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George Mason University

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Comm203-001 SYLLABUS: General Information

sklein1 - 02:46pm Jul 31, 2006 EST
Steve Klein

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
COMMUNICATION 203-001 / FALL SEMESTER 2006
INTRODUCTION TO JOURNALISM
INSTRUCTOR: Steve Klein, Coordinator of the Electronic Journalism Program

THE ESSENTIALS:

This class meets Monday and Wednesday (with the exception of Labor Day Monday Sept. 4 and Wednesday Nov. 22; also, we will meet on Tuesday Oct. 10 instead of Monday Oct. 9) over a total of 15 weeks and 28 sessions beginning Monday Aug. 28 and concluding Wednesday Dec. 6 from noon to 1:15 p.m. in 206 Innovation Hall.

OUR CONTRACT: This syllabus represents an agreement (or contract) between the student and the instructor. By remaining enrolled in this course, each student is accepting the policies and guidelines covered in this syllabus. Therefore, please read it carefully and refer to it often.

NOTE: This syllabus is written using **Associated Press Style**. Please notice the differences from MLA and APA, with which you are likely more familiar.

KEY DATES:

Last day to add: Sept. 12

Last day to drop with no tuition liability: Sept. 12

Last day to drop with no academic liability: Sept. 29

For more information, go to: <http://registrar.gmu.edu/calendars/F06Calndr1.pdf>

IMPORTANT NOTE: Students who do not confirm their registration by attendance at the first class meeting are subject to being dropped at the discretion of the department and instructor. Students must not assume that the department will automatically initiate a drop for not attending class. Students who register for courses that they do not attend are themselves responsible for dropping the class. If you miss the first class, you must contact me with your intention to remain registered or you can be dropped for a waitlisted student.

NOTE: Please let me know if you spot a typo or error in this syllabus. Yes, it's true: Even instructors/professors make mistakes!

HOW TO CONTACT MR. KLEIN:

GMU office: 219-B Thompson Hall

Office phone: 703-993-2199

GMU e-mail: sklein1@mason.gmu.edu

Web page: <http://mason.gmu.edu/~sklein1/>

Office hours: Tuesday and Thursday, noon to 2:30 p.m., in my 219-B Thompson Hall office; and by

appointment. Occasionally, I meet students at Jazzman's Café in the Johnson Center before or after class. My office hours and changes in time or location are always posted on my office door and updated weekly.

COURSE PREREQUISITES (prerequisites exist in order to give you the best opportunity to succeed):

You must have access to a computer (on campus and/or at home) and the Internet and be able to use Microsoft Word software. You will need to access Townhall, a collaborative course software program, daily.

All coursework must be typed and double-spaced on a computer and properly headed/identified in a consistent manner. Failure to do so will be penalized.

All e-mail correspondence must use the SUBJECT line, include the course number (Comm203-001) and indicate what the message concerns. Why? Otherwise, my SPAM filter might kill it! I use your GMU e-mail address, so please keep your inbox cleaned out or messages will bounce.

OVERVIEW:

This three-credit course focuses on **media literacy**. Because of the size of the class, there are limited writing assignments, but the feedback you will receive from them is important. Class discussion and participation is critical (as the grading reflects). The course is designed to introduce you to the field and business of **journalism** within the concepts of mediated and mass communication. However, journalism is in the midst of a participatory revolution that involves the Internet, weblogs, podcasts and citizen (or hyperlocal) journalism. We will read about and discuss these trends as well as news, public relations, advertising and the various media (television, radio, online, advertising and marketing). We will examine the history and power of the press, explore media economics, investigate ethical and legal concerns, and look at the latest directions media are heading. Whether you're a **Communication major**, an **Electronic Journalism minor** or just want to be more media literate, this class should have value for you. This course should help you to become a more thoughtful and critical consumer -- and perhaps participant -- of media while introducing you to the basics with which any journalist or media professional must be familiar. You are expected to be actively involved in your learning: to be more than a passive recipient of information, to think critically, ask questions, and take a constructive role in learning. You will have the opportunity to both write and make multimedia presentations in this class.

GOALS OF THIS CLASS:

To learn about journalism by critically examining the news and understanding the concept of bias.

To learn about and think critically about the process of mass communication and the various mass media, and how that relates to journalism.

To learn the basics of reporting and news writing.

REQUIRED TEXT (please bring your books to every class):

The Media in Your Life; An Introduction to Mass Communication, by Jean Folkerts and Stephen Lacy, 3rd edition (Allyn & Bacon, 2004)

Mightier than the Sword: How News Media Have Shaped American History, by Rodger Streitmatter (any edition, Westview Press)

In addition, there will be readings accessed online in Townhall.

You are expected to keep current with the news (read newspapers every day, read news magazines, watch TV news, listen to radio news and visit and read from selected websites).

CLASS EXPECTATIONS:

You will read, view and discuss how news is presented on a daily basis throughout the semester.

Don't miss class. There are only 28 of them! Class participation in a variety of formats counts 20 percent of your final grade.

In-class quizzes and tests cannot be made up unless excused in advance.

Out-of-class exercises must be turned in on time (on deadline) without exception.

Guest speakers may occasionally contribute to the class's understanding and study throughout the semester.

ALL assignments must be typed and double spaced with standard margins. Hand-written writing assignments will NOT be accepted.

Rather than a cover sheet, type the following information (single spaced) in the upper LEFTHAND corner of the assignment:

YOUR NAME**COMM203-001 / Date****Your GMU e-mail address****A title (or 1-to-3 word SLUG) for the assignment****ASSIGNMENTS:**

Readings from *The Media in Your Life; An Introduction to Mass Communication* will be assigned and paired, as appropriate, with readings from *Mightier Than the Sword*. EVERY student (some in teams) will be responsible for outlining a chapter from the texts, leading the class in a multimedia discussion of that chapter, and providing the outline online in Townhall.

Presentations should go beyond mere outlining and/or regurgitating the material. This is an opportunity for you to be creative and bring your own experience outside the text into the classroom.

You will have **one MAJOR reporting-and-writing assignment** for this class due at the start of class on Wednesday Oct. 18 (that's at the end of the 8th week of the semester).

Make sure you follow the assigned format below.

Grammar, punctuation and spelling ALWAYS matter and affect your grade. You may use **MLA** or **APA** style. **AP Style** IS preferred IF you are familiar with it and I clear it in advance. Paragraphs should, however, meet journalistic standards and NOT exceed 4-to-5 typewritten lines (that's typewritten lines, NOT full sentences). We will discuss this in class.

DEADLINES are important in journalism.

Technical failure ("my printer doesn't work," "my computer crashed," "the lab was down") or similar excuses simply will not be accepted.

Missing a deadline will automatically lower your grade by a full grade; a full day late will mean a further full grade deduction; each ensuing day another full grade. Turning in work late is better than never turning it in at all; never submitting it is a zero.

The only acceptable excuses for missing a deadline are serious illness, serious family emergency, or a **major religious holiday**. To miss a deadline without penalty, you must notify the instructor prior to that deadline, and you must bring a note from a doctor (or medical professional) or parent (in the case of a family emergency). The university requires (really!) a copy of a death certificate in such unfortunate instances. Given the size of the class, and out of fairness to your peers, there can be no exceptions.

If you wait until the last minute to do this MAJOR assignment, which is worth 20 percent of your grade, the quality of your work will no doubt reflect it.

Instructions for your reporting-and-writing assignment:

-- Find and report a feature news story; in all likelihood, this will be a soft-news story (as opposed to a hard-news story). A good place to look for stories on campus is **Today@Mason**.

-- You'll have to **GO someplace**. You can't simply Google this assignment! It is NOT a research paper, although you may have to do some background research.

-- Do some **reporting**: Find out ALL about it! We will talk about reporting early in the class. Reporting means talking to sources.

-- **Do interviews**. We will talk about interviewing techniques early in the class. You must quote (talk to) a minimum of three sources in your story and attribute the quotes properly. Attributing is not the same as citing. You can see how this is done as simply as looking at the newspaper.

-- Try to be as **unbiased** and fair as possible. Do not include your opinion. Do not write in the first person (no "I," "me" or "we" except within quotations unless cleared in advance with the instructor). This is NOT a column or a review. We will discuss the concepts of **bias, fairness, objectivity and subjectivity** in class.

-- Write your story as an exercise in journalism, NOT an academic paper. **TIP**: Observe how stories are written in the newspaper (notice the short paragraphs and differences in style!), online or reported on television and radio. There are examples in Townhall.

-- **FOCUS!** If you try to write about everything, your subject will be too broad! Every story should have an **ANGLE**: the SO WHAT of the article.

--Your story should be about 700 to 900 words (did you know that Microsoft Word can count the words for you?).

-- **Can you rewrite your story?** Yes, BUT only if you turn in the story at least one week before the final deadline (that means at the end of Week 7, or Wednesday Oct. 11). I strongly recommend doing this. Early

stories will be edited with suggestions for improvement (feedback), graded and returned in class by Monday Oct. 16 or Wednesday Oct. 18. I suggest you see me during office hours as soon as possible to review the feedback. You will have one week to return the story to me.

-- **You MUST e-mail a FOCUS SENTENCE and your sources to the instructor NO LATER THAN Oct. 10** (one week earlier if you are taking advantage of the early deadline). This counts as a GRADED assignment. The FOCUS SENTENCE is a simple declarative sentence; if you can't state your story idea in one sentence, the story likely lacks focus. This assignment should also include your sources: who (in general if not specifically) do you plan to talk to? For example, it is not enough to say that you are writing a story about Black History Month. WHAT about Black History Month?

Your story and ALL assignments must be typed and double-spaced with standard margins. Rather than a cover sheet, type the following (single spaced) in the **upper lefthand corner** of the assignment:

YOUR NAME
COMM203-001 / Date
Your GMU e-mail address
A title (or slug) for the assignment

Part of the challenge of this assignment is sorting fact from opinion and avoiding bias. While it is all right for you to report others' opinions, leave your own opinion out of your story. Also, leave yourself out of the story; **NO FIRST PERSON!**

GRADES:

The final grade for this course will be based on the quality of your work and in-class participation, which includes:

Your classroom ethic: Regular attendance, timeliness (walking into class late is rude to your classmates and the instructor), active participation, civility and attentiveness are expected. Classes will begin on time -- just as you expect them to end on time.

Cellphones and beepers: Turn them off before class (except in pre-arranged, emergency situations).

Readings: Every student (some in teams) will outline a chapter from the text, lead the class in a discussion of that chapter, and provide the outline to your classmates.

Deadlines: Adherence to deadlines plays an important role in this course. Journalists meet deadlines; their job is on the line if they don't. Deadlines set for assignments in this course are final; those turned in late without an excused absence will not be accepted.

Attendance: **You must e-mail the instructor if you miss class because of illness or emergency.** I consider these e-mails part of your class participation. **In-class exams cannot be made up.** If you think that a class may be cancelled because of bad weather, listen to TV or radio, check the **GMU homepage**, or call 703-993-1000.

GRADING CRITERIA:

GMU utilizes a 10-point +/- grading scale. The Department of Communication has adopted the following scale for core and basic courses (note that there is **NO C-**), which will be used to assign final grades in COMM203:

A+: 97 to 100 (exceptional work!).

A: 93 to 96 (outstanding work; writing of publishable quality).

A-: 90 to 92.

B+: 87 to 89.

B: 83 to 86 (writing is publishable with editing/minor changes).

B-: 80 to 82.

C+: 77 to 79

C: 73-76 (writing meets standards)

C-: 70-72

D: 60 to 69 (writing is not publishable because of fundamental problems).

F: 59 or less (unacceptable; lack of basic skills; work not submitted).

ASSIGNMENT PERCENTAGE for FINAL GRADE:

- The reporting-and-writing assignment counts 20% of your final grade (200 points).
- All other writing assignments and homework combined count 15% of your final grade 150 points).
- Classroom participation (5%), your chapter presentation (5%) and ONE THING classnotes (10%) counts 20%; I take the ONE THING seriously and so should you (200 points).
- Exam No. 1 counts 10% of your final grade (100 points).
- Exam No. 2 counts 10% of your final grade (100 points).
- Exam No. 3 counts 10% of your final grade (100 points).
- Quizzes from "Mightier Than the Sword," to ensure that you read the book, count 15% of your final grade (150 points).
- There will be occasional extra-credit opportunities built into the semester but NOT added on to late in the semester to bolster a weak grade.

CLASS PARTICIPATION:

-- GMU allows instructors to take class attendance into consideration toward your final grade. IF you miss a class, you **must** explain the absence in an e-mail to me **before the next class**. I consider that communication part of your class participation.

If you missed work, you inform your employer. If you miss class, inform me.

-- **THE ONE THING** exercise (10 percent of your final grade) will be explained during the first class. You are responsible for a minimum of 24 entries (a minimum of 2 per week except for exam days). You should do this beginning with the first class (Aug. 28). Additional participation and civil discussion with your classmates (and me) is encouraged and will be rewarded. **You should reread and edit your posts before publishing them.** I firmly believe that the errors that creep into IMs, e-mails and discussion group postings find their way into your more serious writing. You have until 11:30 a.m. the next class to post for the preceding class. That means you have a shorter deadline for Wednesday classes. I strongly suggest that you post as soon as possible after class and revisit the discussion as often as possible to make additional comments. Doing this improves the quality of the discussion.

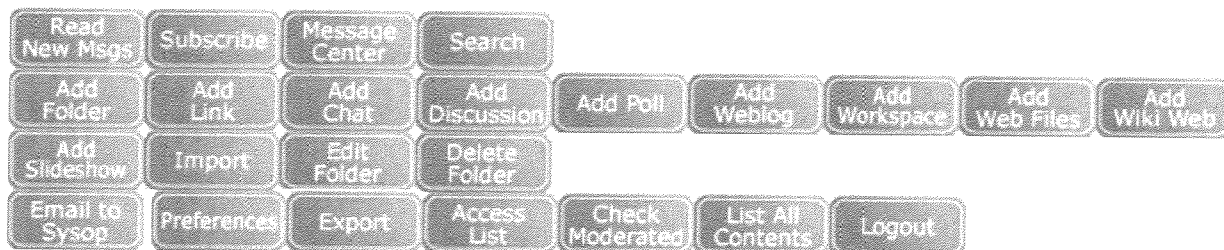
-- You are each responsible for a presentation to be assigned during the first week (yet another reason not to miss the first class and week). This should not be a regurgitation of textbook material (you'll find your classmates will get bored quickly if you do), but an intelligent discussion of the material, based on the text AND utilizing real-life examples. A full range of multimedia is available in the classroom.

-- Part of your class participation grade (5 percent) is subjective, based on my impression of your active participation and contribution to the class. **Remember:** We all learn from each other! This will be as good a class as YOU make it.

-- I strongly encourage each of you to take advantage of my office hours or to make appointments.

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Comm203-001 SYLLABUS: Your weekly schedule

sklein1 - 02:48pm Jul 31, 2006 EST
Steve Klein

NOTE: This schedule is subject to changes based on class progress, speaker availability and breaking news as it impacts the subject matter throughout the semester. Some topics may continue into the next class. Changes will be communicated through **Townhall**, by e-mail and in class. There will be additional readings posted in Townhall on occasion.

Homework is due the next class unless otherwise indicated.

Late assignments, unless excused in advance, will not be accepted without penalty -- generally one full grade per day late.

If you miss a class, you are responsible for submitting the work on time.

In-class work, particularly exams, cannot be made up.

I strongly advise that you have a "class buddy" you can contact in person, by telephone or by e-mail.

I always recommend to my classes that getting together for study groups equates with success. That takes some extra planning on your part. But this class, like most, cannot be completed successfully without working outside of class.

Get Involved! Here are some GMU campus outlets to help you improve your communications skills:

- **Broadside (campus paper):** Christian Yingling, editor-in-chief (EIC@broadside.com) or call (703) 993-2944; Kathryn Mangus, advisor, kmangus@gmu.edu, or call (703) 993-3004.
- **WGMU (campus radio):** Matt Mascari, program director, mmascari@gmu.edu or call (703) 993-2940; Rodger Smith, advisor, rsmith6@gmu.edu, (703) 993-2940.
- **Mason Cable Network:** Koorosh Farchadi, executive director, kfarcahdi@gmu.edu, or call (703) 993-3996; Michele Braithwaite, advisor, mbraithw@gmu.edu, or call (703) 993-2874.
- **Forensics Team:** Dr. Peter Pober, ppober@gmu.edu.
- **Debate Team:** Warren Decker, wdecker@gmu.edu.
- **Lambda Pi Eta (honorary research society):** Susie Tomasovic, stomasov@gmu.edu.
- **Student Video Center:** svc@gmu.edu.
- **PRSSA (Public Relations):** Mike Dickerson, mdickers@gmu.edu.
- **IABC (Intl. Assn. of Business Communicators):** admin@iabcdc.org.
- **SPJ (Society of Professional Journalists):** GMU Chapter, Kathryn Mangus, advisor, kmangus@gmu.edu or call (703) 993-3004.

WEEK #1 (Aug. 28 & 30)

OVERVIEW: Introductions, review of the syllabus, using Townhall, and "How to Succeed in 203."

LECTURE/DISCUSSION TOPICS:

- What is journalism? Who is a journalist?
- A discussion about mass media, media literacy and media usage.
- A discussion about the Journalism concentration and the Electronic Journalism minor.

CLASS PRESENTATIONS: Chapter assignment from the class texts.

VIDEO: "Gilda Live!" and "EPIC 2015"

QUIZ on Wednesday (if time permits): A non-credit news quiz.

JOURNALISM BASICS: Communication Department standards; how writing for the media is different from other writing disciplines.

REMINDER: Your first two Townhall entries must be made no later than a half hour before the start of the following class to receive credit.

WEEK #2 (NO CLASS on Monday Sept. 4; Sept. 6 ONLY)

OVERVIEW:

- Catch up from WEEK#1 (if necessary): review of the syllabus and Townhall.
- The Communication Process and some Journalism history.

JOURNALISM BASICS:

- What is news?
- The Five Rules of Journalism.
- Basics of Good Journalism.
- How to Read a Newspaper (and assignment #1: Your Media Pyramid).
- How to Write a News Story in 15 Steps.

Reading due for discussion THIS week:

-- *Media in Your Life*

1. Chapter 13, Ethics, _____ on WEDNESDAY

-- *Sword*

2. Introduction _____ on WEDNESDAY

WEEK #3 (Sept. 11 & 13)

OVERVIEW:

-- Bias in the Media: Understanding the concepts of objectivity, subjectivity, balance and fairness (and the difference between a bias, biases and being biased).

JOURNALISM BASICS (SEE "How to Write a Story" folder: Speak Up! I Can't Read You):

- Commonly Misused Words.
- Punctuating Quotations.
- Active and Passive Voice.
- Commas (and why they're important!).

Reading due for this week:

-- *Media in Your Life*

3. Chapter 1, We the People: Media and Communication, _____ on MONDAY

-- *Sword*

4. Chapter 1, Sowing the Seeds of Revolution, _____ on WEDNESDAY

Assignment No. 2:

Identify an example of bias (as opposed to opinion) in the media and write a short, well-written, grammatically correct paper (one-page ONLY, double spaced).

DUE on Monday Sept. 20.

WEEK #4 (Sept. 18 & 20)

OVERVIEW:

How to report a story.

GUEST SPEAKER on MONDAY: Gordon Trowbridge, Detroit News Washington Bureau reporter and former Air Force Times senior reporter who has been an embedded journalist in Iraq.

Assignment No. 3 DUE before class begins on Monday: Bring a TYPEWRITTEN, double-spaced question for Gordon Trowbridge to class. Hand-written questions won't be accepted (check your syllabus!).

JOURNALISM BASICS: (SEE "How to Write a Story" folder: Writing the Story: A checklist):

- More on How to Write and Report a Story.
- How to Conduct an Interview.
- Attribution tags.

-- How Reporting Is Different from Researching.

Reading due for discussion this week:

-- *Media in Your Life*

5. Chapter 2, Journalism: Information and Society, _____ on WEDNESDAY

-- *Sword*

6. Chapter 2, Abolition: Turning America's Conscience Against the Sins of Slavery, _____ on WEDNESDAY

WEEK #5 (Sept. 25 & 27)

OVERVIEW:

Writing Feature Stories; All About Public Relations; All About Advertising.

JOURNALISM BASICS:

-- How to Write a Strong Lead.

-- How to Structure a News Story.

-- How to Structure a Feature Story.

MORE JOURNALISM BASICS (SEE "How to Write a Story" folder: In the Beginning: Rethinking the Draft)

Reading due for discussion this week:

-- *Media in Your Life*

7. Chapter 3, Public Relations, _____ on MONDAY

8. Chapter 4, Advertising, _____ on WEDNESDAY

-- *Sword*

9. Chapter 3, Slowing the Momentum for Women's Rights, _____ on MONDAY

Reporting Assignment is due on Wednesday Oct. 18!!!

Early deadline is Tuesday Oct. 10!!!

WEEK #6 (Oct. 2 & 4)

OVERVIEW:

Specialty Stories; Your First EXAM on Wednesday Oct. 4!!!

JOURNALISM BASICS:

-- More on Interviewing Techniques.

-- More on Writing Features.

-- How to Cover Speeches.

Reading due for discussion this week:

-- *Sword*

10. Chapter 4, Attacking Municipal Corruption: The Tweed Ring, _____ on MONDAY

EXAM #1 Wednesday Oct. 4:

-- Covers *Media*, chapters 1-2-3-4 ONLY.

Reporting Assignment is due on Wednesday Oct. 18!!!

Early deadline is Tuesday Oct. 10 (next class!!!)

WEEK #7 (Tuesday Oct. 10 & Wednesday Oct. 11/Columbus Day)

OVERVIEW:

All About Newspapers -- and How to Read Them! All About (Book) Publishing.

JOURNALISM BASICS:

-- Common Errors to Avoid (SEE "How to Write a Story" folder).

Return Exam#1

Reading due for discussion this week:

-- *Media in Your Life*

11. Chapter 6, Newspapers, _____ on MONDAY

12. Chapter 5, Books, _____ on WEDNESDAY

-- *Sword*

13. Chapter 6, Muckraking: The Golden Age of Reform Journalism,

_____ on MONDAY
Reporting Assignment is due on Wednesday Oct. 18!!!
Early deadline is Tuesday!!!

WEEK #8 (Oct. 16 & 18)

OVERVIEW:

Magazines; The Internet, Cross-Media Journalism, Integration and Convergence.

Reading due for this week:

-- *Media in Your Life*

14. Chapter 7, Magazines, _____ on MONDAY

15. Chapter 12, Computers and the Internet, _____ on

WEDNESDAY

-- *Sword*

16. Chapter 5, Journalism as Warmonger: The Spanish-American War,
 _____ on MONDAY

WEEK #9 (Oct. 23 & 25)

OVERVIEW:

Speaker TBA (or catch-up week) and second EXAM on Wednesday!!!

Reading due for this week:

-- *Sword*

17. Chapter 9, Creating "Rosie the Riveter": Propelling the American Woman into the Workforce,
 _____ on MONDAY

Exam #2 on Wednesday Oct. 25 deals with "Media" chapters 5-6-7, 12 ONLY

WEEK #10 (Oct. 30 & Nov. 1)

OVERVIEW:

All About Radio – and How to Listen to It!

Return Exam#2

Reading due for this week:

-- *Media in Your Life*

18. Chapter 9, Radio, _____ on MONDAY

-- *Sword*

19. Chapter 8, Father Coughlin: Fermenting Anti-Semitism via the Radio,
 _____ on MONDAY

20. Chapter 14, Rush Limbaugh: Leading the Republican Revolution,
 _____ on MONDAY

21. Chapter 13, Watergate Forces the President to His Knees,
 _____ on MONDAY

WEEK #11 (Nov. 6 & 8)

OVERVIEW:

All About Television -- and How to Watch It!

Reading due for this week:

-- *Media in Your Life*

22. Chapter 10, Television, _____ on MONDAY

-- *Sword*

23. Chapter 10, Exposing Joe McCarthy: Television's Finest Hour,
 _____ on MONDAY

GUEST SPEAKER on Wednesday Nov. 8 in class: Bobbi Bowman, Diversity Director, American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE).

There will be a pre-class homework assignment associated with this presentation.

WEEK #12 (Nov. 13 & 15)

OVERVIEW:

Out to the Movies

Reading due for this week:

-- *Media in Your Life*

24. Chapter 8, Movies, _____ on **MONDAY**

-- *Sword*

25. Chapter 7, Defying the Ku Klux Klan, _____ on **WEDNESDAY**

26. Chapter 11, Pushing the Civil Rights Movement onto the National Agenda, _____ on **WEDNESDAY**

(with special video presentation)

WEEK #13 (Monday Nov. 20 ONLY; Thanksgiving Week)

This Week's Overview:

The Sound of Music and All That Jazz

Reading due for this week:

-- *Media in Your Life*

27. Chapter 11, Music and the Recording Industry, _____ on **MONDAY**

WEEK #14 (Nov. 27 & 29)

OVERVIEW: Wrapping up "Mightier Than the Sword" ... Catch-up as necessary ... media videos

WEEK #15 (Dec. 4 & 6)

OVERVIEW: In-class Careers Day on Monday and third EXAM during final class on Wednesday Dec. 6!!!

Course evaluations Wednesday Dec. 6

Guest speaker(s) on Monday: Careers, resumes, internships, interviewing.

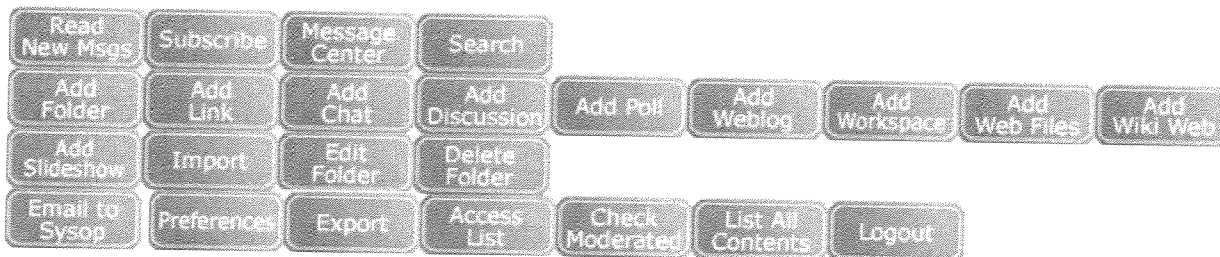
SEE "How to Write a Story" folder: PoynterOnline on Your Work as Your Best Resume: Tips on Clips

Exam #3 Wednesday Dec. 6:

"Media" chapters 8-9-10-11 ONLY.



(no items)



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