Sociology 4TT3
THE SOCIOLOGY OF MASS MEDIA

Winter, 2018
Day and Time of Class: Fri., 11:30 am to 2:20 pm

Instructor: Dr. D. Young
Office (see note below): KTH/629, Ext. 23615
Office Hours (see note below):
  Mon., 2:30 pm to 3:30 pm (Term 2)
  Thurs., 2:30 pm to 3:30 pm (Term 2)
Email (see note below): youngd@mcmaster.ca

Course Outline

Contact Information

My name is Dr. Young. My office location and hours are indicated above. Feel free to drop by or call during these times. Please Note: I would appreciate it if you would make every effort to see me during scheduled office hours. However, if you are unable to speak with me during my office hours, you may ask me to arrange an appointment for you. My office hours will not be in effect during scheduled university closures (e.g., holidays), scheduled university breaks (e.g., mid-term recess weeks), or the term-end examination periods.

My office telephone number is indicated above. Please Note: Leave your name, a telephone number (spoken slowly), and a very brief message.

My email address is indicated above. Please Note: Before sending an email message, please check to see if your question has already been answered in this course outline. Please also ensure that your inquiry deals with something short and simple; complicated matters require discussion in person (i.e., during office hours or by appointment). Since email to professors and TAs is an aspect of business communication, and since it is important for you to acquire business communication skills, please follow these guidelines with regard to sending a message:

- Please ensure that your message is sent from your McMaster email account (not from any other email account or from Avenue to Learn mail). This is official policy adopted by the Faculty of Social Sciences, and university personnel are not required to reply to email originating from a non-McMaster email address.
- Please ensure that you use “Sociology 4TT3” as a subject line.
- Please ensure that you include an appropriate greeting following by my title and last name (“Dear Dr. Young”, “Hello Dr. Young”, or “Hi Dr. Young”). When writing to TAs, please use a similar greeting followed by their name. Please understand that “Hey” is not an appropriate greeting in business communication.
- Please write your email message in a professional manner (e.g., being polite and using full sentences).
- Please sign off in a professional manner (e.g., writing “Thank you”, “Thanks”, “Regards”, or “Sincerely” followed by your full name).

Please do not expect an immediate response. Professors and TAs are busy people, and it may take us a few days to reply. Furthermore, email will only be read and answered during regular working hours (Monday to Friday, 8:30 am to 4:30 pm).
Course Description

This course familiarizes students with selected issues in the sociology of mass media. It is not necessary to have previous background in relevant sociology courses (because I will be giving an introductory lecture that aims to get all students on the same page), but relevant background can certainly be useful. Relevant background includes courses on media institutions, media and social issues, political sociology, or social movements.

Part I of the course considers theoretical and methodological issues. We will become familiar with two critical perspectives on the mass media. One is political economy, and the other is cultural studies. These Marxian-influenced theoretical perspectives focus on the issues of power, inequality, and conflict in relation to the mass media. Essentially, political economy ties these issues to media production while the perspective of cultural studies links the issues to media content. While addressing theoretical issues, we will also discuss methodological approaches to the mass media by examining both administrative research and critical research.

Part II builds on the earlier discussion of critical political economy by examining a variety of topics connected to media production. These topics include ownership (such as the dangers of growing ownership concentration among media companies); globalization (including the impact of transnational media companies and the Internet); the state and its role (with regard to issues such as globalization, legislation, regulation, promotion, and broadcasting); and conflict between private media companies and the state (on the one hand) and social movements (on the other hand) over media policy and other issues.

Part III builds on the earlier discussion of critical cultural studies by considering several topics associated with media content. These topics include dominant ideology, hegemony, and counter hegemony; the under-representation and misrepresentation of subordinate groups (labour unions, the working class, women, and minorities) in the mainstream media; the interpretation of mainstream media content by subordinate groups; and the role of alternative media in relation to the political objectives of social movements.

Course Learning Objectives

This course has several objectives. By the end of the course, you will:

- understand theoretical and methodological approaches that sociologists and other scholars have used to study the mass media
- comprehend how media production is connected to political and economic aspects of capitalist society (such as regulation and ownership)
- grasp how media content reflects capitalist, patriarchal, and racist ideology
- recognize the conflicts that exist between powerful classes or groups and less powerful classes or groups with regard to media production and media content

All of the objectives noted above are associated with the topic and content of the course. Additional objectives are connected to several of McMaster’s Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations (which can be found at: http://cll.mcmaster.ca/COU/degree/undergraduate.html). In particular, you will have the opportunity to enhance the depth and breadth of your knowledge.
as you learn about various theoretical ideas in sociology. Through written work, you will have the opportunity to apply knowledge acquired in the course. Along with verbal participation in classes, the written work in the course will help to enhance your communication skills. Finally, you will be encouraged to deepen your autonomy and professional capacity by developing qualities and transferable skills necessary for further study and employment (e.g., business communication skills, reliability, maturity, time management skills, and behaviour consistent with academic integrity and social responsibility).

**Course Format**

This course is scheduled to run for up to three hours each Friday. You will be given a 15 minute break at a convenient point (toward the middle of the class period). You *must* be prepared to stay for the entire class.

The format will vary from week to week. For example, there will be film presentations in some weeks but not others. There will be only one formal lecture, but there will always be class discussions. Along with class discussions, other types of active learning will be utilized in various weeks.

**Please Note (Hearing Problem):** Please keep in mind that I am partially deaf. This can make it difficult for me to hear comments or questions, especially if there are many students in a course or if a classroom has poor acoustics. Therefore, when students are asking questions or making comments, or when any class discussions are taking place, please listen and refrain from making any noise. Competition from other sounds (talking, sorting notes, adjusting chairs, etc.) makes it extremely difficult for me to hear what someone is saying to me.

**Film Presentations**

Some films may be shown in this course. You are advised to take notes on any films that are screened since you may be required to incorporate the films into a take-home examination. Some of the films may be housed at McMaster, and it may be possible for students to borrow them from the Mills library. However, I may borrow other films from universities across Ontario through a special inter-university loan system that only professors have access to. If you miss the screening of any films that cannot be viewed outside of class, you are advised to borrow notes from students who saw these films.

**Avenue to Learn**

In this course, we will be using Avenue to Learn. Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster email accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure, please discuss this with the course instructor.
Avenue to Learn will be used in a limited way during this course. Avenue will be used to post major announcements as well as discussion questions (and it is your responsibility to check for new announcements regularly).

Please do not contact me through Avenue to Learn. There are two reasons for this. First, I rarely go on Avenue, and I prefer to use my McMaster email account for correspondence. Second, it is impossible to reply to a message sent from Avenue to a McMaster email account. Consequently, if you expect your message to be read and answered, please send the message from your McMaster email account to my McMaster email account.

Please be aware that material posted on Avenue to Learn is protected by copyright. You are permitted to print or download one copy of material that I have written (e.g., course handouts, lecture slides, or tip sheets) so that you can privately read or study this material. However, any further copying or any distribution of these materials (e.g., to websites or to students not enrolled in the course) is strictly prohibited. If some academic writing has been posted on Avenue (e.g., an excerpt from a book), please note that this has been done under provisions in Canada’s Copyright Act. Please pay close attention to the copyright statement provided by the McMaster University Library in the cover sheet for each document.

**Course Requirements**

The course requirements, and the weights attached to them in the calculation of your final grade, are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Position Paper</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Jan. 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Paper</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>Apr. 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminar Attendance</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Grade determined after the end of classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminar Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Grade determined after the end of classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take-Home Examination</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>Apr. 11 and due on Apr. 25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You must complete all of these course requirements. More information about the course requirements can be found in the sections below.

**Position Paper**

A number of the theoretical and methodological issues covered in Part I of the course are debatable. Consequently, you will be required to write a short paper (4 to 5 pages long) that takes a position on a specified topic in Part I. Detailed instructions for completing the position paper will be provided early in the course.

You must incorporate the introductory lecture (from Jan. 5) and the first set of readings in the course (from Jan. 12) into your position paper. No other readings will be required (or permitted), and no research will be required.

You must work on the position paper individually. I want to make sure that each student in the class develops a solid background on the foundational issues in the course.
**Research Paper**

The issues associated with Part II and Part III of the course can be investigated through empirical study. Consequently, you will be required to do research and complete a paper (8 to 10 pages long) that addresses a specified topic connected to critical political economy or critical cultural studies. Detailed instructions for completing the research paper will be provided early in the course.

You must work on the research paper individually. I want to make sure that each student in the class develops strong skills associated with research, analysis, organization, writing, and referencing.

**Seminar Attendance**

Your seminar attendance grade will be based on a quantitative count of how often your name appears on the attendance sheet that is distributed each week.

I reserve the right to reduce your grade if you arrive late for class, if you return late from a break, if you leave at the break and do not come back, or if you get up and walk out on assigned active learning activities.

I also reserve the right to reduce your grade if you engage in inappropriate behaviour while the class is in session (e.g., while I am lecturing, showing films, or leading discussions). It should be fairly obvious, for instance, that it is unacceptable to play with a smartphone in front of me or eat in front of me while I am teaching you. For more information and additional examples of what constitutes inappropriate behaviour, see the section below on “Appropriate Behaviour.”

**Seminar Participation**

Your seminar participation grade will be based on your verbal responses to discussion questions as well as your contributions to any active learning activities that are held in class.

You are expected to complete both of the assigned readings for each week of the course. During each class in the course, you are also expected to participate by offering thoughtful comments about the readings.

In order to facilitate discussion of the readings, I will post some discussion questions on Avenue to Learn about a week before each class. You must access the discussion questions on Avenue, consider these questions as you do the assigned readings for that week, and jot down some thoughts or ideas to bring up during the class discussion. Since everyone will know in advance the major questions that I will raise and have time to consider them in advance, there will be no excuse for not offering viewpoints during the class. It is extremely important that you develop speaking skills, and that is why emphasis is being placed on verbal responses to discussion questions.
Your seminar participation grade will primarily be based on my observation of the *quantity* and *quality* of your *knowledgeable* contribution to class discussions (e.g., how often you say something about the required readings or the films shown in class and the degree of understanding you display of such course material). If you say nothing throughout the term, please be aware that I will be forced to give you a grade of zero for this component of your grade. If you say very little, I will be forced to give you a very low (failing) grade for this component. Please note that you will *only* get credit for making contributions that show knowledge and understanding of the material. For example, if we are discussing an article about video games, you will get credit for articulating some of the author’s points and articulating some thoughtful reactions to these points. Such commentary would have much value, but simply talking about your personal experiences with video games (because you did not read the article) would have little value (and you would not get credit for it).

Your seminar participation grade will also take into account your contributions to any active learning activities that may be held. For example, we may occasionally hold debates on issues connected to the required weekly readings.

**Take-Home Examination**

For the purpose of assessing your overall learning in the course, you will be required to write a take home examination. The examination will cover all three parts of the course, but the emphasis will be on Part II and Part III. You will have a choice between two or three questions, and you will have to prepare an answer (8 to 10 pages long) that synthesizes course material. In order to successfully answer a question, you will have to display substantial understanding of the following: the required course readings associated with the topic of the question; any film presentations related to the topic of the question; and possibly points that I made when formally or informally lecturing on the topic of the question. Detailed instructions for completing the take home examination will be provided at the end of the course.

You *must* work on the take home examination individually. As with any examination, you will *not* get extra time. Therefore, please be aware that a take home examination will *not* be accepted after a specified deadline (the final *day* and *time* for submission).

**McMaster Policy on Accommodation for Missed Academic Term Work**

McMaster University has a policy on “Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work.” This policy is explained in the Undergraduate Calendar. Building on that general policy, the Faculty of Social Sciences has established a policy titled “Student Absence Information: Academic Missed Work Procedures.” This policy can be found on the Faculty’s website.

The following is a combined summary of these policy statements (along with my requirement that students must enter into a written agreement with me for completing missed work). More detailed information can be found in the Undergraduate Calendar and on the website for the Faculty of Social Sciences. You are strongly advised to consult these sources and have a full understanding of the policy statements.
The appropriate approach for requesting relief due to missed academic term work depends on the value of the missed work as well as your specific situation:

1. For medical or personal situations lasting up to three calendar days and affecting academic work worth less than 25% of the final grade, students must use the MSAF online self-reporting tool. No further documentation is required. Students may submit requests for relief using the MSAF once per term. An automated email will be sent to the course instructor, who will determine the appropriate relief. **Students must contact the instructor immediately (i.e., within 2 working days) to discuss possible consideration.** Any consideration that may be provided for missed work is the decision of the instructor. Failure to follow these instructions may result in no consideration given for missed work. If I grant accommodation, students will be required to enter into a written agreement that sets out conditions for completing the missed academic work. **Failure to enter into a written agreement within a specified time frame will result in no consideration given for missed work.** The MSAF cannot be used to meet a religious obligation or to celebrate an important religious holiday; such accommodation is addressed through a separate university policy (the “Policy on Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous and Spiritual Observances”). The MSAF cannot be used for academic work that has already been completed or attempted. **An MSAF applies only to work that is due within the period for which the MSAF applies, i.e., the 3-day period that is specified in the MSAF. However, all work due in that period can be covered by one MSAF.** The MSAF cannot be used to apply for relief for any final examination or its equivalent.

2. For medical or personal situations lasting more than three calendar days, and/or for missed academic work worth 25% or more of the final grade, and/or for any requests for relief in a term where the MSAF has been used previously in that term, students must report to their Faculty Office (i.e., their Associate Dean’s office) to discuss their situation and will be required to provide appropriate supporting documentation. If the reason for a request for relief is medical, the approved McMaster University Medical Form covering the relevant dates must be submitted. The student must be seen by a doctor at the earliest possible date, normally on or before the date of the missed work, and the doctor must verify the duration of the illness. If the reason is non-medical (e.g., a death in the family), appropriate documentation with verifiable origin covering the relevant dates must be submitted, normally within three working days of when the work was missed. Documentation for travel arrangements will not be accepted by the Faculty of Social Sciences. Students may be required to meet with an Academic Advisor to discuss the circumstances surrounding their missed work. Following verification of the documentation and approval by an Academic Advisor (if appropriate), the Faculty Office will send an automated MSAF notification to the instructors (or, in special cases, an email). Students will also receive a copy of the notification or email. **Students must contact their instructor immediately (i.e., within 2 working days) to discuss possible consideration.** Any consideration that may be provided for missed work is the decision of the instructor. **Failure to follow these instructions may result in no consideration given for missed work.** If I grant accommodation, students will be required to enter into a written agreement that sets out conditions for completing the missed academic work. **Failure to enter into a written agreement within a specified time frame will result in no consideration given for missed work.**
**Important Note:** As far as the Faculty of Social Sciences is concerned, submitting an MSAF or submitting documentation only gives students the opportunity to discuss possible consideration with the instructor. In other words, there is no guarantee that an instructor will provide any accommodation. An instructor may deny accommodation to students for various reasons (e.g., if they have submitted an MSAF far too late, if they have submitted inadequate documentation or submitted the documentation too late, or if they have failed to follow-up in a timely manner by requesting accommodation through McMaster email within 2 working days).

**Disability Accommodation Letters**

Students who require academic accommodation for a disability must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Academic accommodations must be arranged for each term of study. SAS can be contacted by phone (905-525-9140, Ext. 28652) or email (sas@mcmaster.ca). For further information, consult McMaster University’s policy on “Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities.”

If you have a disability, you will need an accommodation letter from SAS to arrange your accommodations with me (as well as your other instructors). Please go to the following link and carefully read all of the information provided about how to set up your accommodations (each and every term) for particular courses you are taking:

https://sas.mcmaster.ca/students-how-to/#Receiving_Accommodations

At the link noted above, SAS states: “When your instructor reviews and acknowledges receipt of your accommodations, an auto generated email will be sent to you requesting you to communicate with your instructor.” Furthermore, SAS recommends that you meet with your instructor during office hours or by appointment to discuss your accommodations in person.

**Important Note:** Please bring two copies of your accommodation letter to my office early in the term so that we can discuss and arrange your accommodations for the course. Please drop in during my office hours or contact me via McMaster email to set up an appointment. A meeting will only take about five to ten minutes. We will review your accommodations and discuss your needs. I will then write notes on both copies of your accommodation letter (indicating what we have agreed to). I will keep one copy and give you the other. While some accommodations are straight-forward, others require a conversation and agreement in advance. This is important in order to avoid potential confusion or misunderstanding about your accommodations.

**Grading Schemes**

This course may utilize two different marking schemes. Percentage grades will be used for any multiple choice or true/false testing. Letter grades will be used for any written work. Letter grades are preferred for written work since a numerical scheme implies that it is possible to produce a perfect piece of writing. However, for purposes of interpretation and calculation of a final course grade, the numerical mid-point of a letter grade (or the approximate numerical mid-point) will also be provided. In the case of a failing grade (i.e., an F), the numerical equivalent (between 0%-49%) will be the decision of the marker.
**Academic Integrity**

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences. For example, it can result in: the grade of zero on an assignment; loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (the notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”); and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty, please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy (specifically Appendix 3) located at: [www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity](http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity)

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty: plagiarism (e.g., the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which other credit has been obtained); improper collaboration in group work; and copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

**Important Note:** Students are expected to carefully read the course handout “Referencing Style and Avoiding Academic Dishonesty.” Students are also expected to follow all of the instructions in that handout when preparing written work for the course.

**Use of Turnitin.com**

In this course, we will be using a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal plagiarism. Students will be expected to submit their work electronically to Turnitin.com and in hard copy so that it can be checked for academic dishonesty. Students who do not wish to submit their work to Turnitin.com must still submit a hard copy to the instructor. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to Turnitin.com. All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., an online search).

If you do not wish to submit your work to Turnitin.com, please be aware that I will need time to perform the laborious task of checking your work manually for signs of academic dishonesty. Consequently, I reserve the right to withhold your work until I have had a chance to check it manually. This means that you will not get your paper back on the same day as those students who did submit their work to Turnitin.com. You will have to wait several weeks longer.

If you do submit your paper to Turnitin.com, and if Turnitin.com suggests that there may be a problem with your paper, I reserve the right to withhold your paper until I can carry out a further investigation.
Use of Laptop Computers in the Classroom

Computer use in the classroom is intended to facilitate learning in that particular lecture or tutorial. At the discretion of the instructor or TA, students using a computer for any other purpose may be required to turn the computer off for the remainder of the lecture or tutorial.

If you want to use a laptop computer to take notes, you must use a battery in your computer or sit directly beside a wall and wall outlet. If you are seen stringing a cord to reach an outlet, you will be told to disconnect the cord. This policy is being adopted to ensure safety in the classroom. Please understand that other people could get hurt by tripping over your cord (if it is lying on the floor) or walking into it (if it is left hanging).

Departmental, Faculty, and University Policies

Do not fax assignments. When there are assignments in my courses, you are also not permitted to submit them by email or email attachment. Only a hard copy of written work will be accepted.

The Sociology staff do not date-stamp assignments, nor do they monitor the submission or return of papers.

Students should check the university’s website as well as the white board and the Undergraduate Bulletin Board outside the Sociology Office (KTH 627) for notices pertaining to Sociology classes or departmental business (e.g., class scheduling information, location of mailboxes and offices, tutorial information, class cancellations, TA job postings, etc.).

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of students to check their McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

It is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all email communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student’s own McMaster University email account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

Required Readings

All of the weekly required readings for this course have been assembled in a Custom Courseware package that is available for purchase through the Campus Store.
**Course Lectures**

I will not simply summarize the required readings in the lectures. The lectures will utilize material from the required readings, but they will also go beyond the readings in a variety of ways. They will often address theories, concepts, issues, etc. that are not discussed in the readings. The lectures and the readings are intended to complement each other, not copy each other. You should also be aware that the lectures may not be the same as the lectures in a previous version of the course.

I will post PowerPoint slides on Avenue after a lecture has been given, but it is important for you to understand that these slides will not be lecture notes. Rather, the slides will be “structural outlines” of lectures (which set out the headings and sub-headings used to organize the material) along with “supplementary slides” that provide some details from the lectures (e.g., selected key words, certain sketchy points, and graphs or tables). You need to realize that much of the lecture material will be presented verbally. Therefore, unless you regularly attend the lectures, you will not have the material you need to be successful on a test or examination. You will only internalize the course material effectively if you regularly attend the lectures, listen to the explanations I give, take your own notes on these explanations, and take the opportunity to ask questions if I have said something you do not understand. The PowerPoint slides are best used when writing lecture notes and when later organizing or re-writing these notes.

You are not allowed to make audio recordings or video recordings during the lectures, or to take photos during the lectures, without written permission from the instructor. Usually, only certain disability students are allowed to make audio recordings. If students have an accommodation letter from SAS indicating that audio recordings of lectures are a necessary accommodation for a disability, and if these students meet with me to discuss their accommodation letters, then they will be allowed to make audio recordings of lectures.

Please be aware that my lectures are protected by copyright. Like any piece of academic writing, lectures draw upon academic material produced by others. However, in lectures – as in journal articles or books – the selection and organization of material, as well as the arguments and analyses based on the material, are unique to the person who did the academic writing. Your lecture notes will reflect and reproduce the unique work that I have done, and distribution of that work is protected by copyright. You are certainly permitted (and encouraged) to take notes on my lectures so that you can privately read and study these notes for tests. You are also permitted to share lecture notes with other students in the course on an individual basis (e.g., giving notes to a friend who missed a lecture). However, any mass electronic distribution of lecture notes (e.g., through Avenue to Learn or a lecture-sharing website) is not permitted. Furthermore, any attempt to secure individual gain from the distribution of lecture notes (e.g., by selling lecture notes for profit or receiving any form of compensation from a lecture-sharing website) is strictly prohibited.

**Appropriate Behaviour**

It is your responsibility to attend all classes in this course, to be on time for the classes, and to stay for the duration of the classes. The instructor bears no responsibility for difficulties
experienced by students who do not attend, who are late, or who leave early. If you miss a lecture, or a portion of a lecture (for any reason), you are advised to borrow notes from a student who was present. You are also advised to consult this student about any announcements that may have been made. If you do not know anyone in the course, you are advised to get to know someone early on and exchange contact information so that you can share notes as well as information about announcements. It is not the responsibility of the instructor to provide students with lecture notes or to brief students on any announcements they have missed.

It is your responsibility to conduct yourself in an appropriate manner during classes in this course. While we (either me or a TA) are trying to teach you, and while other students are trying to learn, please do not engage in any behaviour which is rude or distracting. Such behaviour includes (but is not limited to): having a private conversation with another student; eating food; reading a book or magazine; putting your head down or sleeping; doing work for another course; using a laptop computer for anything other than taking notes; and using a smartphone or other personal electronic device for any reason while the class or tutorial is underway. Please understand that such rude or distracting behaviour can make it difficult for the professor or TA to teach, and this behaviour can also make it difficult for other students to learn. For example, other students may find it hard to learn if they are distracted by the sound of chatting or eating and the sight of someone in front of them surfing the Web or playing a video game on a computer or a smartphone. You are welcome to engage in such activities while waiting for the class to begin or while enjoying a scheduled break in an evening course or seminar. However, while the class or tutorial is underway, please show consideration for me, your TA, and your classmates. If you are bothered by the behaviour of other students, you are welcome to discuss your concerns with me privately.

It is your responsibility to interact with the professor, TAs, and other students in a respectful manner. Disruptive or unacceptable behaviour is strictly prohibited. This behaviour includes (but is not limited to): speaking from your seat – or speaking up during class discussions – without raising your hand and waiting to be acknowledged by the professor or TA; yelling at the professor, TA, or other students; and engaging in any threatening, intimidating, degrading, harassing, or discriminatory behaviour (physically, verbally, or in writing) that is directed at the professor, TA, or other students. Disruptive or unacceptable behaviour that occurs in or out of class may constitute a violation of McMaster University’s “Student Code of Rights and Responsibilities” (formerly known as the “Student Code of Conduct”) and be punishable by various sanctions (penalties) that can be imposed by the university. According to the university, all McMaster students have an obligation to familiarize themselves with the “Student Code of Rights and Responsibilities.” Again, if you are bothered by the behaviour of other students, you are welcome to discuss your concerns with me privately.

Reference Letters

Many students will eventually need reference letters from professors to get into graduate schools, law schools, or teaching colleges. Some students may also need reference letters from professors to get jobs.
It is important to understand that reference letters are not reports of your grades. If professional schools or employers want to see evidence that you have a degree or certain grades, they will ask you to arrange for McMaster to send them an official copy of your transcript. They do not need professors to report grades. Excellent grades are usually necessary to get reference letters from professors, but the letters themselves focus on other things.

Through reference letters, professional schools and employers want professors to provide assessments of your skills and your behaviour. In relation to skills, they usually want us to comment on your writing skills, analytical skills, and speaking skills (e.g., the quality of your written work and the quality of your presentations or other verbal contributions to classes). With regard to behaviour, they frequently want to know if you have a strong work ethic and are reliable (e.g., always attending classes, always being on time for classes, and always getting assignments done on time). In terms of behaviour, they also often want to know if you show maturity and exercise good judgment (e.g., behaving appropriately and respectfully during classes and when interacting with professors or other students; making wise decisions; and taking responsibility for your actions or your mistakes). Professional schools and employers also ask about a host of other characteristics associated with skills or behaviour; they sometimes ask if you show initiative (e.g., starting assignments early and getting help early), if you exhibit integrity (e.g., being honest with professors and other people; being honest and ethical when doing academic work), and if you have the ability to work with others as well as the ability to work independently. It should be easy to understand why professional schools and employers are looking for students who have such qualities. In order to make it clear that we are in a position to adequately comment on your skills and behaviour, professors are usually asked to declare how long we have known you (e.g., in terms of months or years).

I am happy to write reference letters for students if they have excellent grades, if I know them by face and name, if I have had sufficient opportunity to observe their skills and behaviour, and if I am able to give a strongly positive assessment of their skills and behaviour in relation to further study or employment.

In light of all of this, I would strongly recommend that you do more than focus on getting high grades throughout the three or four years of your undergraduate degree. I would advise you to establish contacts with professors (e.g., by taking smaller classes where they can get to know you or by visiting them during office hours if the classes are larger). I would also advise you to make an extremely positive impression on professors (with regard to your skills and behaviour).

**Course Schedule**

The course schedule below identifies the course topics, the approximate dates when the topics will be addressed, and the required readings for the topics. You will be given reasonable notice if any significant changes have to be made to the course schedule.
Part I:
Theoretical and Methodological Issues

Introduction to Sociological Analysis of the Media (Jan. 5)
Lecture

Critical Perspectives on the Media (Jan. 12)

Part II:
Critical Political Economy

Ownership of the Media (Jan. 19)
Dwayne Winseck (2008), “The State of Media Ownership and Media Markets: Competition or Concentration and Why Should We Care?”

Globalization of the Media (Jan. 26)

The State and the Media I: Policy and Regulation (Feb. 2)

The State and the Media II: Public Broadcasting (Feb. 9)
David Young (2005), “The CBC and the Juno Awards”

Struggles over Media Policy (Feb. 16)

Mid-Term Recess (No class on Feb. 23)
Part III:
Critical Cultural Studies

**Media Representation I: Labour Unions and the Working Class** (Mar. 2)
Richard Butsch (2005), “Five Decades and Three Hundred Sitcoms about Class and Gender”

**Media Representation II: Women** (Mar. 9)

**Media Representation III: Minorities** (Mar. 16)

**Reception of Representation in Mainstream Media** (Mar. 23)

**Good Friday (No class on Mar. 30)**

**Struggles through Alternative Media** (Apr. 6)