

Spring 2019
with Eric Thomas
University of Kansas

Syllabus

J101: Media & Society

TABLE OF CONTENTS

[INTRODUCTION](#)

[WHAT YOU WILL LEARN](#)

[WHAT MATERIALS YOU WILL NEED](#)

[HOW YOU'LL EARN YOUR GRADES](#)

[CLASS COMMUNICATION](#)

[OTHER NOTES](#)

INTRODUCTION

How do the media dominate your life?

Florida Georgia Line. Patrick Mahomes. The Donald. Queen Bey. Amitabh Bachchan. Cristiano Ronaldo. Chance the Rapper. Michelle vs. Melania. Hamilton vs. Burr. Kanye vs. Everyone. The Menzingers. Luis Fonsi & Daddy Yankee. Frank Ocean. Kerry Washington. James Bay. Sam Hunt. Gal Godot. Jason Aldean. Jason Isbell. Chris Pine. Kendrick Lamar. JLo, JLaw, LeBron, Ellen, Kendall, Oprah, Taraji, Serena, Selena, Katy, Taylor, the Vanderpumps.

Chances are you recognize many of these names. And chances are you know some (or maybe many) details about the lives of these people. You may know more about them than you do some of your own friends or family. While you probably don't know these people personally, you more likely know them through the media.

In our class, we're going to talk about the power of the media, the media's effects on our everyday lives, and how the media influence our values and viewpoints.

Welcome to Journalism 101, a course about media, society, and culture.

We use mass media every day for information and entertainment. We use mass media so much, it's hard to imagine what even one day would be like without the stories, photographs, songs, advertisements, and news we get from books, television, mobile phones, radio, tablets, and the Internet.

Because media are so much a part of our lives, we don't often stop to really think about the images we see, the messages we hear, or the information we receive. That's the purpose of this course—to help us think about media information and influences.

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

In this course, you will:

- Think critically and analyze the media messages you see and hear;
- Consider how mass media shapes your personal views, ideas, and perspectives, as well as how media shapes our culture;
- Understand the history of mass media to assess how the media landscape has changed and continues to evolve;
- Think about the relationship between media and audiences and learn how media works to meet the needs of diverse audiences;
- Understand better how the First Amendment affects the media messages we transmit and receive;
- Learn how technology affects access to knowledge and information around the globe;
- Think about the relationship between media and economics—how media are financed, who owns the media, and how ownership affects the information we get.

How you'll learn in a large class

Look around. Gobs of students are in this class. Learning in a large class can be difficult—it is easy to feel lost and get distracted, and it can be intimidating to ask questions or voice your opinions. So, as the instructor, I will try to do several things to make this feel like a smaller class and to make you feel more comfortable and less anonymous.

First, we will put away the technology. Yes, I will hold this line. Please put away the laptops, iPads, iPhones, Samsungs, smartphones, Surface Pros . . . please put away the technology. Why? After years of teaching large lecture classes I know that students who put away technology do better in the class, they join in discussion more often and they buy fewer dresses online during lecture. But you don't have to trust my observations. [There](#) are [gobs](#) of [studies](#) that show [electronic note-taking](#) is less [effective](#) (and [I even get quoted saying things](#) about the studies). So, we will do it the smart way: by putting away technology. If technology is vital for your learning, please contact me personally. I am happy to accommodate that.

Second, think of the classroom as a lab, where you'll interact, discuss, and learn. We will have lectures, but there will be plenty of time for you to discuss and to ask questions. The best way for you to learn is to be involved. You're in charge of your learning.

Talk to me. In class. Out of class. I will be happy to meet with you individually to discuss your ideas and concerns. You can stop by during office hours or make an appointment.

While my responsibility as a teacher is to create an environment where you can learn, you have some responsibilities as a student. You want to:

- Come to class. (I take attendance, so that's a thing.)

- Listen and ask questions.
- Complete assignments on time and correctly.
- Inform me of any problems that interfere with your learning, including jail time and hospitalizations, when they happen.

WHAT MATERIALS YOU WILL NEED

Top Hat app

I have used the Top Hat (www.tophat.com) app in other courses with great results and student engagement. Aside from driving up attendance substantially, students reported being more engaged in class. Also, the average grade in my classes improved during semesters with Top Hat.

You will be able to submit answers to in-class questions using an app for Apple or Android smartphones and tablets. Or you can use a web browser on a laptops or tablet. Or, you can respond via simple text message. So, here we go.

How do I get Top Hat?

An invitation will be sent to you by email, but if don't receive this email, you can register by simply visiting our course website: <https://app.tophat.com/e/688858>. Our Course Join Code is **688858**.

Top Hat will require a paid subscription: www.tophat.com/pricing. I would recommend purchasing a two-semester membership to Top Hat because it is likely you will also use the app in Journalism 300 with myself or Carol Holstead.

While using TopHat, you should consider your responses as an extension of your course work in the class. Your responses should use correct grammar, show attention to spelling and be your original ideas. Also, your responses should showcase appropriate language for an academic setting. In short, this isn't Twitter or Snapchat. Don't treat it like it is. Similarly, plagiarism or cheating on TopHat is just like academic dishonesty in any other portion of the course.

Finally, TopHat is super-savvy and can now track your location when you input the code. If you are in your bed inputting a code that your friend texted you, I will know. Registering your attendance when you are not here or inputting someone's code when they are not here is academic dishonesty and will carry the same consequences as academic dishonesty otherwise.

Should you require assistance with Top Hat at any time, please contact their Support Team (support@tophat.com) with the in-app support button, or by calling 1-888-663-5491.

What is Top Hat used for?

TopHat will be used in class for three main functions:

- **ATTENDANCE:** At the start of each class a code will be projected on the screens. It is your responsibility to input that code by the start of the class. If you are late and miss the opportunity to input the code, that is the same as an absence. **Warning:** TopHat is

super-savvy and can now track your location when you input the code. If you are in your bed inputting a code that your friend texted you, I will know. And to me, that cheating is the same as plagiarism, and therefore has the same consequences.

- **What happens if TopHat is not working?**
 - Come up to the podium and sign in with Jill (This must be done before lecture begins).
 - Then sit in the first two rows of the auditorium in the middle portion of seating.
 - You must register your attendance on the day the class meets, before the lecture starts, not at a later meeting of the class.
- **ARE YOU READING?** I will often post a set of questions at the start of class. These questions will check whether you are keeping up with reading our text and other assigned readings. These will mostly be multiple-choice questions that track to see who's diligently reading and who is binge-ing "The Office" on Netflix for the 7th time.
- **ARE YOU LISTENING?** At the end of lecture I will often post a set of questions that might test you knowledge of what happened in lecture -- and what was assigned in reading. These are open-note, so the questions encourage you to take good notes. However, they are not group projects: you will work on them independently.

Textbook

"Media & Culture" (11th Edition) by Campbell, Martin and Fabos – Bedford/St.Martin's ISBN 978-1-4576-6874-6 (Paperback) The 11th edition is what is required for this course. There is a 12th edition in print and of course earlier versions. Exam content will come from readings in the 11th edition.

The KU bookstore is selling the 11th edition of the book -- bundled with LaunchPad, an online resource from the publisher that provides other learning opportunities. If you would like to purchase the version that includes LaunchPad, go for it. However, **LAUNCHPAD IS NOT REQUIRED FOR THIS COURSE**. So, if you have a way to purchase the text without LaunchPad, feel free to do so.

There are several ways to obtain your textbook. You can purchase or rent the book from the KU bookstore. You can buy the book from Amazon or another independent bookseller. Additionally, you can buy or rent the book online from the publisher. I will put a hard copy of the book on reserve in the Resource Center, 2nd Floor, Stauffer-Flint Hall. You can read it there, but you can't check it out for use away from the resource center. You will need to have a student ID or driver's license to leave as a deposit with the front desk when you check out the book.

HOW YOU'LL EARN YOUR GRADES

Most students are concerned about grades and how they can do well in their courses. In J101, your grades will be based on your performance on three exams, the completion of a writing assignment, Top Hat points and course pre- and post-tests.

Here's how all your grades will be calculated for J101 (430 points)

- Exam 1: 100 points possible

- Exam 2: 100 points possible
- Exam 3: 100 points possible
- Media Assignment: Media Criticism:: 50 points possible
- Course pre-test and post-test for the KU Core: 20 points
- Top Hat Attendance: 30 points possible
- Top Hat Questions: 30 points possible

The exams will cover the assigned readings for the course, as well as any guest lecturers and discussions we have in class, so take notes carefully. Your notes will be your study guide. I don't do review sessions, unless I think they're vital.

Exams

Here are the exam dates:

- **Exam 1:** Thursday, Feb. 21 from 9:30-10:45 a.m.
- **Exam 2:** Tuesday, April 9 from 9:30-10:45 a.m.
- **Exam 3:** Monday, May 15 from 7:30 a.m. to 9 a.m.

Your final exam runs from 7:30 a.m. until 9 a.m. on Wednesday, May 15. The university sets the time for this exam, so I can't change it. You need to plan to be here. This exam is not cumulative—it will cover material from roughly the final third of the course. The final exam will last 90 minutes

Everyone will take the exams, including the final exam, at the same time on the same day. No make-up tests will be given. Make plans to be in class and on time. The only exceptions for these exam dates will be for students who are required to attend or participate in official university-sponsored events or students who are ill and have documentation. If you're participating in a school-sponsored event, please bring a university letter to me explaining the absence before the exam.

If you are ill, you need to let me know in advance that you'll miss the exam, and you need to bring the physical copy of the note from your doctor or Watkins Health Center. Weddings, surprise plane tickets from parents, parties, job interviews, court appearances, jail time, job conflicts, tickets to sporting events or concerts, and early vacations/breaks are not valid reasons for missing tests or taking them early.

Don't even ask.

Let me say that again. Don't ask.

Writing Assignment: Media Criticism

In addition to your exams, you'll complete a writing assignment, and you'll submit it on the course Blackboard site. The writing should be your original work (no one else's), and it should be original to this class. Don't recycle an assignment from another class, last semester, or from high school. If you do, and I find that it was submitted previously, you'll receive a 0 for the assignment.

There will be two options to prompt your writing for the Media Criticism Writing. I will post them at the start of February on Blackboard.

Plan to write about 600 words about your chosen topic and submit your writing to Blackboard **by 11 p.m. on Tuesday, April 23**. Detailed directions will be on the course Blackboard site. Read them. Follow them.

The most-common mistake on the writing assignment is submitting it in the wrong format. **You will submit your entry as a PDF to Blackboard**. If you don't submit as a pdf or submit it on time, you get no credit for the assignment. **Zero credit**.

It can take two to three weeks to read these entries and record grades, so be chill. Please.

Pre- and Post-Tests

You will also complete a pre- and post-test for the course. It's KU's way of seeing if you learned anything that meets the KU Core standard this class is supposed to meet. Completion of each test is worth 10 points. You can't fail these tests, so consider these easy points, because they are.

Top Hat Attendance

Yes, indeed, I have an attendance policy. You will use the Top Hat app to sign into class starting week 2.

It is your responsibility to be present and have Top Hat ready on a device at the start of class. This device can be as simple as a flip phone (You can text your attendance to Top Hat). You can also use Top Hat through a laptop, tablet or smartphone. We will not give credit for students who approach us after lecture to say the app wasn't working, their device wasn't charged or whatever other technology excuse.

To avoid the nonsense associated with "excused" and "unexcused" absences, know that you have **two free absences**. Use your freebies for sleeping, court dates, funerals, altered states, sick days or when you leave campus and just don't want to come back for class. I don't have to know why you aren't in class (except if you have to miss an exam).

If you are sick, don't bring me a doctor's note and expect me to give you an "excused" absence. It's just one of your absences. If you are sick enough to miss multiple class days, contact the [AAAC office](#) and ask counselors there to intervene on your behalf.

There's a process. Respect it. I will.

If you use a third absence, your Top Hat attendance grade will drop. For each class that you miss, you will lose Top Hat points (there are 30 total for the semester . . . so about 1 point per class).

Please remember that tardy counts as absent for the sake of attendance. However, if you are tardy, you can still participate and earn points that day through Top Hat questions as long as you arrive before the time window for the questions closes. See "Top Hat Questions" below.

If you have some sort of catastrophic occurrence that alters the course of your academics, I will work with you to figure out how best to deal with J101. This includes multiple days in the hospital or a life event that requires you to miss weeks of school. Again, [contact the AAAC](#).

Don't wait until the end of the semester and plead that forgiveness should be retroactive. It won't be.

Top Hat Questions

During most lectures starting in week 2, I will present Top Hat questions. Top Hat totals your points on these questions as the semester rolls along so you can track your progress. These questions are also great indications of the kind of questions that will appear on the exam. At the end of the semester, we will transfer the points earned through Top Hat over to Blackboard. If you have earned 90 percent of the possible points on Top Hat questions, we will award 27/30 points in Blackboard that will influence your final grade in the course.

As with Top Hat attendance above, it is your responsibility to have a device capable of electronically responding to questions for each lecture. Also, responding to questions while not attending lecture constitutes academic dishonesty. Come to class and this is all very simple.

How I'll report your grades

Grades give you feedback on your progress in J101. Remember, grades are earned, not given.

Research suggests a correlation between class attendance and good grades (of course, Top Hat makes this a certainty), so attend class if you want to do well. I will make every effort to keep an accurate record of your grades and to post your test scores quickly. A computer scores the test; usually it takes the testing center about 48 hours to return the test scores to me. I'll post all grades on the course Blackboard site.

Although you will receive numerical grades on your writing and exams, your final grade for this class will be a letter grade. Here is how the numbers translate:

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

Students often ask questions about “rounding up” grades—that is, if the final grade contains a fraction, students want to know what happens. Nothing happens. There has to be a line somewhere. I don't round up. I don't grade on a curve.

If a grade is posted incorrectly—it sometimes happens in a class this large—or if a grade isn't recorded, let us know by email as soon as possible. **All grades for the class are final one week after they are posted to Blackboard.**

A word about your mom and dad

This is college and your grades are your responsibility. You – not your parents – need to take care of business in this class. Should you not get the grades you want, I suggest using the following checklist:

- Did you show up for class, awake, alert and ready to learn?
- Did you pay attention in class? Really? Or did you just scroll and text?
- Did you take notes? You know, real, comprehensible notes?
- Did you study for several hours a week (at least) outside of class?
- Did you take care on the writing assignment? Did you submit it on deadline and correctly?
- Did you work ahead in class and ask for assistance when needed?
- Did you come to class prepared to log in to Top Hat with a device charged and ready?

I will be happy to talk with you about your performance in class and the class material, but I don't do parent-teacher conferences. Please do not have your parents call or write me. I will not talk with them concerning your performance or grades in the class, with or without your permission.

How you'll get extra credit

The only way to get extra credit in J101 is to earn it. You can do that in two ways.

Research experiment

I will announce more details about the schedule for this extra-credit opportunity via Blackboard. Students can earn 10 points for this activity which involves participating in a research experiment organized by a KU academic researcher.

KSPA events

The Kansas Scholastic Press Association sponsors two events each spring on KU's campus for high school students to learn more about journalism and compete in contests. As the executive director, I will recruit your help and reward you with extra credit. The dates? Feb. 25-27 for the Regional Contest and May 2-4 for the State Contest. Volunteer slots for these events are first-come, first-served. **The twist?** If you fail to show for the extra credit volunteer opportunity, I will deduct 10 points from your attendance in addition to your not earning the extra credit points. Please only sign up if you are sure you can help.

Class Communication

Teaching Team

Eric Thomas

Journalism Instructor & executive director of Kansas Scholastic Press Association

317 Stauffer Flint Hall

ericthomas@ku.edu

Jill Hinrich Howell

Graduate Teaching Assistant

308 Stauffer Flint Hall

Feel free to contact us if you have questions or problems. Email is best. If you're going to email one of us and you want a response, you might want to read the "how to" document on Blackboard.

Office Hours

You can also visit us during our office hours or make an appointment.

- **Thomas office hours:** Tuesdays from 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. & Thursdays from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Appointments welcome.
- **Howell office hours:** Thursdays from 1:30-4pm, room 308 STF or by appt. No availability (in person or by email) on Tuesdays.

How you'll demonstrate professional behavior

Most of you are going to college because you want to get a good job. In the School of Journalism and Mass Communications, we want to prepare you as well as we can. That's why in all your journalism classes there is an emphasis on professional behavior.

Professional behavior means that your actions in the classroom mirror your actions in the workplace. As your professor, my responsibility is to create an environment for students who want to learn. Help me help you.

- Attend class. Any materials from class—including discussions, comments from guest speakers, and audio/video clips—may be included on the exam. If you don't come to class, talk with a fellow student about what you missed. Try to avoid disrupting class by wandering in late. We will judge.
- Put away your phone because it doesn't help you learn – and that is why you are here.
- You're trying to balance academics with a social life and maybe a job. It's a lot of pressure, and it can be exhausting. I sympathize with the demands on your time. However, when you come to class, stay frosty. Don't use class time for naps. Seriously, go find a bed – or at least a sofa.
- You cannot be two places at once. If you have a job that conflicts with class, you need to drop this class. Don't leave class early to get to your job or the bus.
- Please don't work on other assignments while you're in J101. You may think it's multi-tasking, but I consider it rude. (Because it is rude.)

Plagiarism and fabrication

In this class, and in all journalism classes, honesty and integrity are critical. Any work you do must be original and reflect your own ideas, thoughts, and research. In a work setting, if you choose to violate professional standards, you will be fired. In this class, if you choose to violate the standards for academic integrity, you'll fail the course, and you may be expelled from or denied admission to the School of Journalism.

Here is the journalism school's official policy statement: "The William Allen White School of Journalism and Mass Communications does not tolerate plagiarism, fabrication of evidence and falsification of evidence. In this course, the penalty for plagiarism, fabrication or falsification is a failing grade for the semester. Additional penalties can include expulsion from the School of Journalism. If you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism, fabrication or falsification, please consult the professor of this course."

The KU University Senate defines plagiarism as "knowingly presenting the work of another as one's own (i.e., without proper acknowledgment of the source). The sole exception to the requirement of acknowledging sources is when the information or ideas are common knowledge." The University defines fabrication and falsification as "unauthorized alteration or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise."

Here's even more clarification on academic dishonesty:

If you use or attempt to use any unauthorized materials during a test, or if you give any unauthorized materials to someone else during a test, this is cheating. Unauthorized materials include written materials, such as notes. Unauthorized materials also include any forms of nonverbal communication (one cough, the answer is A; two coughs, the answer is B, etc.).

Plagiarism is stealing. You take someone else's ideas, thoughts, or words, and you present them as your own original work. This includes taking ideas from written sources, such as books, as well as materials on the Internet. Cutting and pasting materials from the Internet and presenting that work as if it was your own in the Media Criticism Writing is plagiarism. There may be times when you want to incorporate another person's ideas, opinions, and words into your writing assignment to make a point or to provide background. If you do, it is essential that you attribute that information—that you explain where the information came from and give credit where credit is due.

Fabrication and falsification mean that you made it up. This can include making up an entire interview or embellishing a fact, quote, or statistic in the writing assignment to make it sound better.

We will discuss these issues further in class. Questions? Contact me.

What's also boring, but important to note

Journalism School Policy on Classroom Attendance:

No student may add a journalism class after the 20th day of a semester. Students must attend their classes and laboratory periods. Instructors may take attendance into account in assessing a student's performance and may require a certain level of attendance for passing a course. Instructors may choose to drop students from a course, based on attendance, without consent.

The School of Journalism reserves the right to cancel the enrollment of students who fail to attend the first class or laboratory meeting.

The KU Office of Student Financial Aid is required by federal law to determine whether students who receive aid are attending each class in which they are enrolled. Instructors are required to

report to that office absences of students who have stopped attending and names of those who have enrolled but never have attended. Students who do not attend classes may be required to repay federal and/or state financial aid.

Copying or Recording

Course materials prepared by the instructor, as well as content of all lectures presented by the instructor, are the instructor's property. Video/audio recording of lectures is prohibited if I don't give consent.

On request, the instructor usually will permit students to record lectures, on the condition that the individual making the recording only uses such recordings as a study aid. Unless the instructor gives explicit permission, recordings of lectures may not be modified and must not be transferred or transmitted to any other person, whether or not that individual is enrolled in the course.

Where you'll find course materials

I will use the course Blackboard site to keep you up-to-date on class activities. I'll post a copy of the syllabus and class reading assignments on Blackboard, and I (or Jill) will post grades there as well. You will upload your Media Criticism Writing to this site as a pdf. Occasionally, I may post news articles or links to articles that class members think are interesting. If you have an article, video, or idea you'd like to share, you can send it to me to post on Blackboard. Please let me know immediately if you have problems accessing Blackboard.

Where to go if you have special learning needs or life gets complicated

If you have a problem or concern that may affect your learning, contact the AAAC so the folks there can work with you and me toward your success in J101. Student Access Services, part of the Academic Achievement & Access Center, works with all units to help students with disabilities, be they physical, medical, sensory, psychological, or related to attention or learning.

The Office of the Vice Provost for Student Success coordinates the University response to campus and individual student emergencies. The Office of the Vice Provost is also the contact when students are involved in a serious incident away from the Lawrence campus. The Office will offer information, counseling, and support to students, their families and others affected by the incident.

To report an extended illness or accident that keeps you away from class, contact the Academic Achievement and Access Center at (785) 864-4064, www.achievement.ku.edu. AAAC counselors will talk with parents or guardians and pass any details I need to know along to me.

Gun policy

Individuals who choose to carry concealed handguns are solely responsible to do so in a safe and secure manner in strict conformity with state and federal laws and KU weapons policy. Safety measures outlined in the KU weapons policy specify that a concealed handgun:

- Must be under the constant control of the carrier;

- Must be out of view, concealed either on the body of the carrier, or backpack, purse, or bag that remains under the carrier's custody and control;
- Must be in a holster that covers the trigger area and secures any external hammer in an un-cocked position;
- Must have the safety on, and have no round in the chamber.

Tests and guns

Instructors are allowed by Kansas Board of Regents policy, to require backpacks, purses and other bags be placed in an area not directly next to students during exams, and as such those items will not be under the constant control of the individual. Students who choose to carry a concealed handgun in a purse, backpack, or bag must review and plan each day accordingly, and are responsible for making alternate arrangements as necessary. The university does not provide appropriate secured storage for concealed handguns.

Individuals who violate the KU weapons policy may be asked to leave campus with the weapon and may face disciplinary action under the appropriate university code of conduct.

Finally . . .

I reserve the right to alter this semester's schedule as I see fit to help your particular class learn. I will advise you of changes in class or by email - to help you prepare accordingly.