



Department of Communication Studies
COM 3095: Media Literacy, 3 units
Spring 2025
Section 1, TR 11-12:15, RLC 108
Final Exam: 5/6 of Finals Week, 10:30am

Dr. James Wicks
jwicks@pointloma.edu
Office: Cabrillo 203
Office Hours: See Canvas

Catalog Description

A critical approach to interpreting media messages grounded in the study of how messages are constructed, how media industries function, and how communication theory, research, and media ethics explain media impact on society. Emphasis is placed on making informed choices as a media consumer and considering the impact of media from a Christian perspective.

Required Texts

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 TBD + various handouts distributed by the professor

Required films (see Course Schedule) -- pay for streaming fees as required

Media Communication Program Learning Outcomes

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

As a result of this course, students will display an understanding of, and/or be 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 content 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:

1. 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 audience(s), when the message was created, where did it appear, how much money it cost to make and how much money it made, its popularity and awards, and other factors.
2. Emotional dimension: how and why messages engage us emotionally and intellectually and the effects of this emotional engagement on our values, beliefs, and behaviors/actions.
3. Aesthetic dimension: the artistic aspects of mass media messages, and how story in words and/or imagery and sound elicit emotional reactions and can affect us in positive and negative ways.
4. 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).

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 becomes an expression of faith. Being of Wesleyan heritage, we aspire to be a learning community where grace is foundational, truth is pursued, and holiness is a way of life.

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 online (distance education) outside of California.

Course Policies and Requirements

Attendance: *Attendance is required. Missing class for other than medical emergencies or excused absences will affect your grade, as per the University Catalog.* **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 drop date or, after that date, receive an "F" grade.

Class Preparation: All assignments must be completed prior to the assigned due date and time. Some assignments will be discussed in class while others will be completed individually but not discussed.

Class Participation: *Regular* contributions to class discussion are expected, including but not restricted to discussions of weekly readings, related experiential exercises, and open dialogue. Despite the size of the class, I want everyone to feel compelled to share their thoughts on course assignments. Enthusiastic

and responsible participation in assigned group projects (in-class and outside of class) is expected of all.

E-Mail: Please use e-mail (not Canvas email) for simple, logistical questions or clarifications. Write: "COM3095" in the subject line. Allow 24 hours/ 1 business day for a reply.

Canvas Messages: Please use Canvas messages (not Canvas email) for all information regarding assignments submitted to Canvas.

Smart phones and laptops: may be used for classroom related activities only.

Public Discourse: Much of the work we will do in this class is cooperative, by nature of the class discussions and general feedback given to written work and/projects; thus you should think of all your writing and speaking for and in class as public, not private, discourse. By continuing in this class, you acknowledge that your work will be viewed by others in the class.

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. Faculty should follow and students may appeal using the procedure in the university Catalog. See Academic Policies for definitions of kinds of academic dishonesty and for further policy information. 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.) in this course. Any work that utilizes AI-based tools must be clearly identified as such, including the specific tool(s) used. Please use the following sources to guide your citations when using AI.

[Chicago Manual of Style: Citing Content Developed or Generated by AI](#)

Spiritual Care: Please be aware PLNU strives to be a place where you grow as whole persons. To this end, we provide resources for our students to encounter God and grow in their Christian faith. If you have questions, a desire to meet with the chaplain or have prayer requests you can contact your professor or the [Office of Spiritual Life and Formation](#).

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 619-849-2486). 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. The EAC makes accommodations available to professors at the student's request. 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 special 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 a bias incident regarding language, you can find more information on reporting and resources at www.pointloma.edu/bias.

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

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.

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 3000 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 rated “R” content. Students may select an alternative film if they so choose. 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 media communication, 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 3000, we will cover a variety of topics, some of which you may find triggering. These topics include optional rated “R” content. Students may select an alternative film if they so choose. 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 media communication, and I will support you throughout your learning in this course.

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.

Grading Scale

90-100	A	74-77	C
88-89	B+	70-73	C-
84-87	B	60-69	D
80-83	B-	0-59	F
78-79	C+		

Grading

- 20% Reading and Film Notes
- 10% Reflection Papers
- 5% Author Presentations
- 10% Class Discussion Paper
- 15% Global News Project
- 30% Class participation: arrive to class on time; use smart phones and laptops for classroom use (or receive a “0” for the week); complete unannounced assignments; work with peers in small groups; ask and respond to questions in class; pay attention to presentations, lectures, and films; take notes; attend the entire class.
- 10% Final Exam Written Project

Assignment Descriptions

All assignments are due on Canvas before class begins: 11:00am T/R. Assignments require attendance for the entire class period on the day they are due in order to be eligible to receive a score.

Late Assignment Policy: Be sure to hand in your assignment on time, or make a prior arrangement to submit the assignment before the assigned due date. Otherwise, a late submission will not be accepted. Incompletes will only be assigned in extremely unusual circumstances.

Paper Format: Please submit in .doc, .docx, or .pdf format in Chicago Style, typed and double-spaced. Submit assignments in black ink on 8.5"x11" white paper. Use a non-decorative 12-pt. font, such as Times New Roman. Use the Chicago Manual of Style for style, grammar, format, and citation issues.

- <https://writingcenter.uagc.edu/chicago-manual-style>
- https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/chicago_manual_17th_edition/cmospa_tting_and_style_guide/chicago_manual_of_style_17th_edition.html

Reading Notes

Objective: This assignment requires that students take notes while reading our course texts--our class requires being active readers rather than passive readers. You may write your notes in the form of bullet points or prose. Cutting and pasting the text or outside sources into the document does not count towards the word count requirement.

Form: Length: 1/2 page (minimum 200 words, more if you would like), single-spaced. See template on Canvas (within the "Modules" tab).

1) open attached template; 2) fill out the document by writing ½ page of your notes on the day's reading assignment; 3) submit the document to Canvas.

Grading: 5: full set of notes including specific examples and 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, lacks clear detail &/or entire reading is not accounted for

Class Discussion Paper

Objective: Write a reader-response to the assigned class reading.

Form: 1.5- 2 pages (500-675 words including heading). Summarize important details in the assigned text; offer your critical assessment of key themes, and contribute questions that facilitate class discussion. Make photocopies so each class participant has a copy. Submit one copy to your professor. Present your class discussion paper in class and be prepared to guide the subsequent class discussion.

Reflection Papers

Objective: Write a one-page reflection on a topic of interest to you based on the reading or lecture materials presented in the previous two weeks of the course.

Form: 1 page (325-375 words including heading). Word count strictly enforced. No outside sources.

Author Presentation

Objective: Type an author biography in a bullet-point/ brochure-type format.

Form: Length: 1 page. Make photocopies so each class participant has a copy. Read your author presentation in class (10-15 minutes). Creativity is encouraged.

Global News Project

Objective and Form see handout in Canvas.

Final Exam

Objective: Use relevant examples from the lectures, in-class examples, readings, and films to respond to questions that take into account the content of the course.

Form: Written, open-note/book examination.

Evaluation of Assignments

The following questions will be considered when assignments are evaluated and graded. All questions may not be relevant to each assignment.

- Does the assignment fulfill the assignment objective?
- Does the assignment make an academic argument?
- If a claim is required, is it clear and plausible? Is it stated and contextualized effectively?
- Is there sufficient and relevant evidence to ground the claim?
- Does the assignment effectively select and use material from the course materials to support and validate the analysis? Does it summarize, paraphrase, and quote effectively?
- Does the assignment use all relevant details from course texts both to support the claim and to provide a context for the case being made? Does it ignore material that should be taken into account?
- Does the assignment demonstrate an awareness of how the argument being proposed fits into the larger set of claims made about the topic in our course readings?
- Does the assignment work through the complexities of the material (as opposed to oversimplifying or overgeneralizing)?
- Is the assignment well organized?
- Does it cite material from the sources using Chicago Style?
- Are there sentence structure problems or grammatical errors that interfere with the meaning?

Evaluation Standards

- An “A” assignment demonstrates excellent work. It has something to say and says it well. It develops its point of view clearly and consistently, demonstrating a complex understanding of the assignment, and does so using a variety of perspectives. It often rises above other assignments with particular instances of creative or analytical sophistication. There may be only minor and/or occasional structural errors.
- A “B” assignment demonstrates good work. It establishes a clear point of view and pursues it consistently, demonstrating a good understanding of the assignment. There may be some mechanical difficulties, but not so many as to impair the clear development of the main idea. While a “B”

assignment is in many ways successful, it lacks the originality and/or sophistication of an “A” assignment.

- A “C” assignment demonstrates adequate work. It establishes an adequate grasp of the assignment and contains a point of view. In addition, the assignment may rely on unsupported generalizations or insufficiently developed ideas. It may also contain structural errors.
- Work that earns a grade of “D” or “F” is often characterized by the following problems: it fails to demonstrate an adequate understanding of the assignment; it fails to articulate an adequate point of view; and/or it contains significant structural problems.

COM 3095 Course Schedule
(Subject to Change)

Week 1	Tuesday Course Introduction	Thursday Read: Syllabus and <i>MLIA</i> Chapter 1 Notes: <i>MLIA</i> Chapter 1 Topic: Media Literacy
Week 2	Tuesday Read: <i>MLIA</i> Chapter 2 Notes: <i>MLIA</i> Chapter 2 Topic: Media Importance	Thursday Read: <i>MLIA</i> Chapter 3 Notes: <i>MLIA</i> Chapter 3 // Author Pres. 1 Topic: Information Access
Week 3	Tuesday: online/asynchronous Watch: <i>3:10 to Yuma</i> (Daves, 1957) Notes: 1 page submitted to Canvas Writing: Reflection 1	Thursday: online/asynchronous Watch: <i>3:10 to Yuma</i> (Mangold, 2007) Notes: 1 page submitted to Canvas
Week 4	Tuesday Topic: Adaptation as Cultural Transmission of Ideology	Thursday Read: <i>MLIA</i> Chapter 4 Notes: <i>MLIA</i> Chapter 4 // Author Pres. 2 Topic: News Sources
Week 5	Tuesday Read: <i>MLIA</i> Chapter 5 Notes: <i>MLIA</i> Chapter 5 // Author Pres. 3 Writing: Reflection 2 Topic: Propaganda	Thursday Read: <i>MLIA</i> Chapter 6 Notes: <i>MLIA</i> Chapter 6 // Author Pres. 4 Topic: Popular Narratives Class Discussion Paper: 1
Week 6	Tuesday Read: <i>MLIA</i> Chapter 7 Notes: <i>MLIA</i> Chapter 7 // Author Pres. 5 Topic: Preferences and Tastes	Thursday Read: <i>MLIA</i> Chapter 8 Notes: <i>MLIA</i> Chapter 8 // Author Pres. 6 Class Discussion Paper: 2 Topic: Aesthetics and the “Good” Global News Project: Check-in 1

Week 7	Tuesday	Thursday
	Read: <i>MLIA</i> Chapter 9 Notes: <i>MLIA</i> Chapter 9 // Author Pres. 7 Writing: Reflection 3 Topic: Who do you trust?	Read: <i>MLIA</i> Chapter 10 Notes: <i>MLIA</i> Chapter 10 // Author Pres. 8 Class Discussion Paper: 3 Topic: Media Profitability

Week 8	Tuesday	Thursday
	Read: <i>MLIA</i> Chapter 11 Notes: <i>MLIA</i> Chapter 11 // Author Pres. 9 Topic: Social Media	Read: <i>MLIA</i> Chapter 12 Notes: <i>MLIA</i> Chapter 12 // Author Pres. 10 Class Discussion Paper: 4 Topic: Stereotypes

Spring Break

Week 9	Tuesday	Thursday
	Read: <i>MLIA</i> Chapter 13 Notes: <i>MLIA</i> Chapter 13// Author Pres.11 Writing: Reflection 4 Topic: Media Addiction	Read: <i>MLIA</i> Chapter 14 Notes: <i>MLIA</i> Chapter 14 // Author Pres. 12 Class Discussion Paper: 5 Topic: Media Education Global News Project: Check-in 2

Week 10	Tuesday	Thursday
	Read: <i>PC</i> Chapter 1 (1-28) Notes: <i>PC</i> Chapter 1 Topic: Pop Culture Defined	Read: <i>PC</i> Chapter 2 (29-56) Notes: <i>PC</i> Chapter 2 Topic: History of Pop Culture

Week 11	Tuesday	Thursday
	Read: <i>PC</i> Chapter 4 (91-122) Notes: <i>PC</i> Chapter 4 Writing: Reflection 5 Topic: The Business of Culture	Read: <i>PC</i> Chapter 5 (123-140) Notes: <i>PC</i> Chapter 5, pt.1 Class Discussion Paper: 6 Topic: Consumer Culture

Week 12	Tuesday	Thursday
	Read: <i>PC</i> Chapter 5 (140-150) Notes: <i>PC</i> Chapter 5; pt. 2 Topic: Consumer Culture	Read: <i>PC</i> Chapter 7 (183-212) Notes: <i>PC</i> Chapter 7 Topic: Identity, Community, & Our Postcolonial World Global News Project: Check-in 3

Week 13	Tuesday	Thursday
	Screening: <i>La noire de...</i> (Sembène, 1966) Writing: Reflection 6	Easter Recess: No classes

Week 14	Tuesday	Tuesday
	Read: <i>PC</i> Chapter 6 (151-182) Notes: <i>PC</i> Chapter 6 Class Discussion Paper: 7 Topic: Identity	Read: <i>PC</i> Chapter 8 (213-242) Notes: <i>PC</i> Chapter 8 Class Discussion Paper: 8 Topic: Counter and Sub-Cultures

Week	Tuesday	Thursday
15	Read: PC Chapter 9 (243-280) Notes: PC Chapter 9 Writing: Reflection 7 Topic: Globalization	Writing: Reflection 8 Topic: Course Reflection Global News Project: Check-in 4

Final Exam
 Tuesday 5/6 of Finals Week, 10:30am