

## AMERICAN MEDIA

Course: American Media and the Arab World  
Semester: Spring 2011  
Department: International Studies/American Studies  
University of Jordan  
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1<sup>st</sup> Floor Foreign Languages

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### Course Description:

The course will examine the broad history of American media, its national and international scope and influence, the economics and politics of media, and issues of ownership and control. Students will become familiar with the structures and reach of various media forms, cultural debates on media content, political and legal controversies on access and control, the growing power of new citizen journalism and social media, and the role of media in shaping public consciousness. American Media covers the most important forms of US mass media--dominant among them are television, film, and the internet, and the now secondary forms of radio and hardprint. Within each of these media domains are critical arenas that will get individual attention primarily focused on entertainment, news, education, social connections, and advertising.

Mass media and local culture often collide in both the US and the Arab world. This course will give special attention to the effects of American media on the Arab world. This includes examining the production of US public knowledge and attitudes toward matters such as war, religion, and culture in the Arab world. At the same time, the effects of American media's influence on Arab consciousness during this era of global media, with America arguably at the head, are deep, wide, and generational. The education and miseducation of Arab youth takes place especially through American television (MTV, cartoons, comedies, action...); film (Disney, Hollywood, Hamoudeh's DVDs...); and the internet (Youtube, Google, Facebook...). This course will examine contemporary media forms and their impact.

You know from firsthand experience that the internet is spreading in availability and dominance, but do you know who invented the internet? Do you know who controls the internet? You probably read US newspapers online, but what is the future of US newspapers? Are they becoming a media form of the past? And whatever happened to the radio in America? Most young Americans don't even know what a portable radio is. These and other questions about the status of media will be examined. And true to the topic of our course, American Media will rely on media to study the story of its various forms' histories, current dimensions, and future prospects.



## COURSE POLICIES

**CLASS CULTURE:** The class will be organized as a seminar with each student equally responsible for its success. Discussions should demonstrate intellectual rigor, openness, and respect. Differing viewpoints are welcomed within an atmosphere of scholarly debate and sound argumentation. We will practice the arts of listening and conversing, and understand the class environment as a safe space for deep discussion, disagreement, and multiple interpretations. In short, we will practice the best traditions of higher education.

**EMAIL:** I am happy to answer short questions through email, but matters requiring lengthier responses should be handled during office visits. In any email correspondence, please identify our course in the subject heading (American Media.) and include your name on the email. Phone calls are for urgent matters only.

### **ATTENDANCE AND ASSIGNMENTS:**

You are expected to attend our weekly sessions, but if you are absent or late, YOU are responsible for finding out what you missed by contacting another classmate. All assignments are due on their calendar dates.

### **REQUIREMENTS**

#### **1) Participation (10% of grade)**

You are expected to attend class on time, prepare assignments carefully and participate actively in discussion each week. You should come to class ready to discuss key themes that emerge in readings/films/online materials and/or your research.

#### **2) Midterm Research Project and PPT Class Presentation (25% of grade).**

Students will develop a specific topic of their choice about US Media and the Arab World. Topic options and brainstorming ideas will be discussed in class, along with details and guidelines of the research project. Students will examine a topic's representation within a form of American media and analyze the effects of that perspective on viewing/consuming audiences. Example topics: Iraq War(s), Palestinian/Israeli Conflict, Islam, Christianity, Children, Women, Men, Cultural Practices... other. Media forms includes TV, film, newspapers, internet... in categories of education, news, entertainment, and advertising. For example: You might choose to look at US children's television programming and its effects (cultural, psychological, behavioral...) on Arab children. Or you might look at US print media advertising aimed at women and analyze its effects on Arab women's sense of self and material consumption. Or look at major US news outlets' reporting on the Palestinian/Israeli issue and its effects on the people of the area.

Students will orally present their research to the class and hand in CD with PPT and full written report, also in hardcopy. Graded presentations are an opportunity to share your work with the class and widen your knowledge through learning about peer research.

**3) Final Research Project and PPT Class Presentation (25% of grade).** Students will further develop and widen the midterm research by choosing another topic and different media forms to examine and analyze US Media and the Arab World.

#### **4) Final Exam (40% of grade).**

Essay Exam on Course Content from Readings, Online and Media Materials, Lectures, and Discussions.



## CALENDAR

- Feb. 8 Introduction of class members, share contacts, and review course syllabus.  
Debate on controlling the content of media controversies in the US.
- Feb. 15 No Class, Holiday for Prophet Mohammad's Birthday.
- Feb. 22 Critique Al Jazeera *Empire* Show with Marwan Bishara, December 2010.  
Episode title: "Hollywood and the War Machine."  
Program is to be listened to carefully and discussion notes taken on important themes. (Stop every 10 minutes or so for notes, show is 50 minutes long.) The show includes a conversation with Americans Oliver Stone, Michael Moore, and Christopher Hedges.  
Among the many films mentioned are *Hurt Locker* (2009 Best Film Oscar) and *Green Zone*. View and Critique these two movies and take discussion notes on how they portray war and related issues based on their plots, characters, images, and dialogue.
- March 1 Histories, Structures, and Control of New Media Forms:  
Facebook, Youtube, Google, and Twitter.  
Who Invented and Who Controls Email and the Internet?
- March 8 The Future of Print Media in the Era of E-Books and E-News.  
Discussion with author Taghreed Najjar:  
The Influence of American Culture on Children's Literature Globally.
- March 15 Schools, Media, and Popular Culture: Influencing the Minds of American Children and Teenagers.  
Sesame Street and Educational Television.
- March 22 Wikipedia: How It Works. Steps to Becoming a Wikipedian.  
Wikiprojects Controversy on Palestine Category.
- March 29 MIDTERM CLASS PRESENTATIONS AND RESEARCH PROJECTS DUE
- April 5 American Films and the Representation of Arabs and Middle East Issues. View and Critique *Miral* and Disney's *Aladdin*.  
Julian Schnabel: Taking the Flak.  
Harvey Weinstein Interview on *Miral*.  
Jewish Groups Protest Screening *Miral* at United Nations.  
American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee Criticizes Disney.  
Disney Agrees to Alter *Aladdin* Song Lyrics.  
It's Racist, But Hey, It's Disney.
- April 12 American Constitution's First Amendment: Opposing Interpretations.  
The Censorship Debate and Mass Media Control.  
Violence in Media: American Physicians Position Paper.
- April 19 Globalization, Media Market Deregulation, and the Future of Public Information. UNESCO Conference on Media: The Future of Global Media.  
Global Media and Liberalism.
- April 26 History of American Television.
- May 3 America's World News Coverage Versus Local News Sources.  
Reporting the World from Diverse Perspectives.
- May 10 Outlines and Peer Evaluations of Research in Progress.
- May 17 CLASS PRESENTATIONS AND RESEARCH PROJECTS DUE
- MAY 24 FINAL EXAM