

COM 491 – 02 The New Media Industries Spring 2019

Schedule: Monday and Wednesday, 3-4:15 p.m.
Location: Caterpillar Global Communications Center 207

Instructor: Dr. Cory Barker
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Phone: 309-677-4262
Office hours: Monday and Wednesday, 10-11:30 a.m., or by appointment

REQUIRED MATERIALS

All required and resources will be posted on our class Sakai page.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The media industries are always evolving with new technologies. But in the modern era, legacy institutions like newspapers, TV networks, and Hollywood studios are being fully disrupted. They are upended by technology companies that merge the production, distribution, and promotion of content with sophisticated—and inscrutable—algorithms and platforms. They are also pressured from upstarts using social media to target niche audiences based on identity, politics, and fandom. This course will consider how legacy and new media companies compete, collaborate, and converge. It will also examine how the new media industries recalibrate our consumption habits, social experiences, and everyday lives.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the semester, students should be able to:

- Understand how existing media industries adapt to innovations in technology.
- Define key concepts related to new media technologies—such as convergence, platform, transmedia, and protocol—and recognize how those concepts are deployed in the modern entertainment context.
- Articulate the basic structures of the contemporary media industries related to ownership, integration, and synergy, and how these structures influence the production and consumption of content.
- Identify the industry strategies utilized to segment potential consumers into profitable categories based on demographics, taste, and politics.

EXPECTATIONS

This course will ask you to reconsider media objects and social platforms with which you are likely familiar. It is not a pragmatic course for how to make it in Hollywood. However, my intention is not to ask you to simply critique the media industries as nefarious seekers of profit, but to think deeper about how technology and industry work in concert to shape just about all of our daily experiences. With that said, COM 491 will require you to read scholarly

articles on case studies and class issues. It will require you to keep track of the news items and controversies within your industries of interest. And it will require you to communicate your perspective on readings and industry controversies across class discussion, written assignments, presentations, and collaborative work. I'm going to put a lot of work into this class; I expect that you will too. If you do, you'll leave with a sharper understanding of the media ecosystem and your role in it.

Some basic things to keep in mind:

- Closely monitor our Sakai and official communication from me.
- Come prepared, with an understanding of readings, assignments completed, and any lingering questions at the ready.
- Be willing to listen to and respectfully engage with your peers.
- Be curious and carefully consider your words to express thoughtful views.

ASSIGNMENTS

Detailed rubrics for graded work will come as things are assigned, and I might reconfigure the workload based on our progress, but you will complete the following assignments.

Reading Respondent Duty (50 points): To facilitate class discussion, you will be randomly assigned a few days to serve as designated respondents to the readings. You will *not* be required to officially present the readings to the class, but you will be asked to provide at least one substantive comment and/or one relevant outside example, and be called upon if the conversation breaks down among the rest of us.

Industry Beat Blogging & Presentation (150 points): You will cover a corner of the media industries over the course of the semester and produce brief posts about new developments, controversies, etc. on Sakai. You will later explain the biggest issue facing your beat. We will go over this assignment in Week 2, but think about what beat you want to cover. Topics include:

- Social platforms (specific platforms, hate speech, memes)
- Games (e-sports, indie gaming, major titles, board games)
- News and journalism
- Music industry (labels, radio, concerts)
- YouTube and its content creators
- Film industry (production, distribution, promotion, box office)
- TV industry (networks/channels, studios, series, ratings)
- Streaming (video, music, "live" streaming)
- Industry awards and culture
- Conventions and fan culture
- Sports (media organizations, team media, arena entertainment)
- Podcasts (shows, companies, business models)
- Print and publishing (books, e-books, Amazon vs. retailers)

Franchise Paper & Presentation (150 points): For this assignment you will examine the expanded universe of a particular media franchise. In a brief essay, (3-4 pages), you will A) list as many different objects (films, TV series, video games, novels) related to your franchise that you can find; and B) develop a solid comparison between the “main” object and one of its expansions. For the second part, you will discuss how the original object as migrated to a new medium and how the extension tracks with the original. You will then deliver five-minute presentations on your findings.

“New” Media Blackout Diary: (75 points): During Unit 2, we will talk about how technology has changed legacy industries like journalism, music, and television/film. These technologies have also significantly changed our habits. To think deeper about technology and medium’s influence on our daily lives, you will, for one week, participate in a media blackout. You will be “barred” from consuming news, music, or television/film from your smart devices and asked to consume them in “old” ways. You will keep track of your progress and submit the diary in the following week.

Adaptation & Franchising Analysis (100 points): We will talk a lot about the flow of content between platforms and mediums. Here you will analyze a story that started in one “new” medium and then jumped to another. You will craft a five-page essay describing how the two versions tell their stories, and offer relevant industry context that helps package the two projects for their respective audiences.

Artifacts of Influence Presentation (75 points): This assignment will ask you to select one person that you believe best represents *social media influence*. You will then select *one* artifact (Instagram post, tweet, YouTube video, etc.) that distills that individual’s influence and present it to the class. Your goal is to define how social media creates influence. There is no essay component, but you will submit an outline of your claim; you will present your argument in five minutes.

Final Content Plan & Pitch (300 points): The concluding group project will ask you to shift from application and interpretation to invention. Having learned about the media landscape, each group will craft an extensive plan for some kind of new content—a transmedia extension of an indie comic, an investigative podcast, a social media influencer campaign, etc. You will not actually have to *make* this content, but you must provide detailed analysis and rationale for why it could be successful. You will pitch this plan to a panel of “experts” at semester’s end. More details will be available after spring break.

Participation (100 points): I won’t lecture much, and instead come to class with a few relevant talking points, questions, and examples. Our class will function more like a seminar. Please be physically and mentally present.

GRADING SCALE

Grades are assigned based on the following scale:

100-90	A
89-80	B
79-70	C

69-60	D
59-0	F

POLICIES

Although much of our communication will occur in the classroom or in office hours, there will be moments where you need to contact me outside of the GCC. In those cases, please keep a basic level of **professional communication etiquette** in mind. Emails should be addressed to me and use proper grammar. I will do my best to respond within 24 hours. Do not send numerous follow-ups expecting that will help your case.

Attendance will be taken every day. You have **three** absences to utilize for any reason. You do not need to provide documentation for these absences. I understand that there may be certain points of the semester where you need to prioritize other classes, your job, or something else. If you are regularly late to class, it will impact your participation grade and, if warranted, count as a full absence. Each absence after the third will negatively affect your participation score by 10 percent.

If you do miss class, it is your responsibility to acquire any notes from a peer or assignment prompts from me. Please do not email me simply asking for a slide deck or if you “missed anything important.” Missed in-class work **cannot** be made up.

Media careers are premised on punctuality and reliability. As such, the **late policy** is stringent. You will have 48 hours to submit any late assignments. Late assignments submitted in the first 24 hours will receive a 25 percent grade penalty; those submitted within the next 24-hour window will receive a 50 percent grade penalty. There are few legitimate excuses for late assignments, but keep me in the loop at all times.

Given that this is a 400-level course, **writing expectations** are high. Style errors, typos, misspellings, grammar issues, and sloppiness in presentation will lower your grade on everything from major writing assignments to the regular blog posts.

Please use **technology** (laptops, cell phones, recording devices, etc.) in whatever ways facilitate your learning, but be mindful of instances that might interfere with the learning of others. Let's keep an open dialogue about this throughout the semester.

ACCOMMODATIONS AND ACCESSIBILITY

I want this all things related to this course to be fully accessible to everyone. If you have any concerns regarding learning accommodations, religious considerations, or the like, please communicate those to me as soon as possible. I am happy to work out a satisfactory alternative, but not at the absolute last moment.

Specific disabilities requiring alternative classroom arrangements must abide by university policy. If you have a documented disability and require accommodations in this course, please contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. You must be registered with the [Office of Student Access Services](#). The SAS is located in Heitz Hall 100 and can be reached by phone at 309-677-3654. If you need help with this, let me know—I am happy to guide you through the process however I can.

[Bradley University's Counseling Center](#) offers mental health guidance to address students' personal, social and career challenges. Services include confidential mental health assessment, counseling (individual and group), and referrals. The Counseling Center can be found in Markin Center 52 from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, and from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday and Thursday. It can also be reached by phone at 309-677-2700, and after hours at 309-677-3200. Please do not hesitate to talk to me for assistance. I will even walk you to the Counseling Center if you would like.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Any breaches of university standards will be treated severely and, [as per the undergraduate handbook](#), will be reported to Residential Living and Leadership. Instances of academic misconduct may result in, though are not limited to, a zero on the assignment, failure of the course, and further potential discipline as determined by the university, up to and including the possibility of expulsion. If there are questions or concerns about the academic integrity standards, I will be more than happy to clarify expectations. Uncertainty about academic misconduct policies will not be considered valid justification for an offense.

Plagiarism, as defined by the undergraduate handbook, accounts for, but is not limited to, “repeating another’s sentences as your own, adopting a particularly apt phrase as your own, paraphrasing someone else’s argument as your own, and presenting someone else’s line of thinking in the development of a thesis as though it were your own.”

Fabrication is an offense of unique concern to journalism whereby a student creates a source of information or information of any kind, including, but not limited to, quotes, paraphrases, scenes, scenarios, interactions, and non-interactions. Journalism of original reporting should be comprised solely of people, dialogue, and events that exist or have existed. All cited human sources in stories will require contact information for the individual to verify the validity of story elements.

Cheating, as defined by the undergraduate handbook, is defined as “giving or attempting to give, or obtaining or attempting to obtain, information relative to an examination or other work that the student is expected to do alone and not in collaboration with others, or the use of material or information restricted by the instructor.” Examples include, but are not limited to, “copying from another person during an examination, using materials not allowed by the instructor during an examination, collaboration on take-home examination or other assignments where it has been expressly prohibited by the instructor, and the submission of a laboratory report based on data not obtained by the student in the manner indicated by the instructor. The person who provides illicit information is liable to the same punishment as the person who receives and uses it.”

If tempted to commit an instance of academic dishonesty, please contact me. Rather than commit an intellectual crime, we can explore alternatives—possibly an extension or some other solution that doesn't involve risking your academic welfare.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

The schedule is likely to change as we tailor course content to your needs. Readings should be completed by the day on which they are listed. All readings will be posted on Sakai.

UNIT 1: Structure & Conglomeration

WEEK 1

W 1/23 **How Media Become New**

Read: N/A

WEEK 2

M 1/28 **Media Industries Defined**

Read:

- Amanda Lotz and Timothy Havens, Chapter 1 of *Understanding Media Industries*
- Jennifer Holt and Alisa Perren, Introduction to *Media Industries Studies* (excerpt)

W 1/30 **Deregulation & Ownership**

Read:

- Robert McChesney, “US Media at the Dawn of the Twenty-First Century”
- Scan media ownership charts

WEEK 3

M 2/4 **Blockbuster Economics: Disney & the Modern Media Conglomerate**

Read:

- Anita Elberse, “Betting on Blockbusters”
- Scan Box Office Mojo yearly charts, <https://www.boxofficemojo.com/yearly/>

W 2/6 **Convergence & Franchising: *Star Wars***

Read:

- Derek Johnson, “Imagining the Franchise” (excerpt)
- Henry Jenkins, “Transmedia Storytelling 101,” http://henryjenkins.org/blog/2007/03/transmedia_storytelling_101.html

Stream:

- “Star Wars: The Complete Canon Timeline” on YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yXSwJEBfbOc>

WEEK 4

M 2/11 **Triumphs & Challenges in Conglomeration**

Read:

- James Whitbrook, “How the Marvel Cinematic Universe Left Its TV Side Behind,” <https://io9.gizmodo.com/how-the-marvel-cinematic-universe-left-its-tv-side-behi-1825160402>
- Joanna Robinson, “Sony Finally Untangles Its Spider Web,” <https://www.vanityfair.com/hollywood/2018/12/sony-spider-man-future-amy-pascal-phil-lord-interview>

Stream:

- The first two episodes of *Wolverine: The Long Night* podcast, <https://www.wolverinepodcast.com/>

W 2/13 **Multiplatform Synergies: ESPN & the 24-Hour News Cycle**

Read:

- Travis Vogan, “ESPN the Magazine and Page 2: Paper and Digital Sports Pages”
- John Koblin, “How ESPN Pulled a Bullshit Colin Kaepernick Story out of Thin Air,” <https://deadspin.com/how-espn-manufactures-a-story-colin-kaepernick-edition-1185400028>

WEEK 5

M 2/18 **Defending the Empire: ESPN, Barstool, & “Stick to Sports”**

Read:

- Bryan Curtis, “Deep Six: Jemele Hill and the Fight for the Future of ESPN,” <https://www.theringer.com/2017/9/13/16299136/jemele-hill-espn-michael-smith-sportscenter-the-six>
- Jay Caspian Kang, “Spurned by ESPN, Barstool is Staying on Offense,” <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/14/magazine/spurned-by-espn-barstool-sports-is-staying-on-offense.html>

FIRST HALF OF FRANCHISE PRESENTATIONS

W 2/20 **Building the Next Empire: ESPN & Disney Streaming Services**

Read:

- Scan the Wikipedia entry for Disney+, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Disney%2B>

Stream:

- Watch a segment from *Always Late with Katie Nolan*,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SnGauxFbGbE>

****SECOND HALF OF FRANCHISE PRESENTATIONS****

UNIT 2: Old Media & New Distribution

WEEK 6

M 2/25 **The Medium is the News: Apple Conquers Journalism**

Read:

- Will Oremus, “The Temptation of Apple News,”
<https://slate.com/technology/2018/09/apple-news-media-slate-ad-sales-no-money.html>
- Spend some time exploring the Apple News interface

W 2/27 **Discovery on Demand: Spotify & Streaming Music**

Read:

- Jeremy Morris & Devon Powers, “Control, Curation, and Music Experience in Streaming Music Services”
- Liz Pelly, “The Problem with Muzak”

WEEK 7

M 3/4 **Watching “Television” on Netflix: Mediums & Distribution**

Read:

- Amanda D. Lotz, Introduction to *Portals: A Treatise on Internet-Distributed Television*, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/maize/mpub9699689/1:3/--portals-a-treatise-on-internet-distributed-television?rgn=div1;view=fulltext>

Stream:

- *The Ringer*, “How Does Netflix Make Money?”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BdFNln5mc74>

W 3/6 **Binge-Watching Culture: Technology & Habits**

Read:

- Chuck Tryon, “TV Got Better: Netflix’s Original Programming Strategies”
- Nolan Feeney, “When, Exactly, Does Watching a Lot of Netflix Become a ‘Binge?’”
<https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2014/02/when-exactly-does-watching-a-lot-of-netflix-become-a-binge/283844/>

****MEDIA BLACKOUT DIARIES DUE****

WEEK 8

M 3/11 **Recreating Audio Dramas: The Rise of Scripted Podcasts**

Read:

- Andrew Bottomley, “Podcasting, *Welcome to Night Vale*, and the Revival of the Radio Drama”

Stream:

- *Welcome to Night Vale*, “Glow Cloud” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=due3u22Licw>) and “Brought to You by Kellogg’s” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=POitG2eNjuM>)

W 3/13 **Building the Fancult: Podcast Intimacy on *My Favorite Murder***

Read:

- Rachelle Pavelko and Jessica Gall Myrick, “Muderinos and Media Effects: How the *My Favorite Murder* Podcast and Its Social Media Community May Promote Well-Being in Audiences with Mental Illness”

Stream:

- *My Favorite Murder*, “Put It in A Door,” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2z_nYEcfhrk

WEEK 9

M 3/18 **No Class — Spring Break**

W 3/20 **No Class — Spring Break**

UNIT 3: Platforms & Participatory Culture

WEEK 10

M 3/25 **“Hey Guys”: Value on/of YouTube**

Read:

- Mark Andrejevic, “Exploiting YouTube: Contradictions of User-Generated Labor”
- Julia Alexander, “YouTube Premium is Changing Because It Has To,” <https://www.theverge.com/2018/11/29/18116154/youtube-premium-free-ads-subscription-red>

W 3/27 **#Ad: Instagram Influencers & Modern Celebrity**

Read:

- Taylor Lorenz, “Rising Instagram Stars Are Posting Fake Sponsored Content,” <https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2018/12/influencers-are-faking-brand-deals/578401/>

Stream:

- *The American Meme* on Netflix

****ADAPTATION & FRANCHISING ANALYSIS DUE****

WEEK 11

M 4/1 **Connectivity Above All: Facebook, Twitter, & the Commons**

Read:

- José van Dijck, “Facebook and the Imperative of Sharing”
- Charlie Warzel, “I Let Facebook’s Algorithm Run My Life for Weeks,” <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/charliewarzel/i-let-facebooks-algorithms-run-my-life-for-weeks>

Stream:

- Eli Parsier’s TED Talk, “Beware Online ‘Filter Bubbles,’” https://www.ted.com/talks/eli_parsier_beware_online_filter_bubbles

W 4/3 **Clicks for Cash: The Revenue Streams of Social Platforms**

Read:

- Will Oremus, “The Big Lie Behind the ‘Pivot to Video,’” <https://slate.com/technology/2018/10/facebook-online-video-pivot-metrics-false.html>
- Cory Barker, “Facebook, Twitter, and the Pivot to Original Content: From Social TV to TV on Social,” <https://journal.transformativeworks.org/index.php/twc/article/view/1291/1627>

Stream:

- Watch a recent episode of Twitter’s *AM2DM*, <https://twitter.com/i/events/940982303324389377>

WEEK 12

M 4/8 **Collective Viewing: Watching on Twitch**

Read:

- T.L. Taylor, “Networked Broadcasting” (excerpt)

W 4/10 **Ted Danson Can Floss: *Fortnite* & Spreadable Media**

Read:

- Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford, and Joshua Green, “Why Media Spreads” (excerpt)

Stream:

- “Best Fortnite Memes Compilation,”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bFO-IK68Qk4>

UNIT 4: Branding & the Culture Wars

WEEK 13

M 4/15 **A War for Your Mind: *InfoWars* & Conspiracy Media**

Read:

- Paris Martineau, “The Storm Is the New Pizzagate — Only Worse,”
<http://nymag.com/intelligencer/2017/12/qanon-4chan-the-storm-conspiracy-explained.html>
- Jane Coaston, “YouTube, Facebook, and Apple’s Ban on Alex Jones, Explained,” <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/07/us/politics/alex-jones-business-infowars-conspiracy.html>

Stream:

- A selection of clips from *InfoWars*, <https://www.infowars.com/videos/>

****FIRST HALF OF INFLUENCE PRESENTATIONS****

W 4/17 **Fact-Checking with Jokes: Late-Night TV & Political Engagement**

Read:

- Allania Killby, “Provoking the Citizen: Re-Examining the Role of TV Satire in the Trump Era”

Stream:

- Watch an episode of *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver* or *Full Frontal with Samantha Bee*

****SECOND HALF OF INFLUENCE PRESENTATIONS****

WEEK 14

M 4/22 **Into, Out Of: The Financial Limits of Representational Media**

Read:

- Madhavi Mallapragada, “The Market of the Future...And Now: Media Industries in the US and the Race to Capitalize on ‘Multicultural’ Consumers,” <http://www.flowjournal.org/2014/05/market-of-the-future/>
- Jackie Johnson, “Black Twitter and TV Cancellations,” <http://www.flowjournal.org/2018/07/black-twitter-and-tv-cancellations/>
- Kelsey Sutton, “How Grindr is Reinventing Itself as More Than Just a Dating App,” <https://www.adweek.com/brand-marketing/how-grindr-is-reinventing-itself-with-help-from-its-digital-magazine/>

W 4/24 The Best a Man Can Be: Woke Brands & Ethical Consumption

Read:

- Sarah Banet-Weiser, “Free Self-Esteem Tools?: Brand Culture, Gender, and the Dove Real Beauty Campaign”

Stream:

- Playlist of recent commercials, <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLjh2-npLoQ1NV9abGnfkHyengyouZFEfY>

WEEK 15

M 4/29 Student Choice Case Study

W 5/1 Student Choice Case Study

WEEK 16

M 5/5 The Future of the New Media Industries

W 5/7 No Class — Study Day

WEEK 17

S 5/11 Final Content Pitches