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JOUR 412.01: Media and Cultures - Multiculturalism and Newsroom Diversity

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Media and Cultures: Multiculturalism and Newsroom Diversity

*University of Montana School of Journalism
Fall 2009 — JOURNALISM 412/Section 1 — 2 credits
Thursdays, 11:10 a.m.-1 p.m., DAH 316*

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Office hours:	By appointment	By appointment

Scope of Course: Examination of the U.S. media's reporting on the growing multicultural movement that is transforming the country, and of newsroom diversity issues related to the employment of journalists of color and women. By studying news coverage, students will examine the risks of error and insult—such as stereotyping, and conveying and strengthening misconceptions—inherent in writing about cultures largely unfamiliar to mostly white reporters and editors, even those with good intentions.

Goal of Course: To help you acquire both knowledge about, and sensitivities toward, other ethnic groups — and to make you a more intelligent reader and viewer of the U.S. media, which, in the years after your college education, will become your primary "textbook" for learning about the people and groups around you.

Course Outcomes: By the end of this class you should:

- Demonstrate an understanding of diversity.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the importance of getting diverse voices and perspectives in the news.
- Be able to critically evaluate how the news media portray diverse populations.
- Be able to think critically and carefully about how the U.S. media's portrayals of diverse groups affect our personal views and professional practices.
- Improve your reporting skills as you learn how to portray more accurately and fairly individuals, groups and points of view outside society's mainstream and to analyze media messages.

Required texts:

- "Race, Sexism, and the Media: The Rise of Class Communication in Multicultural America," Third Edition, by Clint C. Wilson II, Felix Gutierrez and Lena M. Chao (a gripping read—in other words, you'll have to grip your chair to keep from falling out of it while reading the book).
- "The Authentic Voice: The Best Reporting on Race and Ethnicity," edited by Arlene Notoro Morgan, Alice Irene Pifer and Keith Woods.
- Online: "How Race Is Lived in America," Pulitzer Prize-winning series by correspondents of The New York Times, www.nytimes.com/library/national/race

- Numerous news articles and studies (handouts or Web postings from instructors)

Course Outline:

- Each class will consist of lectures from the textbooks, as well as analyses and discussions of the numerous news stories that students are given in class. In keeping with the real-life newsroom atmosphere where journalists can never guess what they'll do at work from one day to the next, we'll also keep our options open to be able to react to breaking stories and wander into totally unpredictable territory. We also anticipate having several guest speakers, as yet unscheduled.
- Since this is journalism and one of the biggest news story in years is taking place right now, with the election of our first African American president and the appointment of the first Latina Supreme Court justice, we expect students to keep up with the news so we can discuss coverage issues.
- "Racism, Sexism, and the Media" is the main textbook, setting the course, if you will, of class topics, readings, lectures and discussions. We will devote about three weeks to Hollywood, the fountainhead, unfortunately, of many of our racial views and stereotypes. We will watch a Spike Lee movie in class ("Bamboozled"), as well as a segment of the documentary "Vaudeville." We will then spend a month on reporting about people different from us, reading exemplary articles from "The Authentic Voice" and The New York Times' race series. We also will examine efforts by news organizations to increase diversity in their own newsrooms, using as our guide the American Society of News Editors' annual newsroom census and the Radio-Television News Directors Association/Ball State University's survey of women and minorities in the newsroom.

- **Course projects:** This requirement will vary from student to student, depending on each student's wishes and the instructors' inclination. We encourage students to pitch their own project ideas, and they can deliver them in a medium of their own choosing and suitable to the project.

Following are some of our suggestions: Students may be required to "cover" something outside their comfort zones. (What goes on in a library, for example—ouch!) Some students may be required to research—independently from class materials—current events (political and social) in a country of their ancestors' origin. For example, those who claim to be "part Swedish" may be expected to learn something about what is going on in Sweden today, both politically and socially. Other students may be required to read at least one memoir of a journalist of color. (Titles to be named at a later date.) Another project for various students may include reading the same article, or series of articles, and comparing reactions. For example, an Native American reader probably won't react to a story about a Native American issue the same way a non-Native reader might, and we may demonstrate this phenomenon in class. Projects dealing with other topics are subject to instructors' approval. Depending on the quality and media of the projects, we may reserve class time for their presentations.

- **Class Web site:** The class has a Web site: <http://www.jour.unt.edu/blog/32>. Among items posted on it will be the syllabus, updates to the course schedule and links to news articles that will be assigned as required reading.

Attendance: Classes are Thursdays, 11:10 a.m.-1 p.m., in DAH 316. (Feel free to bring lunch!) Students are required to attend each class meeting. The success of this course depends on the quality of our discussions, including discussions with guest speakers. Each unexcused absence will lower your grade by 10 points from the class participation portion of your grade (see below for grading basis). An excused absence means you have contacted one of the two professors before that class and have an approved, valid reason, such as illness or family emergency. We will take roll in this class.

Grading: Attendance and class participation will weigh heavily on your grade. There *will* be **three quizzes**, scheduled about three weeks apart, primarily to force you to catch up to your reading assignments, and to give you a sense of what your grade might be. There *will* be a **final** exam, covering primarily the textbook as well as other reading materials, and given for the same reason as the quizzes.

Basis for Grading: The final grade will be an average of attendance and participation, tests and class project. Grading is on a point system. Maximum possible points:

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| • Class participation | 45 points |
| • Quizzes on Sept. 24, Oct. 15, Nov. 5 | 75 points (25 points each) |
| • Final exam on Dec. 16, 10:10 a.m.-12:10 p.m. | 40 points |
| • Class project | 40 points |

A = 93 to 100% (185-200 points), **A minus** 90 to 92% (179-184)

B+ 88 to 89% (175-178), **B** 83 to 87% (165-174), **B minus** 80 to 82% (159-164)

C+ 78 to 79% (155-158), **C** 73 to 77% (145-154), **C minus** 70 to 72% (139-144)

D+ 68 to 69% (135-138), **D** 63 to 67% (125-134), **D minus** 60 to 62% (119-124)

F 59% and below (118 points and below)

Ethics/academic integrity. The University of Montana School of Journalism is committed to the highest standards of academic and professional ethics and expects its students to adhere to those standards.

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to a penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the university. You need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code, online at:

<http://life.umt.edu/SA/documents/fromWeb/StudentConductCode1.pdf>

Disability Services for Students. If you are a student with a disability and wish to discuss reasonable accommodations for this course, contact the instructors privately to discuss the specific modifications you wish to request. Please be advised we may request that you provide a letter from Disability Services for Students verifying your right to reasonable modifications. If you have not yet contacted Disability Services, in Lommasson Center 154, please do so, to verify your disability and to coordinate your reasonable modifications. For more information, visit the Disability Services Web site at www.umt.edu/dss/

JOUR 412 Class Schedule

Assignments key:

R — “Racism, Sexism, and the Media” textbook

V — “The Authentic Voice” textbook

N — New York Times race series, online

H — Handouts from instructors

Date	Topics (subject to change)	Assignments
Sept. 3	Intro: Minorities, Diversity, Media	
Sept. 10	Race in the Age of Obama (and Gates)	R: Ch 1, 2, H
Sept. 17	Stereotypes/Movies, “Vaudeville”	R: Ch 3
Sept. 24	QUIZ 1, Stereotypes/TV	R: Ch 4
Oct. 1	“Bamboozled” film in class	
Oct. 8	Race in News, Advertising	R: Ch 5-6
Oct. 15	QUIZ 2, Covering Diversity	V, N (see below)
Oct. 22	Covering Diversity	V, N
Oct. 29	Covering Diversity	V, N
Nov. 5	QUIZ 3, Covering Diversity	V, N
Nov. 12	Women in Media	R: Ch 8
Nov. 19	Newsroom Diversity	R: Ch 9, H
Nov. 26	NO CLASS	
Dec. 3	The Minority Media	R: Ch 11
Dec. 10	Diversity and Future of Media	R: Ch 12
Dec. 16	Final Exam, 10:10-12:10	

V: “The Authentic Voice” readings:

- Preface, p xv
- Ch 1: “Somali Girls Coming of Age Are Caught in Cultural Tug of War”
- Ch 2: “What is Race” and “News and Race” (DVD or transcript)
- Ch 3: “Best of Friends, Worlds Apart” (also N, online)
- Ch 4: “The Family Secret” (DVD or transcript)
- Ch 5: “The Color Line and the Bus Line” (DVD or transcript)
- Ch 7: “Asian American” (DVD or transcript)
- Ch 9: “Old South Goes With the Wind”
- Ch 13: “The Other Pro Soccer”

N: New York Times (www.nytimes.com/library/national/race) readings:

- “Shared Prayers, Mixed Blessings”
- “Best of Friends, Worlds Apart” (also Ch 3/pp 53-69, “Voice” text)
- “Who Gets to Tell a Black Story”
- “At a Slaughterhouse, Some Things Never Die”
- “Reaping What Was Sown on the Old Plantation”
- “The Minority Quarterback”

- “Getting Under My Skin”