

# COM195 MEDIA LITERACY COURSE SYLLABUS

Dr. Alan Hueth, Instructor

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## INTRODUCTION

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This course involves developing an intellectual, faith-informed approach to interpreting media messages. The term “media” includes books, newspapers, magazines, film, radio, television, popular music, and the internet. Course content will be grounded in the study of how messages are constructed, how media industries function, and how communication theory and research explain media effects on individuals and society. The goal: to provide a foundation for understanding the artistic and social impacts of media from a Christian perspective and, hopefully, to help you to make informed aesthetic and ethical choices as a media consumer and producer.

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## COURSE FORMAT AND ACTIVITIES

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This course will have a diverse format. It will consist of assigned readings and “Big Idea” chapter reading reports and in-class discussions of textbook content. We’ll also be screening a variety of media programs, and doing some exercises and having some discussion in the practice of media literacy analysis—all in preparation for the creation of a media literacy critique paper/project. The foundation for learning in this course will be your participation in the session-by-session readings and participation in our class discussions. To help you accomplish this, you will be expected to submit typed “Big Idea” chapter reading reports to class at the session that each chapter is being covered, and you must submit the reports at the close of that class session.

Although there will be mini-lectures, the course will primarily be a discussion-based format, requiring all to come to class with a basic understanding of media literacy concepts introduced in the readings, and a readiness to discuss these concepts. We will also be analyzing numerous examples of print and electronic media in our class sessions—all to prepare you for your own media literacy analysis paper/project.

In summary, this course will include the following activities:

- Lectures and discussions of readings
- “Big Idea” reading reports
- Media literacy exercises
- Screenings and discussion of the content, meaning, and effect of an award-winning feature film, various documentaries, a television sit-com, TV commercials, music videos, print advertising, and other media
- A media literacy analysis and critique project/paper and presentation
- Three (3) tests on textbook material and a final exam

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## TEXTBOOKS

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**REQUIRED PURCHASES:** Media Literacy, 5th edition, by W. James Potter, Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage Publisher; and Eyes Wide Open: Looking for God in Popular Culture (Rev & Expanded edition), by William D. Romanowski, Grand Rapids, MI, Brazos Press. Also, some supplemental readings provided by the instructor.

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## STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES (SLO's)

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As a result of this course, the student will display...

- A critical understanding of mass media economics and systems
- A critical understanding of how media exercise social and psychological influences on individuals and groups in American culture and society (and other cultures and societies);
- Basic literacy skills in evaluating media content from cognitive/psychological, emotional, aesthetic, and moral-ethical-spiritual perspectives;
- An ability to apply a Christian worldview and faith perspective to media criticism and production.

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## COURSE SCHEDULE

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### **WEEK 1**

THURSDAY, 1/12/12 READING: none assigned  
Intro to course, syllabus, and introductions

### **WEEK 2**

TUESDAY, 1/17/12 READING: Potter, Chapters 1 & 2  
Discussion: Why Increase Media Literacy?  
Discussion: Media Literacy Approach

THURSDAY, 1/19/12 READING: Potter, Chapters 3 & 4  
Discussion: Individual and Industry Perspectives

### **WEEK 3**

TUESDAY, 1/24/12 READING: Potter, Chapters 9 & 11  
Discussion: Mass Media Content and Reality and Entertainment Content

THURSDAY, 1/26/12 READING: Potter, Chapter 10  
Discussion: News

### **WEEK 4**

TUESDAY, 1/31/12 READING: Potter, Chapters 7 & 12  
Discussion: Economic Perspective  
Discussion: Advertising  
Preview of feature film Network--handout

THURSDAY, 2/2/12 READING: Review as needed  
Test 1

### **WEEK 5**

TUESDAY, 2/7/12 READING: Network review (handout)  
Screen feature film: Network (121 minutes)--part 1

THURSDAY, 2/9/12 READING: Network review (handout)  
Screen Network, part 2, and discuss film content (news & entertainment, economics of TV, mediated reality, prophetic nature of this film, etc.)

**WEEK 6**

TUESDAY, 2/14/12 READING: Eyes..., Intro & Chapter 1 (one report);

Eyes..., Chapters 2 & 3

Discussion: Introduction and State of the Art—Worldly Amusements No More

Discussion: The Smoke Goes Upward: Faith and Culture

Discussion: Studying Popular Art and Culture

THURSDAY, 2/16/12 READING: Eyes..., Chapters 4 & 5

Discussion: Close Encounters...E & Mapping Reality

**WEEK 7**

TUESDAY, 2/21/12 READING: Eyes..., Chapters 6 & 7

Discussion: Measuring Christian Distinction... and Pop Art as Art...

THURSDAY, 2/23/12 READING: Eyes..., Chapters 8 & 9

Discussion: Cultural Landscape... and "The American Melodramatic Way..."

**WEEK 8**

TUESDAY, 2/28/12 READING: Eyes..., Chapter 10 & 11; and Conclusion & Appendix (one report)

Discussion: The Message in the Bottle... and A History of Violence...

Discussion: Conclusion and Appendix

THURSDAY, 3/1/12 READING: none assigned

Discussion: exam Q & A and prep

Media Literacy Project (ideas, options, analytical approaches, etc.)

**WEEK 9—NO CLASSES (SPRING BREAK)****WEEK 10**

TUESDAY, 3/13/12 READING: Review for test

Test #2

THURSDAY, 3/15/12 READING: Potter, Chapters 5, 14, 15, Appendix B

Discussion: Children as Special Audience; Proactive Perspective on Media Effects, and Broadening Our Perspective on Media Effects

**WEEK 11**

TUESDAY, 3/20/12 READING: Potter, Ch. 19; review Appendix B (no report due)

Discussion: Media Violence & Immediate and Long-Term Effects on Individuals, etc.

THURSDAY, 3/22/12 READING: none assigned

The Media and Ethics: A Model for Ethical Decision-Making

Ethics case studies and a Christian ethic

**WEEK 12**

TUESDAY, 3/27/12 READING: Potter, Chapters 20, 21, 22

Discussion: Sports and Media, Personal Strategies for Self and Others to Increase Media Literacy  
Breaking into the World of TV and Film: A Report on the National Academy of TV Arts and Sciences Faculty Industry Seminar  
Preview of Dreamworlds 2

THURSDAY, 3/29/12 READING: review media FX ch's & ethics notes

Screening and Discussion: Dreamworlds 2

**WEEK 13**

TUESDAY, 4/3/12 READING: Potter, Chapters 17 & 18 –and review notes and handouts on Ethical Decision-Making Model introduced and discussed in class 3/22/12

Discussion: Christian ethics, privacy, and piracy

Ethics case studies

THURSDAY, 4/5/12—NO CLASS (HAPPY EASTER!)

**WEEK 14**

TUESDAY, 4/10/12 READING: Review Potter Box Model of Ethical Decision-Making Ethics Case Studies—in preparation for test #3 and term paper/project

THURSDAY, 4/12/12 READING: review media effects chapters & ethics notes

Screening and discussion: episode of Ellen show (1997)

See Discussion Board Posting Assignments

Q & A

SUNDAY, 4/15/12—SEE DISCUSSION BOARD POSTINGS DUE

**WEEK 15**

TUESDAY, 4/17/12—CLASS MEETS ON DISCUSSION BOARD

SEE DISCUSSION BOARD POSTINGS DUE

THURSDAY, 4/19/12 READING: review effects and ethics

Review and feedback of Test #3 postings

Q & A: media literacy projects and presentations

**WEEK 16**

TUESDAY, 4/24/12 READING: none assigned

MEDIA LITERACY PROJECTS DUE

Media Literacy Project Presentations

THURSDAY, 4/26/12 READING: none assigned

Media Literacy Project Presentations (continued)

**Final Exam: THURSDAY, MAY 3, 2012, 10:30-12:30**

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**EVALUATION: Points and Grading Scale**

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Assignment guidelines and evaluation criteria for your media literacy analysis and critique project will be provided later.

<b>Item</b>	<b>Point Value</b>
Media Literacy Analysis & Critique Project.....	250
Big Idea Reading Reports (35 reports @ 5 point each) .....	175
Test 1 .....	100
Test 2 .....	100
Test 3 .....	100
Final Exam .....	200
Attendance & Participation.....	75
Total points:.....	1000

**Grading Scale**

Your final grade will be based on the following point scale:

- 921-1000 = A
- 900-920 = A-
- 880-899 = B+
- 821-879 = B
- 800-820 = B-
- 780-799 = C+
- 721-779 = C
- 700-720 = C-
- 680-699 = D+
- 621-679 = D
- 600-619 = D-

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**COURSE POLICIES**

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**ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION POLICY**

I will take attendance through the “Big Idea” reports or class sign-in sheets throughout the semester. Make sure that if you do not turn in a report, that you submit a paper with your name on it and the date so that you are counted as present in class. On days when there’s not reading and big idea report due, we will have a roll sheet for you to sign, so make sure you sign in or you will be counted absent for that session.

From the Provost: Regular and punctual attendance at all classes in which a student is registered is considered essential to optimum academic achievement. Therefore, regular attendance and participation in each course are minimal requirements to be met. There are no allowed or excused absences except when absences are necessitated by certain university-sponsored activities and are approved in writing by the Provost.

Whenever the number of accumulated absences in a class, for any cause, exceeds ten percent of classes [3 sessions] (this is equivalent to one and one-half weeks in a 15-week semester course), the faculty member has the option of filing a written report to the Vice Provost for Academic Administration which may result in de-enrollment, pending any resolution of the excessive absences between the faculty member and the student. If more than 20 percent [6 sessions] (three weeks or longer in a semester-long course) is reported as missed, the faculty member may initiate the student's de-enrollment from the course without advance notice to the student. If the date of de-enrollment is past the last date to withdraw from a class, the student will be assigned a grade of "F" or "NC." There are no refunds for courses where a de-enrollment was processed.

Below are some guiding thoughts on what will be valued in your attendance and participation in this course, along with my evaluation philosophy and approach to issuing grades:

**Outstanding ("A" grade):**

This indicates exceptional work characterized by depth of thought, creativity, and exhibiting a high level of learning. I view outstanding participation as characterized by active, enthusiastic, inquisitive, and voluntary participation, which exhibits a clear sense of understanding and/or reflection/questions related to the readings and course material. An outstanding participant will be consistently prepared and sharing/seeking to share their responses to questions posed in class. Outstanding attendance is characterized by no more than one unexcused absence in a semester, and tardiness is non-existent.

**Above-average ("B" grade):**

Characterized by very good work, but exhibiting learning or participation of a slightly lesser degree in an area(s) described above.

**Average ("C" grade):**

Characterized by satisfactory completion of all assignments, & participation typified by prepared (but occasional) comments during the course--mostly via instructor prompting.

**Below average ("D" grade):**

Characterized by passing work that reflects lack of understanding of theory and/or failure to fulfill some assigned tasks. Participation: mostly silence during most of the course.

**Failing ("F" grade):**

You were not present in mind and/or body through much of the course.

**IN CLASS TECHNOLOGY-USE POLICY**

You're not allowed to use any communication technologies during class time. Any lecture/discussion notes must be taken with pen/pencil and paper. Sorry for this policy...it's due to steadily increasing in-class texting, student web-surfing, chatting, emailing, etc.—activities which do not contribute to in-class learning. I'm sure you understand.

This indicates exceptional work characterized by depth of thought, creativity, and exhibiting a high level of learning. I view outstanding participation as characterized by active, enthusiastic, inquisitive, and voluntary participation, which exhibits a clear sense of understanding and/or reflection/questions related to the readings and course material. An outstanding participant will be consistently prepared and sharing/seeking to share their responses to questions posed in class. Outstanding attendance is characterized by no more than one unexcused absence in a semester, and tardiness is non-existent.

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## UNIVERSITY POLICIES

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### **Campus Computer/Network Usage**

*Careful and ethical use of computing resources is the responsibility of every user. Students will be held to a standard of accountability for how they use computers at PLNU.*

Link to Computer Use Policy:

<http://www.ptloma.edu/studentdevelopment/StudentHandbook/index.htm>

### **Academic Accommodations**

*All students are expected to meet the standards for this course as set by the instructor. However, students with learning disabilities who may need accommodations should discuss options with the Academic Support Center during the first two weeks of class. The ASC will contact professors with suggested classroom needs and accommodations. Approved documentation must be on file in the ASC prior to the start of the semester.*

Link to Academic Support Center:

<http://www.ptloma.edu/studentdevelopment/StudentHandbook/index.htm>

### **Cheating and Dishonesty**

*Students will be honorable in all of their academic work. Dishonesty in assignments, examinations, or any other academic work is an affront to fellow students and faculty and will not be tolerated. In addition, dishonesty as a student is not acceptable. ...Student Handbook*

Link to Cheating and Dishonesty Policy:

<http://www.ptloma.edu/studentdevelopment/StudentHandbook/index.htm>