



# Jour 803

## Mass Media and Popular Culture

Section 1 (57798), Spring 2017

2:30 – 5:00 p.m. Tue.

ST-F 303

Instructor: Genelle Belmas, Ph.D.

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**Office Hours:** Mon & Wed, 1:30 p.m.-2:45 p.m. and by appointment. I answer email within 18 hours.

**NOTE:** This class is a hybrid class, with work done online on your own time. You must have both Internet access and a computer capable of connecting to Blackboard. You should also have basic Internet use knowledge and skills that include typing and online navigation. If you have technical difficulties, contact the help desk at (785) 864-8080. It is up to you to troubleshoot tech issues.

### About This Syllabus

This syllabus is a contract between you, the student, and me, the instructor. While I take seriously my obligation to provide information about popular culture and media connections and give you a chance to think and write about them, I need you to take seriously your obligation to make a sincere effort to learn that information and understand and perform the assignments given to you. Please feel free to ask questions at any time if you are uncertain as to what I expect or what you should do. However, our schedule is not engraved in stone; if we need to take longer on a particular area, we will make accommodations.

### Course Objectives

Jour 803 is a supervised research and advanced study seminar. In this class, your role will be that of critical observer. Remember, critical thinking about the media doesn't necessarily mean negative thinking; "critical" means that you'll think carefully and logically about the media images you see and hear. One of the neat things about popular culture is that it's so broad. Your interests will drive the content of this course. The goal of the course also includes successful completion of a paper to be submitted to a professional conference and/or the literature review and other elements of your thesis or dissertation – perhaps solo, perhaps as part of a group. It'll be fun, and you'll learn a lot about yourself and your own professional goals in the process!

### Learning Goals: Using the topic of your choice, you will:

- Explore the media "landscape" to learn how the media work, the state of mass media today, and factors that affect the ways we produce and consume media messages;
- Improve your media literacy skills, so that you become more sophisticated media consumers and more thoughtful media producers;
- Consider how your own career goals could be met in an academic setting, and learn about the culture of academic life;

- Better understand the role media play in reinforcing or challenging our cultural values;
- Consider how technology is shaping how we send and receive messages – and the content of messages;
- Examine how the media succeed or fail in meeting the needs of diverse audiences
- Produce a high-quality research product to submit to a conference and/or be the foundation of your thesis or dissertation.

**Textbook and Required Readings (to be read BEFORE the class for which assigned)**

Wendy Belcher, *Writing Your Journal Article in 12 Weeks* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2009). Other readings will be on Blackboard or emailed to you. Take notes on the assigned readings – good notes – and bring them to class. I’ll call on people randomly, so be ready.

**Grading**

- 100 points — Class leadership and participation
- 200 points — Final paper/project (in several parts)
- 300 points — Total**

Grades will be based on the total number of points you accumulate. The scale will be:

A	94-100%	B+	87-89%	C+	77-79%	D	60-69%
A-	90-93%	B	83-86%	C	73-76%	F	0-59%
		B-	80-82%	C-	70-72%		

*All assignments must be completed for a passing grade in the course. Please keep all graded material until you’ve received your final grade.*

**General Guidelines**

**Academic misconduct.** The William Allen White School of Journalism and Mass Communications does not tolerate plagiarism, fabrication of evidence and falsification of evidence. I don’t either. Penalties for plagiarism, fabrication or falsification can include a failing grade for this course and expulsion from the School of Journalism and Mass Communications. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, fabrication, or falsification, please consult me. Some examples:

- 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 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 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 is plagiarism. There may be times when you want to incorporate another person’s ideas, opinions, and words into the papers you write, 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. “Recycling” past interviews or research from previous students and presenting it as your own falls into the category of plagiarism.
- *Fabrication and falsification* mean that you made it up. This can include making up an entire

interview or embellishing a fact, quote, or statistic to make it sound better. Don't do it.

- **Bottom line:** Do your own original work and don't copy another student or cheat in any way. Be yourself, not someone else. If I bust you cheating, I will follow up with university administration. 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.

**Special needs.** The University of Kansas is committed to helping all students learn. If you have a special need that may affect your learning, please contact me as soon as possible. The KU Office of Student Access Services coordinates accommodations for all students who are eligible. If you have a disability for which you wish to request accommodations and have not contacted this office, please do so as soon as possible. Information about services can be found at <https://disability.ku.edu/>. Or you can visit the office on the first floor of Strong Hall. The phone number is (785) 864-4064. The email is [achieve@ku.edu](mailto:achieve@ku.edu). Please contact me privately regarding your needs in this course.

**Weather.** In the event of inclement weather, the decision to cancel classes is made by KU officials (NOT BY ME!). To determine whether snow or icy conditions have canceled classes, call (785) 864-7669 ((785) 864-SNOW).

**Phones, laptops, tablets:** I have no objection to electronic study aids, and some students are better typists than hand-writers. But doing puzzles, messing around on computers, texting or reading the newspaper in class is unprofessional. So is sleeping, particularly if you snore. Anybody doing any of the above in class will be given one warning and then asked to leave class for the day (and lose credit in participation). If you feel you really cannot unplug from Facebook or pause your texting once a week for a grad seminar, please consider another class.

### **Assignments and Class Notes (separate handouts to follow)**

**Professional Writing:** Any written work you submit for this class must be of professional quality. That means it must be accurate, well organized, well written, and free from grammatical or spelling errors. Also, your final paper should demonstrate what academics call "rigorous scholarship." This means that you must show that you understand scholarly literature and theory on a topic, that you have systematically analyzed data, and that you have reached conclusions that contribute something new to the mass comm field. Your work must be original and follow American Psychological Association (APA) style. APA guidelines are online at <http://www.apastyle.org/> and many other places. If you have questions, please see me. Ignorance isn't an excuse. (If you're interested in legal research, see me.)

**Participation and Attendance:** I take roll, and attendance is mandatory. If you don't show up, it's an unexcused absence – see penalty below. If you need to miss class, notify me *in advance* and I'll excuse you. If you're sick, you must call – or email – in sick, just as you would with a paying job. I won't necessarily accept after-the-fact notifications of absence, but I'll excuse absences for *bona fide* emergencies (a good one: "The ambulance didn't have WiFi, so I couldn't email you"), and I may require documentation. Each unexcused absence (after one freebie) loses one (1) percent of your final grade (taken off at the end). If you don't show up on a day when you present, that's five (5) percent at the end. This is a small class – don't think I just won't notice. Participation is critical, too – if you're silent, you run the risk of losing percentage points at the end. I expect you to be an active participant in your own education, and this class is no exception. It's fun to discuss these issues with other smart people. Don't miss out.

**Class Leadership:** You will be responsible for leading one or more class discussions. In this assignment, we'll work together as a teaching team, directing the discussion, and posing questions for students. You will be assigned to one of the topics in which you've expressed interest. Then you and I will meet the week before the class to plan. I will provide one reading for each week, but you will be expected to add a few articles in enough time to enable your colleagues to read and consider them.

**Final Paper:** You'll work with me to develop an appropriate topic for your final paper. You may be expected to give a short presentation during the last weeks of class on your work, time permitting. Separate handouts and rubrics will follow. We will discuss options on how this final paper might look.

***"But my Internet service is down!" "My computer crashed!"*** I do not extend due dates without very good reason, and your home Internet service being down or your computer failing does not count. There are lots of places to get free access, such as the university library, here in ST-F, and the many coffee shops around Lawrence! Plan a backup place to go if you lose access at home. Crashed computers, same deal – make a contingency plan with your family or friends.

### **Attendance and Class Participation**

As I've said, I expect you in class every meeting, and there are penalties for unexcused absences. Excessive absenteeism will reflect poorly on your grade! Extenuating circumstances, like illness or other emergencies, need to be documented for special consideration.

### **Email**

While many of us are addicted to email, and it is a wonderful tool for communication, there need to be a few policies. I read email several times each day, and I welcome your communication, but some things need to be discussed in person—in-depth questions about the material, inquiries about grades, excessive absences. Email is best for quick clarifications and to schedule meetings. It shouldn't be considered a substitute for face-to-face visits.

### **Questions? Criticisms? Comments? Suggestions?**

If at any time something seems unclear or unreasonable to you, please come discuss it with me. I am open to your comments, criticisms and suggestions. This class is meant to be an open forum for learning and discussion, and I am dedicated to making it an enjoyable experience to the extent I am able. I am also extremely open to student suggestions for improvements. If something's not working for you, let's talk about how to fix it.

### **One More Thing ... A Few Ground Rules for Jour 803**

The foundation of the freedoms that the mass media enjoy is the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. We must also remember that it contains protection for "freedom of speech." That said, I need to make clear a few ground rules for discussion.

Our classroom is an open forum for the free flow of information. Disagreement between students or between students and instructor, and perhaps heated discussion, is to be expected. Please do not hesitate to question what I say or what others say. *If you disagree with me, I will not hold it against you!* I know you think that is easy to say but not to do, but if you believe your points of view are being held against you, please talk to me about it. We need many points of view to have a good discussion, and I look forward to hearing yours. However, that does *not* give us the right to attack each other on a personal basis. We can and must disagree respectfully, and I expect that you will conduct yourself appropriately, even if you disagree vehemently. Hate speech, personal attacks, and the like simply won't be tolerated.

### Class Schedule and Reading Assignments (subject to change)

No, this is not a mistake. Since the area of “popular culture” is so broad, I want to give you the opportunity to guide the content areas of the class during the second half of the course, after our AEJMC papers are submitted. A more filled-in version of this calendar will be provided at the next class meeting. It’ll be my job to post a reading on every topic the class wants to study, and your job to add to and discuss that offering.

Week	Dates	Topic	Book and Other Reading	What’s due?
1	Jan. 17	Welcome! Introduction to class. Editing of calendar. Discussion of assignments/expectations. Planning your writing. Do we want a librarian visit?	Ch. 1	
2	Jan. 24	APA style. Thoughts about abstracts. Planning the paper’s flow.	Ch. 2 APA handout	Abstract (end of class)
3	Jan. 31	Arguments: advancing them, planning around them, structuring them.	Ch. 3	
4	Feb. 7	The literature review: why, how to, what’s enough.	Ch. 5	
5	Feb. 14	Strengthening your structure. Presenting your evidence.	Ch. 6-7	
6	Feb. 21	Introduction and conclusion (why now?).	Ch. 8	Lit. review (graded)
7	Feb. 28	Editing: from words to grammar to sentences to paragraphs to organization.	Ch. 10	Intro/conc.
8	Mar. 7	Work day.	-----	
9	Mar. 14	Finalizing the draft.	Ch. 12	
10	Mar. 21	<b>SPRING BREAK—NO CLASS!!</b>	-----	-----
11	Mar. 28	Work day, and last go-round of class edits. <b>AEJMC DEADLINE IS SAT., APRIL 1!</b>		Final draft
12	Apr. 4		Bb readings	
13	Apr. 11		Bb readings	
14	Apr. 18		Bb readings	
15	Apr. 25		Bb readings	
16	May 2		Bb readings	
	May 10 (Wed.)	<b>FINAL PAPER DUE by 5 p.m. via email</b>	----	Final paper (graded)