



Department of Communication Studies / School of Humanities, Arts and Public Engagement

COM 3095 - Media Literacy

Total of Units: 3.0

Spring 2026

Class Meet Time: M/W, 1:30-2:45 p.m.

Cabrillo 102

Final Exam: Friday, May 8, 2026. 1:30-4 p.m.

INFORMATION	SPECIFICS FOR THE COURSE
Instructor title and name:	Prof. Drake Hills, Lecturer
Phone:	(615) 922-9572
Email:	dhills@pointloma.edu
Office location and hours:	By appointment // Zoom - Contact via email to schedule

PLNU Mission

To Teach ~ To Shape ~ To Send

Point Loma Nazarene University exists to provide higher education in a vital Christian community where minds are engaged and challenged, character is modeled and formed, and service is an expression of faith. Being of Wesleyan heritage, we strive to be a learning community where grace is foundational, truth is pursued, and holiness is a way of life.

General Education Mission

PLNU provides a foundational course of study in the liberal arts informed by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In keeping with the Wesleyan tradition, the curriculum equips

students with a broad range of knowledge and skills within and across disciplines to enrich major study, lifelong learning, and vocational service as Christ-like participants in the world's diverse societies and culture.

Course Description - COM 3095

A critical approach to interpreting media messages, grounded in the study of how messages are constructed, how media industries function and how communication, research theory and media ethics explain media impact on society. The course content's emphasis is placed on media consumers making informed choices and considering media's impact from a Christian perspective.

Media Communication Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)

1. Examine and understand past and present production strategies of media across multiple modalities.
2. Incorporate individual creativity within a team dynamic in the process of designing, constructing and producing media projects.
3. Create scripts, audio projects and visual narratives according to industry-specific standards.
4. Display critical thinking when comparing, evaluating and interpreting diverse media content.

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

As a result of this course, students will display an understanding of, and/or, be to able to do the following:

1. Students will gain a critical understanding of mass media economics and systems.
2. Students will be more informed consumers of all forms of media, including understanding how to distinguish among information sources and evaluate their reliability.
3. Students will gain a fuller understanding of the journalistic process, the challenges journalists face, the impacts of journalism in democratic society and the relationships between journalists and the public they serve.
4. Students will better understand the workings of state and local governments, including how state and local government decision-making affects our daily lives, how news coverage and other media influences these decisions and how citizens can engage to influence change. The course focuses significantly on helping students understand and

evaluate journalistic products and processes and their role in democracy. However, it also will provide students an opportunity to learn more about state and local government structures and processes and how they can be influenced by citizen engagement.

5. An ability to apply a biblical-Christian worldview and faith perspective to media analysis, critique and the production of media messages.
6. An understanding and ability to apply media literacy analysis knowledge and skills in the four different dimensions of media literacy:
 - a. Cognitive/Background-Factual dimension: includes the background-facts about the message, including the medium and the messenger – who created the message, their background and role in this message, their perspectives, ideology, the target/principle make and how much money it made, its popularity and awards, and other factors.
 - b. Emotional dimension: how much and why messages engage us emotionally and intellectually, and the effects of this emotional engagement on our values, beliefs, and behaviors/actions.
 - c. Aesthetic dimension: the artistic aspects of mass media messages and how stories in words and/or imagery and sound elicit emotional reactions and can affect us in positive and negative ways.
 - d. Moral-ethical-spiritual dimension: includes the moral, psychological, and spiritual effects of media on individuals, culture, and society, and the ability to analyze and determine the ethics of media message content and their effect(s).

Required Texts and Recommended Study Resources

Students are responsible for having the required course textbooks prior to the first day of class.

All supplemental materials posted on this course site (including articles, book excerpts, or other documents) are provided for your personal academic use. These materials may be protected by copyright law and should not be duplicated or distributed without permission of the copyright owner.

Required Texts and Recommended Study Resources

Students are responsible for having the required course textbooks prior to the first day of class.

All supplemental materials posted on this course site (including articles, book excerpts, or other documents) are provided for your personal academic use. These materials may be protected by copyright law and should not be duplicated or distributed without permission of the copyright owner.

- Hobbs, Renee. 2025. *Media Literacy in Action Questioning the Media*. Blue Ridge Summit: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2nd ed.
- Szeman, Imre, and Susie O'Brien. 2017. *Popular Culture: A User's Guide*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell.
- Additional reading assignments TO BE DETERMINED + various handouts distributed by Professor Drake
- Required films (see course schedule) – pay for streaming fees as required

Assessment and Grading

The instructor has the final authority on all grades and reserves the right to deviate from the various point values listed below when appropriate.

Your final grade will be based on the following (**emboldened**) categories.

Class Participation	30%
Class participation comprises on-time class attendance, use of smart devices (phone, tablet, CPU, etc.) under instructor's orders (or receive a "0" for the day), timely assignment submission, group collaboration integrity, in-class questions and answers and full attentiveness during lectures and films.	
Collaborative Blog Project	30%
Written Papers (Reflection, Class Discussion, Author Presentations)	20%
Final Exam Presentation	15%
Assessments	5%
Critical Thinking	
Quantitative Reasoning	

A	B	C	D	F
A 93-100	B+ 87-89	C+ 77-79	D+ 67-69	F 0-59
A- 90-92	B 83-86	C 73-76	D 63-66	
	B- 80-82	C- 70-72	D- 60-62	

Collaborative Blog Project

Semester-Long Collaborative Blog Project: Purpose, Scope, and Expectations

This course includes a semester-long group project designed to develop students’ digital media literacy, ethical reasoning, and professional communication skills within a Christian liberal arts framework. Announced on January 22, 2026, this project runs from mid-January through early May and requires sustained collaboration, academic integrity, and responsible time management.

Working in groups of 4–5, students will create a free, publicly accessible website (Google Sites preferred) featuring five original blog posts centered on a shared topic related to digital technology, social media, culture, communication, or social issues. Each blog post (400–500 words) must focus on a distinct subtopic, incorporate course concepts (this includes the textbook), reference at least two scholarly, peer-reviewed sources (this does not include the textbook), include a credible external hyperlink (professional media source), and use proper APA citation practices. Ethical content creation is essential: students must avoid misinformation, respect intellectual property, attribute Creative Commons images correctly, and follow course policies regarding AI use.

As scholars and disciples of Christ Jesus, students are called to engage digital media thoughtfully—seeking truth, demonstrating humility, and honoring human dignity. This project reflects PLNU’s commitment to integrating faith and learning by asking students not only what media does in contemporary culture, but why it matters and how Christians should respond. Three structured check-ins (Feb. 18–19, March 18–19, April 22–23) reinforce accountability and professional collaboration. Final websites will be presented during the last section meetings, and each student must submit the project link individually via Canvas.

Assignment Descriptions

All assignments are due on Canvas at Noon on Wednesdays before class. Assignment submissions require attendance for the entire class period on the day they are due in order to be eligible for full credit.

Except for Author Presentations, written paper formatting requires students to submit all written assignments in a .doc or .docx file type, unless otherwise specified (i.e. Google Doc share link). Written assignments will be scribed in APA 7th edition style, typed and 1.5-spaced. I recommend using Grammarly or Zotero/ZoteroBib for style-writing assistance. Headings deserve their own page: Header: The header lists the page number beginning on the title page. Align to the bottom right.

- Title: Title is placed three to four lines down from the top of the page. Major words are capitalized. Title length may be one or two lines. Avoid abbreviations or non-essential words. A focused title is key!
- Author: Student name(s) includes the first name, middle initial(s), and last name. Two authors are joined with an “and.” Three or more authors are formatted as a list, placing commas between author names, and an “and” before the final author’s name.
- Affiliation: Author’s affiliation lists where the student studies and what school their discipline is within.
- Class: List the course number as abbreviated on course materials, followed by a colon, and spell out the course’s name.
- Instructor: Instructor name(s) include the first name, middle initial(s), and last name. Professional titles such as Dr. or degrees such as Ph.D. are appropriate here.
- Date: Format the date as Month Day, Year. List the assignment due date, not when it was originally created.

Submit assignments in black ink on 8.5”x11” white paper, aka portrait (this should be the standard page payout in Google Docs or Microsoft Word). Times New Roman, 12-pt font only.

- **Reading Notes** - The *objective* for students completing this is to leverage in-class notetaking on instructor lectures or textbook readings, requiring students to actively listen and participate in class. The instructor is expecting students to write notes in your own words – what you heard, not what he said – in summary. Cutting and pasting the text or outside sources into the document does not count towards the word count requirement. The *form* for students to follow is a ½ page, following the above written-paper format.
 - Grading
 - 5: full set of notes including specific, timestamped examples from lecturers or page titles from the textbook, with personal commentary
 - 4.5: full set of notes including specific examples

- 4: full set of general notes, certain sections and personal observations omitted
 - 3.5: nearly a full set of notes
 - 0-3: less than ½ page, does not follow a guideline(s), lacks detail or relevance to the pertaining chapters
- **Class Discussion Papers** - The *objective* is for students to write a reader-response to the assigned class readings. The form requires 1.5-2 pages, following the written-paper format above. Summarize important details in the assigned text; offer your critical assessment of key themes, and contribute questions that facilitate in-class discussion. Think student teach-back. Make photocopies, so each class participant has a copy. Submit one copy to your instructor. Present your class discussion paper in class and be prepared to guide your classmates in subsequent seminar-like discussions.
 - **Reflection Papers** - The *objective* is to write a one-page reflection on a topic of interest to you, based on the reading or lecture materials presented in class within the previous two weeks of the course. The form is one page, between 325-375 words, including the heading. Not outside sources.
 - **Author Presentation** - The objective is to compose an alternative-style format press release or journalism article. The form is 300 words and should not be written in APA style but PR press release or journalism form. Headline. Subhead.

Final Examination Policy

Successful completion of this class requires taking the final examination on its scheduled day. The final examination schedule is posted on the [Traditional Undergraduate Records: Final Exam Schedules](#) site. **If you find yourself scheduled for three (3) or more final examinations on the same day, you are authorized to contact each professor to arrange a different time for one of those exams.** However, unless you have three (3) or more exams on the same day, no requests for alternative final examinations will be granted.

Late Work

Any presentation work not completed by the respective deadline will not receive credit, UNLESS you submit via email a compelling reason (such as illness, accident, or a truly unforeseen circumstance). **Traveling, working, technology or simply losing track of the schedule is not a compelling reason.**

You will have several days of notice before something is due (>1 week), so plan your time accordingly. *My honest suggestion is not to wait until the final day to complete an assignment, but to simply take care of it as soon as you can reasonably do so.*

If you so need to make-up a missed assignment, *and you have an approved reason for doing so that is corroboration to the level of an excuse absent notice*, you must notify me of the reason within 24 hours of the missed assignment. In other words, you cannot wait a week to let me know why you missed said assignment.

Content Warning

I acknowledge that each of you comes to PLNU with your own unique life experiences. This contributes to the way you perceive various types of information. In COM 3095 - Media Literacy, all of the class content, including that which may be intellectually or emotionally challenging, has been intentionally curated to achieve the learning goals for this course. The decision to include such material is not taken lightly. These topics include optional explicit or Rated “R” content. If you encounter a topic that is intellectually challenging for you, it can manifest in feelings of discomfort and upset. In response, I encourage you to come talk to me or your friends or family about it. Class topics are discussed for the sole purpose of expanding your intellectual engagement in the area of Communication Studies, and I will support you throughout your learning in this course.

Trigger Warning

I acknowledge that each of you comes to PLNU with your own unique life experiences. This contributes to the way you perceive several types of information. In COM 3095 - Media Literacy, we will cover a variety of topics, some of which you may find triggering. These topics include optional explicit or Rated “R” content. Each time this topic appears in a reading or unit, it is marked on the syllabus. The experience of being triggered versus intellectually challenged are different. The main difference is that an individual must have experienced trauma to experience being triggered, whereas an intellectual challenge has nothing to do with trauma. If you are a trauma survivor and encounter a topic in this class that is triggering for you, you may feel overwhelmed or panicked and find it difficult to concentrate. In response, I encourage you to take the necessary steps for your emotional safety. This may include leaving class while the topic is discussed or talking to a therapist at the Counseling Center. Should you choose to sit out on discussion of a certain topic, know that you are still responsible for the material; but we can discuss if there are other methods for accessing that material, and for assessing your learning on that material. Class topics are discussed for the sole purpose of expanding your intellectual engagement in the area of Communication Studies, and I will support you throughout your learning in this course.

State Authorization

State authorization is a formal determination by a state that Point Loma Nazarene University is approved to conduct activities regulated by that state. In certain states outside California, Point Loma Nazarene University is not authorized to enroll online (distance education) students. If a student moves to another state after admission to the program and/or enrollment in an online course, continuation within the program and/or course will depend on whether Point Loma Nazarene University is authorized to offer distance education courses in that state. It is the student's responsibility to notify the institution of any change in his or her physical location. Refer to the map on State Authorization to view which states allow distance education outside California.

PLNU Copyright Policy

Point Loma Nazarene University, as a non-profit educational institution, is entitled by law to use materials protected by the US Copyright Act for classroom education. Any use of those materials outside the class may violate the law.]

PLNU Recording Notification

In order to enhance the learning experience, please be advised that this course may be recorded by the professor for educational purposes, and access to these recordings will be limited to enrolled students and authorized personnel.

Note that all recordings are subject to copyright protection. Any unauthorized distribution or publication of these recordings without written approval from the University (refer to the Dean) is strictly prohibited.

PLNU Academic Honesty Policy

Students should demonstrate academic honesty by doing original work and by giving appropriate credit to the ideas of others. Academic dishonesty is the act of presenting information, ideas, and/or concepts as one's own when in reality they are the results of another person's creativity and effort. A faculty member who believes a situation involving academic dishonesty has been detected may assign a failing grade for that assignment or examination, or, depending on the seriousness of the offense, for the course. For all student appeals, faculty and students should follow the procedures outlined in the University Catalog. See Academic Policies for definitions of kinds of academic dishonesty and for further policy information.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy

You are allowed to use Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Gemini Pro 1.5, GrammarlyGo, Perplexity, etc) to generate ideas, but **you are not allowed to use AI tools to generate content** (text, video, audio, images) **that will end up in any work submitted to be graded for this course**. If you have any doubts about using AI, please gain permission from the instructor.

PLNU Academic Accommodations Policy

PLNU is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all its programs, services, and activities in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Students with disabilities may request course-related accommodations by contacting the Educational Access Center (EAC), located in the Bond Academic Center (EAC@pointloma.edu or 619-849-2533). Once a student's eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, the EAC will work with the student to create an Accommodation Plan (AP) that outlines allowed accommodations. Professors are able to view a student's approved accommodations through Accommodate.

PLNU highly recommends that students speak with their professors during the first two weeks of each semester/term about the implementation of their AP in that particular course. Accommodations are not retroactive so clarifying with the professor at the outset is one of the best ways to promote positive academic outcomes.

Students who need accommodations for a disability should contact the EAC as early as possible (i.e., ideally before the beginning of the semester) to assure appropriate accommodations can be provided. It is the student's responsibility to make the first contact with the EAC. Students cannot assume that because they had accommodations in the past, their eligibility at PLNU is automatic. All determinations at PLNU must go through the EAC process. This is to protect the privacy of students with disabilities who may not want to disclose this information and are not asking for any accommodations.

Language and Belonging

Point Loma Nazarene University faculty are committed to helping create a safe and hospitable learning environment for all students. As Christian scholars we are keenly aware of the power of language and believe in treating others with dignity. As such, it is important that our language be equitable, inclusive, and prejudice free. Inclusive/Bias-free language is the standard outlined by all major academic style guides, including MLA, APA, and Chicago, and it is the expected norm in university-level work. Good writing and speaking do not use unsubstantiated or irrelevant generalizations about personal qualities such as age, disability, economic class, ethnicity, marital status, parentage, political or religious beliefs, race, gender, sex, or sexual orientation. Inclusive

language also avoids using stereotypes or terminology that demeans persons or groups based on age, disability, class, ethnicity, gender, race, language, or national origin. Respectful use of language is particularly important when referring to those outside of the religious and lifestyle commitments of those in the PLNU community. By working toward precision and clarity of language, we mark ourselves as serious and respectful scholars, and we model the Christ-like quality of hospitality.

If you (or someone you know) have experienced other forms of discrimination, you can find more information on reporting and resources at www.pointloma.edu/nondiscrimination.

Sexual Misconduct and Discrimination

In support of a safe learning environment, if you (or someone you know) have experienced any form of sexual discrimination or misconduct, including sexual assault, dating or domestic violence, or stalking, know that accommodations and resources are available through the Title IX Office at pointloma.edu/Title-IX. Please be aware that under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, faculty and staff are required to disclose information about such misconduct to the Title IX Office.

If you wish to speak to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting responsibility, you can contact Counseling Services at counselingservices@pointloma.edu or find a list of campus pastors at pointloma.edu/Title-IX.

If you (or someone you know) have experienced other forms of discrimination or bias, you can find more information on reporting and resources at www.pointloma.edu/bias

PLNU Attendance and Participation Policy

Regular and punctual attendance at all class sessions is considered essential to optimum academic achievement. If the student is absent for more than 10 percent of class sessions, the faculty member will issue a written warning of de-enrollment. If the absences exceed 20 percent, the student may be de-enrolled without notice until the university withdrawal date or, after that date, receive an “F” grade.

Personally, **tardiness may negatively affect your grade**. If you are going to be more than two-three minutes late, please text me (615-922-9572). This grace period may be changed to reflect the integrity of the student at the instructor’s discretion. Furthermore, if you are late three times, I will convert this to one absence at the end of the semester, when I am calculating your final grade. I will do this every three times you are late.

Excused absences must be submitted before the start of the class meeting via email and corroborated by a note from a medical, familial or academic professional.

Use of Technology

Cellphone use is not permitted in this class, unless otherwise instructed for use by the professor. Every second offense of confirmed cellphone use by the instructor will result in a two-point deduction from the total points of a student’s final grade.

The course syllabus quiz passcode is ABIDEwHim.

COM 3095 Course Schedule

*ATTENTION: This course schedule is subject to change. This schedule has been printed in Professor Drake Hills’ course syllabus 1.0 version on **Jan 9, 2026** . Please be advised.*

*Note: “Media Literacy In Action” or MLIA textbook notations below indicate the student must read the particular chapter **before** the appointed class time. “NOTES” indicate the student took notes on the respective chapter **ahead** of the appointed class time, ready to share.*

<u>Week 1</u> - Jan. 12, 14	Monday: Course Introduction For next class: Study syllabus	Wednesday: Syllabus Quiz, Read MLIA Chapter 1 (NOTES) Topic: Media Literacy	<i>Syllabus Quiz: 10 points</i>
<u>Week 2</u> - Jan. 19, 21	Monday: No Class Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day	Wednesday: Read MLIA Chapter 2-3 (NOTES) Topic: Media Importance & Information Access	<i>Author Presentation 1 Collaborative Blog Project - Install</i>
<u>Week 3</u> - Jan. 26, 28	Monday: ONLINE/Asynchronous - watch <i>3:10 to Yuma</i> (Daves, 1957) NOTES: 1 page to Canvas Writing: Reflection 1	Wednesday: ONLINE/Asynchronous (Mangold, 2007) Notes: 1 page submitted to Canvas	<i>Reflection Papers on films submitted to Canvas Tuesday and Thursday</i>
<u>Week 4</u> - Feb. 2, 4	Monday: Adaptation as Cultural Transmission of Ideology	Wednesday: Read MLIA Chapter 4 (NOTES) Topic: News Sources	<i>Author Presentation 2</i>

<p><u>Week 5</u> - Feb. 9, 11</p>	<p>Monday: MLIA Chapter 5 (NOTES) Writing: Reflection 2</p> <p>Topic: Propaganda</p>	<p>Wednesday: MLIA Chapter 6 Notes: MLIA Chapter 6</p> <p>Topic: Relationships with Humans in the Media</p>	<p><i>Author Presentation 3 due MONDAY. Author Presentation 4 due WEDNESDAY</i></p> <p><i>Class Discussion Paper 1 -Wednesday</i></p>
<p><u>Week 6</u> - Feb. 16, 18</p>	<p>Monday: MLIA Chapter 7 (NOTES)</p> <p>Topic: Preferences and Tastes</p>	<p>Wednesday: MLIA Chapter 8 (NOTES)</p> <p>Topic: Aesthetics and the “Good”</p>	<p><i>Author Presentation 5 due MONDAY.</i></p> <p>Collaborative Blog Project: Check-in 1 - WED</p> <p>Class Discussion Paper 2 - WED</p>
<p><u>Week 7</u> - Feb. 23, 25</p>	<p>Monday: Film Festival</p>	<p>Wednesday: MLIA Chapter 9 (NOTES)</p> <p>Topic: Who do YOU trust?</p>	<p><i>Author Presentation 7 - Wednesday</i></p>
<p><u>Week 8</u> - March 2, 4</p>	<p>Monday: MLIA Chapter 10 (NOTES)</p> <p>Topic: Media Profitability</p>	<p>Wednesday: MLIA Chapter 11 (NOTES)</p> <p>Topic: Social Media</p>	<p><i>Author Presentation 8 - Monday 200 words</i></p> <p><i>Author Presentation 9 - Wednesday 200 words</i></p> <p><i>Class Discussion 3 - Monday</i></p> <p><i>Qualitative Reasoning due Thursday, 11:59 p.m.</i></p>
<p><u>SPRING BREAK</u> March 9, 11</p>	<p>SPRING BREAK</p>	<p>SPRING BREAK</p>	<p><i>SPRING BREAK</i></p>
<p><u>Week 9</u> - March 16, 18</p>	<p>Monday: MLIA Chapter 12 (NOTES)</p> <p>Topic: Stereotypes</p>	<p>Wednesday: MLIA Chapter 13 (NOTES)</p> <p>Topic: Media Addiction</p>	<p>Collaborative Blog Project: Check-in 2</p> <p><i>Author Presentation 10 Monday, 11 Wednesday</i></p>

			<p><i>Class Discussion 4, Monday</i></p> <p><i>Reflection Paper 4, Monday</i></p>
<p>Week 10 - March 23, 25</p>	<p>Monday: MLIA Chapter 14 Topic: Media Education</p>	<p>Wednesday: PC Chapter 1 (Pg. 1-28) - NOTES Topic: Pop Culture Defined</p>	<p><i>Class Discussion Paper 5, Monday</i></p> <p><i>Author Presentation 12, Monday</i></p>
<p>Week 11 - March 30, April 1</p>	<p>Monday: PC Chapter 4 (91-122) - NOTES Topic: The Business of Culture</p>	<p>Wednesday: PC Chapter 5 pt. 1 (123-140) - NOTES 6Topic: Consumer Culture</p>	<p><i>Reflection Paper 5, Monday</i></p> <p><i>Class Discussion Paper 6</i></p>
<p>Week 12 - April 6, 8</p>	<p>Monday: NO CLASS - EASTER</p>	<p>Wednesday: PC Chapter 7 (183-212) - NOTES Topic: Identity, Community, Our Postcolonial World</p>	<p><i>Collaborative Blog Project - Check in 3, Wednesday</i></p>
<p>Week 13 - April 13, 15</p>	<p>Monday: <i>12 Angry Men</i> (Lumet, 1957)</p>	<p>Wednesday: TBD</p>	<p><i>Reflection Paper 6</i></p>
<p>Week 14 - April 20, 22</p>	<p>Monday: PC Chapter 6 (151-182) - NOTES Topic: Identity</p>	<p>Wednesday: PC Chapter 8 (213-242) - NOTES Topic: Counter and Subcultures</p>	<p><i>Class Discussion 7, 8 – Monday & Wednesday</i></p>
<p>Week 15 - April 27, 29</p>	<p>Monday: PC Chapter 9 (243-280) Topic: Globalization</p>	<p>Wednesday: Course Reflection</p>	<p><i>Reflection 7 - Monday</i> <i>Reflection 8 - Wednesday</i></p>

Final Exam Presentation is May 8, 2026 - 1:30 - 4 p.m.