MDIA 204: MEDIA AND CULTURE STUDIES

FALL 2026

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Table of Contents

COURSE DESCRIPTION: 3

IMPORTANT COURSE INFORMATION: 4

Course Delivery: 4
Required Materials: 4
Course Assignments: 4
Course Grading Scale: 5

COURSE POLICIES 6

Attendance: 6
Content Disclaimer: 7
Respect Policy: 7
Technology Responsibility: 7
Generative AI Policy: 7
Late Work Policy: 7
Accommodations: 8
Copyright Statement 8

UNIVERSITY POLICIES 8

University Statement 8
Disability Statement 8
Freedom of Expression 8
Title IX 9
University Grade Appeal Policy *9*
Student Academic Ethics Policy 9

UNIVERSITY RESOURCES FOR YOU 10

The Learning Center 10
The Writing Center 10
The Basic Needs Hub 11
The Counseling Center *11*
Canvas Accessibility 12
FERPA and Privacy 12

Course Description:

Students will consider media as an interactive process and be empowered to make the shift from passive consumers of culture to active critics, including exploring how different cultural and identity groups are represented in American media and how those representations have changed over time.

Prerequisite: Open to approved Media majors and minors.

Student Learning Outcomes:

- Identify the various critical approaches used to analyze media content
- Explore how different culture and identity groups are represented in American media and how those representations have changed over time
- Analyze a media text using one or more critical approaches

Prerequisite: Open to approved Media majors and minors

Student Learning Outcomes:

- Identify the various critical approaches used to analyze media content
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NACE Career Readiness Competencies

Student Learning Outcome	NACE Competency
Identify the various critical approaches used to analyze media content	Critical Thinking, Oral and Written Communication
Explore how different culture and identity groups are represented in American culture and how those representations have changed over time.	Critical Thinking, Equity and Inclusion
Analyze a media text using one or more critical approaches	Critical Thinking

Important Course Information:

Course Delivery:

Our class will meet in person every week starting from August 24, 2026, through December 07, 2026.

Required Materials:

There is no single textbook that you are required to purchase for this course. However, please check Canvas. There you will find assigned readings categorized by weeks and topics. You are required to read those before coming to class.

Course Assignments:

You will have four different kinds of assignments in this course.

1- Quizzes on Canvas:
These will be posted on Canvas and will consist of True/False statements and MCQs. They will usually be due before coming to class and will test your knowledge of the reading materials pertaining to the topic we are covering. There will be ten quizzes.

2- In-Class Assignments:
We will also have weekly class activities that will require you to sometimes work in a group and will need to be submitted during the class.

3- Mass Media Review Paper:
You will review a film, or a TV series episode, or a cable show episode, or an advertisement and write a paper on it discussing how that mass media production portrays identity.

3- TikTok Video or Instagram Reel:
You are also required to shoot and create either a TikTok video or an Instagram reel in groups of three. There will be two of these. These will be based on a contemporary trend, and you will be assessed on how well you communicate your understanding of media. You will find more information about it on Canvas, and I will also explain more several weeks before this is due.

4- Class Presentation:
You will complete a project that demonstrates your understanding of the course topics and present it to the class individually. This is due on November 17. Again, you will find more information about it on Canvas, and I will also explain it several weeks before this is due.

Course Grading Scale:

Important: Assignment details, including instructions, relevant readings, due dates, and grading criteria/rubrics, will be posted and updated on Canvas. Please check Canvas regularly to stay informed and on track.

Assignments	Points
In-Class Assignments We will have many in-class discussions, assignments and quizzes. They will mostly be group based and you will be graded on completion.	200
Social Media Assignment TikTok video or an Instagram reel in groups of three. There will be two of these.	100
Quizzes These will be posted on Canvas and will consist of True/False statements and MCQs.	200
Mass Media Review Paper Two-full-pages explaining your professional mission and values statement.	200
Semester Project Case study involving an ethical dilemma in the world of media. *You will work in groups.*	300
Total Points	1000

Letter Grade	Range
A	100% - 94%
A-	<94% - 90%
B+	<90% - 87%
B	<87% - 84%
B-	<84% - 80%
C+	<80% - 77%
C	<77% - 74%
C-	<74% - 70%
D+	<70% - 67%
D	<67% - 64%
D-	<64% - 61%
F	<61% - 0%

Course Policies

Attendance:

Attendance is required, and punctuality is essential. In this course, Attendance is graded. **You are allowed three absences during the semester without penalty**. These three absences should be used for circumstances such as illness, family emergencies, medical or dental appointments, transportation problems, work conflicts, or other unexpected situations.

Any absence beyond the three allowed absences will result in a 5-percentage point deduction from your overall course grade for each additional absence. Meaning, if you accumulate 4 absences, you can only score a maximum of 95% in this course. **However, if you accumulate 6 absences, you will receive an automatic F in this course.** Students are responsible for obtaining any missed notes, assignments, or course materials and for staying current with class requirements.

Coming to the class later than 15 minutes or leaving the class early counts as an absence. Before examining and discussing the work of media professionals, we should all first learn to be professional ourselves, and punctuality is a necessary trait.

Important Note:
Absences will be excused for the following: funeral and bereavement leave, jury duty, late course addition, military absences, observance of religious holidays, pregnancy leave, student-athletes participating in university- or department-approved activities, and university advisories. **These will not count towards the above attendance policy, but please inform me no later than two weeks in advance by email if you were absent for any of these reasons**. If you are going to be absent because of accommodations, please contact the Office of Disability Services.

Content Disclaimer:

Media covers a range of topics and the content in this course may contain strong language, sexual situations, violence, controversial subjects, and ideas that might be disturbing or offensive to you. This is a college course where students will be expected to discuss all such content in a professional, academic manner. If you have any questions or concerns about the content we will examine during the course of this class, please contact me. However, please be advised – simply being offended by the content is not, in and of itself, a reasonable excuse not to engage the content.

Respect Policy:

Your classmates are just as much your teammates as they are your peers. You are likely to be in class alongside people with diverse and various backgrounds, as well as some who share alternative beliefs/opinions. Discourse in this class is to be civil and mature. You are expected to treat others with the same respect that you would wish to receive in return and be seen as equals. Failure to uphold this policy will result in an immediate dismissal from class with an absence penalty.

Technology Responsibility:

There will be no use of laptops or cellphones during class lectures unless designated by me. Use of technology within that timeframe will result in dismissal from the class and 25% off your final grade. There will be no warning; this section of the syllabus is considered to be your heads up.

Generative AI Policy:

Many of the assignments that you will be assigned in this course can be done by Generative AI. Indeed, as future media professionals, Generative AI may replace some or most of your jobs in the future if you let it. You may use AI to assist with specific tasks such as drafting text, refining and evaluating your work. You must critically evaluate and modify any AI-generated content you use. However, the final submission should show how you have developed and refined these ideas. If your final submission is entirely the work of Generative AI, it will be considered academic plagiarism and university plagiarism policies will apply.

Or maybe don't use it at all.

Late Work Policy:

Any work submitted 1 second after the due date and time will be considered late work. Canvas will likely not allow you to submit late work. The first two late submissions will

be waived. The third late work submission will incur a 50% grade loss on that specific assignment. Any subsequent late work submission will not be allowed.

Accommodations:

If you need course adaptations or accommodations, please contact me as soon as possible. The Office of Disability Services coordinates services for students with disabilities; documentation of a disability needs to be on file in that office before any accommodations can be provided. Disability Services can be contacted at 765-285-5293 or dsd@bsu.edu.

Copyright Statement

All materials for this class have been created for the private, non-commercial use of students enrolled in this class through Ball State University in the current semester. Any material provided to students, including, but not limited to, syllabus, lectures, class notes, PowerPoint presentations, assignments, information, quizzes, exams, or class news, is the property of the course instructor and/or Ball State University and may not be reproduced, distributed, or publicly posted without written permission of the instructor. Selling or distributing course materials may violate the Code of Student Conduct and/or the Information Technology Users' Privileges and Responsibilities policy. Violations will be reported to Dr. Mike Gillilan, Director of Student Rights and Community Standards.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

University Statement
We are committed to ensuring that all members of the community are welcome, through valuing the various experiences and worldviews represented at Ball State and among those we serve. We promote a culture of respect and civil discourse.

Disability Statement
If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, please contact the instructor of record as soon as possible. Ball State's Disability Services Office coordinates services for students with disabilities; documentation of a disability needs to be on file in that office before any accommodations can be provided. Disability Services can be contacted at 765-285-5293 or dsd@bsu.edu.

Freedom of Expression
In this course, we are committed to fostering a learning environment that values intellectual diversity, encourages free expression, and promotes open inquiry. As members of the Ball State Community, we treat each person in the Ball State community with civility, courtesy, compassion, and dignity and respect and learn from differences in people, ideas, and opinions. Please review Ball State University's Statement on Freedom of Expression, the resources on Ball State's Freedom of Expression webpage, and Ball State's Beneficence Pledge.

Title IX
Ball State University is committed to providing a safe and inclusive learning environment for all students. If you or someone you know has experienced sexual harassment—including sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking, please know that you are not alone. The University offers support services and resources. For more information or to report an incident, please visit bsu.edu/titleix or contact the Title IX Coordinator at 765-285-1545 or at titleix@bsu.edu

As your instructor, I am a mandatory reporter under the Title IX policy and required to report any information I receive about possible sexual harassment. This includes information shared in class discussions, assignments, or private conversations.

What happens after I report? The Title IX Coordinator will email the person who experienced sexual harassment (complainant) and invite them to schedule a meeting. If the complainant **chooses** to meet with the Title IX Coordinator,

- Title IX Coordinator will offer supportive measures (e.g., counseling, extensions on deadlines, course-related adjustments, changes to work or class schedules, and/or referrals to campus offices), review the policy, and discuss options to move forward.
- If a complaint is filed by the complainant or the University, an investigation will begin following University policy.

University Grade Appeal Policy
If you believe you received a final course grade that does not reflect your performance due to fairness or a procedural issue, you have the right to file an appeal within 5 school days after final grades are posted by the Office of the Registrar. Review the University Grade Appeal Policy and Process.]

Student Academic Ethics Policy
Honesty, trust, and personal responsibility are fundamental attributes of the university community. Academic dishonesty and other forms of academic misconduct threaten the foundation of an institution dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and will not be tolerated. To maintain its credibility and reputation, and to equitably assign evaluations of scholastic and creative performance, Ball State University is committed to maintaining a climate that upholds and values the highest standards of academic integrity. Visit the VPAA's academic integrity website (Students tab) for resources on understanding academic integrity, citing sources properly, and avoiding inadvertent academic dishonesty. To learn about BSU's academic integrity expectations and students' rights, please read the University Student Academic Ethics Policy.
Academic integrity violations include giving or receiving an unfair academic advantage (cheating), presenting someone else's ideas or work as your own (plagiarism), and falsifying academic records. Unless otherwise indicated, you must work independently by yourself. Check with me if you are unsure whether something constitutes academic dishonesty. Examples of academic integrity violations include but are not limited to:

- Using resources not authorized by the faculty member (including devices, AI tools, hidden notes, and open books)

- Using commercial study websites to find answers to graded assignments (Chegg, Course Hero, StudyPool, OneClass, etc.).
- Without the instructor's written permission, giving away, buying, or selling graded assignments class notes, exams, study guides, or other course materials to other students or to third-party vendors (Course Hero, Chegg, 24HourAnswers, etc.).
- Working with another person on any assignment other than authorized group projects.
- Sharing or allowing others to access your files, whether done with permission or not.
- Reusing your own work from another semester, course, or section.
- Sharing answers with others during exams (passing notes, texting, whispering, gesturing)
- Discussing exam questions and answers with students who have not taken the exam.
- Soliciting others to complete work for you.

Plagiarism Detection
The campus subscribes to Turnitin, a plagiarism prevention service, through Canvas. You may need to submit written assignments to Turnitin. Student work will be used for plagiarism detection and for no other purpose. The student may indicate in writing to the instructor that he/she refuses to participate in the plagiarism detection process, in which case the instructor can use other electronic means to verify the originality of their work.

University Resources for You

The Learning Center
The Learning Center offers free Tutoring and Academic Coaching for many courses at Ball State. Students can make appointments for online (Zoom) or in-person (NQ 350) appointments. To make an appointment, visit myballstate.bsu.edu and click on "Navigate" in the Academic Tools section, or just go directly to bsu.navigate.eab.com.

Testing accommodations for students with disabilities are available for students who have received the appropriate documentation from Disability Services. Tests may be administered in the Learning Center.
Supplemental Instruction is available in select courses. If you have an SI leader for your course, that person will provide students with information the first week of school regarding weekly study sessions. For more information about Learning Center programming, visit bsu.edu/learningcenter or call 765-285-1006. Follow us on Instagram: BallStateLC.

The Writing Center
All writers improve with practice and feedback, so as a student in this course, you are encouraged to use the Writing Center (in Robert Bell 295 during weekdays, Bracken

Library First Floor West in the evenings, or online during any of our regularly scheduled hours) to get additional feedback on your writing.
The Writing Center offers free planning, feedback, and accountability sessions (in person and online) to all students composing essays, reports, reflections, research projects, web content, lesson plans, slideshows, poster presentations, resumes, and other digital or print texts. To schedule a free appointment to discuss your writing, go to bsu.edu/writingcenter. Online and in-person appointments are available; however, plan ahead because appointments book quickly!

The Basic Needs Hub
If you are having difficulty affording enough food, do not have a safe and reliable place to sleep, and/or experiencing an emergency or crisis, help is available through the Basic Needs Hub. The Basic Needs Hub has information, resources, and provides individualized support to students. To talk with a supportive staff member about your experience, receive one on one assistance, or learn more about resources, you can submit a Basic Needs Assistance Form.

The Counseling Center
The Ball State University Counseling Center offers free and confidential services to all students. The Counseling Center is located in Lucina Hall, Room 320. To schedule an appointment, you can contact us at 765-285-1736. Ball State also offers a 24/7 Crisis Line, which can be reached at 765-285-HOPE (4673). The Crisis Line is a mental health resource for those who are struggling with any mental health concerns, including thoughts of self-harm and/or suicide.
At the Ball State Counseling Center, we see students for a variety of reasons, some of which include homesickness, relationship concerns, anxiety, and depression. At your first appointment, you will work with a therapist to create a plan that will connect you with resources that best fit your needs. We assist students with getting connected to therapy at our Center as well as connecting students to self-help resources, other on-campus resources, and community-based resources. All Ball State students also have access to several on-demand, self-help resources through a variety of different platforms. All of these resources, including a direct link to our website, can be found **here**.

The Speaking Center
The Speaking Center is a free resource available to all members of the BSU community wanting to improve their public speaking abilities. We offer personalized coaching designed to help you become a more confident and effective speaker. Our trained coaches provide constructive feedback and support throughout the entire speech preparation process, whether you are in the early stages of brainstorming ideas and organizing your thoughts, or you need to practice your delivery and refine your message.

The Center is in the David Letterman Communication and Media Building, room 302. To schedule an appointment, please access us through your Navigate app or use this direct link to sign up for a time**.** Appointments are available both in person and on Zoom. Appointments are available in person, on Zoom, and in virtual reality (VR) for those interested in practicing in an immersive speaking environment.

Canvas Accessibility
Canvas provides a user experience that is easy, simple, and intuitive. Special attention has been paid to making Canvas screen-readable. The Rich Content Editor encourages users to create accessible content pages (i.e. text formatting is accomplished using styles). Canvas is designed to allow limited customization of colors and schemes to be accessible for all users. The National Federation of the Blind granted Canvas the Gold Level Web Certification in 2010. **Find more information by visiting the Canvas Voluntary Product Accessibility Template (VPAT).**

FERPA and Privacy
As a student, your educational records are considered confidential. Under FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act), your records are confidential and protected. Under most circumstances, your records will not be released without your written and signed consent. However, some directory information may be released to third parties without your prior consent unless a written request to restrict this is on file. You can learn more about student rights to privacy by reading **Ball State's FERPA and Privacy and Protection.**