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Syllabus - Business of Media - Spring 2025 revised 1

Media Studies (Queens College CUNY)



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Media Studies 264 **The Business of Media**
Multiple (Mara Einstein, JV Fuqua +++) **Spring 2025**
Thursday, 1:40 – 3:10 synchronous

Office: G-102A
Phone: 718-997-2976
Office Hours: Monday 12-1, and by appointment
E-mail: mara.einstein@qc.cuny.edu, also feel free to approach other professors. You can get their office hours through the Media Studies department

Description:
This course will provide students with an in-depth understanding of the business models and practices of various segments of the media industry. It will focus on the economics and organizational structures underlying the rapidly changing media business and how those structures affect content and distribution. Media categories to be examined include television (broadcast, cable, satellite), publishing, film, music, and the Internet. Because of its economic impact on most of these segments, we will also examine the advertising and marketing industries.

Over the course of the semester, we will track industry trends and strategies. To that end, students are expected to make on-going use of trade and industry publications, corporate reports and industry surveys, and the popular press as part of their preparation for class and research.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- To learn the basic concepts, economics, terms, and principles that apply to the entertainment industry.
- To analyze the activities and strategies of the leading entertainment and media conglomerates through articles, case studies, and lectures.
- To become familiar with key strategic and marketing issues that cut across all the sectors of the entertainment industry.

Requirements:
Classroom Norms Please put on your camera

Plagiarism:
It is assumed that all work submitted is the original work of the student whose name appears on it. Plagiarism and other acts of dishonesty—including using ChatGPT or other AI technology—will result in an automatic failing grade for the assignment and may incur further academic penalties, including a failing grade for the course and disciplinary action.

Assignments:

- Late assignments will either not be accepted or will incur a grade penalty unless due to documented serious illness or family emergency. Exceptions to this policy for reasons of religious observance or civic obligation will only be made available when the assignment

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cannot reasonably be completed prior to the due date and you make arrangements for late submission in advance.

Class Assignments and Evaluation

Attendance, Participation, Periodic Pop Quizzes/reader response	10%
Short papers (4) on current media issues	20%
Major Research Assignment (Paper/Presentation)	50%
Midterm Exam	20%

(Explanation for assignments are at the end of the syllabus)

REQUIRED AND SUPPLEMENTAL READINGS

Required Books and Readings:

Derek, Johnson. *From Networks to Netflix*. (2nd Edition). Taylor & Francis, 2022.

Course Documents as posted on Blackboard

EXTRA CREDIT: Attend a Center for Communications (http://www.cencom.org/) seminar and write a 2-page paper describing the event and how it contributed to your understanding of media industries. Present your findings to the class.

Additional Course material:

At least one "trade" publication of your choosing

Supplemental Trade Publications and Trade Association Resources are available.

Here are sites where you can find some interesting industry information:

Media Industries Project (MIP): http://www.carseywolf.ucsb.edu/mip

Cynopsis (for TV): http://www.cynopsis.com/

The Paley Center: http://www.paleycenter.org/

(links to additional sources are in the last slide other PPT named Lecture 1)

Evaluation Standards

A = Outstanding. "A" students demonstrate commitment to class in attendance, participation, and preparation; this means virtually perfect attendance, reading assignments fully, and showing interest during class time. They ask questions, are able to connect past learning with the present, show initiative, and aren't afraid to be creative. Written work demonstrates comprehensive and solid understanding of the material, and presents thoughtful interpretations, well-focused and original insights, and well-reasoned commentary and analysis. Students also demonstrate skillful use of source materials, illuminating examples and illustrations, fluent expression, and few grammatical errors. [A = 94-100 points; A- = 90-93]

B = Good. "B" students may miss class from time to time, but are generally prepared and try to participate. Their commitment to class may vary: at times they may seem bored or distracted, at other times engaged and involved. They have interest in the subject and have the ability to master scholarly material. Written work demonstrates an accurate understanding of the material, presents a reasonable degree of insight and broad levels of analysis. Work reflects competence, but stays at a general or predictable level of understanding. Source materials, examples, illustrations, are used appropriately and articulation/writing is clear. Papers have been carefully proofread. [B+ = 87-89; B = 84-86; B- = 80-83]

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C = Fair. “C” students miss class too frequently and show little interest in course readings and class discussion. They are not visibly committed to class and body language often expresses boredom. Written work is superficial, incomplete, or expresses some significant errors or weaknesses. Source materials may be used inadequately or inappropriately, and arguments lack concrete, specific examples and illustrations. Writing/articulation is vague, hard to follow, or cluttered with technical errors. [C+ = 77-79; C = 74-76; C- = 70-73]

D = A student in difficulty. “D” students miss class frequently, participate rarely, show disinterest, and have generally misunderstood much of we have done, said, and/or read (if they prepared or read anything to begin with). Written work demonstrates serious errors in understanding, fails to express the most rudimentary aspects of the material, and may contain little logical development in its arguments. Sources may be used inappropriately or not at all, and writing/articulation appears deficient.
[D+ = 67-69; D = 64-66]

F = Failed. Work not submitted. This is also the grade for plagiarized work or work that breaches CUNY policy on academic honesty. [F = 63 and below]

RE-GRADING
The process of assigning grades is intended to be one of unbiased evaluation. Students are encouraged to respect the integrity and authority of the professor’s grading system and are discouraged from pursuing arbitrary challenges to it.

If you believe an inadvertent error has been made in the grading of an individual assignment or in assessing an overall course grade, a request to have the grade re-evaluated may be submitted. You must submit such requests in writing to me within 7 days of receiving the grade, including a brief written statement of why you believe that an error in grading has been made.

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Class Meetings – SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Topic	Readings	Assignments
2/6 – Introduction Intro to Media economics/TV industry structure	*Networks to Netflix*: Chapter 2 (ABC: Crisis, Risk, and the Logics of Change) Adam Conover: https://www.tiktok.com/@adamconover/video/7264227179083386155?lang=en **Suggested Reading:** https://collegegrad.com/industries/broadcasting#nature **In Class:** **1) Review Sources for learning about the Media Biz --** Media Post, TV Newscheck, Variety, Next TV, CNBC, WSJ, NYT **2)** Review Current issues assignment *Television Accounts for Less Than Half of U.S. Viewing Time for the First Time* https://www.wsj.com/articles/television-accounts-for-less-than-half-of-u-s-viewing-time-for-the-first-time-158a1fc?page=1	
2/13 –The Media Landscape/ Economics Prof. Fuqua	Mintel Research – The Media Landscape – US 2023 **[BB]** **Havens & Lotz --** Chapter 5 (Economic Conditions) **[BB]** **In Class: -** 1) chart of media revenue streams	**NOTE**: While reading, make note of terminology you do not know.

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	2) Discuss final group assignment	
2/20 – Media regulation --Media Concentration --Media Ownership Prof. Fuqua	**Havens & Lotz:** Chapter 4 (Regulation of Media) **[BB]** ***Network to Netflix*:** Chapter 36: HBO Max: Media Conglomerates and the Organizational Logic of Streaming **Screen in class:** https://billmoyers.com/story/media-consolidation-should-anyone-care/ **In Class**: Discuss FCC, ownership, impact on content	**Due:** **Current Issues #1** – Media Economics or Regulation
2/27 – Streaming Wars Prof Cohen	***Network to Netflix***: OTV Chapter by AJ Christian Selections from Binge Times: Inside Hollywood's Furious Billion-Dollar Battle to Take Down Netflix by Dade Hayes and Dawn Chmielewski	
3/6	**NO CLASS (Follows a Monday schedule)**	
3/13 Streaming Wars (cont.) Prof. Cohen	The Apple-Amazon-Google Streaming O.S. Mega War by Juila Alexander https://puck.news/the-apple-amazon-google-streaming-o-s-mega-war/ May have guest in this class session.	**Current Issue #2** – TV industry, TV company, or streaming company
3/20 Amazon: The new economics?	***Buy Now*: Chapter 3** – From Bookseller to Behemoth **[BB]** ***Buy Now*: Chapter 5** – Watch Now **[BB]** View: Amazon Empire: The Rise and Reign of Jeff Bezos (full	

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Prof. Einstein	documentary) | PBS FRONTLINE	
3/27 Music Prof. Herzog	Donald Passman, *All You Need to Know About the Music Business*, 11th ed. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2023) [excerpts]. Wonjung Min et al, "Transcultural Fandom of the Korean Wave in Latin America," *Media, Culture & Society* 41.5 (2019), 604–619.	**Due:** **Current Issues #3** – Amazon, publishing, or Music
4/3 – Advertising & Marketing Industry Prof. Einstein	Hubspot: The State of Marketing 2025 **[B]** IAB 2024 DIGITAL VIDEO AD SPEND & STRATEGY REPORT **[B]** *Networks to Netflix***:** Chapter 13: Bravo brand	
4/10 – Prepping for Online	**MIDTERM** **View:** *Coded bias* (Netflix)	
4/17	**NO CLASS – Spring Break**	
4/24 – Publishing Prof. Einstein	**Marketline: Publishing in the United States 2024 [BB]** **https://www.ala.org/bbooks/book-ban-data** **Recommended:** https://collegegrad.com/industries/publishing	
5/1 –Movies	*Readings TBD*	

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Prof. Cornell	**Recommended Reading and viewing:** https://collegegrad.com/industries/motion-picture-and-video	
5/8 Podcasting Prof. Chapdelaine	Readings TBD	**Due:** **Current Issues #4 –** Social Media/ Digital
5/15 Social Media Prof. Einstein	**Hubspot, others, TBD**	

CURRENT EVENT PAPERS

From news sources, like the Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, or industry trade publications, such as *The Hollywood Reporter*, or *Variety,* you will pick an article that relates to an important business issue related to the topic. For example, if the topic is television, you might find an article about how the FCC is targeting PBS and NPR. It would NOT be appropriate to select an article about a new show going into production or who won a Golden Globe.

After you have selected your article, write a one-page (3-5 paragraphs) summary and analysis about an article that has appeared in your magazine/on the website. We will do this 5 times during the semester. This assignment does 3 things: gets you into a habit of looking at news, 2) teaches you the language of the industry, and 3) allows you to learn how to summarize content similar to an executive summary (which you will need to do for your final paper). **STUDENTS WILL BE ASKED RANDOMLY TO GIVE HIGHLIGHTS FROM THEIR PAPERS.**

GROUP PROJECTS

Guidelines for Group Projects

Business activities involve group effort. Consequently, learning how to work effectively in a group is a critical part of your education. **(NOTE: If you choose to write an individual paper because this is an online class, that is fine. The difference between a group paper and an individual paper will appear bolded in parentheses.)**

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Every member is expected to carry an equal share of the group's workload. As such, it is in your interest to be involved in all aspects of the project. Even if you divide the work rather than work on each piece together, you are still responsible for each part. The group project (paper) will be graded as a whole: Its different components will not be graded separately.

It is recommended that each group establish ground rules early in the process to facilitate your joint work including a problem-solving process for handling conflicts. In the infrequent case where you believe that a group member is not carrying out his or her fair share of work, you are urged not to permit problems to develop to a point where they become serious. If you cannot resolve conflicts internally after your best efforts, they should be brought to my attention and I will work with you to find a resolution.

You will be asked to complete a peer evaluation form to evaluate the contribution of each of your group members (including your own contribution). If there is consensus that a group member did not contribute a fair share of work to the project, I will consider this feedback during grading.

TERM PAPER
DECONSTRUCTING the ENTERTAINMENT AND MEDIA INDUSTRY
The entertainment and media industry is made up of more than 9 sectors. We will cover several of them in this class in great detail from an institutional perspective. In addition, we will examine sources of subsidiary revenue, including merchandising, licensing, and branding integration. This is primarily a survey course.

To gain a more detailed understanding, the group paper will require more research, analysis, and an understanding of a sub-segment of one of these sectors. Technology, especially social media, streaming, and AI, has had an incredible impact. Consolidation and convergence are rampant. Labor issues have become front and center, and even the recent fires in Los Angeles are contributing to changes in the industry.

To understand this phenomenon, we need to analyze the companies, their parts, and the importance of these within the sectors in which they operate. The entertainment and media industry is on the precipice of considerable change.

TERM PAPER ASSIGNMENT **<u>Due May 15 (Last day of class)</u>**
A 20-page paper, double-spaced with a bibliography (be sure these a correct citations and not simply web links), and any exhibits or graphs you want to include. (**Individual papers are 12 pages.**) The paper will be graded based on content, clarity, grammar, spelling, organization, and analytical and innovative thinking. Where material has been excerpted, footnotes must be used.

Optimally, there should be four members in your team. If it is less, let us know. The general categories from which companies will be selected are listed below. Each team will select one important and/or interesting company to analyze. If you choose a large conglomerate, you will focus your paper on just 2 or 3 divisions of the company, with only an overview of the entire company for context. **(If you are doing an individual paper, you should select a smaller company or a division within a company and not a major media conglomerate.)**

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For example, if you are working in a group, you could pick the Disney Company. **(Individuals could pick Marvel Studios or Disney Theme Parks.)**

You will have some time during the first three classes to shift between teams and then maintain that position through the balance of the term.

TEAM / SECTORS

FEATURE FILM	ANIMATION
BROADCAST TV & LOCAL	STREAMING (OTT, SVOD, AVOD)
CABLE/SATELLITE	SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT
PRINT	MUSIC LABELS /STREAMING
GAMING	

TERM PAPER STRUCTURE

The term paper must include a brief background on the sector, background about the company, what are the core competencies of the company, strengthes and weaknesses, list and examine the competition (major three or four companies in the sector), its growth potential, its challenges, and a recent successful business move or recent unsuccessful one.

Here is a purely illustrative way to organize the paper:

1- 2 pages – executive summary
2 - 3 pages giving an overview of the sector
4 pages on the company selected for analysis. This should (minimally) include:

- History of the company
- Major mergers or acquisitions and their impact on the company
- Explanation of the sectors in which the company operates

3 pages on top/leading competitors (no more than four companies) in the sector
4 (or more) pages on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges facing the company. This is a deep dive into a SWOT analysis of your company.
2-3 pages future trends in the industry/sector
2 pages explaining the company's current strategy for revenue growth and any plans they have in place to respond to upcoming trends
1-2 pages that take a position on the company's strategy and growth potential over the next 3-5 years and defend that position.
Plus charts, graphs, bibliography

INDIVIDUAL PAPER

1 page – executive summary
1 page – overview of the sector
1- 2 pages on the company selected for analysis. This should (minimally) include:

- History of the company
- Major mergers or acquisitions and their impact on the company
- Explanation of the sectors in which the company operates

2 pages on top/leading competitors (no more than four companies) in the sector
2 pages on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges facing the company. This is a deep dive into a SWOT analysis of your company.

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2 pages future trends
2 pages explaining the company's current strategy for revenue growth and any plans they have in place to respond to upcoming trends
1 page that takes a position on the company's strategy and growth potential over the next 3-5 years and defend that position.
Plus charts, graphs, bibliography

Source Material:
Make sure while researching your company that you examine the company's most recent annual report, news releases, analyst reports, and other publicly available documents. You may also use course material, but that should primarily be for background.

Your assignment is expected to reflect your understanding and comprehension of the material covered in this course. This includes all the readings, supplementary handouts, and the lectures. Most of the detailed information concerning the various aspects of the course curriculum are contained in the readings provided. Your assignment should represent the cumulative work product of this course and incorporate that information.

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