Comparative Mass Media in London
MCOM 3503 – Cross-Cultural Communication
MCOM 3513 – Special Topics in Mass Communication

Summer 2017 – 6 credits
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Dr. Jim Sernoe

MSU Course Equivalents
MCOM 3503 – Cross-Cultural Communication and MCOM 3513 – Special Topics in Mass Communication are currently electives in the mass communication degree, but students who participate in British Studies will be allowed to substitute them for required courses. Students need to meet with the department chair to determine which courses will be replaced.

Course Objectives/Description
- Learn the basics about how the mass media operate in Great Britain
- Learn the basics about media ethics and freedom of expression in Great Britain
- Compare and contrast British and American media systems

In many ways, British media have historically served as models for American media. Early book publishing, newspapers, advertising, public relations and other forms of media were adapted in the United States, and now for 300-plus years media in both countries have influenced each other. This course will give students an introduction to various forms of British media as well as opportunities to see the similarities and differences in the ways they function, interact with their audiences, and influence the societies in which they operate.

Prerequisites
- Completion of MCOM 1233 – Introduction to Mass Communication or Consent of Instructor

Reading
I have decided not to use a formal textbook this summer. Required reading will consist of handouts, including at least one assignment to be read before we arrive in London, and will be supplemented by considerable outside assignments/research.

Grading
Please note that the program consists of two courses, and students are required to enroll in
and complete the requirements for both. Please note also that this is not a traditional reading/lecture/exam course. I have never believed in that format, and I definitely do not think it is useful for a study abroad program. Grading elements and standards reflect the experiential nature of this course instead of a traditional course with traditional exams.

Journals – 30 percent: Students are required to make daily entries based on that day’s classes/activities. A separate handout on format and expectations will be distributed.

Final Essay – 20 percent: The final exam will be a take-home essay that asks you to take a broad view of British media and evaluate various issues. You will have several days to work on your answers, which will be due on the last day of class, Friday, Aug. 4, 2017, at XXX a.m. Plan ahead. There will be no extensions! In lieu of an in-class exam, we will spend the final exam session discussing your responses.

Final Project – 35 percent: The final project will require you to interact with British professionals in our field and compare their work and careers to those in the United States in similar positions. One component will need to be completed before we leave London, while the other component will be completed after we return to the United States. The project will be due on Friday, Sept. 15, 2017, at 9 a.m. Plan ahead. There will be no extensions! A separate handout on format and expectations will be distributed.

In all formats, you will be required to think critically about the topics being discussed and present your analysis coherently. A textbook or rote memorization can not help you in this class. As a result, I’m not interested in true-false or multiple choices tests.

Attendance/Attitude/Participation – 15 percent: Perfect attendance is required. I will go to great lengths to attain full attendance. Missing any class or event will result in a lower course grade unless you provide evidence that I should excuse the absence. If you have to miss a class or a deadline for any reason, please contact me IN ADVANCE to let me know. CONTACTING ME IN ADVANCE DOES NOT AUTOMATICALLY EXCUSE AN ABSENCE, but it is a lot better than contacting me after the fact. If you fail to contact me before the next class period to explain an absence, it will be very difficult for me to excuse the absence.

As one of my former colleagues says, in the “real world,” you can not do your job if you are not present to do it. Employers do not generally tolerate such behavior, and employees who offer weak, irritating excuses frequently find themselves unemployed and unemployable. The same rules apply in this course, even though it is summer and we are in London.
IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO SEE ME IF YOU MISS CLASS. I will not chase students around the city.

A related note: You are required to be on time and I have little tolerance for those who are continually late. Constant tardiness will be noted and could lower your final grade. I am not above embarrassing students who walk in late.

Attitude/Class Participation: The success of this course will depend on students attending regularly and discussing the topics at hand. As stated above, this isn’t the type of course in which you memorize information, spit it back to me on an exam, and forget what you’ve learned as you walk out of the exam room. Because this is an upper-level course, corresponding attitudes and work ethics are required.

A related note: Cellular phones, pagers and other similar devices will not be tolerated. In my mind, they are a sign of a bad attitude. I will not tolerate annoying jingles and beeps. If you own such a device, turn it off (not on vibrate) or somehow make sure it doesn’t make any noise while I am trying to conduct class. If cell. phones become more than a one-time problem, I reserve the right to lower your final semester grade and/or take further disciplinary actions.

Unfortunately, laptop computers, iPhones and other similar equipment will not be allowed in class for note-taking. Although I realize this is a convenient way to take notes, past students have abused the privilege by using the equipment to surf the Internet, send e-mail, and troll Facebook. I will not tolerate this kind of distraction.

Sending and receiving text messages during class will not be tolerated.

Appropriate conduct – in the classroom, with the instructor and in any other class-related situations – is required at all times. The instructor has the right to remove disruptive students from the classroom and take other disciplinary actions as necessary.

Appropriate attire – in the classroom, with the instructor and in any other class-related situations – is required at all times. We may visit sites where casual clothing is not appropriate. You will receive advance notice of proper attire.

You are required to remember that you are representing the department, the university and in some ways all Americans during your time here. As such, you are expected to conduct yourself in ways that will not bring embarrassment to the department or university. It is on you to meet responsibilities in such a way that Londoners do not say, “Those students from (MSU/Texas/The United States) are so obnoxious.”
If you cannot make it a priority to behave responsibly and professionally, please drop now. If you cannot make it a priority to represent the department and the university in ways that will keep our reputation intact, please drop now.

I reserve the right to drop any student with an F if he/she has excessive absences or missed assignments, engages in disruptive behavior, has a poor attitude, or in any other way is clearly not taking the class seriously.

By accepting this syllabus and remaining enrolled in this course, you are indicating that you understand my expectations for students concerning attendance, attitude, work ethic and participation.

Two final notes on grading: Critics from both within and outside of higher education have accused faculty of engaging in “grade inflation,” the idea that grades don’t truly reflect quality and instead have been devalued to the point that an A means very good, a B means average, and anything less than a B is failing. I’m not sure whether those people would include me in their criticisms, but I do know I try my best to adhere to the system as I understand it: an A means outstanding, a B means above average, and a C means average. Please remember these interpretations as the semester progresses.

Please remember also that attending every class and completing every assignment do not constitute outstanding quality or guarantee an A for the course. Attending every class and completing every assignment are only prerequisites for achieving a desired grade in the class. Too many students have argued that these are the reasons they deserved an A in the class, and I do not buy into this way of thinking.

By accepting this syllabus and remaining enrolled in this course, you are indicating that you understand the grading policies for the course. If you have questions, you should see me as soon as possible.

Ethics
The MSU Student Honor Creed, written and adopted by the 2002-2003 MSU Student Senate, covers expectations related to cheating and other forms of academic dishonesty. The main statement from this document is:

“As an MSU student, I pledge not to lie, cheat, steal, or help anyone else to do so.”

All students in my courses are expected to abide by this student-produced document, as well as all other related university policies. I will provide copies of the MSU Student Honor Creed to any student who requests one. It is also on page 8 of the 2016-2017 MSU Student...

In addition, the university requires faculty to provide this statement to all students:

By enrolling in this course, the student expressly grants MSU a “limited right” in all intellectual property created by the student for the purpose of this course. The “limited right” shall include but shall not be limited to the right to reproduce the student’s work product in order to verify originality and authenticity, and educational purposes.

By accepting this syllabus and remaining enrolled in this course, you are indicating that you understand the statement provided above and agree to comply with it.

I require COMPLETE honesty in producing your work. Working professionals are often encouraged to confer with their colleagues on strategies and wordings, but there is a difference between advice and blatant plagiarism.

I also realize it will be very easy to confer with colleagues on take-home assignments, but you should realize that instructors can usually identify when students have worked together. I also realize the Internet provides a convenient source of information, but students need to be aware that proper citation will be required.

Past students will tell you I take this issue very seriously and have not hesitated to confront them. A slightly higher grade on an assignment is not worth the extremely unpleasant experience of taking an accusation of academic dishonesty through the university hierarchy. Please don’t force me to do it.

I reserve the right to drop any student with an F if he/she engages in any form of academic dishonesty. I further reserve the right to recommend other sanctions as may be appropriate. Students are also encouraged to consult the following sources for additional discussion of students’ rights and responsibilities regarding cheating, attendance and general conduct:

- The MSU Student Honor Creed
- The 2016-2018 MSU Undergraduate Catalog, available online at http://catalog.mwsu.edu/.
By accepting this syllabus and remaining enrolled in this course, you are indicating that you understand the seriousness of academic dishonesty and realize I will impose the harshest sanctions possible if I can prove you have engaged in academic dishonesty. You are also indicating that you understand what constitutes academic dishonesty; I will not tolerate the excuse that the student did not know he/she was engaging in academic dishonesty.

Privacy
Federal privacy law prohibits me from releasing information about students to certain parties outside of the university without the signed consent of the student. Thus, in almost all cases I will not discuss your academic progress or other matters with your parents. Please do not have them call me. Regardless of these important legal considerations, it is my general policy to communicate with the students, not their parents, even when a student has signed a consent form. College students are adults and are expected to behave accordingly.

Special Accommodations
Students with disabilities or who are in need of special arrangements should see me prior to departure and work with the MSU Office of International Education well in advance. I will do what I can within reason to accommodate your needs. Please note that in order to qualify for consideration of special accommodations, you must be registered with the MSU Office of Disability Support Services (and the Office of International Education for this program), and I must have a memo on file, along with the Special Accommodations Request form.

If you have specific medical information that needs sharing or you need specific accommodations in case of emergencies or emergency evacuations, please see me as soon as possible.

Course Organization and Schedule
This course will be run as a seminar, with the expectations that students will arrive for class prepared and that the course will proceed with far more discussion than lecture. The success of this format depends on your willingness to actively participate in class discussions and other activities.

This is the tentative course schedule. Due to storms, last-minute changes, extended class discussions and my frequent inability to stick to the agenda I set at the beginning of the course, this schedule is likely to change. I reserve the right to change the class schedule if circumstances make it necessary. Chances are good that you will receive at least one revised schedule before the term is over. If reading assignments or deadlines
change, I will tell you well in advance. Please note that the reading and general workloads vary considerably from week to week.

It is imperative that you complete the readings before we begin discussing each unit.

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Journal Instructions

7/17          Final Project Instructions

7/28          Final Exam Questions

8/4, XXXX a.m. Final Exam Due/Final Exam Session

Friday, Sept. 15, 9 a.m. Final Project Due

Potential Topics
Please note that the exact schedule will be finalized as MSU works with our contacts in London to arrange speakers, trips, etc.

BBC – News
  Sport
  Entertainment/Television
  Radio and/or Music
  BBC-America or BBC-Canada or BBC-Languages
  BBC Local
  BBC World News Service

Newspaper
  Serious
    Financial Times
    Guardian
    Telegraph
Times
Evening Standard or City A.M. or Metro
Local – e.g., Islington Tribune
Kensington and Chelsea News
Tabloid – e.g., Mirror, Daily Mail, Star, Express, The Sun
Foreign Language or Ethnic Minority
  e.g., Asian Express, Polish Express, Achievement (aimed at Russian immigrants), Catholic Herald, Irish Times, Jewish Chronicle
Sports – e.g., League Express (rugby)

Magazine (there are hundreds, literally, published in London)
  Most famous is probably London Magazine

Advertising Agency

Public Relations/Marketing Agency

Music
  Abbey Road Studio (or another)
  Sony Records UK
  Trip to Liverpool