

## **SOC495 Section 02 Analysis in Media & Society**

*Spring 2012*

Department of Sociology  
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

### **Reading and Media Materials are Subject to Change**

Instructor: Kohei Yamazato

Class: MFW 1:30 p.m. to 2:20 p.m.

Office: TBA

Office hours: TBA

Email: yamazato@hawaii.edu

### **Course Description and Goals:**

SOC495 *Analysis in Media & Society* is an E and WI focus course. The course will teach students on ways to conduct sociological inquiries and analyze media materials particularly the ethical issues inscribed in contemporary media of both news and popular. The “ethical issues” in concern are categories such as *nation, society, ideology, race/ethnicity and health and crime*. The course will teach students on (1) ways to point to ethical issues, (2) ways to address the issues as sociological problems and (3) the sorts of methodologies that can be employed in analyzing and addressing the possible influences the issues might have on society. The materials used in class will include actual printed and visual media materials, and social science studies on media and society. The tasks for the students will be to conduct personal work of writing assignments and collaborative work with student cohorts in a group project.

While respecting all students’ perspectives on categories in concern, the course will encourage students to consider what *are* and *are not* the “ethical issues.” At the same time, students will be asked reflect on the sorts of biases, stereotypes, fallacies (if any) inscribed in the media materials used in class particularly of the categories in concern. We will view and read actual media materials of both news and popular media, and take them as resources for inquiries and to examine the sorts of “ethical issues” that are inscribed in them. By the end of the semester, students should be able to make critical judgments on “ethical issues” in regards to contemporary media and their relation to society.

In addition, this course also teaches students on the ways to conduct empirical studies

on media and society. Existing empirical studies inquire into what sorts of categories (i.e. race/ethnicity, gender, crime, political ideology, and pictorial images) are described and presented. These studies address the biased selection of news stories, stereotypes, construction of flaws of what is considered “real” in society, and therefore try to address “what the media does, “why” and the “consequences.” The sociological approach to conduct empirical studies in media and society will be taught particularly through teaching ways to (1) address the “issues,” (2) select data, (3) employ appropriate methods and (4) formulating findings while leaving empirical questions open. Students will read such articles in their weekly assignments.

Finally, this course asks students to consider how contemporary media can make reports and represent categories in concern while respecting the freedom for speeches and expressions of the media and the freedom for consumption of media materials of audience/readers. The ethical standards in perceiving media materials and sociological responsibilities will be in alignment with the Code of Ethics of American Sociological Association (2009).

### **Reading Materials:**

Empirical studies on media influence on society particularly of those that concern categories of nation, society, ideology, race/ethnicity, health and delinquency will be provided *one per week via Laulima*. Students must read the articles before coming to class and be prepared to provide thoughts and engage in discussion with class cohorts and the instructor.

### **Assignments, Midterm/Final Papers and Grading:**

#### ***Writing Assignments***

One of the students’ tasks in this course is to address ethical issues in contemporary media through providing organized and clearly constructed composition in analytical papers. Students will be asked to formulate 1 to 2 pages analytical paper per week on the actual visual and printed media materials used in class. Students will be asked to (1) address the “ethical issues” and (2) address why they think so. Students are also asked to provide what sorts of sociological approaches they could employ in conducting actual studies. The sociological approaches in concern include (1) “issues” (not limited to ethics) and data, (2) methodologies, (3) findings and arguments. The instructor will read student papers, make comments and corrections on grammars, sentence constructions, wordings and organization and will give them back the following week. Students will

have the opportunity to revise and resubmit their papers up to two times. The progress of the students' papers will be part of the grading.

### ***Group Project***

Students will also conduct a group project in which they will choose certain visual or printed materials of any news and popular media as data, work out together in addressing the “ethical issues” and do a presentation on their findings. The students will then be asked present how they would present the ethical issue of the material if they were to be a journalist or working for a media agency while considering the freedoms for speeches and expressions of the media, and freedom for consumptions of the audiences/readers.

There will be a midterm and final exam on students understandings on sociological studies on media and society, and a short final paper which will ask students on ways to conduct sociological studies on media and society. The writings assignments, group projects and exams will allow students to reflect personally and collaboratively on their views and stances toward categories of concern in contemporary media and engage in discussions with student cohorts.

### ***Midterm and Final Paper***

Students will submit a five pages midterm paper using the analytical paper they used earlier in the classes. Student will be asked to pick up a certain media material and write what they consider the categories inscribed in the materials. The midterm paper is due on the seventh week of the semester therefore students will incorporate in their midterm paper what they will have learned by the seventh week. The same applies to the final paper due on the fourteenth week of the semester. Students are to choose one media material, incorporate previous analytical papers and write what sorts of methodologies can be employed in studying it, ideas on consumption and audience, and media effects. Rather than assigning an individual paper, the midterm and final paper is aim to guide students on ways to conduct actual studies.

### **Grading:**

1. Attendance: 10% of the final grade
2. Weekly analytical paper: 40% of the total final grade
3. Group Project: 20% of the total final grade
4. Midterm paper: 20% of the total final grade
5. Short final paper and exam: 10% of the total final grade

90-100% = A  
85-90% = A-  
82-84% = B+  
78-81% = B  
75-77% = B-  
71-74% = C+  
65-70% = C  
60-64% = C-  
57-59% = D+  
53-56% = D  
50-52% = D-  
Less than 50% = F

## **Readings and Assignments, and Class Schedule**

### **Week 1: Understanding Media and Society 1**

Introduction of the course and form groups on the first day of instruction. We will go over the Code of Ethics of the American Sociological Association (2009).

#### **Read:**

**Altheide, L. David. 1985. "1. The Media as a Social Force." Pp. 9-23 in *Media Power*, Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.**

*We will view two video clips on making news stories in media agencies and interviews with journalists.*

### **Week 2: Understanding Media and Society 2**

First analytic paper due on the first class of the week.

#### **Read:**

**Gans, J. Herbert. 1979. "Nation and Society in the News." Pp. 8-37. In *Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek, and Time*. Toronto, Canada: Random House, Inc.**

*We will view two video clips on selection of news reports. We will also read a newspaper article that describes a crime, perpetrator and victim. They will show you how newsworthiness is constructed within news agencies.*

### **Week3: Selection of News Stories**

Second analytical paper due on the first class of the week.

#### **Read:**

**Gans, J. Herbert. 1979. "Objectivity, Values, and Ideology." Pp. 182-213. In Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek, and Time. Toronto, Canada: Random House, Inc.**

*We will view to short clips in class and have a discussion and debate on the clips. We will read a newspaper article on escapee from mental health institution.*

### **Week 4: Data and Methodological Approaches 1**

Third analytical paper due on the first class of the week.

#### **Read:**

**Cavender, Gray and Lisa Bond-Maupin. 2006. "Fear and Loathing on Reality Television: An Analysis of America's Most Wanted and Unsolved Mysteries." Pp. 59-69. In Constructing Crime: Perspectives on Making News and Social Problems, Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, Inc.**

*We will view to short clips on AMW and UM in class and have a discussion and debate on the clips. We will read a newspaper article on escapee from mental health institution.*

### **Week 5: Data and Methodological Approaches 2**

Fourth analytical paper due on the first class of the week.

#### **Read:**

**Best, Joel and Mary M. Hutchinson. 2006. "The Gang Initiation Rite as a Motif in Contemporary Crime Discourse." Pp. 95-114. In Constructing Crime: Perspectives on Making News and Social Problems, Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, Inc.**

*We will view clips that represent crime and race/ethnicity and discuss what they tell us and how we understand race/ethnicity today.*

### **Week 6: Data and Methodological Approaches 3**

Fifth analytical paper due on the first class of the week.

#### **Read:**

**Altheide, L. David. 1985. "The TV News Code and the Information Order." Pp. 97-130. In *Media Power*, Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.**

*We will view clips of data and look into the methodologies employed in actual studies of news media and its contents.*

### **Week 7: Media and Economy 1**

Midterm paper due on the first class of the week.

**Read:**

**Gans, J. Herbert. 1979. "Profits and Audiences." Pp. 214-248. In**

*Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek, and Time.* Toronto, Canada: Random House, Inc.

*We will view video clips on media business in contemporary era of both news and popular media. We will also read a newspaper article on a national and local topic and discuss why the topics were chosen.*

### **Week 8: Media and Economy 2**

Sixth analytical paper due on the first class of the week.

**Read:**

**Donna, Killingbeck. 2006. "The Role of Television News in the Construction of School Violence as a .Moral Panic." In *Constructing Crime: Perspectives on Making News and Social Problems*, Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, Inc.**

*We will view video clips on media business in contemporary era of both news and popular media. We will also read a newspaper article on a national and local topic and discuss why the topics were chosen.*

### **Week 9: Media and Audiences 1**

Seventh analytic paper due on the first class of the week.

**Read:**

**Altheide, L. David. 1985. "The Media as Museum." Pp. 37-51. In *Media Power*, Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.**

*We will view two clips and discuss what viewing and reading media materials mean to us and how they might influence our perspectives on society and people.*

### **Week 10: Media and Audiences 2**

Eighth analytical paper due on the first class of the week.

#### **Read:**

**Altheide, L. David. 1985. "The Media as Museum." Pp. 37-51. In *Media Power*, Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.**

*We will view two clips and discuss what viewing and reading media materials mean to us and how they might influence our perspectives on society and people.*

### **Week 11: Media Effects 1**

Ninth paper due on the first class of the week.

#### **Read:**

**Weitzer, Ronald and Charis E. Kubrin. 2006. "Breaking News: How Local TV News and Real-World Conditions Affect Fear of Crime." Pp. 345-365 In *Constructing Crime: Perspectives on Making News and Social Problems*, Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, Inc.**

*We will view clips of concurrent crime movies and documentaries discuss about our ideas and images about crimes and fear for them. We will see a newspaper article and discuss what sorts of selections of certain pictorial images are made and how it influences the readers.*

### **Week 12: Media Effects 2**

Tenth analytical paper due on the first class of the week

#### **Read:**

**Hawton, Keith., Simkin, Sue., Deeks, J. Jonathan, O'Connor, Susan., Keen, Alison., Altman, G. Douglas., Philo, Greg., and Bulstroede, Christopher. 1999. "Effects of a drug overdose in a television drama on presentations on hospital for selfpoisoning: time series and questionnaire study." *British Medical Journal*, 318:972-977.**

*We will view two clips on how media influences health problems among audiences. We will read a newspaper article that entails methods of self-poisoning and how it might influence readers.*

### **Week 13: Media Effects 3**

Eleventh analytical paper due on the first class of the week.

#### **Read:**

**Phillips, P. David. 1982. "The Impact of Fictional Television Stories on U.S. Adult Fatalities." *The American Journal of Sociology*, 87(6):1340-1359.**

*We will view two clips on fictional television and discuss what sorts of messages are inscribed in the fictional televisions. We will read a magazine story series and see what fictions are embedded in it and how fictions might impact audiences.*

### **Week 14: Media Responsibility**

Final paper due on the first class of the week.

#### **Read Either:**

**Au, J. S., Yip, P.S., Chan, C. L., and Law, Y. W. 2004. "Newspaper Reporting on Suicide Cases in Hong Kong." *Crisis*, 25:161-168.**

**Frey, Conrad., Michel, Konrad., and Valach, Ladislav. 1997. "Suicide reporting in Swiss printed media: Responsible or Irresponsible?" *European Journal of Public Health*, 7(1):15-19.**

**Jamieson, Kathleen., Jamieson, Patrick., and Romer, Daniel. 2003. "The Responsible Reporting of Suicide in Print Journalism." *American Behavioral Scientist*, 46:1643-1660.**

*We will view a clip and read a newspaper articles that contain harmful visual and printed images and texts for vulnerable individuals in society. We will have a discussion on the materials.*

### **Final Exam: TBA**

#### **Plagiarism:**

From the UHM Student Conduct Code: Policy and Procedures (August 2010)

Students are responsible to abiding to the Code of Conduct "The term plagiarism. includes, but is not limited to, the use, by paraphrase or direct quotation, of published or unpublished work of another person without full or clear acknowledgement. It also

includes unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials” (UHM Student Conduct Code, 9:2010).

**KOKUA for Students with Disabilities:**

If you feel you need help due to physical or psychological conditions that influence your attending the course, please feel free to talk to me. I will work with you so that you feel comfortable attending and being in the class. The KOKUA Program (Office for Students with Disabilities) will help ensure your needs in attending and being in the class. The KOKUA Program can be reached at (808) 956-7511 or (808) 956-7612. Their room is located in Room 013 of Queen Lili. ukalani Center for Student Services.

***End of Syllabus***