MCOM 151: Introduction to Mass Communications, Online
Fall Semester 2018
University of South Dakota
Instructor: Tanner Sifferath
Virtual Office Hours: Wednesdays from 7:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

Three (3) Semester Credits, undergraduate
Semester Dates: Aug. 20 – Dec. 12, 2018

***PLEASE NOTE: You must post your comments for the first discussion before 11:30 p.m. Aug. 30, 2018 so that the instructor knows you intend to complete the course.***

This is the online version of MCOM 151. The course is presented through D2L, Desire to Learn. You may contact me via my USD e-mail account, tanner.sifferath@usd.edu, at any time.

*I will do my best to respond to you within 24 hours during the week, and within 48 hours during weekends. My USD e-mail is your best bet for contacting me.*

That address is in the paragraph above. In an emergency, call the CMJ office at 605-677-5477. If you leave your name and phone number, they will contact me and I will call you back.

**Required Text:**


The textbook provides information about how to access course-related materials online through the publisher’s website.

**Technical and General Information**

Read “A new student’s guide to online learning at the U,” which is available at [http://www.usd.edu/~media/files/usd-online/online-orientation-guide.ashx?la=en](http://www.usd.edu/~media/files/usd-online/online-orientation-guide.ashx?la=en) even if you have previously taken an online course from USD. This document provides several suggestions for success, as well as technical information, such as minimal hardware and software requirements.

A USD e-mail account is required for this and all other online courses. If you have not already done so, you should go to [http://usd.edu/accounts/pickup](http://usd.edu/accounts/pickup) to create a USD email account.
You **must** have a USD e-mail address to participate in this, and all online courses at USD, even if you have already have an email account at another university.

**Course Description**
MCOM 151 provides an overview of the mass media in the United States and the world. The course includes discussions of newspapers, magazines, radio, television, books, movies, records, advertising, and public relations, as well as mass media rights and responsibilities, ethics, and censorship. Keeping up with the class readings, assignments, and video clips that supplement each chapter will provide the information you need for successful completion of each exercise within the class. Completing the readings, quizzes, and assignments will prepare students for exams, and will serve as a method of exploring new ideas regarding previous topics.

**Course Goals**
Upon completion of this course and its assignments you should have a clear understanding of the following concepts related to media:

1) Media is integrated into nearly every aspect of 21st century life
2) Media has a profound impact on individuals and culture
3) Modern media have historical origins and have evolved over time
4) Technological developments affect all forms of media
5) Thinking critically about media makes one a better consumer of media

Additionally, you will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the history and development of mass communications.

**Course Policies**

**D2L**
*It is your responsibility to check D2L for course information on a regular basis.*
Deadlines for each week’s assignments will appear on the calendar at the left side of our home page.

Additionally, you will use D2L to complete and/or submit the primary evaluation tools in this course: weekly brief exams, weekly conversations on the discussion board, and weekly writing assignments in the form of a brief paper or a worksheet provided to you by the instructor. You will also be able to check your grades, get course material, and retrieve announcements through D2L.

**PLEASE NOTE:** *Grades for your discussion posts and papers/worksheets are normally available within one week of the due date of the assignment.*
The quizzes you will take in the class are graded automatically by the D2L system, and appear shortly after you have completed the quiz/test.

Rubrics outlining the criteria used for grading the papers/worksheets, and your discussion board posts are available on our D2L homepage under “Content.”

You may check your grades on the D2L page under the “Assessments” tab. Click on “Grades” when the dropdown menu appears below the “Assessments” tab.

**Discussion Boards/Discussion Groups**
Each of you has been assigned to one of several discussion groups. These assignments were made randomly. You will stay in the same discussion group throughout the semester.

There will be a total of eight discussions throughout the semester. You are expected to participate in each discussion/conversation based on the prompt provided for you by the instructor.

*For purposes of this class, a discussion is not a single sentence in a post.* Each conversation is worth 10 points toward your overall grade in the course. You have the chance to “talk” to one another within your groups – please do so. Minimal participation will produce a minimal score for the week’s discussion.

**Papers/Worksheets**
You will complete eight brief papers or worksheets provided to you by the instructor. Details about these assignments are available in the content section of our home page.

Please type your assignments in **Microsoft Word, version 2010 or newer**, and submit them to the appropriate drop box on D2L. A free download of Office 365 is available to you under the “Technology” tab on the USD Portal. Using MS Word 2010 allows me to respond by using the feedback features associated with the software.

**Tests (Quizzes)**
In lieu of major comprehensive exams, you will take 10 mini-tests covering the reading material and slides assigned for the chapter(s) covered by the tests.

Each test will be worth a total possible score of 50 points.

You will be able to take each test twice if you want to try, to try and improve your score after your first attempt.
Due dates for exams are the Sunday of the week they are scheduled. However, they will be available the entire week, so you may take the exam anytime within that seven-day period. If you wish to complete the exams early, please email me at tanner.sifferath@usd.edu, and ask permission to do so.

**Late Assignments**
Assignments will be considered on time when posted before 11:30 pm (CT) on the date due. If timely submission of an assignment could become challenging for a student due to a legitimate reason, an advance notice should be sent to the Instructor with the reason for the delay. Grading that assignment would be at the Instructor’s discretion. If prior approval for late submission is not obtained, late assignments will be deducted one letter grade for the first day late. Beyond one day late, grading is at the Instructor’s discretion. No assignments will be accepted after the final day of class unless prior approval is received. Late discussion board postings unless prior approval is obtained.

**Class Schedule**

| MCOM 151 |
|------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------|
| **Week 1 & 2** *(8/20 – 9/2)* | The Media & Me | Discussion Post #1 *(Due 8/30)*  
| | | Test #1 Chapters 1 & 2 *(Due 9/2)*  
| | | Paper Worksheet #1 *(Due 9/2)*  
| **Week 3** *(9/3 – 9/9)* | Violence in Video Games | Discussion Post #2 *(Due 9/9)*  
| **Week 4** *(9/10 – 9/16)* | | Test #2 Chapters 3 & 7 *(Due 9/16)*  
| **Week 5** *(9/17 – 9/23)* | Banning Books / Censorship | Discussion Post #3 *(Due 9/23)*  
| | | Paper Worksheet #2 *(Due 9/23)*  
| **Week 6** *(9/24 – 9/30)* | | Test #3 Chapter 4 & 12 *(Due 9/30)*  
| | | Paper Worksheet #3 *(Due 9/30)*  
| **Week 7** *(10/1 – 10/7)* | Your Brain on Music | Discussion Post #4 *(Due 10/7)*  
| | | Test #4 Chapter 5 *(Due 10/7)*  
| | | Paper Worksheet #4 *(Due 10/7)*  
| **Week 8** *(10/8 – 10/14)* | TV and Changes in Program Delivery | Discussion Post #5 *(Due 10/14)*  
| | | Test #5 Chapter 6 *(Due 10/14)*  
| **Week 9** *(10/13 – 10/21)* | | Test #6 Chapter 8 *(Due 10/21)*  
| | | Paper Worksheet #5 *(Due 10/21)*  
| **Week 10** *(10/22 – 10/28)* | Visual Images: How Much is Too Much | Discussion Post #6 *(Due 10/28)*  
| **Week 11** *(10/29 – 11/4)* | | Paper Worksheet #6 *(Due 11/4)*  
| | | Test #7 Chapter 11 *(Due 11/4)*  
| **Week 11** *(11/5 – 11/11)* | Is Media Bias Really a Bad Thing? | Discussion Post #7 *(Due 11/11)*  
| | | Test #8 Chapters 9 & 10 *(Due 11/11)*  

**Instructor-initiated Drop**

The instructor may drop a student from the course if he/she has not posted a comment on the first discussion board by 11:30 p.m. Aug. 30, 2018.

**Incomplete**

An incomplete grade may be granted at the discretion of the instructor when a student experiences extenuating circumstances that prevent completion of a course. Anticipated course failure is not justification for an incomplete. I realize that extreme events and circumstances occur in all of our lives, but they also are fairly rare. Please contact me immediately if such circumstances arise during the semester.

**Discussion Requirements and Guidelines**

The goal of each conversation on the discussion boards is to respectfully discuss multiple viewpoints regarding an issue, and gain new perspectives about the subject we are discussing. Thoughtful, mature adults should be able to discuss even contentious issues without the goal of changing one another’s minds.

Please follow the guidelines listed below when posting comments within your group’s discussion area:

- Stick to the topic – try not to ramble.
- Be careful with your online interaction -- think before you post.
- Use pertinent subject lines/titles.
- Let readers know if your message is long and may take a while to read.
- Do not forward someone else’s messages without permission.
- Tread cautiously if you’re trying to be funny.
- If something makes you angry wait before you post your reaction.
- Never say anything you wouldn’t want your grandma to read!
**Freedom in Learning**

Under Board of Regents and University policy student academic performance may be evaluated solely on an academic basis, not on opinions or conduct in matters unrelated to academic standards. Students should be free to take reasoned exception to the data or views offered in any course of study and to reserve judgment about matters of opinion, but they are responsible for learning the content of any course of study for which they are enrolled. Students who believe that an academic evaluation reflects prejudiced or capricious consideration of student opinions or conduct unrelated to academic standards should contact the dean of the college or school that offers the class to initiate a review of the evaluation.

**Grade Breakdown**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exams – 10 @ 50 pts each</td>
<td>500 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papers/Worksheets – 8 @ 20 pts each</td>
<td>160 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disc. Board Conversations – 8 @15 pts each</td>
<td>120 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>20 points</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total possible:** 800 points

**Grading Scale:**

- 90-100 percent (720 - 800 points)  A
- 80-89 percent   (640 - 719 points)  B
- 70-79 percent   (560 - 639 points)  C
- 60-79 percent   (480 - 559 points)  D
- 59 percent or less (479 or below)  F

This is the standard grading scale used in college courses. If you have questions about this or a particular grade that you receive, contact me: Tanner.sifferath@usd.edu.

**Academic Integrity**

The University of South Dakota considers plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of academic dishonesty inimical to the objectives of higher education. The University supports the imposition of penalties on students who have been adjudicated to have engaged in academic dishonesty, as defined in the “Conduct” section of the University of South Dakota Student Handbook, and South Dakota Board of Regents policy 2-33 [www.sdbor.edu/policy/Documents/2-33.pdf](http://www.sdbor.edu/policy/Documents/2-33.pdf).

No credit can be given for a dishonest assignment. A student found to have
engaged in any form of academic dishonesty may, at the discretion of the instructor, be:

a. Given a zero for that assignment.
b. Allowed to rewrite and resubmit the assignment for credit.
c. Assigned a reduced grade for the course.
d. Dropped from the course.
e. Failed in the course.

**Disability Accommodation**
Any student who feels she/he may need academic accommodations or access accommodations based on the impact of a documented disability should contact and register with Disability Services during the first week of class or as soon as possible after the diagnosis of a disability. Disability Services is the official office to assist students through the process of disability verification and coordination of appropriate and reasonable accommodations. Students currently registered with Disability Services must obtain a new accommodation memo each semester.

Please note: if your home institution is not the University of South Dakota but one of the other South Dakota Board of Regents institutions (e.g., SDSU, SDSMT, BHSU, NSU, DSU), you should work with the disability services coordinator at your home institution.

Ernetta L. Fox, Director
Disability Services, Room 119 Service Center
(605) 677-6389
Web Site: www.usd.edu/ds
E-mail: disabilityservices@usd.edu

**Diversity and Inclusive Excellence**
The University of South Dakota strives to foster a globally inclusive learning environment where opportunities are provided for diversity to be recognized and respected. To learn more about USD’s diversity and inclusiveness initiatives, please visit the website for the **Office of Diversity**.

**University of South Dakota Title IX Statement**
In compliance with Title IX, University of South Dakota must provide a safe and equitable learning environment for all students. You have the right to protection from: dating violence, domestic violence, gender harassment, discrimination based on pregnancy and parental status, sexual assault/rape, sexual harassment, and stalking. Read more about your rights here. If you experience or witness any of this type of behavior, please report it to the Title IX Coordinator, Khara Iverson, 605-677-5671, Khara.Iverso@usd.edu. If you have any other concerns regarding a student such as: alcohol abuse, drug abuse, depression or suicide, please report these to the Dean of Students, Kimberly Grieve, Vice President of Student Services; MUC #218; 605-677-5331. Anonymous complaints can also be made using the Silent Witness Form.
You can also get help through the Student Counseling Center at 605-677-5777. You can also get help from the Domestic Violence Safe Option Services located here in Vermillion. This is a confidential center that aids victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, and/or stalking. They have a 24 hour hotline at 605-624-5311. If you are not located in Vermillion, you can find your local services through the South Dakota Coalition Ending Domestic & Sexual Violence at this website.

_Instructor Privilege_

Although I will do my best to avoid it, it may become necessary through the course of the semester to make changes in the schedule and/or assignments for this course. If such changes become necessary, the instructor will inform all students _immediately_ regarding the nature of those changes and how they will affect the course overall.