



## COM 244: Media & Democracy

Section 1, Tuesday/Thursday, 2:30 p.m. – 4:20 p.m.

BH 317

**Instructor:** Sarah Wolter

**Office Hours:** Tuesday/Thursday 1:30-2:30 or by appointment

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### Course Description

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The current political climate has heightened journalists' and consumers' attention toward the role of information in society. From news sources to social media, media offer the most prevalent and immediate opportunities for gathering information to make political decisions on local and national issues. This class will explore ways media ownership concentration and contested truth influence content and access to information. The final project will develop media literacy curricula for children to help them navigate the changing nature of information in society.

### Student Learning Outcomes

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Student learning outcomes provide a foundation for the goal of instilling a capacity and passion for lifelong learning in every Gustavus student. For this course, specific learning objectives are as follows:

- **Cognitive Practice:** Students thoughtfully analyze enduring and contemporary questions from multiple perspectives, will independently develop original and creative solutions to complex problems, and will support their reasoning while considering other possibilities.
- **Intellectual Capacities:** Students demonstrate the ability to understand and communicate effectively across a variety of modes, including written, oral, visual, creative, and quantitative.
- **Integration of Learning:** Students synthesize and apply their broad and specialized knowledge, skills, and ways of knowing in varied contexts.
- **Ethical Reflection:** Students critically contemplate the conflicting value choices of the ethically complex world in which we live, will articulate their own values, and will reflect on how these values shape their ethical decisions.
- **Intercultural Understanding:** Students thoughtfully consider different beliefs, customs, practices, and social behaviors as they develop strategies for respectful and constructive engagement with others in order to come to a broad sense of being in the world.

### Required Texts

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Articles/book chapters on Moodle. These should be printed and each day's readings brought to class that day.

### Assignments/Grading

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All written and oral assignments, including exams, are to be completed by the date assigned. **No late assignments will be accepted except under extenuating circumstances.**

Participation*	100 pts.
Visual representation of concepts assignment	25 pts.
Evaluating information assignment	50 pts.
Media/democracy paradox assignment	60 pts.
Learning resources for K-12 children	80 pts.

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<b>Total</b>	<b>315 pts.</b>
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\*Students will be required to participate in small group and/or large group discussion each day of class. Class discussion provides students with the opportunity to demonstrate comprehension of the material, accurate application of concepts to their own experiences, meaningful connections between this course and others, and concise, sophisticated oral communication. When students read an article/chapter, they should identify main points, be able to explain main

concepts, and provide relevant examples of the issues addressed in the article. Students should bring hard copies of readings to class along with questions prompted by the readings. Students receive one “free” absence and then participation points will be deducted for each absence, regardless of the reason the student is gone.

Assignment guidelines for all other assignments will be handed out in class.

### ***Grading scale***

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A 94-100%	B+ 87-89%	C+ 77-79%	D+ 67-69%
A- 90-93%	B 84-86%	C 74-76%	D 63-66%
	B- 80-83%	C- 70-73%	F 0-63%

Students must receive a grade of C- or higher for the course to count toward completion of the Communication Studies major. Students need a grade of D or better for the course to count toward graduation.

### ***Honor Code***

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Students agreed to the following when they enrolled at Gustavus:

“As a community of scholars, the faculty and students of Gustavus Adolphus College have formulated an academic honesty policy and honor code system, which is printed in the Academic Bulletin and in the Gustavus Guide. As a student at Gustavus Adolphus College I agree to uphold the honor code. This means that I will abide by the academic honesty policy, and abide by decisions of the joint student/faculty Honor Board.” It is expected this code is followed in this classroom. The following code should be written in full and signed on every examination and graded paper: “On my honor, I pledge that I have not given, received, or tolerated others’ use of unauthorized aid in completing this work.”

### ***Writing Policy***

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Clearly expressing your ideas in writing is essential for success in this course and beyond it. Since I expect your writing to improve over the course of the semester, you should be proactive in addressing any stylistic or grammatical issues that I raise when I provide feedback on your work. Read and reflect on the comments, and set goals for the aspects of your writing that need improvement. The Writing Center is available for help on papers and speech outlines. The Center also has a part-time tutor for ELL instruction. Students can schedule appointments by contacting the Writing Center at <http://www.gustavus.edu/writingcenter/>

Students must always document material drawn from other sources using the most recent guidelines for the citation of others’ research outlined by the American Psychological Association or the Modern Languages Association. Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Any incident of plagiarism will result in a failing grade in the course.

Students can always get help with your research at the library. Reference librarians will help you find information on a topic, develop search strategies for papers and projects, search library catalogs and databases, and provide assistance at every step. Drop-ins and appointments are both welcome. Visit [https://gustavus.edu/library/reference\\_question.php](https://gustavus.edu/library/reference_question.php) for hours, location, and more information.

### ***Disability Services***

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Gustavus Adolphus College is committed to ensuring the full participation of all students in its programs. If you have a documented disability, or you think you may have a disability of any nature (e.g., mental health, attentional, learning, chronic health, sensory, or physical) and, as a result, need reasonable academic accommodation to participate in class, take tests or benefit from the College’s services, then you should speak with the Accessibility Resources staff, for a confidential discussion of your needs and appropriate plans. Course requirements cannot be waived, but reasonable accommodations may be provided based on disability documentation and course outcomes. Accommodations cannot be made retroactively; therefore, to maximize your academic success at Gustavus, please contact Accessibility Resources as early as possible. Accessibility Resources (<https://gustavus.edu/advising/disability/>) is located in the Center for Academic Resources and Enhancement. Accessibility Resources Coordinator, Kelly Karstad, ([kkarstad@gustavus.edu](mailto:kkarstad@gustavus.edu) or x7138), can provide further information.

## ***Support for English Language Learners and Multilingual students***

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Support for English learners and multilingual students is available through the Center for International and Cultural Education's (<https://gustavus.edu/cice/>) Multilingual and Intercultural Program Coordinator (MIPC), Carly Houston Overfelt. The MIPC can meet individually with students for tutoring in writing, consulting about academic tasks, and helping students connect with the College's support systems. When requested, the MIPC can consult with faculty regarding effective classroom strategies for English learners and multilingual students. If requested, the MIPC can provide students with a letter to a professor that explains and supports appropriate academic arrangements (e.g., additional time on tests, additional revisions for papers). Professors make decisions based on those recommendations at their own discretion. In addition, English learners and multilingual students can seek help from peer tutors in the Writing Center (<https://gustavus.edu/writingcenter/>).

## ***Mental Wellbeing***

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The Gustavus community is committed to and cares about all students. Strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol or drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating, and/or lack of motivation may affect a student's academic performance or reduce a student's ability to participate in daily activities. If you or someone you know expresses such mental health concerns or experiences a stressful event that can create barriers to learning, Gustavus services are available to assist you. You can learn more about the broad range of confidential health services available on campus at <https://gustavus.edu/counseling/> and <https://gustavus.edu/deanofstudents/services/>.

## ***Title IX***

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Title IX is federal legislation that makes clear that violence and harassment based on sex or gender are civil rights violations. Gustavus Adolphus College takes incidents of sexual misconduct and sexual harassment seriously. College employees, including instructors, have mandatory reporting responsibilities regarding acts of sex and/or gender discrimination, including sexual violence; I am required to share information with the Title IX coordinator. You may speak to someone confidentially by contacting the Sexual Assault Response Team (SART/CADA), Chaplains, Counseling Center, or Health Service staff; conversations with these individuals can be kept strictly confidential. SART/CADA can be reached 24 hours a day at [507-933-6868](tel:507-933-6868). The college will respect the confidentiality of the victim and alleged offender(s) as much as possible consistent with the College's legal obligations. Students also always have a choice as to whether to participate in an investigation or not.

Sexual misconduct includes the following: non-consensual sexual contact, non-consensual sexual intercourse, sexual exploitation (taking non-consensual or abusive sexual advantage of another), intimate partner violence (physical, sexual, or psychological harm by a current or former partner or spouse), and stalking (please see the Student Sexual Misconduct Policy on the Title IX website <https://gustavus.edu/titleix/>). Sexual Harassment is any behavior of a sexual nature that is unwelcome, offensive or fails to respect the rights and dignity of another person whether of the same or opposite sex (please see the All-College Policy against Harassment and Sexual Harassment for examples and more details: <https://gustavus.edu/facultybook/allcollegepolicies/#Anchor-Sexua-60443>).

If you have any questions, contact Title IX and Sexual Misconduct Prevention Coordinator, Patty Dawson ([507-933-6360](tel:507-933-6360) or [pdawson@gustavus.edu](mailto:pdawson@gustavus.edu)), or one of the deputy coordinators (listed online at <https://gustavus.edu/titleix/TitleIXTeam/>).

## Course Calendar

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### Tuesday, September 5

*Topic:* Introduction to the course

*Assignment due:* None

### Thursday, September 7

*Topic:* What is democracy? Historical development and democratic theory.

*Assignment due:* Read Curran, "What democracy requires of the media" (1)

Read Hallin & Giles, "Presses and democracies" (2)

### Tuesday, September 12

*Topic:* Information formats and shape, content, quality, rigor

*Assignment due:* Read Schudson, "Orientations: The press and democracy in time and space" (3)

Read Entman, "The nature and sources of news" (4)

### Thursday, September 14

*Topic:* [Sarah gone] Work on visual representation of concepts and evaluating information assignments

*Assignment due:* Work on current assignments

### Tuesday, September 19

*Topic:* Media effects: framing, priming and agenda setting

*Assignment due:* Read McCombs, "The agenda-setting function of the press" (5)

Read Scheufele & Tewksbury, "Framing, agenda setting, and priming: The evolution of three media effects models" (6)

### Thursday, September 21

*Topic:* Review Module 1; Visual representation of concepts art gallery walk/interactive presentations

*Assignment due:* Visual representation of concepts

### Tuesday, September 26

*Topic:* Evaluating information for relevancy and reliability

*Assignment due:* Checkology course: Module 1, Filtering News and Information, "Know your zone: Sorting information"

Checkology course: Module 4, How to Know What to Believe, "Recognizing Bias"

Checkology course: Module 4, How to Know What to Believe, "Checking Credibility: Evaluating Information"

### Thursday, September 28

*Topic:* Establishing and evaluating information using information criteria

*Assignment due:* Read "Web literacy for student fact checkers" and do activities within chapter (<https://webliteracy.pressbooks.com/>)

### Tuesday, October 3

*Topic:* Case study: reality and media manipulation: [futureoffakenews.com](http://futureoffakenews.com)

*Assignment due:* Go to "Future of Fake News" website and listen to RadioLab broadcast (51 minutes), watch "The Fake Video" (1:25), "Project Voco" (6:01), "Synthesizing Obama" (7:58), and "Face2Face" (6:33) videos

**Thursday, October 5**

*Topic:* Why the system exists: Media regulation

*Assignment due:* Read Horwitz, "Communications regulation in protecting the public interest" (7)

**Tuesday, October 10**

*Topic:* Capitalism's role in democracy, day 1

*Assignment due:* Read McChesney, "Does capitalism equal democracy?" (10)

**Thursday, October 12**

*Topic:* Capitalism's role in democracy, day 2; workshop political economy project

*Assignment due:* Read McChesney, "Preface to the 2015 edition" (8)

Read McChesney, "Introduction" (9)

**Tuesday, October 17**

*Topic:* Media conglomeration; political economy of the media

*Assignment due:* Read Picard, "Money, media, and the public interest" (12)

**Thursday, October 19**

*Topic:* Capitalism's role in democracy, day 3; workshop political economy project

*Assignment due:* Bring materials to work on political economy project

**Tuesday, October 24**

*Topic:* No class – Fall break

*Assignment due:* None

**Thursday, October 26**

*Topic:* The impact of new information technologies on democracy

*Assignment due:* Read McChesney, "How can the political economy of communication help us understand the internet?" (11)

**Tuesday, October 31**

*Topic:* Alternative news sites and the economic value of information

*Assignment due:* Read NPR, "Fake News Expert on How Fake News Stories Spread and Why People Believe Them" (13)

Read Ohlheiser, "This is how Fakebook's fake-news writers make money" (14)

Read NPR, "We tracked down a fake-news creator in the suburbs. Here's what we learned." (15)

Read Silverman interview (Checkology), "5 types of misinformation"

**Thursday, November 2**

*Topic:* Critical information literacy, day 1

*Assignment due:* Read Downey, "The theoretical foundations of critical information literacy" (16)

Read Wilson & Tunney, "chapter 1, 100% information literacy success" (17)

Political economy project due

**Tuesday, November 7**

*Topic:* Critical information literacy, day 2

*Assignment due:* Read Kellner & Share, "Critical media literacy, democracy, and the reconstruction of education" (18)

Read interview with Victor Strasburger (Consortium for Media Literacy) (19)

Read Boyd, "Did media literacy backfire?" (20)

**Thursday, November 9**

*Topic:* Learning resources workshop: Know your audience

*Assignment due:* Read and take notes on at least three articles relating to the developmental characteristics of the age group for which you will write your learning resources

**Tuesday, November 14**

*Topic:* Learning resources workshop: Minnesota State Standards

*Assignment due:* Find and read the Minnesota State Standards on media literacy for the group for which you will write your learning resources (21)

**Thursday, November 16**

*Topic:* Learning resources workshop: P21 Framework for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning

*Assignment due:* Read "Reimagining Citizenship for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" (22)

Read "What is 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning and Citizenship All About?" (23)

Read P21 Framework Definitions (24)

Read P21 Media Literacy description and check out resources (25)

Read P21 Information Literacy description and check out resources (26)

Read P21 ICT Literacy description and check out resources (27)

Read P21 Civic Literacy description and check out resources (28)

Read P21 Critical Thinking description and check out resources (29)

Read P21 Communication description and check out resources (30)

**Tuesday, November 21**

*Topic:* Learning Resources workshop: Wiggins & McTighe's "Backward Design" curriculum design process

*Assignment due:* Read "Understanding by Design" Chapter 1 "Backward Design" (pp. 13-34) (31)

Read "Understanding by Design" Chapter 2 "Understanding Understanding" (pp. 35-55) (32)

Read "Understanding by Design" Chapter 3 "Gaining Clarity on our Goals" (pp. 56-81) (33)

Read "Assessment: A 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills Implementation Guide" (34)

Read "21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills Assessment e-paper" (35)

**Thursday, November 23**

*Topic:* No class – Thanksgiving break

*Assignment due:* None

**Tuesday, November 28**

*Topic:* Learning Resources Workshop: Learning Resources Template

*Assignment due:* Read through template before class

**Thursday, November 30**

*Topic:* Learning Resources Workshop: final preparations

*Assignment due:* Keep working on learning resources

**Tuesday, December 5**

*Topic:* Learning resources presentations

*Assignment due:* Prepare for learning resources presentation

**Thursday, December 7**

*Topic:* Learning resources presentations

*Assignment due:* Prepare for learning resources presentation

**Tuesday, December 12**

*Topic:* Course wrap-up

*Assignment due:* None

**\*\*Students enrolled in COM 244 are responsible for the information in this syllabus. Read it regularly throughout the semester. The contents of this syllabus are subject to change at the instructor's discretion.\*\***