

*“People forget that industry is not an end in itself, but should be only a means to insure to people their material subsistence and to make accessible to them the blessings of a higher intellectual culture. Where industry is everything and people are nothing begins the realm of a ruthless economic despotism whose workings are no less disastrous than those of any political despotism. The two mutually augment one another, and they are fed from the same source.”*

-- Rudolf Rocker

### **Syllabus**

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**Course Objective:** Communication policy and its outcomes weigh heavily on the quality of our lives as citizens and on the quality of the environment in which decisions regarding our future as a civic society are being made. Students who value the quality of communication in the public sphere and who have an interest in communication policy issues will get an opportunity in this course to put these interests to practical use. "Media Industries/Media Activism" will provide students with knowledge about the ills of the media industry and with an opportunity to experience hands-on the works of media advocacy groups. Students will be engaged in studying the media industries and media policy issues. Subsequently they will choose those fields of media policy they believe they wish to have an impact in, and help media activists craft policy solutions to the industry's challenges.

### **Course structure, outline, schedule and reading list:**

A. The course readings include the following:

1. Todd Gitlin (2003) *Letters to a Young Activist*. New York: Basic Book (hereinafter: "Gitlin")
2. Russell J. Dalton (2009) *The Good Citizen: How a Younger Generation is Reshaping American Politics*. Washington, DC: CQ Press (hereinafter: "Dalton")
3. Robert McChesney (2004) *The Problem of the Media*. New York: Monthly Review Press (hereinafter: "McChesney")
4. Amit M. Schejter (Ed.) "*...And communications for all: A policy agenda for a new administration*" Lanham, MD: Lexington Books (hereinafter: "Schejter" with author name of chapter)
5. Assorted readings as appearing in this syllabus (all electronically accessible under the lessons tab on ANGEL or on electronic reserve).

B. Readings are assigned according to the schedule to be announced in class.

- C. Communication policy is a “living” entity that is in constant change and development.  
You are expected to come to class after you have read the assigned reading for the topic to be discussed that day.

**Note: The schedule is subject to changes, and will be updated if needed during the course of the semester. Readings may be added, removed or declared “elective.” Such information will be announced in class and emailed to students through ANGEL.**

- D. The telecommunications industry in general, and the regulatory activity within it in particular, are dynamic and are an essential element in this course. In addition to the course readings, students are required to:
1. Subscribe and follow daily the “Benton Foundation” communications related headlines, which can be accessed at:  
<http://owa.benton.org/listserv/wa.exe?SUBED1=bentoncompolicy&A=1>
  2. Subscribe and follow the daily reports of the *Media Reform Daily*, which can be accessed at <http://www.freepress.net/news/subscribe.php>

**These news sources and events they cover will be discussed in class and you are expected to have read them prior to coming in to class.**

**Part 1:** The media industries: Structure and challenges

**Weeks 1-3**

1. Introduction

2. The media industry: an overview

Reading: Hesmondhalgh, D. (2007) *The Cultural Industries* (2<sup>nd</sup>. Ed.) London: Sage (pp. 103-136) (on electronic reserve)

Assignment #1: Abstract of reading assignment

3. What’s at stake? -- Communication policy issues I

Reading: “McChesney” (Chapter 1)

Assignment #2: Abstract of reading assignment

4. What’s at stake? – Communication policy issues II

Reading: “McChesney” (Chapter 2)

Schejter, Amit M. and Obar, Jonathan A. (2009) 'Tell it Not in Harrisburg, Publish it Not in The Streets Of Tampa' *Journalism Studies* (on ANGEL)

Assignment #3: Abstract of reading assignment

5. What’s at stake? – Communication policy issues III

Reading: “McChesney,” Ch. 4

Schejter, A. (2007) “Jacob’s Voice, Esau’s Hands:” Transparency as a First Amendment Right in an Age of Deceit and Impersonation. *Hofstra Law Review* 35(2), 1489-1518 (on ANGEL)

Assignment #4: Abstract of reading assignment

6. What's at stake? – Communication policy IV

Reading: Coopman, T. M. (2007). Spectrum wars: Bridging factionalism in the fight for free radio. In (Eds.) Frey, L. & Carragee, K.M. *Communication activism, vol. II: Media and performance activism*, pp. 223 - 254. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press. (on ANGEL)

Connolly-Ahern, C., Schejter, A., Obar, J., & Martinez-Corrillo, N. (2009). A Slice of the Pie: Examining the State of the Low Power FM Radio Service in 2009. Prepared for presentation at the 37th Research Conference on Communication, Information and Internet Policy (TPRC) Friday, September 25-Sunday, September 27, 2009 George Mason University School of Law, Arlington, VA (on ANGEL)

Assignment #5: Abstract of reading assignment

7. What's at stake? – Challenges for the new administration

Assignment #6: Students will be assigned to present different chapters from "Schejter"

## **Part 2**: The university campus and social activism

### **Weeks 4-6**

1. What's a campus activist?

*Film: Crossroads (Israeli/Palestinian conflict/Columbia University PBS video)*

Reading: Arenson, K. (Feb 26 2007), Film's View of Islam Stirs Anger on Campuses. *New York Times*.

Jones, T. (Jan 6 2008). Two, Three, Many Columbias. *New York Times*.

Aviv, R. (Jan 6 2008). One Generation Got Old, One Generation Got Soul. *New York Times*.

Ballinger, J. (2006). Students Against Sweatshops or United Students Against Sweatshops. In L. Sherrod, C. A. Flanagan, R. Kassimir, & A. B. Syvertsen (Eds.), *Youth activism: An international encyclopedia*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing.

Assignment #7: Collect and analyze briefings from web site

<http://www.studentsforacademicfreedom.org/>

2. Is student journalism a form of activism?

*Film: The Paper*

3. Discussing *The Paper*: what did we learn?

Reading: Dewey, J. (1916/1940). The democratic conception in education (Chapter 7), *Democracy in education: An introduction to the philosophy of education*. New York: Macmillan.

Assignment #8: Abstract of reading assignment

4. Are today's young Americans politically active?

Reading: "Dalton"

Assignment #9: Book review

5. Are we as good as the “good old days”?

Reading: “Gitlin”

Assignment #10: Book review

6. Guest speakers: student and faculty activists

Assignment #11: Faculty/activist biography

### **Part 3:** Media activism

#### **Weeks 7-9**

1. The university campus & media activism

Reading: “Schejter”: McChesney

Cohen, J. (2006). A laboratory for public scholarship and democracy. In Eberly, R., and Cohen, J. (Eds.) New directions for teaching & learning: A laboratory for public scholarship and democracy, 105, 7-16.

Assignment #12: Abstract of reading assignment

2. Media activism: Mapping the ground

Reading: “McChesney” (Chapter 7)

Assignment #13: Collect briefings from industry web sites ([www.nab.org](http://www.nab.org); [www.ncta.org](http://www.ncta.org); [www.usta.org](http://www.usta.org)) and from activist web sites ([www.frepress.net](http://www.frepress.net); [www.mediaaccess.org](http://www.mediaaccess.org); [www.wetmachine.com](http://www.wetmachine.com); [www.mattstoller.com](http://www.mattstoller.com); <http://www.netcompetition.org>; <http://www.handsoff.org/blog/>) according to exercise to be issued in class

3. Guest speakers: Community and media activists

4. Field trip

### **Part 4:** Becoming active

#### **Weeks 10-12**

Students engaged in class projects

### **THANKSGIVING BREAK**

### **Part 5:** What have we learned

#### **Weeks 14-15**

1. Peer reviews of projects

2. Student presentations

Recommended Reading for Extra-credit Op-ed Assignment: *Susan Stranahan, "How to Write an Op-ed piece," Annenberg Public Policy Center/Annenberg Civic Education Project*

**Grading:**

Each reading abstract: 3% (x10)

Each book review 10%

Peer review: 10%

Final paper: 50%

Op – Ed bonus (as part of final paper project): 10%

Class participation: 10%

Total: 100% (+10% bonus for op-ed piece).

**Attendance and assignment policy:** I do not make distinctions between excused and unexcused absences – I assume that if you are not in class, you have a good reason and it's none of my business. Therefore, I don't want to see doctors' notes, letters from coaches or excuses from parents, for example. Still, **it is not possible to make up missed work done in class, no matter the reason.**

**Failure to hand in 3 assignments will result in failure in course,**

**ANGEL:** The course syllabus and some readings will be available on ANGEL. We will use ANGEL in this course regularly for information, correspondence, and at times, the distribution of additional course-related materials; you should therefore check it daily for activity and updates. *As a means of introducing ourselves to one another, please post a picture to ANGEL so your classmates and instructors can sooner put names to faces in efforts to better establish a learning community.*

**Personal Communication Devices:** Use of cell phones, pagers, ipods, or any other personal communication devices or programs in the classroom during class time is strictly prohibited. You will be asked to leave for the day if you engage in such practices. Repeated offenses may affect your grades. Make sure these devices are turned off prior to entering the classroom.

**Food and Beverages:** Food and drinks are prohibited in the classroom as a result of past experience with crumbs, spills, and left garbage. Eat and get your caffeine before you come to class. You will be asked to dispose of any food items found in class, and asked to leave if you are found consuming them during class time. Water will be allowed on a trial basis; if garbage is left or spills occur, it will consequently also be prohibited; i.e. drink responsibly. **Likewise, you will be expected to dispose of any newspapers or other materials in your vicinity as you exit class, leaving the room in the best shape possible for the next class session. Take pride in your actions.**

**Academic Integrity:** Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly and creative activity in an open, honest and responsible manner, free from fraud and deception, and is an educational objective of the College of Communications and the university. Cheating, including plagiarism, falsification of research data, using the same assignment for more than one class, turning in

someone else's work, or passively allowing others to copy your work, will result in academic penalties at the discretion of the instructor, and may result in the grade of "XF" (failed for academic dishonesty) being put on your permanent transcript. In serious cases it could also result in suspension or dismissal from the university. As students studying communication, you should understand and avoid plagiarism (presenting the work of others as your own). A discussion of plagiarism, with examples, can be found at:

<http://tlt.its.psu.edu/suggestions/cyberplag/cyberplagstudent.html>. The rules and policies regarding academic integrity should be reviewed by every student, and can be found online at: [www.psu.edu/ufs/policies/47-00.html#49-20](http://www.psu.edu/ufs/policies/47-00.html#49-20), and in the College of Communications document, "Academic Integrity Policy and Procedures." Any student with a question about academic integrity or plagiarism is strongly encouraged to discuss it with his or her instructor.

**Note to Students With Disabilities:** Penn State welcomes students with disabilities into the University's educational programs. If you have a disability-related need for reasonable academic adjustments in this course, contact the Office for Disability Services, ODS located in room 116 Boucke Building at 814-863-1807(V/TTY). For further information regarding ODS, please visit their web site at [www.equity.psu.edu/ods/](http://www.equity.psu.edu/ods/). Instructors should be notified as early in the semester as possible regarding the need for reasonable academic adjustments.