scale:

- A= 93% and up  
- A-= 90-92%  
- B+= 87-89%  
- B = 83-86%  
- B- = 80-82%  
- C+= 77-79%  
- C = 73-76%  
- C- = 70-72%  
- D = 65-69%  
- F = < 65%

Workload Expectations

3 credit hour (unit-semester hour) courses at Loyola Marymount University require the student spend a minimum of 6 hours a week, on average, outside of class time researching, applying, and otherwise investigating the material presented during class time.
NOTE: One student may spend more (or less) time with a given assignment than another. Furthermore, there are cycles in the term where one week may be rather quiet but the demands of the next week exceed the minimum of 6 hours of work. The syllabus will outline the projects of the term and the professor will discuss the arc of workload during the semester.

In some cases, this work will involve discussion with classmates and/or independent study, reflection, reading, and writing. In other cases, this work may also involve preparing oral presentations or cultivating skills that are requisite to an art form. This work may also take the form of creative engagement in an artistic or service/community-based learning project.

The final grade will reflect both attendance and participation during class as well as work outside class. To both support and augment your learning, you may consult with your professor during regularly scheduled office hours. Additionally, a variety of resources and support services are available, including but not limited to: the holdings and staff of the William Hannon Library, the staff and workshops at the Academic Resource Center, contemplative and service retreats sponsored by a variety of on-campus organizations, and a range of varied university events (e.g., lectures, symposia, exhibits, and performances).

**Graded Activities**

**Term Paper (45 points):** Traditional media texts (television, newspapers, music, video games) are replete with representations of different groups identities. Much of what we'll be doing in this course is developing critical reading skills that will enable us to ask important questions about the impact of media representations on how we understand ourselves and each other. For decades, this was the bread and butter of media studies. However, we'll be doing something a bit different!

You'll start by selecting a traditional media text in which a group identity is represented, but you'll then go online and see how audiences have responded to this representation. For instance, are there: YouTube response videos; comments memes and other visual humor; twitter feeds about the media representation; blog posts?

Your primary research topic will be about the responses of what we can understand as digitally-empowered audiences to how a group is portrayed in a traditional media text.

Your term paper is divided into 4 components. We will devote significant class time to developing the skills you will need to write each of these 4 components.
1) Term Paper Proposal (5 points): In this first component, you will develop a one-page outline of your intended study. You will also be asked to justify your research topic and explain how it will contribute to existing knowledge and theory about the topic. Please also include a ‘Working Bibliography’ with 5 relevant sources.

2) Literature Review (10 points): You will write a 4-5 page paper that identifies and discusses existing scholarly literature related to your topic. Literature reviews aren’t summaries of other work. Instead, you want to put the different sources you’ve identified into conversation with one another.

   For example: How does Article A address the weakness in Article B? How does Article B make you question an assumption in Article D? How do Articles A,B,C & D influence how you understand your specific research topic?

   Your literature review must engage with at least 7 relevant sources.

3) Analysis (15 points): In this 6-7 page section, you’ll use what you’ve learned about how a research study, specific theory or set of theories to develop an analysis of your topic. This is where you will have the opportunity to develop your own approach to the topic. But, please keep in mind that your approach must be both evidence-based and situated in existing theory (even if you wish to take issue with it).

4) Revised and Complete Paper (15 points): You’ll get feedback on each of the above three sections as the term progresses. In this assignment, you will use that feedback to revise your work and to combine the different components into a single term paper.

Final Oral Presentation (15 points): You will develop a 10-minute research presentation to introduce your class to your term research paper. In this presentation, you will be asked to speak extemporaneously. You will also develop a visual presentation, such as PowerPoint or Prezzi. I encourage you to include engaging and relevant digital media elements (audio, video, images, etc.), but these should primarily function to augment your oral presentation. So, please limit any audio or video clips to 2 minutes.

Comparative Online Media Assignments (10 points): For this assignment, you will complete 2 comparative media analyses. For each, you will select a contemporary media story and collect articles, videos and other media texts about it. These different media texts should be from numerous different types of organizations (and, in some cases, individuals).

After reviewing these different texts, you will be tasked with selecting at least 2 (but no more than 4) media texts that represent a breadth of perspectives on the story you are following. In a 2-3 page paper, you will develop an analysis of how these different media texts frame the story differently. You should consider both the intended audience for your media texts and the political economic factors influencing how and where your text was published.
Mediated Identities Personal Reflection (5 points): In this assignment, you will write a 2-3-page reflection paper. You will be asked to consider the power of media representations of individuals both in terms of how they inform your understanding of others and how they inform your understanding of yourself. A specific writing prompt will be given in class.

Active Participation & Your Writing Blog (10 points): You are encouraged to actively participate in this class. I encourage comments, questions and debates. You’ll be graded on both the consistency and substance of your contributions to our classroom discussions. In addition, you are asked to update a blog as part of your writing instruction on the Connect system. The writing instructor and I will post a series of ten prompts across the term. We’ll go over where to post your blog entries in the first week of class.

Engaged Reading Exercise (5 points): In this assignment, you will develop your engaged reading skills. We’ll discuss key approaches to engaged reading in the first weeks of this class. You should make a habit of using your engaged reading skills when completing work for all of your classes.

While there are many ways to do active reading, I’m going to introduce a specific form or tool to help you practice this skill. You are asked to submit two completed engaged reading exercises where you use this tool (please see the course schedule for the deadline).

In addition, you are invited to submit a third engaged reading exercise for an extra credit grade of 2 points.

Library Tutorials (10 points): All FYS students must complete four standardized online library tutorials:
   1) Starting your Research Assignment
   2) Types of Information
   3) Finding and Evaluating Information
   4) Using Information Ethically

Each tutorial is worth 100 points (80 points are earned by taking the tutorial and 20 points are earned by taking the accompanying quiz). Your weighted score (out of 10 class points) will be calculated based on your scores across all of the tutorials and quizzes.

Please take the tutorial sequentially. I’ve assigned each module as homework in the class schedule.
Course Expectations and Policies

Classroom Etiquette Policy: Be courteous and respectful to others and refrain from using offensive language. This is especially important in this First Year Seminar where sensitive issues of identity will be discussed. We should all encourage an inclusive environment and make our observations with care. We will not shy away from discussing controversial subjects, but we will strive to do so in a careful, analytical and sensitive way. If you have any concerns and you would like to speak to me privately, don’t hesitate to drop by my office.

Mobile Devices Policy: Consider the classroom to be much like an airplane. All smartphones, iPods and other potentially disruptive mobile communication devices must be turned off and stowed. The first time you use a mobile device during class, you will be politely asked to shut it off. Multiple infractions of this policy will result in the student being asked to leave the classroom for the duration of the class and an absence will be recorded.

You are welcome to bring a laptop or a tablet to class. However, you do so at your own risk! Recent studies have demonstrated an extraordinary gap between the grades of students who use laptops in class and students who do not.

- Students who used laptops scored 11% less than regular pen+paper students on a series of in-class tests
- Students who were surrounded by laptops and scored a whopping 17% less on in-class tests than those students whose peers did not have laptops

The culprit in both cases? Distraction! So, if you insist on using a laptop and your peers don’t mind, you may use it to take notes. If I find that you are using it to do other tasks (e-mail, Twitter, Facebook, homework etc.) you will be asked to turn it off and will not be allowed to use it in subsequent classes.

Attendance and Class Participation Policy: You are expected to attend all class sessions and to participate regularly. A significant portion of your final grade will be based on classroom attendance and participation.

More than 2 unexcused absences, excessive tardiness or excessively leaving early will result in grade reductions. In other words, points start being deducted after the first 2 ‘freebies’.

Exemptions from class exercises and discussions due to legitimate absence require documentation and my prior explicit permission. Fraternity and sorority events, concerts, and last minute cramming for another course are NOT considered legitimate absences. If you have any concerns or questions about whether an absence is legitimate, just ask me.

If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to obtain from either a classmate or
MyLMUConnect any missed information such as changes to the class schedule. I do not make my lecture notes or powerpoints available. Thus, I suggest partnering with a ‘study buddy’ to trade notes in the event that you have to miss a class.

**MYLMU Connect and E-Mail Policy:** You must be able to access and use MyLMUConnect as well as your LMU e-mail account. My usual response time is 24 hours during the week and 48 hours on the weekend. If you haven’t heard from me within a reasonable amount of time, please send me a polite reminder e-mail.

NOTE: If your lion e-mail isn’t your primary account, be sure to set it up to forward mail to your primary account since official LMU communications and MyLMUConnect automatically send to your lion account.

It is critical that you consult our class page on MyLMUConnect frequently. As with the classroom, MyLMUConnect is to be a safe environment for an informed discussion of class subjects. Be respectful and courteous and be sensitive to the ideas and opinions of others.

**Written Assignment Submission Policy:** All written assignments are to be submitted in hard copy at the beginning of class on the day they are due.

They must be formatted as follows: Times New Roman; 12 point font; double-spaced. Always include your full name, class name, instructor name and date on a title page. References (APA style) MUST be included at the end of each written assignment. I also require in-text citations (APA style) in all of your assignments.

**Late Assignment Policy:** Late papers will be penalized 1 point per day. Papers that are more than 5 days late will NOT be accepted except with my prior permission. Exemptions from this rule will be granted in extenuating circumstances (such as major illness, compassionate grounds, official university business or legal proceedings). I will evaluate each request on a case-by-case basis and discuss alternative arrangements.

**Incomplete:** An incomplete will be allowed for students who have passing grades and become seriously ill or suffer tragedies that prevent them from otherwise completing the course. To receive an incomplete, the illness or tragedy must be documented in a written memo. The memo must clearly show that the emergency prevented the student from completing the remainder of the coursework.

**Academic Honesty:** Academic dishonesty is an extremely serious matter, with serious consequences that can range from receiving no credit for assignments/tests to expulsion. It is never permissible to turn in work that has been copied from another student or copied from a source (including the Internet)
without properly acknowledging the source. You also may not submit work that you already completed for another class. It is your responsibility to make sure that your work meets the standard of academic honesty set forth in the “LMU Honor Code and Process” which appears in the LMU Bulletin.

NOTE: In this class, academic dishonesty will result in a grade of 0 for the assignment.

Special Accommodations: Students with special needs who require reasonable modifications, special assistance, or accommodations in this course should promptly direct their request to the Disability Support Services (DSS) Office. Any student who currently has a documented disability (ADHD, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Learning, Physical, or Psychiatric) needing academic accommodations should contact the DSS Office (Daum Hall 2nd floor, 310-338-4216) as early in the semester as possible. All discussions will remain confidential. Please visit www.lmu.edu/dss for additional information.

Emergency Preparedness: To report an emergency or suspicious activity, contact the LMU Department of Public Safety by phone (x222 or 310-338-2893) or at the nearest emergency call box.

In the event of an evacuation, follow the evacuation signage throughout the building to the designated safe refuge area where you will receive further instruction from Public Safety or a Building Captain. For more safety information and preparedness tips, visit http://www.lmu.edu/emergency.

Tentative Course Schedule

Note #1: This is a tentative schedule of readings and assignments. Therefore, it is subject to change. It is your responsibility to attend class regularly and follow any changes or modifications distributed in class or posted on MyLMUConnect.

Note #2: Beginning in Week 3, Prof Haas will also be assigning you weekly writing exercises and readings. Please log into the McGraw Hill Connect system at least weekly to read each week’s assigned readings, to complete assigned writing exercises, and to update your blog.

KEY

Regular Font = Class Lecture & Seminar
Italics = Writing Instruction (Prof. Haas Leads the Class)
Bold = Assignment DUE (Date will also be shaded in grey)
Underline = Library Tutorials
Week 1

M 08/26  Welcome & Introduction
W 08/28  Meet in Library for an Introduction to Mediated Identities

Week 2

M 09/02  **LABOUR DAY – No Class!!**
W 09/04  1) READING: Kellner, ‘Cultural Studies, Multiculturalism, and Media Culture’ (textbook pp. 7-18)
          Mediated Identities Personal Reflection DUE

Week 3

          2) The ‘Term Paper Recipe’ and an Introduction to Engaged Reading

W 09/11  Writing Instruction Class #1

Week 4

M 09/16  1) READING: Jenkins, ‘Star Trek Rerun, Reread, Rewritten: Fan Writing as Textual Poaching’ (textbook: pp. 57 – 66)
          2) What’s a Paper Proposal?
          Engaged Reading Exercise #1 DUE
          Complete ‘Starting Your Assignment’ Library Tutorial

W 09/18  Writing Instruction Class #2
          Complete ‘Types of Information Assignment’ Library Tutorial
          Complete ‘Finding and Evaluation Information’ Library Tutorial

Week 5

M 09/23  Writing Instruction Class #3
W 09/25  1) READING Hall, ‘The Whites of Their Eyes: Racist Ideologies and the Media’ (textbook: pp. 81-84)
4) Complete ‘Using Information Ethically’ Library Tutorial

**NOTE: All Library Tutorials MUST be completed by 11:55pm on Wednesday, September 25th. Regular late penalties apply beginning on Thursday, September 26th.**

**Week 6**

**M 09/30**

1) READING Azikwe, ‘More Than Baby Mamas: Black Mothers and Hip-Hop Feminism’ (textbook: pp. 137-144)

**Term Paper Proposal DUE**

**W 10/02**

1) READING Butsch, ‘Ralph, Fred, Archie, Homer, and the King of Queens: Why Television Keeps Re-Creating the Male Working-Class Buffoon’ (textbook, pp. 101-110)

**Week 7**

**M 10/07**


**Engaged Reading Exercise #2 DUE**

**W 10/09**

*Writing Instruction Class #4*

**Week 8**

**M 10/14**

1) READING Ouellette, ‘Inventing the Cosmo Girl: Class Identity and Girl-Style American Dreams’ (textbook pp. 221-234)

**Comparative Online Media Assignment #1 DUE**

**W 10/16**

1) READING Steinem, ‘Sex, Lies, and Advertising’ (textbook pp. 235-242)

**Week 9**

**M 10/21**

1) READING Clarkson, ‘The Limitations of the Discourse of Norms: Gay Visibility and Degrees of Transgression’ (textbook: pp. 335-340)

**Term Paper Literature Review DUE**
Week 10

M 10/28  1) READING: Bertozzi, "You Play Like a Girl": Cross-Gender Competition and the Uneven Playing Field' (textbook: pp. 443-454)

W 10/30  Writing Instruction Class #6

Week 11

M 11/4  1) READING Brookey and Cannon, ‘Sex Lives in Second Life’ (textbook, pp. 571-582)
        Term Paper Analysis DUE

W 11/6  Amanda Todd & Revenge Porn READINGS: TBA

Week 12

M 11/11  Religion Online & Innocence of Muslims READINGS: TBA

W 11/13  Current Events Discussion: EVENTS YET TO HAPPEN!

Week 13

M 11/18  Term Project Presentations

W 11/20  Term Project Presentations
        Comparative Online Media Assignment #2 DUE

Week 14

M 11/25  Term Project Presentations

W 11/27  **HAPPY THANKSGIVING – No Class!**

Week 15

M 12/2  Term Project Presentations

W 12/4  Term Project Presentations
        Class Summary… and HOLIDAY BREAK!
        Revised Term Paper DUE