



Section 700 CRN: 14346

This is a Kent State University Trumbull campus course. This course is asynchronous and 100% online.

Updated: January 12, 2026

Spring 2026 Course Syllabus

Dr. Carol L. Robinson

BEST WAYS TO CONTACT ME:

- **Do not send me messages from within Canvas or via KSU Google Chat!** It is likely I will not see the message in a timely manner.
- The best way to communicate with me is by signing up for a KSU Google Chat **appointment**.
- The second best way to communicate with me is by sending me an email (clrobins@kent.edu).

First Day of Classes: January 12

Last Day to Add a Full Term Class or Change Sections: January 18

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day (No Classes): January 19

Spring Break (No Classes): March 9-15

Last Day to Withdraw ("W" grade): March 29

Midterm Grades Available: after March 1

Last Day of Classes: May 3

Final Exams Week: May 4-10

Final Grades Available: on or after May 13

Dr. Robinson's Cyberspace:

<https://cyberspacerobinson.org/>

Email: clrobins@kent.edu

Office Phone: 330-675-8907

Office Hours: I am available each week of the semester for online real-time text conferences (KSU Google Chat). *Times vary and are strictly by appointment. See the Course Site for more information.*

Course Description

Prerequisite: None.

This course fosters critical understanding of mass media in their historical, ideological, economic and cultural contexts—examining what forces influence media and how media influence consumers. Students will learn about the role of mass media in American history, how technological and economic factors influence mass media industries and consumers (particularly in terms of content), about the relationship between media providers and their respective audiences, about basic media literacy skills and the various forms of media communication, and to recognize new and ongoing diversity issues involving mass media communication in society.

From targeted advertising and viral videos to hashtags and Snapchat filters, the media has become a ubiquitous force in American culture and society, infiltrating virtually every aspect of our existence. Yet we don't often critically examine the values, norms, and ideologies that are disseminated through the media, or how they impact our everyday lives. This course aims to help you become more knowledgeable and critical consumers of mass media by introducing you to key issues, concepts and methods in media studies. We will explore the historical evolution of mass media into their current forms; the technological and economic forces that shape media industries; the legal and ethical issues at play in the media; and the role of mass media in a democratic society.

Media Power and Culture is included in the university's list of courses for the Kent Core and has been designed as a domestic diversity course. One of the key objectives of this course is to examine how media is impacted by intersecting systems of power including race, class, gender, sexuality, nationality, and disability. The word "power" in the course title can be interpreted in three ways: First, the course explores the powers that shape mass media: social, political, cultural, and economic. Second, the course



explores the power media have to shape the perceptions and values of the audience. Finally, this course empowers Kent State University students to become more proactive media *users*, rather than passive media *consumers*. This course will help you develop critical media literacy skills that you can put to use in your own life as a Kent State student and beyond.

This is a Kent Core Social Science course: This course may be used to satisfy a Kent Core requirement. The Kent Core as a whole is intended to broaden intellectual perspectives, foster ethical and humanitarian values, and prepare students for responsible citizenship and productive careers.

This is a KSU Designated Diversity course: This course may be used to fulfilled the requirement for Diversity Domestic. Diversity courses provide opportunities for students to learn about such matters as the history, culture, values and notable achievements of people other than those of their own national origin, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, age, gender, physical and mental ability, and social class. Diversity courses also provide opportunities to examine problems and issues that may arise from differences, and opportunities to learn how to deal constructively with them.

Learning Outcomes

When you are finished with the course, you should be able to:

- understand the role of mass media in American history, democracy and culture
- identify how technological and economic factors influence mass media industries, consumers and content
- interpret the relationships between media providers and their respective audiences
- use media literacy skills to critically analyze media content
- differentiate among various forms of mass media such as entertainment, journalism, advertising and public relations
- analyze the portrayals of underrepresented groups in both historic and contemporary mass media content
- demonstrate how social norms of race, class, gender, sexuality and disability are shaped by mass media

Required Course Materials & Structure

- You *must* have consistent use of a **reliable personal computer and Internet access. Computer technology issues are not a valid excuse for missed or delayed work.** *If you do not own a computer, please remember that there is technical and even emergency fund support at the Trumbull campus (see the links provided, or email me for more details).*
- This course makes use of the following:
 - <https://cyberspacerobinson.org/courses/mpc/>
 - the Course Syllabus
 - the Course Plan,
 - all Lessons (password protected: find the password in the START HERE module in Canvas)
 - all assignments, reading and viewing materials (there is no textbook)
 - **KSU Canvas**
 - posted grades
 - announcements
 - lessons password
 - links to the external course site materials
 - **KSU Google Chat** (for optional online conferences)
 - **WeJoinIn** Appointments Sign-up Sheets (for online and on-land conferences)



Course Time and Location

This course is asynchronous: you may work on the lessons and assignments at any time of the day or night that you like. However, most of these lessons and assignments must be completed by certain dates. Furthermore, **the class is functioning on the time zone for Kent, Ohio.** If you are in a different time zone, you should check a web site (such as The World Clock at <http://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/>) to make sure that you submit your work on time.

Enrollment

University policy requires all students to be officially registered in each class they are attending. Students who are not officially registered for a course by published deadlines should not be attending classes and will not receive credit or a grade for the course. Each student must confirm enrollment by checking his/her class schedule (using Student Tools in FlashLine) prior to the deadline indicated. Registration errors must be corrected prior to the deadline.

Academic Engagement Verification

In compliance with federal regulations, the University is required to report that enrolled students have participated in at least one academically related activity. If no academic activity is submitted by the end of the fourth week of the semester (for a full-term course) then a grade of NF (Never attended F) will be assigned. The NF mark will count as an F in computing grade point averages. Students who have received an NF mark will lose their access to Canvas.

To avoid an NF mark, students must participate in at least one academic activity as soon as possible and no later than the end of the fourth week. Examples of some of the acceptable academically related activity are: physically attended the course (does not apply to online courses), submitted an academic assignment, completed an interactive tutorial, initiated contact with the instructor to ask a question about the academic subject matter, submitted an exam or quiz, participated in an online discussion about academic matters.

Student Responsibilities

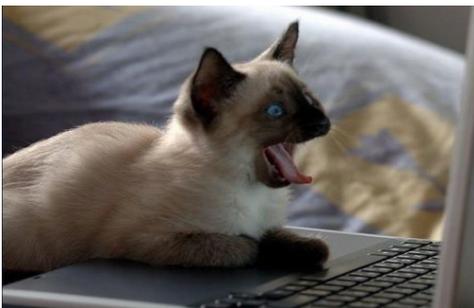
- Manage your time wisely.
- Read this Course Syllabus and the Course Plan—carefully.
- Follow the directions for all assignments—thoroughly.
- Complete all lessons and assignments.



SAS: Student Accessibility Services

University policy 3342-3-01.3 requires that students with disabilities be provided reasonable accommodations to ensure their equal access to course content. If you have a documented disability and require accommodations, please contact the instructor at the beginning of the semester to make arrangements for necessary classroom adjustments. Please note, you must first verify your eligibility for these through Student Accessibility Services (contact Elaine M. Shively at 330-675-8932 or visit <http://www.kent.edu/trumbull/student-accessibility-service>) for more information on registration procedures.

Course Work & Conduct



“For every credit hour, students are expected to spend 2 – 3 hours per week working outside of class. For example, for a 3 credit hour class, students should expect to put in 6 – 9 hours per week outside of class, studying or doing assignments” ([KSU Protect Your GPA](#)). In this course we will view, read, think, and write about issues of power and oppression—as they exist in media and are managed by culture. This work is often difficult and uncomfortable, because some of the most important learning happens when we are pushed out of our comfort zones. You are encouraged to challenge yourself in this course while staying mindful of your own limits and boundaries. I will promote respectful engagement in which ideas will be exchanged and debated. However, some of the issues we cover in class might be controversial or emotional for some members of the class. It is therefore essential to show respect for your classmates and the course community—this is a requirement for the class. Students are expected to conduct themselves in a mature and professional manner, and comments that are racist, classist, sexist, heterosexist, ableist, transphobic, or otherwise discriminatory will not be tolerated.



A Few Words Regarding Stress and Attitude

If you become stressed or find yourself not doing well in the course, don't “disappear” from the class. Instead, please do not hesitate to contact me. I am here for you. If you work hard, I will work hard to help you do as well as possible in the course. However, if you stop doing the course work, I will have no choice than to assume that you have given up on the course, and I will begin to give up on you. Even then, however, if you make the effort to reach out to me for help, as long as it is not too late, I will do what I can to help you succeed.

Instructor Availability and Response Time

This semester, in addition to my office hours, I plan to be on campus most of the day on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. If you can't find me in my office, it is likely that I am in the Digital Media Production Center (next to the Library). I am frequently available for online conferences (text-chat) via KSU Google Chat. Feel free to sign up for a conference appointment any time! If none of the appointment times work for you, please email me with times that you are available. Alternatively, feel free to email me whenever you have questions or concerns (clrobins@kent.edu). As a rule, I respond rather quickly to emails, often within the same hour. However, if you email me over the weekend (Friday afternoon to Sunday afternoon), I am likely to respond less quickly, but will do so as soon as I am able. Please allow for at least 48 hours response time. I am here for you.



Grade Distribution

Media Analyses (10% or 100 points, each)	70%	700 points
Final Exam	30%	300 points
	100%	1000 points

Some Assignment Details

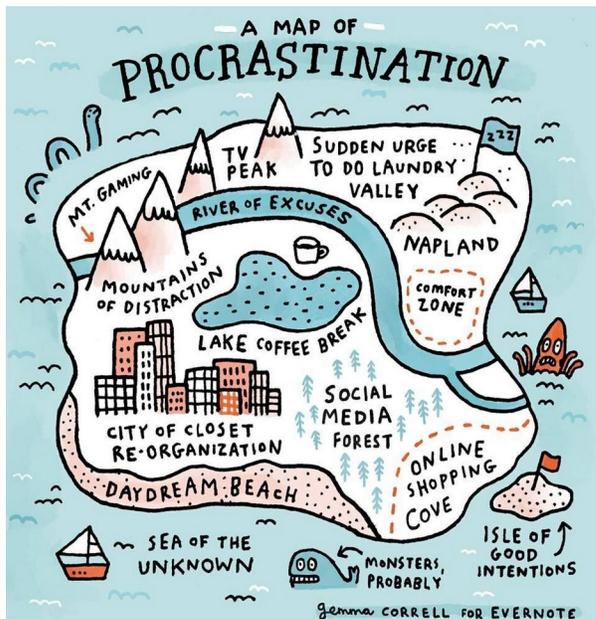
Media Analyses | 70% (700 points; each analysis is worth 100 points)

One of the goals of this course is to increase your ability to engage with various forms of media. Eight times during the semester, you will be responsible for analyzing media, using concepts and case studies from the course. Sometimes you will be asked to analyze a “top story” (the most “important” news on a particular day). For each assignment, you will have the opportunity to express your analysis in one of three ways: in a 1000-1500 word essay, or 3-5 minute video, or a set of 30-50 slides (Google Slides, PowerPoint,...). Specific assignment guidelines and a grading rubric will be posted on the course main site, linked to the Course Plan.

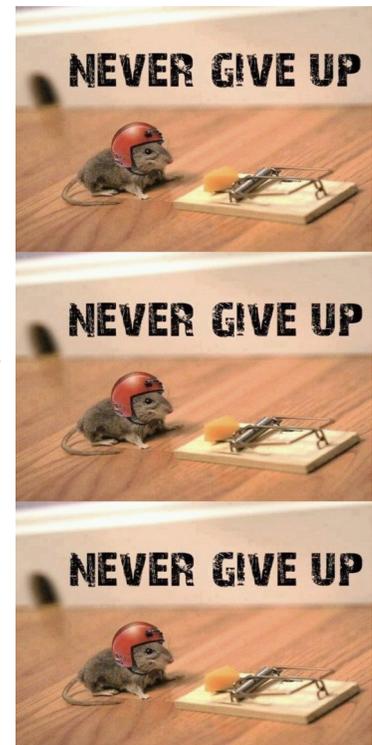
Final Exam | 30% (300 points)

This exam is comprehensive, testing your knowledge of all course material covered. It will be structured very much like the Media Analyses work, but there will also be a short answer section, covering concepts and terminology. This exam is designed as an “opened books/opened notes” essay style exam. The Final Exam may only be submitted in written form (no alternative media submissions).

Regarding Missed, Late, or Incomplete Work



Late work will be accepted for a period of time after the due date; however, points will be deducted for late submissions. For each day the work is late: 3% (1.5 out of a possible 50 points, 3 out of a possible 100 points, 6 out of a possible 200 points) will be deducted from the grade. **No late work will be accepted if shared eight days or later past the due date**, and no work will be accepted after **May 9, 2026**.



Course Grades

No grade ever goes above the level of an A+ (never above 100/100 possible points, for example); likewise, no graded work ever goes below the upper level of an F points (never below 55/100 points, for example); however, if an assignment is never submitted, or is submitted too late to be graded, it will receive ZERO points. If your final course score is 64-63%, you will earn a D for the course; if your final course score is 62-60%, you will earn an F for the course. All assignments will be weighted according to the percentage value. All assignments will be evaluated on a 100 point scale as follows:

GRADE	Media Analyses (Each)	Final Exam	FINAL GRADE Conversion
A+	100-97	300-289	4.0
A	96-94	288-280	4
A-	93-90	279-268	3.7
B+	89-87	267-259	3.3
B	86-84	258-250	3.0
B-	83-80	249-238	2.7
C+	79-77	237-229	2.3
C	76-74	228-220	2.0
C-	73-70	219-208	1.7
D+	69-67	207-199	1.3
D	66-64	198-190	1.0
D-	63-60	189-166	***
F	55	165	0.0

Please see individual assignments for how items are evaluated (grading rubrics).

Statements on Cheating and Plagiarism

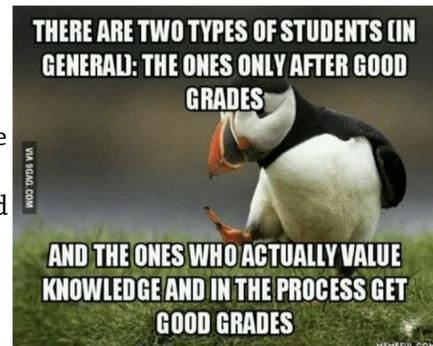
University policy 3342-3-01.8 deals with the problem of academic dishonesty, cheating, and plagiarism. None of these will be tolerated in this class. The sanctions provided for in this policy will be used to deal with any violations. If you have questions, please read the policy at http://www.kent.edu/policyreg/policydetails.cfm?customel_datapageid_1976529=2037779 and/or ask your instructor. Plagiarism is the act of using someone else's thoughts, words, drawings,... without giving that person due credit.

Even if you use only a tiny part of that person's expression, you must give credit for that expression. Plagiarism carries a variety of sanctions, ranging from lowering of a grade to dismissal from the university.

The [School of Media and Journalism](#) deals in publishable works and educates its students for various aspects of publishing and other communications professions.

Within this framework, every student must be aware of the following rules and definitions while in school or on the job:

- **Fabrication** is, in phrasing first used by the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, the cardinal sin. Faking quotations, faking "facts," reporting things that did not happen are not only reprehensible; they could be actionable in court.
- **Plagiarizing**, as defined by Webster, is "to steal and pass off as one's own the ideas or words of another". It is unethical and, in cases involving creative work, usually illegal. One of the worst sins a communications practitioner may commit is to plagiarize the work of another – to steal his/her words, thought, or outline and pass them off as his/her own.
- **Cheating** includes the submission of work in which you have received material and substantive assistance from others, or copied the work of others, when the assignment was intended to be completed by you alone. Unless specifically designated as a group project, all assignments for this course are intended to be the result of your individual efforts.
- **Duplicating work** is defined as submitting the same work to more than one instructor (or publication) without the prior knowledge and agreement of both.



Commission of any of these offenses while in school is grounds for disciplinary action. If the complaint is upheld, a variety of punishments may be imposed, from a reprimand to a lowered or failing grade in the course to dismissal from the university. Please refer to Kent State University's Policy Register Section 3-01.8 regarding plagiarism:

<https://www.kent.edu/policyreg/administrative-policy-regarding-student-cheating-and-plagiarism> for more information.

MDJ Program Statement:

As a program accredited by the Accrediting Council for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, we are committed to developing a curriculum designed to meet twelve professional competencies. This course, as part of a larger program, contributes to our development of:

thoughtful, Proficient Communicators

- who write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve
- who demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications
- who understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information
- who apply current tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work, and to understand the digital world

who are creative, critical thinkers

- thinking critically
- thinking creatively
- thinking independently

trained to uncover and evaluate information

- conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work
- critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical coherence
- apply basic numerical and statistical concepts

within a legal and ethical framework

- understanding and applying the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press in the United States, as well as receive instruction in and understand the range of systems of freedom of expression around the world, including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power, and to assemble and petition for redress of grievances
- demonstrating an understanding of professional ethical principles and working ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness, and diversity

in a diverse and global society.

- demonstrating an understanding of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and (as appropriate) other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications
- ***demonstrating an understanding of the diversity of people and cultures of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society.***

Intellectual Property and Privacy

Intellectual property displayed or distributed to students during this course (including but not limited to PowerPoint presentations, notes, quizzes, examinations) by the professor/lecturer/instructor remains the intellectual property of the professor/lecturer/instructor. This means the student may not distribute, publish or provide such intellectual property to any other person or entity for any reason, commercial or otherwise, without the express written permission of the professor/lecturer/instructor. Additionally, students may not distribute or publish recordings and/or links to live classroom presentations, lectures, and/or class discussions.

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

FERPA sets forth requirements regarding the privacy of student records. FERPA governs both the access to and release of those records and the information they contain. Under FERPA, faculty have a legal responsibility to protect the confidentiality of student records even from parents and guardians. For additional information about FERPA, please visit the university Registrar's webpage.

Request for Religious Accommodations

The University welcomes individuals from all different faiths, philosophies, religious traditions, and other systems of belief, and supports their respective practices. In compliance with University policy and the Ohio Revised Code, the University permits students to request class absences for up to three (3) days, per term, in order to participate in organized activities conducted under the auspices of a religious denomination, church, or other religious or spiritual organization. Students will not be penalized as a result of any of these excused absences. The request for excusal must be made, in writing, no later than fourteen (14) days after the first day of instruction in a particular course and include the date(s) of each proposed absence or request for alternative religious accommodation. The request must clearly state that the proposed absence is to participate in religious activities. The request must also provide the particular accommodation(s) you desire. You will be notified by me if your request for accommodation is approved, or if it is approved with modification. I will work with you in an effort to arrange a mutually agreeable alternative arrangement. For more information regarding this Policy you may contact the Student Ombuds (ombuds@kent.edu).

A Few More Notes from Dr. Robinson:

- **At any time during the semester, please feel free to email me (clrobins@kent.edu), or to sign up for an appointment to meet with me via KSU Google Hangouts/Meet, if you have questions or concerns!**
- I believe that it is important for all students to feel that they belong in this learning environment.
- I am committed to the creation and maintenance of a learning space that welcomes all students to be their authentic selves. We are all responsible for creating this learning community in which individuals feel that they can honestly and openly share their perspectives.
- This course is a learning environment where all will be treated with respect and dignity, and where all individuals will have the opportunity to succeed.
- The differing experiences, backgrounds, and perspectives that each student brings to this course are viewed as strengths that benefit our learning. I am committed to honoring each student as an individual who contributes to our collective learning in unique and valuable ways.
- I expect students to engage in dialogue that is respectful of all (peers and professor) and to practice civility in all interactions. This means:
 - debating ideas, not people
 - listening without interruption
 - advocating for one's ideas without making personal attacks
 - pointing out why you disagree with a viewpoint in a civilized and rational voice.
- Practicing respect and kindness is a priority.



By the way, this is my dog, Betty Zing (a basset hound). She's the course mascot.



If you work hard, I will work hard to help you succeed!

No work will be accepted after May 9, 2026 (11:59pm, EST)!