

**Media Matters:  
Stereotypes and Social Change in Popular Media**

Academic Connections · UCSD · Summer 2015

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**Class Webpage:** [www.mediamatters2015.wikispaces.com](http://www.mediamatters2015.wikispaces.com)

**Location:** York Hall, Room 3000A  
**Schedule:** Monday – Friday, 9:00-11:30a and 1:30-4:00p

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**Course Overview**

We all consume popular media, yet we can often overlook how they depict a biased view of social reality. This course will introduce students to how popular media portray particular social groups based on three core sociological concepts: class, race, and gender. We will investigate how television, films, music videos, and other forms of popular media depict and recreate stereotypes based on socioeconomic class, race, and gender. We will discuss why the media sells these kinds of representations, the effect these representations have on us, the role of the media in reinforcing inequality, and how the media can be used for positive social change.

The course is designed for young learners with little to no experience in sociology or media studies. The general aim of the course is to show students how popular media project a biased or distorted view of social reality and give students the ability to critically analyze and engage with media. This skill is especially crucial for young students, who are coming of age in a social environment dominated by media consumption. While we will often engage in academic discussion of contemporary social phenomena, you should come away from the course feeling prepared and empowered to critically engage with media environments in your daily life.

**Learning Objectives**

We will focus our attention on three specific learning objectives.

*Building Critical Media Literacy*

Critical media literacy involves forming and practicing a set of cognitive analytical tools. These tools are ‘cognitive’ because they are, primarily, tools for *thinking*. The tools are formed by first learning how to ask questions about the media we see and hear. They are practiced by continually asking these questions using different media and in order to observe different messages.

*Introductory Understanding of Core Sociological Concepts*

Sociology rests on a foundation of core concepts – things that most, if not all, sociologists agree upon. These core concepts shape the way sociologists look at the world. In this class, we will be focusing on five core concepts: class, race, gender, social structure, and culture.

*See the Connection between Media and Inequality/Social Change*

While practicing media literacy, we will also be taking our discussions to the next level by analyzing the ‘bigger picture’. In many ways, the media provides the cultural beliefs that reinforce inequality. However, cultural beliefs can also be changed, and the media plays a large role in that change. We will continually address how people can *use* the media to send a different message.

## **Homework**

You will have some kind of homework each day. Complete the homework on the day that it is assigned because we will discuss them the *following* day. Homework materials for this class will be available online, through our class wiki. We have posted links or PDF copies of all the required homework to the wiki.

## **Grading & Assignments**

Attendance, Participation, Preparedness	35%
Weekly Quizzes (3 quizzes, 5% each)	15%
Informal Presentation: Class	10%
Informal Presentation: Race	10%
Informal Presentation: Gender	10%
Partner Presentations	20%

By far, the most important thing you can do for this class is to be present and prepared. You can show that you are prepared by participating in class discussions. You are required to participate – meaning you need to be engaged with what we are doing in class. This is not the time for you to zone out!

Each week, you will have a quiz on the topics we discussed that week. The quizzes will consist of multiple choice, fill in the blank, and short answer questions. To study for the quiz, you will need to take good notes, review the lecture slides posted online, and do the homework assigned that week.

During each of our segments on class, race, and gender, you will give an *informal* 5-minute presentation on some type of media that you find and analyze outside of class. During the week, as we discuss and analyze different media through the ‘lens’ of class, race, or gender, you should be keeping an eye out for a piece of media that catches your attention and can also be analyzed through that ‘lens’. For example, during the week where we analyze media and race, you may be attracted to a commercial, ad, television show, film, or video game that you think also has some interesting racial representations. Take that piece of media, and analyze it using the Key Questions for Media Literacy (Day 1). Then, you’ll come to class and give us an informal, 5-minute presentation of that piece of media. The media text you choose must be recent (within the past 2 years) and must be something you encountered in your own life. That means you should be actively consuming media while at UCSD! Your presentation should:

1. Display the piece of media you chose (either something you can pass around or pull up on the laptop/projector)
2. Tell us how you would answer the Key Questions
3. Pose at least one question about the piece of media (you have considerable flexibility here; it could be a discussion question for your classmates, a question to the makers/actors in the piece of media, wondering if the piece of media did what it was supposed to do, etc.)

At the end of the course, you will present a *formal* presentation with a partner that broadly analyzes some general category of media through the lens of class, race, OR gender. Some examples of ‘general category’ of media include: commercials for cleaning supplies, 30-minute family sitcoms, FPS video games, YA novels, etc. When choosing a general media category, try to think of something broad enough that there is plenty to study, but avoid something so broad that there would be *too much* to study. For example, if you are really interested in race on television, the category of ‘television’ is WAY too broad. On the other hand, the category of ‘dating/romance reality TV’ or ‘MTV reality shows’ is much more narrow, but still gives you plenty to study. You’ll need to study at least 10 “pieces” from your genre and then prepare a presentation that goes over some of the major themes/patterns you see. For this assignment, you can either do the presentation by yourself or with a partner. You will decide your partners during the first week, so that you have plenty of time to decide your general

category and coordinate. At the end of the final week, you (and your partner) will give a formal 10-15 minute presentation. Your presentation should:

1. Introduce us to the general media category you chose and display a few key examples of that category
2. Review the sociological perspective of class/race/gender (as applicable)
3. Present a broad/general analysis of the media category using the 'lens' of class/race/gender and that integrates the Key Questions
4. Give us some conclusions and your impressions of the media category's representation of class/race/gender

### Course Schedule

Day	DATE	TOPICS
<b>1</b>	Monday, July 13 <b>INTRO</b>	AM: Introduction, overview of course goals, initial discussion PM: Conducting a critical media analysis, Key Questions, media analysis practice <i>Play the SPENT challenge, Read Palmer's "You Get what You Deserve," Read Lareau "Unequal Childhoods," Read Khan "Ease of Privilege"</i>
<b>2</b>	Tuesday, July 14 <b>CLASS</b>	AM: Intro to Class, class-based inequality, the classless society? PM: Class reproduction, meritocracy, and cultural capital <i>Read Eagleson "What Happened to all the Middle Class Sitcoms," Read Mantsios "Media Magic," Read Schor "New Politics of Consumption," Read Zweig "America's Working Class Majority"</i>
<b>3</b>	Wednesday, July 15 <b>CLASS</b>	AM: The invisible poor, the abundant middle class in Sitcoms PM: Meritocracy and class in reality TV – whose reality? <i>Work on presentation and study for the quiz</i>
<b>4</b>	Thursday July 16 <b>CLASS</b>	AM: <b><u>Informal Presentations &amp; Quiz #1</u></b> PM: What are media makers selling and why? <i>Play PBS Sorting Game, Watch first two chapters of "Blue Eyes, Brown Eyes," Read Kozol "Still Separate, Still Unequal"</i>
<b>5</b>	Friday July 17 <b>RACE</b>	AM: Intro to race, race-based inequality PM: Racism and meaning, stereotypes vs. identities, ascription and assertion <i>Read Framing and Fear Pts I and II, Read "Who Would You Shoot, Read excerpt from Entman and Rojecki "Race at the Movies," Read excerpt of Heider "White News"</i>
<b>6</b>	Monday, July 20 <b>RACE</b>	AM: Old News? Race, crime, and power in mass media news outlets PM: Race and the American blockbuster film <i>Read "Analyzing Ads: Race," Read "Why I Hate Abercrombie and Fitch" Read "Cultural Appropriation: The Fashionable Face of Racism," Read Schor "The Marketing of Cool"</i>
<b>7</b>	Tuesday, July 21 <b>RACE</b>	AM: Race in advertising - how race shapes our values PM: What are media makers selling and why? <i>Watch examples of Gendered Advertising (links on Wiki), Work on presentation and study for the quiz</i>
<b>8</b>	Wednesday, July 22 <b>RACE &amp; GENDER</b>	AM: <b><u>Informal Presentations &amp; Quiz #2</u></b> PM: Intro to Gender, essentialized difference, Hegemonic Masculinity and emphasized femininity <i>Read excerpt of "An Overview of Sex Inequality at Work," Read Steinem "Sex, Lies, and Advertising," Watch "Killing Us Softly 4" (link on Wiki)</i>
<b>9</b>	Thursday, July 23 <b>GENDER</b>	AM: Gender-based inequality PM: Selling Gender in Advertising <i>Homework: Spend some time on the Chapman University website and</i>

		<i>think of 1 question for our campus tour guide</i>
<b>10</b>	Friday, July 24	All Day: Field Trip to Chapman University, Dodge College of Film and Media Arts <i>Read excerpt of Kimmel "The Gendered Media," Read Madley-Rath "Stereotypes in Kids Books"</i>
<b>11</b>	Monday, July 27 <b>GENDER</b>	AM: Gendering children – Disney films and children's shows PM: Dreamworlds – Gender in music/music videos <i>Read Katz "Advertising and the Construction of Violent White Masculinity," Work on presentations (Wednesday informal and final project)</i>
<b>12</b>	Tuesday, July 28 <b>GENDER</b>	AM: Media and women's power: <i>Miss Representation</i> PM: Media, violence, and men's life chances: <i>Tough Guise</i> <i>Work on your informal presentation and study for the quiz</i>
<b>13</b>	Wednesday, July 29 <b>GENDER</b>	AM: <b><u>Informal Presentations &amp; Quiz #3</u></b> PM: What are media makers selling and why? <i>Homework: Spend some time on the SDSU website and think of 1 question for our campus tour guide; work on your final project</i>
<b>14</b>	Thursday, July 30 <b>CHANGE</b>	AM: Field Trip to SDSU PM: The media as a social tool for social change/Work on Partner Presentations in the Computer Lab <i>Finish your final project</i>
<b>15</b>	Friday, July 31	AM: <b><u>Partner presentations &amp; Course Wrap-Up</u></b> PM: Graduation Rehearsal