Integrating Sustainability Themes into Survey of Mass Communication
Heather McIntosh

This course is a large lecture course that covers a wide variety of information related to mass communication, media industries, media literacy, and cultural topics. The most visible integration of a sustainability theme occurs with the session dedicated to exploring how media cover these themes and audience’s reactions to that coverage. A short paper assignment builds on that session in asking students to find their own example of media coverage of these issues and to conduct a brief analysis of that coverage.

Other forms of this integration occur with the concepts, examples, and discussion questions (both in class and on the online discussion board) used throughout the course. A fundamental concept that emerges in the textbook is how the media industries focus on the bottom line, and part of augmenting that bottom line is the introduction of new technologies and the planned obsolescence of them. This business strategy creates an immense amount of waste in terms of production and disposal. For example, we see this through the releases and updates of cell phones, and we see this through the cell phone companies’ incentives to upgrade our previous phones to the newer models. A discussion question asks students to consider how else they have seen these practices at work and how they might address their own participation within them.

Another conceptual place where sustainability issues emerge is through public relations. While public relations plays an important role in industries, it also occurs within public health initiatives run by the government, colleges and universities, and civic groups. Examples from this session bring in campaigns that address sustainability issues, such as the ones run through BC and other universities, through state governments such as Massachusetts and California, and through companies both within and outside media. Several discussion questions emerge here, such as how do the campaigns differ among the various groups? What kind(s) of sustainability messages are they sending, and how do they balance those messages with their organizational goals? What messages might get overlooked in the process? This session blends well with the session on social media, as many of these campaigns use social media as a primary outlet for communicating their messages.

A third place to explore the sustainability themes appears in the session on the television industry and television programming. Several television channels have shows that address new products and ideas that support and advocate sustainable living. A specific example here is Discovery Channel’s Planet Green, which shows documentaries and other programming about these issues. Discussion questions similar to public relations prove useful here, with what kind(s) of messages are
they sending, how do they balance with advertisers’ influences, and and what messages might get overlooked in the process?

The print industries, including magazines and books, offer yet another place to explore these themes. Both industries produce an excess of materials each year. Some of the materials get purchased by consumers, but some of these materials get disseminated through mass mailings and other forms of distribution. Many of these materials end up straight in the garbage, though hopefully some of them get recycled. These industries currently are undergoing some upheavals thanks to the new digital readers, such as Kindle, nook, and iPad. The questions related to sustainability here become more complicated in bringing up digital technologies, which sometimes are seen as almost panacea for paper materials. Some questions that emerge here include the following: Do digital technologies actually solve these problems, or do they create different ones? What can we as consumers do to reduce these problems? What can the industries do?

In general, these themes can be integrated into lectures through specific examples; into multimedia materials through relevant clips and programs; into discussions through questions that merge sustainability with media industries and messages, and into assignments through connecting these themes with media literacy. These are just a few of the many places that the sustainability themes can be integrated and explored.
CO 020: Survey of Mass Communication
Boston College, Spring 2011
9-10:15 a.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays
Fulton 511

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Teaching Assistants
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Overview and Objectives
Mass communication is a rapidly growing and changing field that affects our society as a whole and us as individuals on a daily basis. Survey of Mass Communication will introduce you to some of the basic concepts of the field, such as media industries, industry trends, media regulations, and media ethics. It will address some of the historical developments that have shaped the mass media, particularly through the rise of various industries, including newspapers, books, music, radio, television, film, advertising, and public relations. It will consider the influences of new media, their roles in culture, and their impacts on the traditional media industries. Within these larger developments, it will explore topics such as genres, blockbusters, globalization, documentary, digital photography, social media, sports, “fake news,” independent filmmaking, environmental communication, fans and fan cultures, and media violence. Further, it will ask you to consider your position as a media consumer and producer through concepts of media literacy. Overall, the course will demonstrate the impacts of media and their influences on our lives.

Required Materials
Textbooks


Additional Readings
Other articles noted on the course schedule are available on Blackboard, http://cms.bc.edu.

Course Requirements
NOTE: You must complete ALL exams in order to pass this course. Failure to complete all exams will earn an “F” automatically. For work submitted online, make sure you keep a back-up copy just in case of computer error. All work completed in class cannot be made up in the event of an absence. More information about these requirements will be provided.
Coursework is valued at 1,000 total points. It includes the following:

- Exams (700 points)
- Online discussion board (200 points)
- Short papers (100 points)
- Research participation

**Exams (700 points; 200 points for exams 1 and 2; 300 points for exam 3)**

Exams will cover all course materials, including readings, lectures, clips, and screenings. Exam questions will engage your critical thinking skills and ask you to analyze course concepts and apply them to various situations. These questions will require that you thoroughly understand the material presented; it will not be enough to identify a term by its meaning. We will talk more about the test questions and the exam format as the first exam approaches. Exam dates are **February 17, March 31, and May 16.**

You must take the exams during the scheduled times. Make-up exams will be given only with a documented medical excuse or family emergency. It is your responsibility to notify the professor prior to the exam if this situation exists and await further instruction. Exam 3 is scheduled during the final exam week and cannot be rescheduled. **If you know in advance that you will not be here for that exam, you should not take this course.**

**Online discussion board (Ten posts at 20 points each for 200 points)**

At the beginning of the semester, you will be placed into an online discussion group on Blackboard at http://cms.bc.edu. By 10:30 a.m. each Thursday, a question and maybe a short reading or two will be posted to your group. The readings will be drawn from popular media and blogs, and they will relate to our course topic for that week. Ten times during the semester you must reply either to the question or to another student’s reply. **Only the first ten attempts -- no matter the score -- count toward your grade.** Replying to extra posts will not result in canceling out a previous grade or other types of extra credit. Replies will be evaluated according to how well they address the question, how well they demonstrate course concepts, if they meet the minimum word count, and if they use appropriate writing. **Replies are due 9 a.m. Thursday of the following week. DO NOT WAIT** until the last week of class to “catch up” on this requirement; you will not be able to do so.

**Short Papers (100 points; paper 1 at 40 points; papers 2 and 3 at 30 points)**

Short papers will run 1-2 pages and ask you to apply or explore a concept from class through media. Papers will be evaluated according to how well they demonstrate your understanding of the concepts, the readings, and screenings; how well they follow the assignment; how well they follow the paper format; and if they use appropriate grammar. Papers are due **February 3, March 17, and April 28.**

**Research Participation**

One of the most exciting aspects of the Boston College Communication Department is the research that our faculty and honors thesis students produce. During the semester, members of the Communication Department will be completing several research projects. In order to expand your understanding of the field and to aid these researchers, you will be required to participate in one research project as part of this course. Information about these projects will be provided to you throughout the semester. You are responsible for signing up and completing participation in the research project. If you object to the research projects and decide not to participate in one, please let the professor **before April 1** know and an alternate assignment will be provided to you. Failure to participate in a Communication Department research project will result in the subtraction of 100 points from your final point total for the course.

**Grading**

Grades will be assigned on a standard A-F scale. Grades are computed according to university policy as follows: A = 4.0, A- = 3.66, B+ = 3.33, B = 3.0, B- = 2.66, C+ = 2.33, C = 2.0, C- = 1.66, D+ = 1.33, D = 1.0, D- = .66, F = 0. Since this class is evaluated on a point scale, here is the breakdown by points:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>925 to 1000</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>900 to 924</td>
<td>A-</td>
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<tr>
<td>875 to 899</td>
<td>B+</td>
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<tr>
<td>825 to 874</td>
<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>800 to 824</td>
<td>B-</td>
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<td>775 to 799</td>
<td>C+</td>
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<td>725 to 774</td>
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<td>700 to 724</td>
<td>C-</td>
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<td>675 to 699</td>
<td>D+</td>
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<tr>
<td>625 to 674</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>600 to 624</td>
<td>D-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>599 and below</td>
<td>F</td>
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Please note that the grading scale and attendance policy will not be modified for any reason. I will be happy to let you know your “grade so far” at any point in the course. Feel free to make an appointment to discuss it.

**Course Policies**

By remaining in this course you agree to abide by and be responsible for the policies set forth below. If you have questions or need clarification, please do not hesitate to ask.

**Teaching Assistants**

Three assistants are available to help you and the professor with this course. Treat them with the same respect and courtesy as you do the professor. They can help you with the following:

- Questions about discussion board prompts, readings, and evaluation
- Questions about course materials and concepts
- Questions about studying for exams

Each assistant is assigned to discussion board groups. The assignments are as follows:

**Groups 1 and 2:** Jana Ross, jana.ross.1@bc.edu  
**Groups 3 and 4:** Stephanie Mariani, mariansa@bc.edu  
**Groups 5, 6, 7, and 8:** Victoria Gonzalez, victoria.gonzalez@bc.edu

They will NOT help you with the following:

- Test and paper grading: See the professor for all questions related to grading.  
- Make-up exams: Contact the professor about these arrangements.  
- Missed class notes: Get those from another student first. If you have questions after that, then feel free to ask.  
- Exam questions: The assistants for the course will not have this information.  
- Attendance sign-in sheet: You are responsible for signing the attendance sheet. Do not ask the teaching assistants to sign you in if you are late. Do not ask the professor to make an exception, either. For further explanation, see the Attendance policy, below.

**Before you send that e-mail,** please double check the syllabus, other course documents, and online for information about requirements and deadlines.
**Attendance**
You are expected to be in class at 9 a.m. and stay for the entire session. Starting in week 2 and for every session following, attendance sheets will be passed around by the teaching assistants. You will be required to sign your name on that sheet. *Once you sign, you are expected to remain in class for the rest of the session.* If you leave after the sign-in sheet has been collected, you will be marked as absent. If you arrive to class after the sign-up sheet has been passed around, you will be marked as absent.

You are allowed **THREE (3)** absences. There is no distinction between excused or unexcused. You’re either there or you’re not. Starting with your **fourth (4th)** absence, your final grade will drop by **100 points**. For example, if you have 955 points (an A) and have missed five classes, your final points will be 855 (a B). Starting with your **sixth (6th)** absence, your final grade will become **an automatic F**.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Absences</th>
<th>Penalty</th>
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<tr>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>None</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>-100 points off final grade</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>-100 points off final grade</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>F for the course</td>
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*Any attempts to misrepresent your accurate attendance total will be considered a violation of the academic integrity policy and could result in automatic failure of this course. This policy applies to students who misrepresent their own attendance, as well as students who assist their “friends” in misrepresenting their attendance.*

Attendance policies in this course are mandated by the Communication Department. (Please see page 9 for more information.) The Academic Integrity Policy is mandated by the Communication Department and the College of Arts and Sciences. (Please see pages 9 and 10 for more information.)

**Collegiality**
Respect your classmates and their opinions. If the issue is a “hot button” for you, pause and think before offering your own ideas. You may disagree, but be sure have a solid, supported reason when you do. Always remember to address the idea, not the person. **This is the most important rule.** Anyone disregarding this rule will be asked to leave and forfeit their attendance and possible points for that day.

**Courtesy**
Avoid disruptive and disrespectful behaviors such as chatting with classmates, sending text messages, surfing the Internet, doing homework for other classes, or filling in crossword puzzles. Consume all food and beverages before coming into the room. Put away all MP3 players and remove all hands-free devices before class begins.

**Preparation**
Bring your books, readings, and notes to each session. Complete the assigned readings, and bring your questions to each session. Be ready to answer questions. I may call on you to bring you into the discussion at any time. I do this not to call you out, but to ensure your participation in the conversation.

**Cell Phones**
Leave them in your backpacks during the class session. **Put them on SILENT mode or turn them OFF before class begins.** Check your watch or the clock in the room if you want to know the time. **If your phone rings or vibrates during a session, I reserve the right to answer it.**
**Laptops**
Laptops may be used for taking notes only if you agree to and comply with the following rules in addition to the general courtesy ones:

1. Within the first week of class, you send an e-mail letting me know that you intend to use your laptop for note-taking.
2. You sit within the first two rows of the room during each session.
3. You send a copy of your notes to surveyofmasscomm@gmail.com at the end of each session. Your notes will be kept confidential.

Failure to comply with this policy will result in you being prohibited from using a laptop for the rest of the semester.

**Late Assignments**
The world operates on a deadline, and media and communications industries in particular are deadline driven. Deadlines maintain class structure and flow, and they facilitate timely feedback and evaluation. Any homework or assignment turned in late without prior communication with me will earn zero (0) points.

Late work includes work not handed in when it is collected in class or otherwise due, work that is hand written, or work that otherwise fails to fulfill the basic formatting criteria. Allow yourself plenty of time to print your assignments -- avoid waiting until the 15 minutes before class to print. Late work also includes any work sent via e-mail and any computer-related excuses. If you cannot make the deadline for a valid (which I will determine on a case-by-case basis) reason, contact me beforehand (as in 24 hours or more) to make arrangements.

NOTE: Any homework sent to me via e-mail will not be accepted or acknowledged.

**Grades**
A grade is a measure of how well you have achieved the goals in this course, and that achievement is determined by your learning of the material and your performance on the assignments. Adjustments to your grade will be made only in case of mathematical error. If you have any questions about your grade or your performance, please make an appointment to discuss the matter in person. Due to privacy issues, I do not discuss grades through e-mail.

**Extra Credit**
Plenty of opportunities to measure and demonstrate your learning exist in this course, so extra credit will not be offered on an individual basis. Extra credit includes appeals for rounding, additional writing assignments, assignment revisions and other work as a means of improving your grade. Changes in grades will be considered only in cases of mathematical errors. If I assign extra credit, it will be done in class and offered to everyone at that time.

**Statement for Students with Disabilities**
If you require accommodation, please notify the professor as soon as possible to make the necessary arrangements. You must make these arrangements through the Disability Services Office, 21 Campanella Way, Suite 212, and or (617) 552-3470.

**Course Schedule**
Please complete the reading for the day it is assigned. With the exception of exam dates, course readings and topics subject to change depending on course flow and student interest. The other articles are available on Blackboard at cms.bc.edu.
Week 1
January 18
Topic: Introduction to Communication and Culture
Read: Turow, Chapter 1

January 20
Topic: The Importance of Media Literacy
Read: Smith, Chapter 1
Review: Turow, Chapter 1, 28-35

Week 2
January 25
Topic: The Media Business
Read: Turow, Chapter 2

January 27
Topic: Genres
Read: Smith, Chapter 4

Week 3
February 1
Topic: Media Industry Trends
Read: Turow, Chapter 5

February 3
Topic: Globalization, Documentary, and Programming
Read: Smith, Chapter 2
Due: Short Paper #1

Week 4
February 8
Topic: Media Regulation
Read: Turow, Chapter 3

February 10
Topic: Media Ethics and Digital Photography

Week 5
February 15
Topic: Public Relations
Read: Turow, Chapter 16
February 17
Due:  **Exam #1**

**Week 6**

**February 22**
Topic:  Old Media, New Media
Read:  Smith, Chapter 7
       Smith, Chapter 8
       Turow, Chapter 14 (Skip sections “The Rise of Video Games,” 553-555, and

**February 24**
Topic:  Social Media
Read:  Boyd, Danah M. and Nicole B. Ellison. “Social Network Sites: Definition, History,

**Week 7**

**March 1**
Topic:  Advertising
Read:  Turow, Chapter 15

**March 3**
Topic:  Gender, Sport, and Advertising
Read:  Carty, Victoria. “Textual Portrayals of Female Athletes: Liberation or Nuanced Forms

**Spring Break:** March 8 and March 10

**Week 8**

**March 15**
Topic:  Magazines
Read:  Turow, Chapter 9

**March 17**
Topic:  Books
Read:  Turow, Chapter 7
Due:  **Short Paper #2**

**Week 9**

**March 22**
Topic:  The Newspaper Industry
Read:  Turow, Chapter 8
Review:  Turow, Chapter 2, “News,” 52-58

**March 24**
Topic:  News, Parody, and *The Daily Show*
Read:  Sandra L. Borden and Chad Tew, “The Role of Journalist and the Performance of
Week 10
March 29
Topics: Identification, Stereotyping, and the “Other”
Read: Smith, Chapter 3
      Smith, Chapter 6

March 31
Due:   Exam #2

Week 11
April 5
Topic: Recorded Music and the Music Industry
Read: Turow, Chapter 10

April 7
Topic: Radio Industry
Read: Turow, Chapter 11

Week 12
April 12
Topic: Film Industry
Read: Turow, Chapter 12

April 14
Topic: Independent Filmmakers and the Film Industry

Week 13
April 19
Topic: Media and the Environment

April 21
No class this day

Week 14
April 26
Topic: The Television Industry
Read: Turow, Chapter 13

April 28
Topic: Fans and Fan Cultures
Due:   Short Paper #3

Week 15
May 3
Topic: Mass Communication Research
Read: Turow, Chapter 4
May 5
Topic: Media Violence and Video Games
Read: Smith, Chapter 5

Exam 3: 9 a.m. Monday, May 16

Department of Communication Attendance Policy
Attendance is required as a condition of successful completion of all courses in the department of Communication. After missing any class session, a student is responsible for finding out about assignments, due dates, announcements, handouts, and so forth that were covered during the missed session, and for making up any missed work. The student is also responsible for obtaining class notes from a classmate for the session, and for learning the material from that session for any exams or quizzes.

The equivalent of 2 weeks of absences from any course will reduce a student's course grade by one full letter grade. Absence from a combined total of 3 weeks of class meetings will result in automatic failure of the course. Thus, if the class meets once a week, 3 missed sessions equals automatic failure. If a course meets twice a week, 6 missed sessions will result in failure of the course, and a combined total of 9 missed class sessions will result in automatic failure of a course that meets 3 times per week. There are no exceptions to this rule.

Absences for any reason, including illness, personal crises, athletics or other extra-curricular activities are included in this total. If a student is involved in any activity that might require that student to miss 3 or more weeks of a particular course, then that student should not enroll in the course. Individual faculty members may add additional requirements or stipulations to this policy.

NOTE: Any attempts to misrepresent your accurate attendance total will be considered a violation of the academic integrity policy and could result in automatic failure of this course. This policy applies to students who misrepresent their own attendance, as well as students who assist their “friends” in misrepresenting their attendance.

Department of Communication Policy on Academic Integrity
The department holds the highest standards of academic honesty for Boston College Communication majors. The maintenance of these standards is essential to the basic functioning of the department as an academic community, and makes possible the conduct of fair, meaningful, and worthwhile educational experiences. Because the faculty of this department takes academic honesty so seriously, we remind all students in all Communication courses of the academic integrity statement signed by all students upon matriculation at Boston College.

Please re-read the statement carefully. Instances of cheating, plagiarism, dishonesty or collusion will be treated seriously within the department of Communication. Sanctions for such breaches of academic integrity will include failure of the course, ejection from the major, and/or expulsion from Boston College. All cases will be referred to the department chairperson or the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

In order to help ensure honesty in written work submitted as part of the course requirements for courses within the communication department, the department requires that ALL written assignments for ALL department courses be handed in on diskette as well as on paper. The diskettes will routinely be checked for plagiarized material through a professional service that analyzes the content of the work against a broad range of Internet and on-line databases. Written work will not be accepted unless it is accompanied by a diskette version.
Statement on Academic Integrity from the College of Arts and Sciences

The College [of Arts and Sciences] expects all students to adhere to the accepted norms of intellectual honesty in their academic work. Any forms of cheating, plagiarism, or dishonesty or collusion in another's dishonesty is a fundamental violation of these norms.

CHEATING is the use or attempted use of unauthorized aids in any exam or other academic exercise submitted for evaluation. This includes data falsification; the fabrication of data; deceitful alteration of collected data included in a report; copying from another student's work; unauthorized cooperation in doing assignments or during an examination; the use of purchased essays, term papers, or preparatory research for such papers; submission of the same written work in more than one course without prior written approval from the instructor(s) involved; and dishonesty in requests for either extensions or papers or make-up examinations.

PLAGIARISM is the deliberate act of taking the words, ideas, data, illustrative material, or statements of someone else, without full and proper acknowledgment, and presenting them as one's own.

COLLUSION is assisting or attempting to assist another student in an act of academic dishonesty.

As part of your scholarly development, you must learn how to work cooperatively in a community of scholars and fruitfully utilize the work of others without violating the norms of intellectual honesty. You have a responsibility to learn the parameters of collaboration and the proper forms for quoting, summarizing and paraphrasing.

Faculty members who detect any form of academic dishonesty have the responsibility to take appropriate action. The faculty member also has the responsibility to report the incident and penalty to the Department Chairperson and the appropriate Class Dean. The report will remain in your student file until you graduate.

If the gravity of the offense seems to warrant it or if the faculty member prefers that another academic authority decide the matter, he or she may refer the case to a Dean. In addition, if the student is unwilling to accept the faculty member's decision, he or she may choose to have the matter adjudicated either by an Associate Dean or by an Administrative Board. The section of the College of Arts and Sciences in the Boston College Undergraduate Catalogue has further details about this process.

Academic integrity is a very important matter. If you have any questions in any of your courses about what is allowed or not allowed, please discuss the matter immediately with the professor.