

Carolyn Nielsen

Journalism 375: Diversity, Mass Media and Social Change

Summer 2010

Syllabus

“We all should know that diversity makes for a rich tapestry, and we must understand that all the threads of the tapestry are equal in value no matter what their color.”

Maya Angelou

Prof. Carolyn Nielsen

Office hours: TuThu 2:30 p.m.- 4 p.m.

Class meets: TTh 7 p.m. – 9:50 p.m.

Prerequisite: J190 or equivalent or instructor permission

Required text: Race/Gender/Media: Considering Diversity Across Audiences, Content and Producers by Rebecca Ann Lind.

Required materials: Classroom Response “Clicker” control checked out for the entire quarter. This is FREE @ WWU. You may check it out from ATUS Classroom Services in Haggard Hall 144. You must bring your student ID to check it out. Bring it to the second class meeting and every class thereafter.

Catalog description: Examines how mass media cover social change, through a substantive focus on race/ethnicity and gender, to discern the effects of mass media on its audiences.

Course description: This course will examine news media production, consumption and impact through a framework of intersectionality. The course will provide an introduction to key communications theories such as framing and agenda setting as well to delve into Critical Race Theory. Students will hone critical-thinking skills through discussions, papers, readings, case studies and online discussion boards.

Course objectives:

- To familiarize students with the concepts of unearned privilege, intersectionality, framing and agenda-setting theories and Critical Race Theory.
- To show students how these theories relate to the news media both from a historic and a current perspective.
- To help students build media-literacy skills necessary to question the news media they consume and see news media through perspectives different from their own.
- To help students explore and challenge their own assumptions and beliefs about people who are different from them, and to be aware when the news media reinforces stereotypes.

Attendance and participation: This course is taught as a seminar, so attendance is imperative. It’s important to be involved in discussions, both as a listener and a participant. Absences will be deducted from your grade.

Ground rules for respectful behavior: We will be covering sensitive topics in this class. People will have strong feelings. Everyone deserves a safe environment in which to participate in the discussion. It is important to listen and respond appropriately.

- Listen to each other with respect. Do not interrupt.
- Use "I" statements: Speak your own truth. Express only your own thoughts, reactions, feelings, and experiences, not those of others;
- Do not debate someone else's experience. If someone says ____ happened to him or her, do not argue with someone's personal experience, but do feel free to contribute your own experiences.
- No cell phones, iPods, Blackberries, etc. should be used in class. It's rude and it distracts both your professor and your classmates.

Assignments: (total of 450 points)

- **1 book essay:** 100 points
- **1 midterm on lecture/reading/movies/speakers:** 100 points
- **1 group presentation:** 20 points
- **Online responses (twice a week in discussion boards):** 80 points
- **1 final paper:** 120 points. This is a group paper divided into sections. Each individual will be graded on his or her specific section of the project (100 points possible). The overall paper will be graded for cohesiveness and clarity and that will figure into individual grades (20 points).
- **Attendance and participation:** 30

Grading criteria:

While not everyone in this class aspires to be a journalist or is proficient in journalistic writing style, papers are expected to be commensurate with university-level writing. Points will be deducted for spelling and grammar errors, run-on sentences, incomplete sentences, etc.

Grades will be awarded based on display of strong critical thinking skills, use of clear and pertinent examples and level of research shown.

***Late work will receive a 10% deduction per day it is late.** If you are seriously ill and unable to complete a requirement of this class, you must contact me before the beginning of class and provide written documentation of your absence upon your return. There is no extra credit in this class.