

VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY ❖ SCHOOL OF MASS COMMUNICATIONS
Syllabus for: Mass Communications • MASC 101 • Section 002 • Fall 2011

Instructor:	Jeff South
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Office hours:	10 a.m.-noon on Monday and Wednesdays; 2-4 p.m. on Tuesdays; and by appointment.
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When and where our class meets	9-9:50 a.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays in Temple 1164
Class home page:	http://blackboard.vcu.edu ; also on Facebook: MASC 101 Mass Communications (Section 002, Fall 2011) @ VCU
Student assistants	Jason Gardner : gardnerja4@mymail.vcu.edu William Sullivan-Cooper: sullivancowa@vcu.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Open only to mass communications majors or media studies minors, or by permission of School of Mass Communications. A comprehensive overview of mass media which examines its history and evolution. Emphasis is given to the ways in which communications technologies have shaped and are shaped by society. Considers how digital and earlier technologies have led to increasing integration of world cultures and economies. Includes discussion of mass media law and ethics, including the origins and evolution of a free press and the legal framework of contemporary mass media practice. (Source: *VCU Bulletin*)

This course will explore the development, structure and functions of traditional mass media, such as newspapers and television, and new media, such as the Internet and cell phones. We will examine the history, economics and other aspects of the media globally and especially in the United States. In MASC 101, you will study how “old” media and digital media influence both society and individuals and how society and individuals affect the media. The course will give you an overview of communication professions, such as journalism, public relations and advertising. MASC 101 also will help you develop your media literacy skills so you can make informed decisions as citizens and consumers.

You must earn a C or better in MASC 101 to continue your studies in the School of Mass Communications.

COURSE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of MASC 101, students will be able to:

- Trace the historical development of analog and digital media
- Identify the rapidly changing forms of the media and the influence that technology is having on mass communication
- Articulate how the media impact individuals, institutions and society and how individuals, institutions and society impact the media
- Discuss the media's ethical responsibilities and the legal framework that governs and affects the media
- Demonstrate an understanding of the First Amendment and of the news media's watchdog role in a democracy
- Discuss professions and career opportunities associated with traditional and interactive media
- Explain how corporate interests affect the media and the information and entertainment we receive
- Define and demonstrate media literacy skills, particularly news literacy skills

The course also will introduce each of the learning objectives required by the school's assessment plan and the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications. These objectives include: Laws & Freedom of Speech; Media History; Diversity; Use of Images; Ethics; Critical & Creative Thinking; Research & Information-Evaluation Skills; Writing Abilities; Editing Abilities; Numbers & Statistics; and Tools & Technologies. More information about these intended learning outcomes are available on our Blackboard website.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK

You must buy the following book for this course:

The Media of Mass Communication
(tenth edition; © 2011), by John Vivian

Publisher: Pearson | ISBN: 9780205693054

The book is available (both new and used and as a rental and an e-textbook) at the Barnes & Noble @ VCU Bookstore, 1111 W. Broad St. It is also available from Amazon and other online bookstores.



CLASS WEBSITE

We will use the Blackboard course management system [<http://blackboard.vcu.edu>] extensively in MASC 101. Through Blackboard, you will have access to class announcements, supplementary readings, lecture notes, instructions for assignments, online discussions, online quizzes and grades.

FACEBOOK GROUP

We have created a closed Facebook group called MASC 101 Mass Communications (Section 002, Fall 2011) @ VCU. We will post announcements, readings, assignment reminders and other materials in this group to give you an additional access point to your course material. We will use our Blackboard site for all official course content, such as online quizzes.

IMPORTANT RULES ABOUT E-MAIL

VCU gives each student an e-mail account, and that is the address Blackboard uses (and we will use) for this class. We will communicate frequently in this class by e-mail. Therefore, you should check your e-mail frequently for messages about MASC 101. It is your responsibility to ensure that you are receiving e-mails from me. When you send me e-mail, begin the subject line with “**MASC 101:**”. Otherwise, my spam filter may delete your message.

CLASS ATTENDANCE POLICY

Attendance is crucial for success in this course. During our class meetings, we will discuss key concepts from the textbook, recent developments involving the media and many ideas you won't find in the book. We also will interact with guest speakers and watch and discuss short videos. We will learn from each other; if you are absent, you can't learn from us, and we can't learn from you.

It may not be practical to take attendance in a large class. But to ensure that you understand the material, I will give frequent quizzes, in class and online. To do well on those quizzes, and on our in-class tests, you must attend class regularly. (There will be no makeup quizzes, tests or exams. Exceptions will be made only for dire emergencies as determined by the instructor.)

ONLINE CLASS MEETINGS

On seven class days during the semester, we will meet online instead of in our classroom. Those days (mostly Fridays) are identified on our week-by-week schedule. These online meetings will be asynchronous: You will have a window of time (from Friday morning until Sunday evening) to log into Blackboard and complete the online lesson. The online meetings will include Web-based quizzes and discussions. If you miss the deadline to take an online quiz, participate in an online discussion or complete an online assignment, you will receive a zero for that activity; you cannot make up this grade.

In the online discussions, I will pose a question, and you must provide an answer of about 150 words. Your online postings must be of high quality, both in content and style. I will not accept submissions with grammatical and typographical errors. I expect you to take advantage of spell-checking and other programs that help guard against such errors; however, there is no substitute for careful proofreading. VCU's Writing Center (www.vcu.edu/uc/writingcenter/) can help you improve your writing skills.

ARTICLES ABOUT MEDIA IN THE NEWS

We will begin most of our class meetings with a look at mass communication and media in the news. We will discuss online news articles and other Web postings about trends in advertising, journalism or media technology, for example. We all will be responsible for finding articles to discuss. So look for fodder when you are online. When you see an interesting and relevant

article, tag it with “vcumasc101” – using the social bookmarking tool Delicious. That way, all of our tagged articles will be listed together at: www.delicious.com/tag/vcumasc101

Our student assistants, Jason Gardner and William Sullivan-Cooper, and I will curate the tagged articles and choose some for presentation and discussion in class. We will award extra credit in the course (adding a point to the final grade) to students who consistently tag enlightening articles on Delicious.

MEDIA-ORIENTED SERVICE/RESEARCH PROJECT

During the second half of the semester, we will divide the class into groups of about 10 students each. Each group will choose a service/research project that involves the media. For example, your group might conduct a book drive for Books for Africa; provide Internet training at a community center; support a journalist who has been imprisoned in another country; or campaign against sexist advertising. Each group will post a report and make a short presentation for the entire class. You can view summaries of last year’s projects at:

<http://www.slideshare.net/jcsouth/mass-comm-101-service-projects>

CALCULATION OF FINAL COURSE GRADES

This chart show how much each gradebook item will be worth. This grading scheme will be modified if we change the number or types of assignments or tests during the semester. Changes will be announced in class and on Blackboard.

Gradebook item	Weight
Test covering Chapters 1-4 (Sept. 23)	10%
Midterm exam covering Chapters 1-8 (Oct. 19)	20%
Test covering Chapters 9-13 (Nov. 18)	10%
Final exam (Dec. 14)	30%
Online quizzes (approximately 10)	10%
Online discussions and assignments (approximately seven)	10%
Media-oriented service/research project	10%
Total	100%

Here is how I will calculate your final grade:

Weighted total	Final grade
90% or more	A
80-89%	B
70-79%	C
60-69%	D
Below 60%	F

INCOMPLETES

No incompletes will be given in this course, except for dire emergencies. All assignments must be completed by the end of the semester to pass.

ETHICS AND PLAGIARISM

The VCU Honor System will be strictly enforced in this class. If you fabricate or plagiarize material, your name will be turned in to appropriate university officials for disciplinary action. The honor policy provides substantial penalties for violation, including expulsion.

Unless I specify otherwise, all work done for this course is “pledged” work, as defined by the Honor System. Each assignment implicitly carries this pledge:

“On my honor, I have neither given nor received aid on this assignment.”

For a complete copy of the VCU Honor System, see:

http://www.provost.vcu.edu/pdfs/Honor_system_policy.pdf

CLASSROOM DECORUM AND BEHAVIOR

According to the student conduct policy in the VCU Undergraduate Bulletin, you are entitled to receive instruction free from interference by other students. If you believe that another student’s behavior is disruptive, tell me and I will deal with the situation.

No food or drink is allowed in the classroom. Turn off your cellular phones before class begins. You may not sleep, wear headphones or use electronic devices (such as computer games) in class. You must not conduct side conversations or create other disruptions. It is disruptive to arrive late and/or pack up early. Be on time for class and plan on meeting for the entire class period.

VCU rules prohibit anyone “to have in his possession any firearm, other weapon, or explosive, regardless of whether a license to possess the same has been issued, without the written authorization of the President of the university.”

Be polite; respect your classmates, your instructor and others with whom you will interact during this course. If you engage in any behavior that I deem disruptive, you will get a verbal warning for the first incident and a written warning for the second. A third incident will result in your being administratively withdrawn from this class. For more about the university’s policy on student conduct, see www.students.vcu.edu/policies.html.

CULTURAL DIVERSITY

It is vital that students in this course broaden their mass communications experiences, with guidance from the instructor, by including in their course work people and subjects such as ethnic, racial and religious minorities, people with disabilities, gay men and lesbians, and other groups. The intent is to ensure that students are exposed to diverse ideas and perspectives. In this class, it is the responsibility of the instructor and students to foster an environment that supports free expression.

Under VCU policy, you may not harass or intimidate any person or “interfere with the lawful freedom of other persons, including invited speakers, to express their views.”

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 requires Virginia Commonwealth University to provide academic adjustments or accommodations for students with documented disabilities. If you have a disability that requires an academic adjustment or accommodation, you must contact Joyce Knight, the coordinator of services for students with disabilities on VCU's Academic Campus. Ms. Knight's office is in Room 102 of the Student Commons, 907 Floyd Ave. Her e-mail address is jbknight@vcu.edu, and her phone number is 828-2253.

After meeting with Ms. Knight, you then should meet with me to discuss your needs and how we can address them. For more information, see the university's Web page on Services for Students with Disabilities: www.students.vcu.edu/dss/

STUDENT TECHNICAL STANDARDS

The School of Mass Communications has created descriptions of technical standards required for various professions within communications, including but not limited to print journalism, broadcast journalism, online journalism, advertising, public relations and photography. These technical standards – in the areas of motor skills, sensory-observation abilities, communication skills, cognitive skills and behavioral capabilities – reflect the performance abilities and characteristics that are necessary to successfully complete the requirements of the academic programs at the school. These standards are not requirements for admission into the programs. The School of Mass Communications complies with the requirements and spirit of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Therefore, the school will endeavor to make reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities who are otherwise qualified. The complete technical standards may be found at:

www.has.vcu.edu/mac/ugrad_programs/tech_stand.html

WHAT TO KNOW AND DO TO BE PREPARED FOR EMERGENCIES AT VCU

1. Sign up to receive VCU text messaging alerts (www.vcu.edu/alert/notify). Keep your information up-to-date.
2. Know the safe evacuation route from each of your classrooms. Emergency evacuation routes are posted in on-campus classrooms.
3. Listen for and follow instructions from VCU or other designated authorities.
4. Know where to go for additional emergency information (www.vcu.edu/alert).
5. Know the emergency phone number for the VCU Police (828-1234). Report suspicious activities and objects.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES, ASSIGNMENTS AND TESTS

Before coming to class, you must read the material to be covered in that day's lecture. At least a day before each lecture, I will post lecture notes on Blackboard. You may print out the notes and bring them to class; they will make note-taking easier.

First class meeting (Friday, Aug. 26) – Review syllabus. Define and discuss mass communication, media and media literacy.

Week 1

Monday, Aug. 29: Chapter 1 (Mass Media Literacy)

Wednesday, Aug. 31: Chapter 1 (continued)

Friday, Sept. 2: Chapter 2 (Media Technology)

Assignment: Media technology survey

Week 2

Monday, Sept. 5 (Labor Day) – No class

Wednesday, Sept. 7: Chapter 2 (continued)

Friday, Sept. 9: Chapter 2 (continued).

Assignment: Online quiz on Chapters 1-2

Week 3

Monday, Sept. 12: Chapter 3 (Media Economics)

Wednesday, Sept. 14: Chapter 3 (continued)

Friday, Sept. 16: Class will not meet in person. We will meet online for a Web-based lesson, an online discussion and a quiz on Chapter 3.

Week 4

Monday, Sept. 19: Chapter 4 (Ink on Paper)

Wednesday, Sept. 21: Chapter 4 (continued)

Friday, Sept. 23: In class, you will take a test covering Chapters 1-4 and other material.

Week 5

Monday, Sept. 26: Chapter 5 (Sound Media)

Wednesday, Sept. 28: Chapter 5 (continued)

Friday, Sept. 30: Class will not meet in person. We will meet online for a Web-based lesson, an online discussion and a quiz on Chapter 5.

Week 6

Monday, Oct. 3: Chapter 6 (Motion Media)

Wednesday, Oct. 5: Chapter 6 (continued)

Friday, Oct. 7: Class will not meet in person. We will meet online for a Web-based lesson, an online discussion and a quiz on Chapter 6.

Week 7

Monday, Oct. 10: Chapter 7 (New Media Landscape)

Wednesday, Oct. 12: Chapter 7 (continued)

Friday, Oct. 14: Chapter 8 (News)

Assignment: Online quiz on Chapters 7 and 8

Week 8

Monday, Oct. 17: Chapter 8 (continued)

Wednesday, Oct. 19: In class, you will take a midterm exam covering Chapters 1-8 and other material.

Thursday-Friday, Oct. 20-21 (Reading Days) – No class on Friday, Oct. 21

Week 9

Monday, Oct. 24: Chapter 9 (Entertainment)

Wednesday, Oct. 26: Chapter 9 (continued). Discuss media-focused service/research projects.

Friday, Oct. 28: Class will not meet in person. We will meet online for a Web-based lesson, an online discussion and a quiz on Chapter 9. Online, you will choose a media-focused service/research project.

Week 10

Monday, Oct. 31: Chapter 10 (Public Relations)

Wednesday, Nov. 2: Chapter 10 (continued)

Friday, Nov. 4: Chapter 11 (Advertising)

Assignment: Online quiz on Chapters 10-11

Friday, Nov. 4 – Last date to withdraw with a mark of W

Week 11

Monday, Nov. 7: Chapter 11 (continued)

Wednesday, Nov. 9: Chapter 12 (Mass Audiences)

Friday, Nov. 11: Class will not meet in person. We will meet online for a Web-based lesson, an online discussion and a quiz on Chapter 12.

Week 12

Monday, Nov. 14: Chapter 13 (Mass Media Effects)

Wednesday, Nov. 16: Chapter 13 (continued)

Friday, Nov. 18: In class, you will take a test covering Chapters 9-13 and other material.

Week 13

Monday, Nov. 21: Chapter 14 (Media and Democracy)

Wednesday, Nov. 23: Class will not meet in person. We will meet online for a Web-based lesson, an online discussion and a quiz on Chapter 14.

Thursday-Sunday, Nov. 24-27 (Thanksgiving holidays) – No class on Friday, Nov. 25

Week 14

Monday, Nov. 28: Chapter 15 (Mass Media Globalization)

Wednesday, Nov. 30: Chapter 16 (Media Law) and Chapter 17 (Ethics)

Friday, Dec. 2: Class will not meet in person. We will meet online for a Web-based lesson, an online discussion and a quiz on Chapters 15-17. By Dec. 4, each group must post on Blackboard a report about its media-focused service/research project.

Week 15:

Monday, Dec. 5: Service/research project presentations

Wednesday, Dec. 7: Service/research project presentations

Friday, Dec. 9: Service/research project presentations and review for final exam

Final exam: 8-10:50 a.m. on Wednesday, Dec. 14, as per VCU's schedule. The final exam will be cumulative: About two-thirds of the questions will be drawn from material we have covered since the midterm; the other third will cover earlier material.

Intended Learning Outcomes MASC 101
To be included in the course syllabus

Intended Learning Outcomes

Students enrolled in MASC 101 will be introduced to 12 mass communications core values and competencies that have been adopted by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications which accredits the School of Mass Communications and are included in the School's assessment plan. The 12 values and competencies are:

- **Laws & Freedom of Speech:** Understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press, including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power, and to assemble and petition for redress of grievances.
- **History:** Demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications.
- **Domestic diversity:** Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of groups in domestic society in relationship to mass communications.
- **Global diversity:** Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures in global society in relationship to mass communications.
- **Use of Images:** Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information.
- **Ethics:** Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity.
- **Think Critically & Creatively:** Think critically, creatively and independently.
- **Research & Evaluate Information:** Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they will work.
- **Writing Abilities:** Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve.
- **Evaluation:** Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness.
- **Numbers & Statistics:** Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts.
- **Tools & Technologies:** Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they will work.