

RACE, GENDER AND THE MEDIA

COM 346 SECTION 1 FALL, 2007

Wednesdays & Fridays, 12:45 – 2:05 p.m., Room 14, Newhouse I

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Diversity is more than a buzzword or the basis for a *Real World* episode. Diversity, or the increasing contact between people of different backgrounds, life experiences, and identities, is a feature of not only our present day, but also our future. Demographers tell us that as the population of the United States grows in the coming decades, this country will become much more diverse. Non-Latino Whites, who currently comprise nearly 66% of the population, will see that percentage fall, while the proportion of Hispanics will increase dramatically. As the baby boom generation ages, the percentage of elderly Americans will increase also. The fact is this country will look very different in 50 years.

This should be of special interest to Newhouse students, because regardless of the area of public communications you settle into, you will have to work with, communicate with, and serve people from a variety of backgrounds. Since effective communication depends on knowing and understanding your audience, this course is designed to expose students to a variety of issues concerning the media and people of various “categories of difference.” We will discuss such topics as how the media portray people of various groups, the social psychology of difference and its implications for media production and reception, the impact of media images, and the relationships between media images, social power and economics.

The course is divided into two sections. The first section, which consists of roughly the first eight weeks, is devoted to discussing some “theoretical tools” that help us get a handle on these issues. These tools include theories and research findings from such diverse areas as social psychology, sociology and critical theory. The purpose of this section of the course is to give students the theoretical background necessary to analyze the subsequent issues in the course in a thoughtful and critical way. The second section of the course examines specific issues concerning diversity and media in more detail. Our discussions will examine a variety of issues in more depth, and culminate with group presentations.

Goals of the course

This course has two primary goals. One is to provide perspective, in that I hope students will leave the course with a better appreciation for how people with different backgrounds, life experiences, and cultural competencies can have different *and valid* perspectives on things. The second goal stems from the first: I hope that with this awareness for the validity of differing perspectives comes a willingness to be a more mindful media consumer and a more ethical and inclusive media producer.

Required readings

- Dines, Gail. & Humez, Jean M. (2003). *Gender, Race and Class in Media (Second Edition)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Heider, Don. (2004). *White News*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Lind, Rebecca Ann (Ed.) (2004). *Race/Gender/Media. Considering Diversity Across Audiences, Content and Producers*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

There will also be other readings handed out in class.

You will get the most out of our class discussions if you come to class having already read the assigned readings for that week. Thus, **read the readings for the week before you come to class on Wednesday**. This will allow you to contribute intelligently to our class discussions (see below), which will help your grade in the class as well as your understanding of the material.

Course website: blackboard.syr.edu

Check this frequently, as I will be putting material up frequently, and we will use the discussion board feature. There are also external links to many interesting sites that might be helpful for your project in this class. You will need your Syracuse user ID and password to access the site.

Participation

This class will feature a combination of lecture and discussion, but the emphasis will clearly be on discussion. **All students should expect to actively participate in class**. Active participation means that students should: come to class having read the assigned readings for that day; make regular, thoughtful contributions to class discussions; bring their journals to class with them and be prepared to discuss them (more on that below); be courteous to others when they speak, and; show up for class on time. I learn a lot from students every semester through our class discussions, but I can only learn if you are willing to speak. Participation will be an important component of your course grade – **20%** – and since you can't participate if you aren't here, attendance for every class period is essential. Missing more than three classes will drastically hurt your participation grade (exceptions will be made for documented illness or family emergency). *The success of this class depends on everyone feeling like they can contribute, so be willing to listen to others as well as be willing to speak up.*

Online Discussion Participation

Students are required to participate in online discussions about course topics through the blackboard website for this class. The instructor will post questions raised in our class discussions and our readings on the online discussion board (click on the “Discussion Board” button on the blackboard website) at various times throughout the semester, usually on a [Friday](#). You will have until the following [Friday](#) (a week) to post a response to either the instructor’s comments or those of your fellow classmates. This isn’t a test, so there aren’t right answers; instead, this is an opportunity to explore some issues free from the time constraints of the class. Points for these online discussions will vary, but the total by the end of the semester will be 100 points. Students who post comments that show thoughtful engagement with the issues will receive up to the maximum for that assignment, while students who merely log on and say something insightful like “yeah, me too!” will only earn half the possible points. Participation in these online discussions is worth **10%** of your total course grade.

Journal

You will keep a journal throughout the semester, providing one journal entry every two weeks for a total of six. Plan on writing at least two full typed pages (double-spaced) per entry, but feel free to write more (try to keep it under ten pages, though – I have to read a lot of these!) Journal entries should focus on topics relevant to class discussions and the week’s readings.

Don’t summarize the readings - instead, analyze them by looking for connections, contradictions or confrontations between them. Also, feel free to discuss how the readings illuminate experiences *in your own life* or practices in relevant media. The purpose of the journal is to get you to process the readings at a deeper level and integrate this knowledge with your own experiences, so try to write journal entries that reflect this goal. They also help you prepare to actively participate in class by forcing you to organize your thoughts on these issues.

Journals will be collected roughly every two weeks (marked on the course timeline). Though it may seem odd to “grade” your reactions, I will grade them based on how well they achieve the goal described above (and are at least 2 full pages). Like most things that you write for Newhouse, keep in mind that the quality of your writing figures into the grades as well as the content of your entries. Please keep your journal entries together in a folder or a binder; I may ask you to turn in all your entries sometime when we collect the journal. You must be present to turn in your journal; no journals will be accepted outside of class except in cases of documented illnesses or family emergencies. **NO EMAIL** – I lose track of emailed journals too easily, so please print out a hard copy and turn it in on time. The sum of your journal grades will account for **20%** of your course grade.

Exams

There are two exams for this course, both of which are essay exams. The midterm exam ([Wednesday, Oct. 24](#)) will cover the “theoretical tools” portion of the class and ask about the readings and class discussion up to that time. I will hand out potential exam questions about one week before the exam; the actual questions will be selected randomly from them. The final exam, scheduled for [December 10 at 2:45 p.m.](#), will also ask you to integrate the readings into coherent essays. Each exam will be worth **10%** of the final course grade.

The Final Project

Instead of individual research papers, I would like you to put together a final project for this class that both addresses the types of issues we cover and takes advantage of the skills and knowledge you have gained here at Newhouse and Syracuse University thus far. Students will be assigned to groups of four or so based on major early in the semester for the final project, the presentations of which will be given in class near the end of the semester. The final project itself will be a document of some kind to be turned in to the instructor on [December 7](#). The presentation will be worth **10%** of your final grade, and the project itself will be worth **20%**.

Obviously, in a class like this, there are a lot of issues that we could talk about, but don't have time to explore. The goal of this group assignment is to allow you to apply your creative and intellectual talents from your major to some of these issues so that we all might learn a bit more about diversity and the media. Such an assignment has the value of allowing you to really understand a topic by investigating and presenting it in some depth, and gives your classmates an additional chance to learn from each other as well as from the instructor. This assignment also gives you the chance to see how you might address these issues in your future career, and it allows you to add something to your professional portfolio.

It is up to the group as to how to divide the labor required for this assignment.

A major-specific project: I try to put together groups of students who share a major or whose majors/minors are related. The purpose of this is to have a group of people who are already familiar with the requirements of the format, styles of reporting, and types of information that various communications industries look for in the work that people do. If these industries are to become more inclusive in how they produce and deliver messages, then the people going into these industries need to be able to see not only how diversity issues apply to the media they consume, but how to incorporate these perspectives into they work they do as well.

Therefore, I would like the groups to put together final projects that cover some issue relevant to this class in a format that is appropriate to your major:

Advertising: Imagine that you have a client that wishes to fund a public service campaign about some issue involving media & diversity. Design a campaign that incorporates some issue or aspect of diversity in a way that demonstrates some of the concerns raised in this class about such messages. The deliverable for this is a campaign booklet, including all the elements necessary for a full understanding of the campaign, its creatives, media plan and an appropriate research brief. The research brief should explain how relevant communications research justifies the campaign strategy.

Public Relations: Research an organization that currently has or has had some significant image problems in an area of diversity and come up with a communications campaign to help repair the damage. (Note: there are many real-world organizations in this area to chose from.) If your PR firm was hired by this organization, what kind of a campaign would you propose to help this client demonstrate that it is serious about diversity? Which specific aspect of diversity you wish to focus on is up to you, but your campaign

should include the goals, strategies and tactics you would employ and a clear idea of the overall feel for the campaign. It should also include background research on the topic that helps us understand how your campaign is a step in the right direction for this organization. The deliverable for this project will be a complete press kit outlining the new campaign (complete with a backgrounder on what the problem was).

Broadcast Journalism: Put together a *series* of stories about some topic that is relevant for this course. These stories should not be a scatter-shot approach to media and diversity, but instead should be a multi-part series that develops some central theme and explores it in some depth. You have tremendous latitude in what you do and how you do it. How you choose to do this is up to you, but I hope that what you produce will be something that you would feel comfortable submitting to a local station, Citrus TV or include as a tape that you send out to potential employers. The deliverable for this is a tape or DVD of your series.

Print/web/VIC: Put together either a *series* of shorter stories or one significant single article, with photos and/or graphics, that would be appropriate for a news magazine or a magazine that features current events-oriented pieces, such as The New York Times Magazine. You also have the option of presenting your piece as an article for a serious webzine, with appropriate links, photos and graphics. The deliverable will be the complete article(s).

Television/radio/film: You have tremendous latitude in the type of project you do, but it should be akin to the creative work you do in TRF classes. You could write a short story script, a radio play, or shoot a short documentary. You can even use your talents to create a short project for the web. Be sure to consult with the instructor on any ideas you have for your project early in the semester. The goal, of course, is to use your story-telling talents to help an audience come away with a more inclusive perspective on some topic pertinent for this course. The deliverable is the finished project in the appropriate medium.

It is important to remember that the purpose of these projects is to focus on and apply an under-discussed issue concerning media and diversity in the format appropriate to your major. There are lots of potential topics out there for you to choose from: Underrepresentation of Africa; The controversy over Native-American-themed mascots; The relative invisibility of transgendered people in media; racism or misogyny in popular music; The construction of gender in martial arts films; Christianity and Islam in coverage of the war on terror; Asian stereotypes in news coverage of China; Racism and coverage of Hurricane Katrina's aftermath – the list is a long one. The Lind book and your D&H text are good sources for coming up with ideas, as they both feature chapters or sections that we didn't discuss in class.

Do research: The research required of you, of course, depends a lot on the specifics of your project. Your project should rely on more than just your own observations and intuition; it is expected that you will **use extensive outside sources** to bolster your analysis and conclusions about the topic you chose. Think about how the arguments of various researchers and authors might apply. The ComAbstracts database and the Communication and Mass Media Index (available through the library) will be very helpful for tracking down academic research on communications, while the Lexis/Nexis and Proquest databases will help you find material from more popular sources. I would like you to use some of the theoretical tools from this class to

really analyze these topics and the cultural messages that inform them. I hope to be able to see the influence of these perspectives in the final project you submit.

Format: The format for each final project is the one that is appropriate for that type of deliverable.

Due date: The deliverables for the final projects are due to the instructor on [Friday, Dec 7](#), but note that you will be presenting your final projects to the class one week before (see below).

A short (one to two page) proposal is due to the instructor on [Wednesday, Sep. 26](#).

How the project will be graded: The final projects will be graded based on the overall quality of the final deliverable as well as how well that product reflects the goals, issues and concerns raised in this class. Although I will have the final say on the grade earned on a final project, I will consult with appropriate faculty members about the quality of the press kits, creative briefs, stories and articles submitted to this class. **Your final project should reflect the effort required of something that accounts for 30% of a final grade in a junior/senior-level class at Newhouse.** The deliverable itself is worth 20% of your final grade, and the presentation you make to the class is worth an additional 10%. Each individual will receive the grade the group is assigned, although anonymous feedback of group members could influence the grade of an individual. Remember, I want this to be great enough that you would feel comfortable submitting this to potential employers.

Final Project Presentations

Presentations will be conducted in class on [Wednesday, Nov. 28](#) and [Friday, Nov. 30](#).

The order of the presentations will be determined by random chance.

Format: Presentations are strictly limited to 15 minutes in length, although there is some flexibility given the different formats of these final projects. The instructor will time each presentation and give groups visual cues as to how much time they have left. This time limit is necessary to make sure that all groups presenting on a given day have sufficient time to do so. The presentation should be appropriate to your project's format. **Don't let your creativity or your performance overshadow the fact that you still have to convey the appropriate information to your audience.**

Following the presentation, we shall have about 10 minutes for class discussion of the topic. The group should be prepared to handle questions, but this period is less about "defending" your position and more about all of us discussing the interesting issues and facts brought up by the presentation.

Grading: Groups will be evaluated based on the clarity and accuracy of their presentation, whether they have met the content requirements, and presentation quality (including few "ums," "likes" and "uhs"). Creativity is a bonus - a clever, creative presentation can help your grade, but one in which the creative format takes away from the informative element of the presentation will likely hurt your grade. Each individual in the group will receive the grade the group is assigned. The presentation is worth 10% of the final course grade.

In order to promote healthy competition, and to encourage students to pay attention to their classmates' presentations, I will be asking those in the audience to score each of the presentations in the areas of creativity, professionalism, production skill, reflects course content, and other areas (you don't score your own, obviously). Such scores will be taken into consideration when assigning grades.

Course grades

Final grades for the course will be computed based on the following formula:

	Participation	20%	200 pts
	Online participation	10%	100
	Journal	20%	200
<i>Oct 24</i>	Midterm Exam	10%	100
<i>Nov 28 or Nov 30</i>	Final project presentation	10%	100
<i>Dec 7</i>	Final project	20%	200
<i>Dec 10</i>	Final Exam	10%	100
	TOTAL		<hr/> 1000 pts

Academic Honesty:

Please be honest in this class. Any work you submit is expected to be your own unless otherwise cited. **Any example of plagiarism will be taken seriously, and will result in an F for the assignment and possibly the course.** I have to inform the Dean as well.

According to our University's new Office of Academic Integrity, "At Syracuse University, academic integrity is expected of every community member in all endeavors. Academic integrity includes a commitment to the values of honesty, trustworthiness, fairness, and respect. These values are essential to the overall success of an academic society. In addition, each member of the University community has a right to expect adherence to academic integrity from all other community members." Furthermore, "Plagiarism is the use of someone else's language, ideas, information, or original material without acknowledging the source." For more information and to read the complete University policy concerning academic integrity, go to:
http://provost.syr.edu/academicintegrity_office.asp

Newhouse School of Public Communication Rules

- II C 1. "Any piece of work bearing a student's name is assumed by the School to guarantee that the thoughts, expressions, editorial and photographic material not credited to another are literally the student's own. If such credit is not given for another's work the student shall be guilty of committing plagiarism. Plagiarism proceedings will begin when a teacher submits evidence thereof to the Academic Standards Committee of the School.
2. "It is not permissible for any student to submit the same material, with substantially the same style, structure, or wording, to instructors in two or more courses.

Course Timeline, section 2, Fall 2007

<i>Date</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Readings</i>
Week 1	Introduction; Identity _____	
W Aug 29	Introduction to course & each other	
F Aug 31	The concept of identity; Understanding the social construction of identity	Harwood & Roy; Downing & Husband
	<i>Why do images matter? What is difference? Thinking about identity as a social construct.</i>	
Week 2	Identity, Diversity and the Psychology of Difference	
W Sep 5	Identity construction and media	DH 1, 14, 25
	<i>Bring in music that speaks to your identity</i>	Lind 1, 3.1
F Sep 7	The social psychology of difference	Lind: 2.1;
	<i>Journal</i>	
	<i>The intersection between media and identity construction; The social psychology of stereotypes, prejudice, and attribution theory</i>	
Week 3	Cultivation and hegemony _____	
W Sep 12	Cultivation & its implications for media audiences	DH 29, 33 Lind: 2.2
F Sep 14	Hegemony, power and the power to define	DH 5, 7, 8, 11, 28; Lind: 2.3, 3.2, 3.3, 4.3
	<i>Cultivation and implications for media audiences; representation and symbolic annihilation; Understanding “me” and “we” as relating to “them” and “they”</i>	

Week 4 Media, Hegemony & Constructing the Other_____

W Sep 19 *No class* – *Newhouse III dedication*
(but there will be a special assignment related to this)

F Sep 21 More on hegemony, social power, and
Journal communication

Hegemony, class and the maintenance of power; How power reproduces itself.

Week 5 Hegemony & Privilege; Constructing Norms_____

W Sep 26 Assimilation and pluralism; Privilege; Racisms old DH: 12, 14, 49, 60
and new McIntosh; Buck
Lind: 11.1, 11.2, 11.4

F Sep 28 Constructing White & Black, male & female; DH 43, 55
intersecting identities Lind: 3.7, 6.1, 7.1, 8.1

The privileges of social dominance; White privilege; assimilation, pluralism and attempts to define the norm – are we a melting pot or a salad bowl? What should we be?

Week 6 News: Power of Routine, Power of Representation_____

W Oct 3 Heider's *White News*;
White (male, straight...) News

F Oct 5 News and the rhetorical power of reality Heider's *White News*;
Journal Lind: 5.1, 5.2, 5.4; 5.6

How do the routines and practices of journalists uphold traditional power structures of race and gender? Are audiences impacted by this?

Week 7 Gendering Media & Framing Feminism_____

W Oct 10 Feminism and gendering media DH: 44, 45
Lind: 5.5, 10.1, 12.1,
13.2

F Oct 12 *No class* – *Eid Ul-fitr*

*What is feminism, and what does it mean to be a "feminist."
How are feminists portrayed in mass media? How might these portrayals tell us something about how power works in a commercial media system? Gendering media*

Week 8

Stereotyping & Pornography_____

- W Oct 17 Gender, stereotypes and advertising DH 24, 26, 64
Lind: 4.1, 2.4, 6.2, 7.3
- F Oct 19 Pornography DH: 4, 39, 41, 42
Lind: 10.2, 12.2

Pornography is a \$10 billion a year industry involving some of the largest media conglomerates. How does advertising and pornography inform our understanding of gender. How does gender inform our understanding of advertising and porn?

Week 9 (midterm) LGBT and the media

- W Oct 24 **Midterm Exam**
- F Oct 26 Constructing gays & lesbians DH: 9, 10, 31, 56, 57
Lind: 11.3; Katz

Companies pulled their ads from Ellen DeGeneres' coming-out episode, but only a few years later Will & Grace and Queer Eye for the Straight Guy are profit-makers for NBC. What does this tell us about media & society? News coverage of gay rights.

Week 10 Symbolic Annihilation: Transgender and disability

- W Oct 31 A discussion about B and T in LGBT
- F Nov 2 Confronting stereotypes and invisibility: disability in DH 30; Baynton
Journal Murderball

Symbolic annihilation is the lack of representation in media. Here are two groups we rarely see.

Week 11 Spanish language media

- W Nov 7 "Hispanic" as an invented category Rios & Gaines
Lind 8.2
- F Nov 5 Spanish language media and their growing importance Mastro & Behm-
Morawitz

Hispanics make up the largest minority in the United States now, but you'd never know by watching mainstream television. What does this mean for where we are and where we are going?

Week 12 Asian-Americans and the media _____

W Nov 14 Stereotypes of Asians & Asian-Americans, Dragon DH 28, 46, 62, 63, 69
ladies and martial artists Lind: 5.3, 6.3

F Nov 16 The model minority Wu; Mirikitani

Journal

*When Asians are seen, how are they portrayed?
What does it mean to be a “model minority”? Is this
a good thing?*

Week 13 No class - Thanksgiving _____

W Nov 21 *No class - Thanksgiving break: give thanks and enjoy*

F Nov 23 *No class - Thanksgiving break - enjoy*

Week 14 Presentations _____

W Nov 28 **Final project presentations**

F Nov 30 **Final project presentations**

Week 15 Native Americans & Muslims; Final thoughts _____

W Dec 5 Native Americans and Muslims: misunderstood, DH 70
Journal misrepresented Lind 3.4, 4.3
Sawy; Shaheen

Final journal due in class

F Dec 7 **Last class** – Wrap up discussion – The “N-Word” Asim; various

Final project deliverables are due

End of classes

M Dec 10 **Final exam – 7:15 p.m.**

Note: The instructor reserves the right to change the course content and timeline.

Additional readings (to be handed out in class)

- Harwood, J. & Roy, A. (2005). "Social identity theory and mass communication research." In J. Harwood & H. Giles (Eds.) *Intergroup Communication*. New York: Lang.
- Downing, J. & Husband, C. (2005). "'Race' and ethnicity: Definitions and Issues." In J. Downing & C. Husband, *Representing 'Race' – Racisms, Ethnicities and Media*. London: Sage.
- McIntosh, P. (1988/2004). "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack." In P. Rothenberg (Ed.) *Race, Class, and Gender in the United States*. New York: Worth.
- Buck, P.D. (2001/2004). "Constructing Race, Creating White Privilege." In P. Rothenberg (Ed.) *Race, Class, and Gender in the United States*. New York: Worth.
- Katz, J.N. (1990/2004). "The Invention of Heterosexuality" In P. Rothenberg (Ed.) *Race, Class, and Gender in the United States*. New York: Worth
- Baynton, D.C. (2000/2004). "Disability and the justification of inequality in American history." In P. Rothenberg (Ed.) *Race, Class, and Gender in the United States*. New York: Worth.
- Rios, D.I. & Gaines, S.O. (1998). "Latino media use for cultural maintenance." *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 75, 746-761
- Mastro, D.E. & Behm-Morawitz, E. (2005) "Latino representation on prime-time television." *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 82, 110-130.
- Wu, F. (2001/2004). "Yellow." In P. Rothenberg (Ed.) *Race, Class, and Gender in the United States*. New York: Worth.
- Mirikitani, J. (1987). "Suicide note." In P. Rothenberg (Ed.) *Race, Class, and Gender in the United States*. New York: Worth.
- Sawy, N.E. (2001/2004). "Yes, I follow Islam, but I'm not a terrorist." In P. Rothenberg (Ed.) *Race, Class, and Gender in the United States*. New York: Worth
- Shaheen, J. (1989/2004). "TV Arabs." In P. Rothenberg (Ed.) *Race, Class, and Gender in the United States*. New York: Worth.
- Asim, J. (2007). "To slur with love," and "Nigger vs. Nigga." In *The N Word: Who can say it, who shouldn't, and why*. New York: Houghton Mifflin.
- Various authors. (July, 2007). Contributors to Ebony magazine on the N word.