



CMST 435_02 | Communication and Media Arts Activity (3 credits)

DOING MEDIA LITERACY THROUGH THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF DISNEY

Spring 2017 • Tuesdays & Thursdays 1:00-2:15pm | UN 2031 & UN 2042

Course location: <http://domedialiteracy.wordpress.com>

INSTRUCTOR:

Vanessa Domine, Ph.D. | Professor | School of Communication and Media

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Office Hours: Mondays & Thursdays 11:30-1:00pm | Skype office hours also available by appointment

CATALOG DESCRIPTION:

Communication and Media Arts Activity 1-3 Credits Prerequisite(s): CMDA 320. Supervised communication and media arts activity focused on specific topics of relevance. May be repeated without limit. Previous course SPCM 435 effective through Spring 2012.

COURSE SECTION DESCRIPTION:

This course takes both a critical (theory) and a creative (practice) approach to communication and media literacy using the various cultural contexts of Disney. Students will activate their media literacy skills¹ and dispositions by accessing, analyzing, and evaluating cultural artifacts; and creating, producing, and communicating their discoveries through the use of transmedia platforms. The topography for this exploration is the economic, social, political, and technological landscapes comprising the Wonderful World of Disney. The course offers a 360-degree perspective through the lenses of celebration (and Celebration), protectionism, educated consumerism, and cultural criticism.² This academic *imagineering* of sorts includes (but is not limited to) reading, viewing, curating, blogging, tweeting, crowdsourcing, and remixing of multimedia content within the guidelines of fair use.³

COURSE CONTENT & SCOPE:

The center of gravity this semester is media literacy—a constellation of life skills that are necessary for full participation in our media-saturated, information-rich society.⁴ These skills include the ability to:

- **Access** information by locating and sharing materials and comprehending information and ideas
- **Analyze** messages in a variety of forms by identifying the author, purpose and point of view, and **evaluating** the quality and credibility of the content.
- **Create content** in a variety of forms, making use of language, images, sound, and new digital tools and technologies

¹ National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE). *Media Literacy Defined*.
<https://namle.net/publications/media-literacy-definitions/>

² Domine, V. (2009). *Rethinking Technology in Schools: A Primer*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.

³ Fair use is arguably one of the most important features of Copyright Law. Under fair use, educators using the concepts and techniques of media literacy can choose illustrative materials from the full range of copyrighted sources and make them available to students in class and also in password-protected university learning communities. See <http://centerforsocialmedia.org/medialiteracy>.

⁴ Hobbs, R. (2010). *Digital and Media Literacy: A Plan of Action*. Washington, DC: The Aspen Institute.

- **Reflect** on one's own conduct and communication by applying social responsibility and ethical principles
- **Take social action** by working individually and collaboratively to share knowledge and solve problems in the family, workplace and community, and by participating as a member of the community.⁵

Media literacy promotes individual's capacity to simultaneously empower and protect themselves and their communities. In this way, information needs are both personal and civic.⁶ There is also a tendency in Academia to limit our activity to simply being critical at the expense of creativity. This severely limits our thinking and blinds us to our own assumptions. Therefore, in this upper-division elective course, you are required to both think critically *and* act creatively.

In other words, you will take on the role of an **academic imagineer**.⁷

This course requires you to *do* media literacy, meaning that you will engage in *all* aspects of the media literacy cycle listed above (e.g., access, analyze, evaluate, create, reflect, and act) using as your intellectual (and in some cases, physical) playground the "wonderful worlds" of Disney. As one of the most recognizable and influential corporations on the planet Earth, the Walt Disney Company (established in 1923 in Burbank, California) has evolved into an international entertainment company operating in five different segments: Media Networks, Parks and Resorts, Studio Entertainment, Consumer Products, and Interactive. All five segments are fodder for your media literacy explorations this semester. Whether you are interested in exploring cultural criticism, transmedia storytelling, filmmaking, audio-sound design, public relations, organizational culture, or online fan communities (just to name a few) this course will provide you with a robust media literacy experience to magnify your particular program of study in the School of Communication and Media.

REQUIRED TEXTS & TECHNOLOGIES:

- **Course textbook:** Wasco, J. *Understanding Disney: The Manufacture of Fantasy*. Malden, MA: Polity Press. (ISBN: 978-0-7456-1484-7) (261 pages). You will have weekly assigned reading from this text and in-class quizzes based on its content. *Note that you have options: Rent/buy and Kindle/paperback.*
- **Documentary Films:**
 - Colt, S. (Producer & Director). (2015). *Walt Disney*. United States: PBS American Experience. Running Time: 3 hours 41 minutes. *Available on iTunes for under \$10.*
 - Hahn, D. (Director). (2010). *Waking Sleeping Beauty*. United States: Red Shoes Productions. *Available on Amazon for rent for under \$4.*
- **Laptop or smart device:** This class is BYOD (bring your own device). It's essential that you have access to a web-enabled device *at the beginning of every class*, so that you can take the weekly quizzes. Sharing devices is prohibited during quizzes and exams, but allowed for all other in-class activities. [Note that the Office of Information Technology offers laptop lending](#) through the

⁵ See Hobbs, p. vii-viii.

⁶ Knight Commission on the Information Needs of Communities in a Democracy. (2009). *Informing communities: Sustaining democracy in the digital age*. Washington, D.C.: The Aspen Institute.

⁷ Walt Disney Imagineering is the unique, creative force behind Walt Disney Parks and Resorts that dreams up, designs and builds all Disney theme parks, resorts, attractions, cruise ships, real estate developments, and regional entertainment venues worldwide. See <https://disneyimagineering.com/about-imagineering/>.

Sprague Library in case you need it. *There are NO paper-based assignments in this course.*

- **A working knowledge of popular social media tools (e.g., WordPress, Twitter, GoogleApps, iSpring).** Each student will be designated as an Author of the course WordPress blog. It is your responsibility to acquire a basic working knowledge of these free, web-based tools, as they are required for assignments on which your final course grade is based. A basic knowledge includes embedding images and video within these programs. Thankfully, there are numerous tutorials available for these tools—freely accessible on the Web—so be pro-active about learning them. All of these social media tools are free (no purchase required).

METHODS OF ACHIEVING COURSE GOALS:

This 3-credit upper division course in the School of Communication offers a progression of assignments that build upon each other to lead to a transformed understanding about media literacy through the cultural lens of Disney. To establish common intellectual ground, you are asked to read about, respond to, and critically analyze essays, film, and television programming through various cultural lenses that will be introduced to you in the assigned readings, in-class discussions, live screenings, and off-site field experiences. In the process, you will be asked to engage with a wide array of media texts and forms. Anticipate completing **roughly 3-6 hours of work beyond your weekly class attendance.**

The following assignments comprise your final course grade at the end of the semester:

- **QUIZZES** You will be quizzed on the content of the assigned readings and your basic comprehension of that content. Of particular emphasis are the Disney-specific terminology and the media literacy concepts. Quizzes cover exclusively the assigned readings from your textbook and supplemental readings, where assigned. The sole purpose of each quiz is to ensure that you complete the reading prior to coming to class—and *not* to assess your mastery or application of content. There will be a total of 10 quizzes during the semester @ 5 points each (50 points total). *There are no make-up quizzes. Therefore, if you are tardy to or absent from class then you earn a zero score.*
- **DISNEY AUTOBIOGRAPHY** Consists of three components: Completion of online survey, Autobiographical essay (1250 words), and Perspectives Plot. (100 points total)
- **FAN SITE EVALUATION** Each student is in charge of describing, analyzing, and evaluating web resources and/or online communities related to Disney. (700-750 words in length) (75 points total)
- **VIDEO RESPONSES** Each video screening will require you to document your observations, ask questions, and make connections across concepts. There will be 5 separate screenings during the semester (10 points each) to which you will respond. (50 points total)
- **HISTORICAL TIMELINE** This multimedia production will follow an historical thread of your choice. This is a mini-project completed in a group setting. (75 points)
- **MAPPING DISNEY PROJECT** This final transmedia project will be a course topic of your choice that will be approved by the instructor for submission at the end of the semester. It will involve all elements of the media literacy cycle and culminate in a class presentation/demonstration on the day of the final exam. (150 points)

ASSIGNMENTS-AT-A-GLANCE:

Assignment	Point Value	Final Grade %
In-Class Quizzes (10 @ 5 points)	50 points	10%
Disney Autobiography	100 points	20%
Fan Site Evaluation	75 points	15%
Video Responses (5 @ 10 points)	50 points	10%
Historical Timeline	75 points	15%
Mapping Disney Project	150 points	30%
Total:	500 points	100%

PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS:

- **Reliable Internet access is required to fully participate in this course.** Being “offline” is not a legitimate excuse for missing class, not completing the reading or viewing of assigned material, or missing a submission deadline. Anticipate snafus and plan for the unexpected.
- **Use standard academic email etiquette.** Whenever possible, communicate to me through the Canvas course interface. On rare occasions when you must communicate outside of Canvas, use your university email account, if possible. In extreme circumstances, if you email me using a non-university email address, you *must* put [CMST 435] in your subject header if you want me to read (rather than delete) your message. Make sure to include your first and last name in the message body. You can find additional rules of email etiquette at <http://tinyurl.com/CMDAtips>.
- **Limit your in-class use of digital tools to course-related tasks.** It is acceptable and even encouraged to use laptops, tablet devices, and/or smart phones for use within the classroom for note taking. However, know your strengths as well as your limitations. *The research on multi-tasking reveals that by simultaneously engaging in multiple activities, we do none of them well.*⁸ As is true in the professional world as well as socially, you will be more successful and your experience more enjoyable if you work with a partner throughout the semester.
- **Only students with official accommodation forms are allowed to audio/video record class sessions.** Please notify me in advance if this applies to you.
- **No late assignments will be accepted. No exceptions.** If you know you will be missing a particular class session, then you also know that you will miss a quiz. Arriving late may also cause you to miss a quiz. If you submit an assignment through Canvas or Launchpad beyond the deadline, I will not assess your work.
- **All written work should adhere to university standards for writing** (see specifics at <http://www.montclair.edu/dean-of-students/handbook/writing-standards/>). You are responsible for citing/attributing the source of all work (including quotes, videos, images, and logos) that you use as part of your work in this course. Consult the 6th edition of the [APA Style Guide](#) on how to do this.

⁸ As MIT neuroscientist Earl Miller explained in an interview with NPR, most people are actually quickly shifting their attention from one task to another when they think they are doing two or three or eight things at once. That constant change of focus makes our brain less functional, not more. Learn more at <http://www.digitalresponsibility.org/perils-of-multitasking>

- **I expect you to do your own work for this course, work independently, and give credit for all materials used in your research.** As an MSU student, digital citizen, and a future professional in the workplace, you are responsible for knowing and adhering to the university policies on academic honesty, including citation of all source materials. All students who engage in dishonest acts such as cheating and/or plagiarism will be subject to disciplinary action, which includes failure of the course and possible expulsion from the university. You are solely responsible for understanding what constitutes a violation of academic honesty. Check here: <http://www.montclair.edu/dean-of-students/student-conduct/code-conduct/-academic-dishonesty>.
- **If you receive an assignment back and are confused or disagree with assigned grade, I encourage you to discuss it with me.** I do require that you wait at least 24 hours after receiving your grade before contacting me (a “cooling period”) so that our discussion can be the most fruitful.
- **Montclair State University is committed to maintaining an environment that is inclusive and free of discrimination, bullying, or harassment.** MSU welcomes persons from all racial, ethnic, social, cultural, and religious backgrounds. Behavior that violates the civil and statutory rights of any individual or group, or interferes with any individual or group’s ability to benefit from, or contribute to, the employment, educational, and/or cultural opportunities provided by the University constitutes a violation of University policy and will not be tolerated.

ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION:

- **Your grade will automatically default to “F” upon your fourth absence from class—no matter the reason for your absence.**⁹ In the case of an absence, you are 100 percent responsible for finding out what you missed. Consult the course calendar and plan your semester accordingly. In the case of extreme life circumstances, I recommend that you withdraw from the course so that you can tend to your personal wellbeing. Doing so will ensure that coursework is conducted at a time when full attention may be devoted to the learning experience.
- **Please follow the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” rule.** I will neither ask you the reason for your absence nor do I want to know the reason. I do this to refrain from making judgments or creating any unnecessary bias on my part as the instructor of this course. For this reason, do **not** report your absences to me. Refrain also from submitting a doctor’s note, as it is unnecessary. Neither of them will compensate for your lack of class participation due to missing a class session. Your in-class performance and your assignment submissions speak on your behalf. *If you are experiencing personal trauma, please pay a visit to [Counseling and Psychological Services in Russ Hall](#).* The services are both free and confidential.
- **There are no repeat performances of class sessions.** If you happen to be absent, do **not** ask me: “Did I miss anything important in class?” because I will always respond with, “Yes, you missed *the most important session of the semester.*” Instead, ask a classmate to share notes with you (and likewise share freely with them). Forming collaborative partnerships with your classmates will dramatically increase your chances of successfully completing (and enjoying) this course.

⁹ Missing more than 30 minutes of a class session is considered an absence. Dates as listed on the Provost’s official Religious Observance list (holy days) are exempt from this policy and do not count as absences.

GRADING STANDARDS:

The following evaluation criteria are applied to all oral, written, and digital assignments that comprise the course of study. Major assignments will be accompanied by more detailed rubrics for assessment.

A—Demonstration of superior work. Work demonstrates deep and detailed understanding of material and is logically developed. Sources used are cited appropriately and in accordance with APA style guidelines. Creativity or special insights are evident, and work is free from spelling, grammatical, and/or formatting errors.

B—Very good work. Work demonstrates a clear understanding of the material and provides relevant details that ground theory in practice. Work displays coherent organization, addresses the purpose of the assignment, and is relatively free from spelling, grammatical, and/or formatting errors.

C—Satisfactory work. Work, for the most part, demonstrates understanding of material and provides a few relevant details. Work displays a basic level of organization, mildly addresses the purpose of the assignment, and contains spelling, grammatical, and/or formatting errors.

D—Unsatisfactory work. Student work displays a severe lack of understanding of material and provides little or no relevant detail. The work is poorly organized, does not meet the purpose of the assignment, and contains numerous spelling, grammatical, and/or formatting errors

F—Work is neither satisfactory nor complete. Student work displays no understanding of material and provides no detail. The work lacks organization, does not meet the purpose of the assignment, and does not adhere to spelling, grammatical, and/or formatting guidelines.

94-100%= A	84-86%= B	74-76%= C	64-66%= D
90-93%= A-	80-83%= B-	70-73%= C-	60-63%= D-
87-89%= B+	77-79%= C+	67-69%= D+	59% or below= F

RESOURCES AVAILABLE:

- **Instructor Availability**

I can be reached by phone during office hours and by email. I usually respond within 24 hours Monday through Friday and you can also request an "after hours" Skype appointment during the week. Please allow 48 hours for a response over the weekend as I (like you) have a life outside of academia. Feel free to contact my teaching assistant during office hours as well.

- **Accommodating Students with Disabilities**

It is important for those students with a documented disability to have the appropriate university staff communicate that information to me. This confidential information may afford modification of seating, testing, or other class requirements. For more information, go to: <https://www.montclair.edu/disability-resource-center/about-our-services/> or visit the Disability Resource Center in Room 100 in Webster Hall (973-655-5431).

- **Emergency Evacuation Plan**
There is a laminated floor plan posted in our classroom that outlines the safest route to evacuating the building in the case of emergency. Pay particular attention to which (preferably enclosed) stairwell to use in case of building evacuation.
- **Emergency Communication Tools**
In the event of a campus power outage or inclement weather, check the university web site home page for notifications prior to coming to campus or class. I also recommend that you download the RAVE app for emergency notifications (Go here: <https://www.montclair.edu/student-services/msu-cares/apps/>)
- **Office of Information Technology Training & Technology Group** offers training events for students. They have designed several workshops that are *specifically* geared for students to assist you in your coursework. To sign up, go to: <http://tti.montclair.edu/training/training-development/workshops/>

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY:

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- Fjellman, S. M. (1992). *Vinyl Leaves: Walt Disney World and America*. Boulder, CO: Westfield Press.
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