COMC3247 Race, Class & Gender in Media: Thursday 9am-noon

Professor Jacqueline Springer

Office Hrs: Thursday 4pm – 5pm by email appointment (jspringer2@fordham.edu)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The unique composition of Fordham London’s Race, Class & Gender in Media will allow students to academically explore distinctions between US print and UK print and broadcast media while learning about past and contemporaneous British society, culture and journalism output.

What can we understand about a story, an event or a tragedy by the origins of its journalistic source? Race, Class & Gender in Media will examine how distinct approaches to nationality, identity, cultural, social and communicative histories, media operation and ethical practices inform on story cultivation, dissemination/suppression and in steering reader/viewer/listener comprehension and response.

Race, Class & Gender in Media will comprise the analysis of stand-alone stories by a US news provider and the social, cultural, communicative and media analysis of British journalism’s treatment of the same story.

Distinctions between US and UK press operation; the execution of, and challenges to, the freedom of the press, privacy, public interest and ethical practices regarding criminal, terroristic and personal tragedies and accomplishments will invite academic cross-examination from communication, media and social science theories.

Students will be tested on their growing observations and familiarity with related theories within the named sections of the course (‘media,’ ‘race,’ ‘class’ and ‘gender’). They will gain insight from invited guests, an in-class roundtable and independent study.

By semester’s end students will possess – and should embrace – a transatlantic view of media history and operation and carry it with them into their personal and professional futures.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students of Race, Class, & Gender in Media will, by semester’s end, be in a position to:

I. Develop confidence in the ability to academically interpret media output via media, communication and social studies theories.

II. Academically critique British media and, through study, understand how British media is inextricably linked to nationhood – what comprises that nationhood and what techniques are utilised to communicate nationhood to readers/listeners/viewers.

III. Identify and critique the British media’s social and cultural motives driving the representation and misrepresentation of national, cultural, gendered, racial and social identities.

IV. Identify and academically explain the distinctions – communicative, operational, cultural, racial, gendered – that exist between the output of select US news providers and their British counterparts.
V. Explore and appraise—through academic examination—what these distinctions mean for story comprehension and subject representation.

ORGANISATION:

Students will be provided with a copy of, or access to, US print material related to the forthcoming week’s topic.

This must be read along with weekly readings that will be posted to Blackboard in advance of class.

Weekly 3-hour class sessions will explore a stand-alone story featured in the aforementioned material. Contrasts will be drawn between the US source’s interpretation of the story and—via the course’s evolving academically-framed understanding of the British media history, the industry’s cultural, gendered and racial approach to representation—how and why British media outlets reported on the story in the way they chose to and to what effect.

All assigned readings MUST be read in advance of class.

COURSE POLICIES: As per university policy, all absences must be communicated to the office once known and any illness validated by relevant documentation. Failure to validate absences to meet university requirements will result in final grade deductions per absence of a half grade.

COM3247 also operates a no-laptop/electronic media in-class policy. The use of electronic media during taught content time will attract an automatic final grade deduction of half a grade.

Students must arrive on time for class. Students arriving 15 minutes or more after the start of class will receive a half-grade deduction from their final course grade.

NOTE:

Last minute guest speaker unavailability may result in the rescheduling of class order or assignments.

In order to avoid students sitting repeat sessions owing to Liberal Arts and Gabelli trips, some portions of the course will be missed by some students. The taught schedule has been adjusted to ensure no student will miss a graded assignment or be at a topic disadvantage by participating in their scheduled trips.

GRADING & ASSIGNMENTS:

Assignments have been designed to test student engagement and their ability to utilise course readings and studied theories to meet challenges set in questions and tasks.
Assignments will take place at the conclusion of the course’s named sections.

**GRADING:**

**Media Section:** Media Ethics & the Editors’ Code of Practice written assignment: 15%

**Media section:** Graded Guest Speaker Questions – two guests 10% per guest

**Social class section:** written test on a related print and broadcast story 15%

**Race section:** Graded Guest Speaker Question 10%

**Race section:** Roundtable discussion with guest speakers and classmates 10%

**Gender section:** written assessment of a printed (10%) and broadcasted (10%) story related to gender/sexual orientation

**Class participation:** 10%

**GRADE PENALTIES**

Students who take unexcused absences for travel or undocumented sickness will be subject to an automatic penalty of a half grade deduction from their final course grade.

Students observed using electronic media (phones, laptops, iPads) not covered by a Learning Accommodation use will receive an automatic half grade deduction from their final course grade for every observed instance of use.

**ASSIGNMENTS:**

**MEDIA SECTION:**

**Editors’ Code of Conduct/Press Ethics written test – 15%**

Three questions (worth 5% each) will be set in a written test centered on examining student knowledge of the Editors’ Code of Practice, its relevance to the print industry and its function and public faith in ethical editorial practice. This test will last for an hour.

**Guest Speaker Engagement – pre-submitted questions – 20%**

Students will be graded on the quality of questions posed to two guest speakers. A national broadcaster (10%) and a national print journalist (10%) who will visit to discuss their respective working practices, careers, how (and why) working practices differ within newsgathering and dissemination between their fields and, in light of greater consumer choice, the impact of global competition and ‘digital age’ journalism.

**SOCIAL CLASS SECTION:**

**Social Class coverage written test – 15%**
Three questions (worth 5% each) will be set in a written test inviting students to appraise, via social, media and communication theories, print and broadcast coverage of social class in Britain.

**RACE SECTION:**

**Guest Speaker Engagement – pre-submitted questions – 10%**

**Guest Speaker Engagement – class-wide round-table – 10%**

Students will be given two British news stories from which they are to create two guest speaker questions (5% per question).

Once all student questions have been posed to guests from the Tell Mama organisation (who work with British media outlets and members of the public on the issue of media representation, misrepresentation and hate crimes), interpretation (student) and the Tell Mama’s actual response to the stories will form the basis of a wider class-wide roundtable on freedom of speech, media output, the Editors’ Code and British laws governing incitement of racial and religious hatred and the rising use of organisations like Tell Mama as arbitrators between media and victims of press output on racial, ethnic and religious identities.

Student participation in this roundtable is worth 10%.

**GENDER SECTION:**

**Privacy, gender, identity & the Editors’ Code written assessment: 20%**

An archive news item will be screened (10%) and one archive article will be distributed (10%) to students on the day for written academic assessment.

Utilising media, communication, social class, gender and identity theories, students will be expected to identify if or how print and broadcast ethics were compromised within both stories and academically frame their observations.

**Class Participation: 10%**
Race, Class and Gender in Media

MEDIA:

WK1: 18th JANUARY: British Media: a history: From town criers to Caxton’s press, the opening session will establish the role of the British media through British history and its relatedness to social, racial and gender statuses. What is the British Free Press?


Scannell, P. Media and Communication. London: Sage [34; 35]

The Editors’ Code of Practice

WK2: 25th JANUARY: British print & broadcast media ethics & the Editors’ Code of Practice: How should – and must – Britain’s national print and broadcast behemoths conduct the pursuit of truth and dissemination of information for a paying public?

What is the Editors’ Code of Practice? Why is it fundamental to the ethical operation of the regional and national British press industry?


Scannell, P. Media and Communication. London: Sage [34; 237-238]
WK3: 1ST FEBRUARY: Media Assignment: written test + Edward Snowden, the Guardian & the New York Times  A timed written test where students will relay their knowledge of the Editors’ Code of Practice, press ethics and press operation will be set. This test, comprising three questions, is worth 15% and will last for an hour. See the Course Assignments section.

Following this examination, students will explore how did the revelation that US government departments were spying on the US population (and some allied leaders) lead to Edward Snowden’s (the story’s whistle-blower) Russian exile, the Guardian’s London office’s being raided by representatives of Britain’s intelligence services and the partner of one of the journalists working with Snowden being detained by counter-terrorism officials in the UK?

What, on reflection, can media students learn about the response to the joint international exclusive investigation undertaken by the New York Times, the Guardian and Der Spiegel into the National Security Agency’s mass surveillance program? What does the ‘NSA/Snowden Leak’ tell us about press freedom, the public interest, press responsibility, whistle blowing, official secrets and views on male patriotism in the post 9/11 age?


8TH FEBRUARY: WK4: Graded guest speakers visit.

Students will welcome their first guest speakers of the semester who they will question - a national broadcaster (10%) and a national print journalist (10%) - about their careers.

Guests will visit to discuss how (and why) working practices differ within their respective newsgathering and dissemination fields and, in light of greater consumer choice, the impact of global competition and ‘digital age’ journalism.

See the Course Assignments section.

SOCIAL CLASS:


Scannell, P. Media and Communication. London: Sage [74]


W6: 22ND FEBRUARY: The Duchess of Cambridge & Closer magazine. Prince Harry & TMZ: Between 1970 and 2015 the UK’s best-selling daily newspaper published an image of a topless woman on its third page. Why, then, did that same newspaper - The Sun (and every other national British newspaper) - choose NOT to publish images of a topless Duchess of Cambridge? What did British and American media decisions on publication say about class, status, privacy, the public interest and media operation?

The US website TMZ obtained nude images of Prince Harry in a hotel room and published them online in 2012. Their exclusive amused an inquisitive public and challenged the editorial and cultural instincts of the British newspaper industry (while also leading St James’s Palace to issue a legal warning against publication to the British media).

How did this story differ in its privacy concerns to the topless pictures of the Duchess of Cambridge? Why did The Sun publish the nude picture of Prince Harry but not the Duchess while still publishing their Page Three Girl?


WK7: 1ST MARCH: Social Class as entertainment + Social Class written assignment: British costume dramas, re-interpretations of Shakespearean plays and novels by Dickens, the Austen’s, Bronte’s and Conan Doyle all contribute to a class-centered narrative which is successfully exported internationally.

What do contemporary programmes like Downton Abbey and Peaky Blinders (as well as long-running soap operas) tell us about the furtherance of class depiction when bound in entertainment? Where do race, gender and sexual identities fit into class-focussed programming steeped in nostalgia?


8TH MARCH: WK8: Mid term break

RACE (ETHNICITY, RELIGION & (MIS)REPRESENTATION):

W9: 15TH MARCH: The Charlie Hebdo magazine massacre: In January 2015, two men stormed into the offices of the French satirical magazine, Charlie Hebdo and shot dead 11 members of staff before killing a policeman in a neighbouring street. The two siblings who carried out the massacre were heard to have exclaimed that their actions were in response to the magazine’s depiction of the prophet Mohammed.

In the first of two examinations of the press and the impact of press reporting in the post 9/11 age, students will explore the coverage of the Hebdo massacre and consider the ripple effect on people unconnected with events, but affected by the interpretation of them in the UK by the British media.


WK10: 22ND MARCH: Race & Religion Assignment: Tell Mama Guest Speaker Engagement/Topic Roundtable
Further to topics covered in week 11, students will be given two British news stories related to the terrorism and British Muslims ahead of class to help them to create two questions for their guest speakers (5% per question).

The questions, once posed to guests from the Tell Mama media organisation (who work with British media outlets and members of the public on the issue of media misrepresentation and hate speech), will form the basis of a class-wide roundtable on freedom of speech, media output, the Editors’ Code and British laws governing incitement of racial and religious hatred and the rising use of charities like Tell Mama as arbitrators between media output and victims of racial and religious hatred.

Student participation in this roundtable is worth 10%. See the Assignments Section of Blackboard.


**WK11: 29TH MARCH: The Ethiopian Famine of 1984, Live Aid & USA for Africa**

PT1: In 1984 the BBC’s then Foreign Correspondent, Michael Buerk, filed a television broadcast from Ethiopia, showing the devastation of a national famine brought about through drought, civil war and a delayed global response.

Why did responding to a humanitarian crisis become a series of transatlantic musical feats?

This opening session of two classes focussing on coverage of and response to the Ethiopian famine will explore the British news media’s response to Buerk’s report.


**WK12*: 5TH APRIL: The Ethiopian Famine of 1984, Live Aid & USA for Africa**

PT2: What did the hit singles ‘Do They Know Its Christmas?’ and ‘USA for Africa’ and the Live Aid and Live
8 concerts say about UK & US disaster response, poverty fatigue, the steering of recreational interests into charity fundraising and the motives of the transatlantic music industry and its talent?


*GABELLI JR'S ABSENT

**GENDER (& SEXUAL ORIENTATION)

WK13*: 12th APRIL: The Admiral Duncan pub bombing & the Pulse nightclub massacre: hate crime? Terrorism? Both? The killing of two people and injuring of 30 in a nail bomb attack in the Admiral Duncan pub in London’s Soho was declared an act of homophobic terrorism. What parallels can be drawn on the reporting of, and response to, the massacre in Orlando’s Pulse nightclub in 2016? Does heteronormativity influence coverage of - and sentiment to - victims who are not heterosexual or cisgender, but who were victims of terrorism?


*GABELLI SOPHOMORE'S ABSENT
WK14: 26TH APRIL: Savile and Weinstein: male sexual abuse, celebrity and institutional complicity. Who was Jimmy Savile? What was he to the BBC?

Who is Harvey Weinstein? What does he mean to Hollywood?

What is gendered power and how is it used (and abused) once conflated with someone’s professional role?

Using the police and the BBC’s failure to unmask Jimmy Savile’s sexual crimes during his lifetime and the New York Times and the New Yorker’s exclusives on Harvey Weinsten, students will explore how established media depictions of cis-gender, heterosexual and masculinity and hyper-sexuality inform our responses high profile male sexual abuse scandals


WK15: 3RD MAY: Assignment: Privacy, gender, identity & the Editors’ Code - written assessment - 20%

An archive news item will be screened (10%) and one archive article (10%) will be distributed to students. Utilising media, gender and class theories, students will be expected to identify how print/broadcast ethics were compromised by the sources’ retelling of the stories.

Ends