

**223.26 • Media and Society** (3 hrs.)  
Professor: Dennis Hiebert, Ph.D.  
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Providence College  
Winter Session, 2011  
Tuesdays & Fridays 3:20  
Lecture Theatre

## SYLLABUS

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### A. Calendar Description of the Course

An interpretive and critical examination of the media's role in society that gives particular attention to media dimensions, processes, institutions, and texts, with reference to their content, production, circulation, and consumption. (Cross-credited with the Department of Professional Studies, Communications and Media.)

### B. Purpose of the Course

Upon completion of this course, the student should be able to:

1. identify the main public media in Canada, what they are mandated to do, and what they really do in and for Canadian society, and how;
2. compare the various theoretical perspectives and methods employed by sociologists and communications theorists to locate and explain media in their social context;
3. describe how public media are shaped by society, and how media in return, as processes of persuasion within the context of power and politics, shape society;
4. discuss the major issues of the content (media discourses) of contemporary media with reference to the perspectives and people represented in them;
5. demonstrate an appreciative and critical Christian understanding of the different types of public communication processes and technologies, and their role in Christian life;
6. interpret his or her own production and consumption of media, and thereby enhance self-understanding;
7. express encouragement toward her or his own potential for more enlightened and satisfactory human relationships through media;
8. display an appreciation of and commitment to the mediated well-being of both individuals and society.

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#### *Note re. Syllabus:*

It is the student's responsibility to retain their course syllabi for use as support for possible future applications to other educational institutions for transfer of credit.

## C. Textbooks

### REQUIRED:

O'Shaughnessy, Michael, and Jane Stadler. 2009. *Media and Society: An Introduction*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Oxford University Press.

Hipps, Shane. 2009. *Flickering Pixels: How Technology Shapes Your Faith*. Zondervan.

All assigned collateral readings are available as PDF documents under Course Readings at [www.provsoc.org](http://www.provsoc.org).

### RECOMMENDED:

Bordwell, D., and K. Thompson. 2008. *Film Art: An Introduction*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed. McGraw-Hill.

Brabazon, T. 2007. *The University of Google: Education in a (post)Information Age*. Aldershot.

Burgess, Jean, Joshua Green, Henry Jenkins, and John Hartley. 2009. *YouTube: Online Video and Participatory Culture*. Polity Press.

Campbell, Heidi. 2010. *When Religion Meets New Media*. Routledge.

Chidester, D. 2005. *Authentic Fakes: Religion and American Popular Culture*. University of California Press.

Curran, James, and Michael Gurevitch, eds. 2005. *Mass Media and Society*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Hodder Arnold.

Danesi, Marcel. 2008. *Popular Culture: Introductory Perspectives*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Dawson, Lorne L., and Douglas E. Cowan, eds. 2004. *Religion Online*. Routledge.

Dill, Karen E. 2009. *How Fantasy Becomes Reality: Seeing Through Media Influence*. Oxford University Press.

Dyer-Witheford, Nick, and Grieg de Peuter. 2009. *Global Capitalism and Video Games*. University of Minnesota Press.

Hartley, J. 2007. *Television Truths: Forms of Knowledge in Popular Culture*. Wiley-Blackwell.

Haskell, David M. 2009. *Through a Lens Darkly: How the News Media Perceive and Portray Evangelicals*. Clements Academic.

- Jenkins, Henry. 2009. *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. MIT Press.
- Keane, S. 2007. *CineTech: Film, Convergence, and New Media*. Palgrave.
- Laytham, D. Brent. (forthcoming). *iPod, YouTube, Wii Play: Theological Engagements with Entertainment*. Wipf & Stock.
- Levinson, Paul. 2009. *New New Media*. Allyn & Bacon.
- McCall, J. 2007. *Viewer Discretion Advised: Taking Control of Mass Media Influences*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Morgan, David. 2007. *The Lure of Images: A History of Religion and Visual Media in America*. Routledge.
- Nesbitt-Larking, P. 2007. *Politics, Society, and the Media*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Broadview Press.
- Palfrey, John, and Urs Gasser. 2010. *Born Digital: Understanding the First Generation of Digital Natives*. Basic Books.
- Pomerance, Murray, and John Sakeris, eds. 2008. *Popping Culture*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Pearson Education Canada.
- Postman, N. 2005. *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*. Vintage Books.
- Reynolds, John Mark, and Roger Overton, eds. 2008. *The New Media Frontier: Blogging, Vlogging, and Podcasting for Christ*. Crossway Books.
- Romanowski, William D. 2007. *Eyes Wide Open: Looking for God in Popular Culture*, rev. ed. Brazos Press.
- Schultze, Quentin J., and Robert H. Woods. 2008. *Understanding Evangelical Media*. InterVarsity Press.
- Steven, Peter. 2010. *The No-Nonsense Guide to Global Media*. New Internationalist.
- Vivian, J., and P. Maurin. 2009. *The Media of Mass Communication: Fifth Canadian Edition*. Pearson Education Canada.
- Woods, Robert H., and Paul D. Patton. 2010. *Prophetically Incorrect: A Christian Introduction to Media Criticism*. Brazos Press.
- Zittrain, Jonathan. 2009. *The Future of the Internet – and How to Stop It*. Yale University Press.

NOTE:

A **Selected Bibliography** for this course is posted under “Shared Documents” on your Providence Student Portal for this course. It is comprised of separate sections on 1) Books, 2) Journals, and 3) Websites.

Students should familiarize themselves with the following **websites**:

Association for Media Literacy [www.aml.ca](http://www.aml.ca)

Media Education Foundation [www.mediaed.org](http://www.mediaed.org)

Center for Media and Democracy [www.prwatch.org/](http://www.prwatch.org/)

Christian Media Association [www.christianmedia.org](http://www.christianmedia.org)

Adbusters Culturejammer Headquarters [www.adbusters.org](http://www.adbusters.org)

## D. Course Requirements

### 1. Reading Checks (15%)

There will be a reading check at the beginning of most classes according to the class schedule below. The checks will consist of 2-3 multiple-choice questions from textbook chapters and one multiple-choice question from any collateral reading assigned. They will enable you to demonstrate whether you have completed the assigned reading on time with rudimentary comprehension. The questions can only be answered at the time they are given to the whole class; late-comers or absentees will forego the opportunity for credit for that reading. Your grade for this component of the course will accumulate throughout the semester.

### 2. Book Reflection (15%)

**Due Date: February 8**

Write an informal, personal reflection on Shane Hipps’ *Flickering Pixels: How Technology Shapes Your Faith* (4-5 pages, double-spaced, 12 point font). Your response is not expected to adhere to the conventions of a formal academic book review, nor should it merely summarize the contents of the book. You should rather discuss what you found most interesting or provocative about Hipps’ ideas, while demonstrating your comprehension of them all. Articulate what thoughts of your own the book stimulated, and conclude with your own general observations about the intersection of media and Christianity. Your paper will be graded on the quality of its content (10%) and composition (5%). Help in all aspects of essay writing can be found in the *Providence College Academic Formation Guide* available in the Providence Bookstore.

### 3. Media Fast (10%)

**Due Date: February 25**

Avoid all media you possibly can from when you wake up one morning until you wake up two mornings later (i.e. 48 hours). You may want to plan ahead, and let family and friends know that you will be out of mediated contact, and that no one else will communicate through media on your behalf. You should give your cell phone to someone else for the duration. You may want to carry a pencil and paper with you, and take note of media that you can successfully avoid and media that you cannot avoid. You should at least be able to avoid all electronic media that you control (pull media), including ICTs, though it will be more difficult to avoid all print and visual media (push media). Nevertheless, you are still expected to attend classes and maintain your normal course-related reading and writing. You are permitted to check your Providence student mailbox and Blackbaud student portal, but as with everything else, the less the better (i.e. no non-course-related emailing, text messaging, social networking, video gaming, etc). Take it as a challenge.

When the 48 hours are over, write a 3-4 page report on your experience. What behaviours did you engage in to avoid media? How successful were you? Which media were the most difficult to avoid? How did other people react to you? How did the experience make you adjust your normal way of engaging the world? How did it make you feel? Which form of media would you be most and least willing to live without, and why? What did you learn from the experience? Your grade will be based on your effort and attention to detail in media avoidance, and the depth of your reflection in your written report.

### 4. Project (20%)

**Due Date: March 22**

Do any **one** of the following options:

#### a) Research Paper

Write a short research paper (6-7 pages, double-spaced, 12 point font) on any relevant topic of your choice, using a formal style of writing (i.e. third person, etc.) and a social scientific style of documentation (see “The Bare Basics of ASA Documentation” in your Blackbaud student portal under “Shared Documents” for this course). As a general guideline, you should have approximately the same number of references as there are pages to your paper, and no more than half of the references may be from internet sources other than on-line academic journals, government agencies, or credible public organizations. See also the *Providence College Academic Formation Guide* for general writing guidelines. Topics that are significantly different than those covered in the class sessions of this course should have **prior** approval from me. Your paper should demonstrate that you have done independent research and reading beyond the assigned readings, that you have thought carefully and/or reorganized your topic in an original manner, and that you can express

yourself in writing clearly and effectively. It will be graded on the quality of its content (15%) and composition (5%).

b) Case Study

Write a 5-page case study on any relevant topic of your choice, adhering to the same guidelines for a research paper stipulated above. See the list of case studies on page *x* of the O'Shaughnessy & Stadler text for examples. Note that case studies typically have fewer references than research papers.

c) Culture Jamming Exercise

Read ahead of the class schedule in the O'Shaughnessy & Stadler text, carefully studying chapters 11-14. Then follow the instructions of the Culture Jamming Exercise on pages 225-6. Write a 5-page report of your jam.

5. Textual Analysis (10%)

**Due Date: April 8**

Select a particular text from a medium of popular culture, and write a 4 page analysis of its content, using the theoretical perspectives and/or interpretive skills developed in the classes and readings of this course. For examples, see the O'Shaughnessy & Stadler text Chapter 10: "Model Essay: Semiotic Analysis of an Advertisement," or Chapter 16: "The Language of Film: *American Beauty*." Attach a copy of the text you are analysing in photocopy (paper) or digital (CD, DVD, or URL link) form, together with your written report.

6. Exams (15% x 2 = 30%)

You will write two exams, each worth 15% of the final letter grade, and each consisting of approximately 30 multiple choice questions, 5 written definitions and examples of concepts, and one writing answer. Each exam will hold you responsible for only but all the material in the lectures and videos covered since the previous exam; the final exam is not comprehensive. See the study help posted under Shared Documents in your Blackbaud student portal entitled "How to Study for and Write (My!) Exams." The dates of the exams are as follows:

**Exam #1**

**March 1**

**Exam #2**

**April 12**

Any request to reschedule a final exam must be approved by the Academic Committee in accordance with the policy in the College Academic Calendar. ([http://www.providencecollege.ca/college/programs/registrars\\_office/calendar/](http://www.providencecollege.ca/college/programs/registrars_office/calendar/)).

## E. Grading Summary

### 1. Grade Components

Reading Checks	15%
Book Reflection	15%
Media Fast	10%
Project	20%
Textual Analysis	10%
Exams	30% (2 x 15%)

Note: The last date for **Voluntary Withdrawal** from this course is Monday, Mar. 14.

### 2. Grading Scale

Final course letter grades and their Grade Point equivalents will be calculated using the following scale:

<i>Percent</i>	<i>G.P.</i>	<i>Quality</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>G.P.</i>	<i>Quality</i>
91 – 99 = A+	4.0	Exceptional	67 – 69 = C+	2.5	Satisfactory
85 – 90 = A		Excellent	63 – 66 = C	2.0	Adequate
80 – 84 = A-			60 – 62 = C-		
77 – 79 = B+	3.5	Superior	57 – 59 = D+	1.0	Marginal
73 – 76 = B	3.0	Good	53 – 56 = D		Poor
70 – 72 = B-			50 – 52 = D-		
			< 50 = F	0.0	Failure

## F. Course Policies

The full text of the academic policies, procedures and regulations of Providence College can be found online in the Student Handbook

([http://www.providencecollege.ca/college/student\\_life/](http://www.providencecollege.ca/college/student_life/)) and the College Academic Calendar

([http://www.providencecollege.ca/college/programs/registrars\\_office/calendar/](http://www.providencecollege.ca/college/programs/registrars_office/calendar/)).

### 1. Class Attendance

Full attendance at all classes is expected, because active listening, thinking and discussing are primary learning experiences in this course. Questions on exams will be designed to reward class attendance and attention. While I am committed to making the classes as interesting and informative as possible, it is neither my role nor my gift to be an entertainer. I am happy to give additional assistance outside the classes to students who find themselves struggling with course material, but only to those who have demonstrated the self-discipline to attend all the classes they possibly can.

## 2. An ICT-free Classroom

Student use of electronic information and communication technologies, including laptop computers, is not allowed in class. Anyone found using one will be asked to either put it away or leave the classroom. (If you have a special learning need, please consult with me.) While I deeply regret the inconvenience for note-taking this becomes, too many students in the past have abused ICTs in the classroom, distracting themselves and their classmates, and disrespecting the educational enterprise. Our advanced technologies have by now created a need to regain the ability to give sustained total attention to a single focus, a life skill now more in need of nurture than the ability to multi-task, though I well realize that banning ICTs does not guarantee it. As partial compensation, I will post the PowerPoint presentations from my lectures in the Shared Documents for this course in your Blackbaud student portal for one week after each topic is completed, for you to download if you wish.

## 3. Academic Integrity

Students are expected to demonstrate academic integrity in all its various forms, and will be held accountable for doing so by the policy on Academic Conduct in the Student Handbook ([http://www.providencecollege.ca/college/student\\_life/](http://www.providencecollege.ca/college/student_life/)). One particularly problematic breach of academic integrity is plagiarism, which is stealing from the ideas and writings of another person and passing them off as one's own. For an elaboration of the nature, types, and prevention of plagiarism, see the document entitled "Academic Dishonesty: The Problem of Plagiarism in Academic Writing" posted under Shared Documents in your Blackbaud student portal.

## 4. Late Assignments

Assignments will not be accepted after their due date; a grade of zero will be given for that component of the course. Furthermore, I will *not* receive requests for due date extensions. If you feel an extension is warranted, attach a cover letter to your assignment when you hand it in, explaining why it is late, and I will make a decision if and when your paper is graded. Assigning a late penalty (usually 10% or one letter grade per week) or waiving the zero grade will be considered only in the cases of medical or personal emergencies as detailed in the cover letter. Computer problems, conflicts with co-curricular activities, changes in employment schedules, or competition for library resources do not constitute such personal emergencies. Failure to plan ahead, or to maintain a margin of time for unforeseen events prior to the due date, does not warrant an extension either.

## 5. Missed Exams

Students who miss an exam are responsible to contact me within one week of the exam date if they still wish to write the exam. Permission to do so will be given to only those students who present evidence, acceptable to me, of medical reasons for having missed the exam. The format of the exam will be at my discretion, with essay questions likely. Students who do not write an exam by at most two weeks after the exam date will receive a grade of zero for that component of the course. Student athletes who are travelling during a scheduled exam period are required to write their exams ‘on the road’, invigilated by a coach or supervisor, and are responsible to notify me one week prior to the exam date.

## G. Class Schedule

All assigned readings from other than the O’Shaughnessy & Stadler text (O & S) are posted under Course Readings at [www.provsoc.org](http://www.provsoc.org). I reserve the right to assign additional readings during the course of the term, or to alter the schedule of topics as I see fit.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Reading Check</u>	<u>Assignment Due</u>
Jan. 11	Orientation to the Course		
<b>UNIT I: Media Dimensions</b>			
Jan. 14	Introduction to Media Studies		
Jan. 18	Media Outputs: Effects and Impacts	O&S ch.1 “Defining Media” O&S ch.2 “Media Studies”	
Jan. 21	Media Effects: The Case of Violence	Video: <i>Mean World Syndrome</i> O&S ch.3 “What Do the Media Do to Us?”	
Jan. 25	<b>Day of Prayer (classes cancelled)</b>		
Jan. 28	Media Ownership and Regulation	O&S ch.4 “What’s in a Name?”	



Feb. 25 Video: *Toxic Sludge is Good for You: Public Relations Unspun*  
**Media Fast Due**  
Walt, Vivienne. 2010. "Can BP Ever Rebuild Its Reputation?" *Time*.

Mar. 1 **Exam #1**

Mar. 4 The Internet and ICTs  
Ma'anit, Adam. "A World Wide Web of Change." *New Internationalist*. 2010, Issue 435.  
<http://www.newint.org/features/special/2010/09/01/online-activism/>  
Ekine, Sokari. "My Shadow of Doubt Over Online Activism." *New Internationalist*. 2010, Issue 435.  
<http://www.newint.org/blog/2010/09/02/is-internet-activism-useful/>

Mar. 7-11 **Reading Week (classes cancelled)**

### **UNIT III: Textual Analysis**

Mar. 15 Reading Popular Culture  
O&S ch.13 "Dominant Ideology and Hegemony"  
O&S ch.14 "Culture Jamming and Counter-hegemony"

Mar. 18 Semiotic Analysis: Reading Images  
Guest Lecturer: Nicholas Greco  
O&S ch.8 "Semiology"

Mar. 22 Narrative Analysis: Reading Films **Project Due**  
Guest Lecturer: Nicholas Greco  
O&S ch.9 "Reading Images and Advertisements"  
O&S ch.10 "Semiotic Analysis of an Advertisement"

Mar. 25 Lyric Analysis: Reading Music  
Guest Lecturer: Michael Gilmour  
O&S ch.15 "Genres, Codes, and Conventions"  
O&S ch.16 "The Language of Film"  
O&S ch.17 "Normative Structure and Binary Oppositions"

