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**Diversity and the Media**

Mondays & Wednesdays, 11:30 a.m. to  
12:50 p.m.

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J534 Web site: <http://courseware.ku.edu>

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Office Hours:

Tuesdays, 2 – 4 p.m.

Wednesdays, 9 – 11 a.m.

By appointment

## Welcome, Students!

Welcome to J534, a course on diversity in the media. In this class we're going to take a look at how the mass media shape our perspectives in a multicultural society, and we'll consider the roles the media play in challenging or reinforcing stereotypes we have about ourselves and the people with whom we live and work.

What is diversity?

Webster's dictionary defines it as a "state of difference."

In this class we'll define diversity as difference, too – difference in perspective and experience. Our views of the world may be affected by our race, gender, religion, sexual identity, class, geography, ethnicity, age, or physical abilities. We'll look at the roles mass media play in shaping our views of ourselves, as well as our views of others who aren't like us.

We are all media consumers, and some of you are taking this course because you want to be media producers. The goal of this class is to encourage you to think critically about the media images you see and to consider whether you think those images are realistic and representative of the world in which we live. In this class, we'll study media images and portrayals of African-Americans, Asian-Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, women, men, gays and lesbians, the elderly, and the disabled. We'll also take a look at international news coverage, and we'll consider how wealth and social status – or lack of it – affect media images.

Our primary focus will be news, but we'll take a look at entertainment media as well, including film, music, and television. We'll study historic and contemporary examples of media portrayals of diverse groups, and we'll discuss how those portrayals have changed and continue to change.

## What will we learn?

Our goals in this class are to:

- Increase our understanding and awareness of how the mass media portray diverse populations.
- Think critically about how media portrayals and images affect our personal and professional views of diverse populations.
- Examine the use of media by diverse populations as a means for disseminating information, providing entertainment, and practicing "resistance."
- Expand our knowledge of the role that diverse groups play as media consumers (audiences) and in media production (the workplace).
- Learn about theories of mass communication and consider how those theories can help us better understand diversity.

- Become skilled, thoughtful communication professionals by becoming more aware of diversity in news, entertainment, advertising, public relations, marketing, and digital media.

## How will we learn?

One way we'll learn is by reading what scholars and communication professionals have written about diversity. There are two required textbooks for this course. They are:

**Lind, R. A. (2004). *Race/gender/media: Considering diversity across audiences, content, and producers*. Boston: Pearson Education.**

**Dines, G., & Humez, J. M. (Eds.). (2003). *Gender, race, and class in media: A text-reader* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.**

Both are available in the student bookstores.

From time to time, we may read assignments from other texts. If we do, I'll put copies of those on reserve in the j-school resource center, second floor of Stauffer-Flint Hall, or I'll post those readings on the course Web site.

You'll learn best in this class if you're actively participating, so please come to class prepared to discuss assigned readings and current media issues. Discussion should be the rule in this class, not the exception. We'll have large class discussions, and from time to time, we'll break into small groups – some of you may feel more comfortable speaking in front of a smaller group than a larger one. You'll also be able to express thoughts and concerns through in-class writing exercises.

## What will you do in this class?

To determine how well you are learning key concepts from readings and discussions and to determine how skillful you are in applying the concepts you've learned, you'll complete a series of in-class and out-of-class assignments. This class is focused on research, writing, and analysis of media, so your assignments reflect that emphasis. You also will receive a grade on attendance.

**Attendance.** There are numerous studies that show that students who receive the highest grades in class are also the students who attended class most often. It's a simple concept: If you show up, you'll learn more, and you'll get a higher grade. To encourage you to attend class regularly, I'll take attendance.

I will start taking attendance on Aug. 29, to give people time to drop and add the course. We will have 28 class sessions, and you will receive four points for each class you attend.

I will circulate a sign-up sheet during every class session. Please sign your name. Signing for another person constitutes academic dishonesty, and you will be expelled from the class if you do so.

While attendance is important, participation is critical. Please plan to discuss readings and share concerns and ideas.

**Diversity blog.** You'll keep track of your media consumption habits by postings on a diversity blog. Your blog should include your TV and movie viewing, newspaper and book reading, and Internet use, as well as your use of radio and recorded music. You'll keep a record of the media you used, and you'll write down your observations of how diversity was incorporated—or not. You should plan to have at least two entries per week in your blog. These should not include movies, TV shows, or recordings we've used in class.

It is important that you tie your observations to what you've seen or heard to class discussions. This will help me determine whether you understand the reading assignments and discussions. In posting your blogs, you may want to link to Web sites, if they are relevant to your work. Or you may want to supplement your blog by turning in a print ad or article. Your blog should include your media consumption habits from the first day of class through Wednesday, Sept. 21. You'll complete your blogs by the beginning of class, and I'll read them and give you feedback.

**Response papers.** During the semester, you will write five short response papers about a diversity issue. This may include your reaction to a class reading or a video we've seen. It could include your thoughts on a news event or a class discussion. Or it could simply be your personal perspective on some aspect of diversity. You'll hand write these papers in class, and I'll give you instructions beforehand. The grades you receive will be based on how thoroughly and thoughtfully you address the topic. Be sure to tie your writing to our class discussions. There are no make-up assignments. If you miss an assignment, you will not receive a grade that day. Each paper counts 2 percent of your grade.

**Background report.** You'll prepare a report on a diverse population group and turn in the report on **Wednesday, Oct. 5**. This report should be five to six pages long. It should be typed and double-spaced. Use Times New Roman font and 1-inch margins. This paper will be the foundation for a news article you will write later in the semester.

To prepare this report, you'll select one group in which you're interested. Because one of the goals of this class is to help you learn about people who are not like you, you must select a group to which you do not belong. (For instance, if you are gay, you don't want to write about gays.)

You will do research in the library and online, as well as telephone or in-person interviews to learn more about this population. You can discuss the presence of the population group in Lawrence, in Kansas, and in the United States. You can include census figures, and you may include some historical research on this group. You may even include information about past laws that have affected the group. (For instance, Title IX federal legislation made funding available for women's sports; prior to that time, women had to depend on the generosity of the university.) You will want to do a library search using the LexisNexis

Academic database or the American Newspapers database to determine how the news media have covered this group. You will examine news stories to learn issues that are important to the group, and in your background report, you will suggest some future news stories that you think might be interesting for readers of the *Kansan* or *Jayplay*.

The purpose of this report is to inform and explain. One way that may help you prepare the report is to think of it as a memo from a reporter to an editor. Pretend you are a reporter who has been assigned to cover a new beat. Tell the editor what you know about the group you've been assigned to cover; explain what media coverage has been like in the past; then explain where you think coverage should go in the future. What are key issues for this group? What have past news stories missed? What should future news stories cover?

Plan to use at least two online sources and one human source. List your sources at the end of your report.

**News feature article.** After you prepare your background report, you will use that information as the basis for a news feature article. You will find a person who is a member of the group you wrote about, and you will write a profile of that person. Your article should be eight- to 10-pages long, double-spaced. Use Times New Roman font and 1-inch margins on top, bottom, and sides.

You will submit a story “budget” or summary of your idea to me by e-mail on Monday, Oct. 17. Failure to do so will affect your grade.

Your final story will be due Wednesday, Nov. 2, at the beginning of class.

You should think of the article as a piece that might be published in the *Kansan* or *Jayplay*. I will work with the editors and advisers of those two publications to help you submit your articles.

As with the background report, your goal is to talk with someone who is different from you. Some examples: If you are pro-choice, you might interview someone who is opposed to abortion. If you are young, you might interview someone who is a senior citizen. If you are a U.S. citizen, you might interview a student from another country. You should tell the person you interview that you are writing the paper for a class and that the article may be published in a university newspaper or magazine. Your story should have news value—what makes this person different, unique, special? One of your goals is to explain what makes this person tick—what motivates them. Some guidelines and suggestions for the interview are attached.

You should plan to conduct the interview in person and be sure to get a phone number or e-mail so you can call to follow up with questions. Plan to submit your interview questions, plus notes. If you fail to include questions and notes, your paper will drop a letter grade (10 points). In addition to the person you interview, you must include two additional human sources—friends, family members, and co-workers. Be sure to include the names, e-mails, and phone numbers of news sources. Failure to do so will affect your grade. Be aware that I may contact these sources to verify quotes or other information.

Grammar and spelling count. Please follow Associated Press style guidelines. Your work must be original and accurate.

**Media advocacy project.** Instead of a final exam, you'll prepare a media advocacy report, in which you try to persuade a media producer to be more cognizant of diversity issues.

You'll monitor some aspect of the mass media over time, taking notes on what you see or hear. For example, you might look at cosmetic ads in three issues of *Cosmopolitan* magazine. You might examine the images of masculinity in five different video games. You might look at three movies distributed by Miramax, monitor a week's worth of sit-coms on FOX, or examine the front page of *The Kansas City Star* for 10 days. In this analysis, you do want to look at media products over time. You don't want to look at one newspaper on one day or report on one TV show.

During the semester, we will discuss ways to systematically analyze the media. You will apply one of these approaches to your media analysis.

To give your paper some context, you'll conduct some research in the library, on the Internet, or through personal interviews. Remember that you are trying to be persuasive, so you'll want to use this background material as evidence that helps make your point. Be sure to cite your sources. (In-text citations are fine. For example, you might say, "A July 2 article from Women's E-news reported . . ." Or, you might write, "The Disney Web site says . . .")

You'll prepare a 10- to 12-page page double-spaced paper, addressed to a media producer (the CEO of the company, the head writer, the director of marketing). You'll have to do some research here, too. This must be a real person.

You'll outline your findings, then offer some constructive criticisms—what this media producer is doing well to incorporate diversity, how he/she can improve. You can be as creative as you want. You can use satire to make your point, or you can argue logically. You don't want to rant and rail—it's a persuasive report, not a blog. Your grade will be determined by how thoroughly you research your topic, how carefully you analyze the material, how well your arguments are presented, how clearly your paper is written, and how persuasive you are.

You'll submit an outline of your plan by **Wednesday, November 14**. Failure to do so will affect your grade. Your final paper will be due the last day of class, **Wednesday, December 7**. Contact me ahead of time if you run into problems.

You must submit your notes and any forms you have used for analysis. If you do not, you will lose 10 points from your final grade.

## **A few words about your out-of-class assignments**

- All assignments are due at the beginning of class.

- Because deadlines have been announced in advance, **late papers will not be accepted.** Broken computers, corrupt floppy disks, dysfunctional printers, or interviewee's broken promise to call you back are not excuses for missing the deadline. If you have a problem, let me know ahead of time.
- Please keep electronic and hard copies of your papers. That way if a paper is lost (because of you or me), we can solve the problem quickly. Please keep any copies of papers that are returned to you. That way, if there is a discrepancy as grades are posted, we can check and resolve the problem right away.
- If you type your paper on library or lab computers, save your papers to a "memory stick." The computers are "cleaned" every night. If you don't save your paper electronically, you'll lose it.

## How will your work be evaluated?

Here is how your grades will be calculated:

Attendance – 5 percent

Diversity blog – 15 percent

Response papers – 10 percent

Background report – 20 percent

News feature article – 25 percent

Final project – 25 percent

You will receive a letter grade on each project you complete, including the in-class response papers. Your individual work and your final grade will be evaluated based on this scale:

A = Excellent. Student demonstrates originality and independent thought, a thorough mastery of the subject. Material is presented clearly, concisely; it is well-organized. Any arguments are strong, logical, and supported by persuasive evidence (citation of others' research, personal observation and experience, or systematic analysis of material). There are no unanswered questions for the reader.

B = Above average. Student's work shows some measure of originality and independent thought. The student has gone above and beyond what was expected of her/him. The student has presented the material well, but there may be unanswered questions or arguments may not be strongly supported.

C = Satisfactory. The student has done the minimal amount of work expected in the assignment but has not demonstrated original thought or mastery of the subject.

D = Unsatisfactory. The work is below average and of poor quality. There's no indication the student put much thought or effort into the work. (If you are taking this class, you should not get this grade.)

F = Failing. The student did not complete the assignment or did not do what was expected. (You don't want this grade either.)

You'll receive number grades on your news feature stories and your final projects. You'll receive letter grades on your blogs, background reports, and in-class response papers. Here's how the letter grades will translate into numbers.

A+	99/100	C	75
A	95	C-	70
A -	90	D +	69
B +	89	D	65
B	85	D -	60
B -	80	F	59 or below
C +	79		

Your final grade for this class will be a letter grade. Here's the grading scale.

<b>A</b>	93-100	<b>C</b>	73-76
<b>A-</b>	90-92	<b>C-</b>	70-72
<b>B+</b>	87-89	<b>D+</b>	67-69
<b>B</b>	83-86	<b>D</b>	63-66
<b>B-</b>	80-82	<b>D-</b>	60-62
<b>C+</b>	77-79	<b>F</b>	59 and below

## **Class policies**

This is an elective course, and you are in J534 because you want to be here. It's my responsibility to make this class a positive learning experience for you and to help you do well on your assignments. You have responsibilities to make this class a good learning experience, too, for yourself and your classmates.

- You should complete the assigned readings before you come to class. That way, you'll be able to participate actively in the discussions.
- Everyone in this class is encouraged to participate in the discussions. Everyone should feel free to express ideas, opinions, and questions. I will work to make sure everyone feels comfortable talking and that no one, including me, dominates the conversations.

- We are going to discuss some controversial topics in this class, and these discussions may make us feel angry, annoyed, hurt, guilty, or confused. While it's normal to feel emotional, we want to keep our discussions civil and respectful. We want to listen to what others have to say, even if we don't agree, and to give everyone an opportunity to speak. I expect everyone in the classroom to be tolerant and open to new ideas.
- I expect you to be here every day, and I expect you to be on time. If you are going to be absent, or if you're going to be late or need to leave early, please let me know in advance. Do not wander in and out of class. Take restroom and water breaks before or after class.
- Remember, you cannot make up in-class assignments. If you are absent that day, you don't receive a grade.
- Please turn off cell phones when class begins. Don't check cell phone messages or text messages in class. If your cell phone or pager goes off, I will ask you to leave.
- Keep personal conversations to a minimum. Your ideas are important, so be sure to share them with the entire class.
- This is a journalism class, so deadlines are important. Please turn in assignments on time.
- Because this is a journalism class, grammar and spelling are important. Not paying attention to grammar and spelling will adversely affect your grade.

## **Special needs**

The University of Kansas is committed to helping all students learn. If you have a special need that makes learning difficult for you, please contact me as soon as possible. Please be aware that the KU Offices of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) coordinate accommodations and services for all students who are eligible. If you have a disability for which you wish to request accommodations and have not contacted SSD, please do so as soon as possible. Information about services can be found at <http://www.ku.edu/~ssdis>. Or you can visit the SSD office at 22 Strong Hall. The phone number is: 785-864-2620 (V/TTY). Please contact me privately regarding your needs in this course.

## **Academic integrity and professionalism**

The William Allen White School of Journalism and Mass Communications does not tolerate plagiarism and fabrication. Neither do I. If you plagiarize or fabricate material, you can expect to get a zero on the assignment. You also can expect to fail the course and possibly to be expelled from the journalism school.

Here is the school's official policy statement:

“The William Allen White school of Journalism and Mass Communications does not tolerate plagiarism, fabrication of evidence and falsification of evidence.

Penalties for plagiarism, fabrication or falsification can include a failing grade for this course and expulsion from the School of Journalism and Mass Communications. If you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism, fabrication or falsification, please consult the professor of this course.”

The KU University Senate defines plagiarism as “knowingly presenting the work of another as one's own (i.e., without proper acknowledgment of the source). The sole exception to the requirement of acknowledging sources is when the information or ideas are common knowledge.” The University defines fabrication and falsification as “unauthorized alteration or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise.”

Here's some more information that may clarify these issues.

Plagiarism is taking someone else's ideas, thoughts, or opinions and passing them off as your own. This includes print and electronic materials (no matter how old they are), as well as materials from the Internet. If you cut and paste materials from the Internet, it is plagiarism.

If you use secondary sources—that is, research that someone else has already done—you must attribute in your papers.

You don't have to attribute commonly known facts (broccoli is a vegetable) or historical facts (George Bush is president of the United States).

Fabrication is making up something and presenting it as true. This includes making up a statistic, a fact, or a figure. It also includes making up quotes for interviews or “fudging” on quotes to make them sound more interesting. It's OK in fiction; it's not OK in a journalism course.

If you have questions about plagiarism or fabrication, see me.

## **The course Blackboard site**

We'll use the course Blackboard site throughout the semester: <http://www.ku.edu>. I will post grades on the site (only you will be able to see your grade), and I'll use the site to send class e-mails. Also, we'll use the site to post class announcements, to post some of your excellent work, or to post interesting articles or links to relevant articles and Web sites. Please check the site frequently.

## **In case of emergency . . .**

If an emergency or crisis causes you to miss three or more days of class, the AAAC can help contact your professors. Office: 22 Strong, Phone: 785-864-4064. Fax 785-864-2817.

If you are sick for three or more consecutive days due to illness or injury can request a *Documentation of Illness/Injury* statement from Student Health Services. Students who have illnesses or injuries of shorter duration and who schedule appointments at Student Health Services can obtain a copy of their medical record containing information about their visit by submitting an Authorization for Use/Disclosure form to the SHS Records and Registration Department. The processing of this request will be completed within 10 working days.

## **A final word**

Diversity is an important topic in mass media, and one that is sparking considerable debate within the communication professions. This class offers you a chance to get in on the discussions: to consider how the media shape our perspectives of ourselves and others. It also gives you an opportunity to start thinking about how you might want to change or challenge the way the media work. In the future, you'll be making the rules. This class offers you a chance to think about mass media images and how you might change those images when you become a media producer.

## Readings and Assignments

Below is the list of topics we'll discuss in class and the readings that will help you prepare for the discussions.

Date	Topic	Please read these assignments by the time you come to class
<b><i>Introduction to diversity</i></b>		
Aug. 22	Introduction to the class	
Aug. 24	Why study diversity?	Lind, "Laying a Foundation . . ." p. 1; Dines, "The Whites of their Eyes," p. 89.
Aug. 29	Us and Them	Lind, "The Social Psychology of Stereotypes," p. 14; Dines, "Hegemony," p. 61.
Aug. 31	SCWAMPed: Analyzing media images	Lind, "Hip-Hop Sees No Color," p. 199.
Sept. 5	Labor Day	No class! No readings!
Sept. 7	Look who's talking: Who sets your media agenda?	Lind, "The Face of the Front Page," p. 140; Lind, "Racialized Portrayals of Reporters and Criminals . . .," p. 132.
Sept. 12	Global media: Good business or bad imperialism?	Lind, "Global Media/Local Meanings," p. 27; Class handouts.
Sept. 14	Global media: How America sees the world	Dines, "'Con-fusing' Exotica," p. 274; Lind, "Interpeting Media Representation . . .," p. 117.
Sept. 19	New markets	Guest speaker from Hallmark
<b><i>Diverse populations in mass media</i></b>		
Sept. 21	"Nobel savages:" Native Americans and mass media	Lind, "Arguing over Images . . .," p. 68; Shipp, "The First Americans," class handout.  <b>Diversity blogs due.</b>
Sept. 26	Riding on the Orient distress: Images of Asian-Americans	Dines, "Ling Woo in the Historical Context," p. 656; Lind, "Outwhiting the Whites," p. 146
Sept. 28	African-American media: history lessons	Dines, "White Negroes," p. 111 Lind, "Fears of Difference . . .," p. 125.
Oct. 3	Look again: Passive racism	Lind, "Relevance of Race . . .," p. 76; Lind, "Color TV?" p. 206.
Oct. 5	El mundo loco: Media images of	Lind, "From 'Rico Suave' . . .," p.

	Latinos/Latinas	235; Martinez, "Seeing More Black than White. . ." Class handout.  <b>Background report due.</b>
Oct. 10	Temporarily Able-Bodied: The media and disabilities	Dines, "Current Perspectives on Advertising Images of Disability," p. 293; Other readings to be assigned.
Oct. 12	Ageism: You're not getting older, you're getting invisible	Dines, "No Politics Here," p. 497; Class handouts.
Oct. 17	Feminism: What is it and should I be afraid of it?	Dines, "Sex, Lies, and Advertising," p. 223; Lind, "The More You Subtract," p. 103.  <b>News feature idea due.</b>
Oct. 19	She plays like a girl: Women, sports, and media	Lind, "Favoritism and Identity in the Mediation . . .," p. 110; Lind, "Gender and Sport Media," p. 168.
Oct. 24	No class.	One-on-one meetings to discuss interviews. Sign up with Prof. Barnett.
Oct. 26	Macho, macho man: Images of masculinity in media	Dines, "Advertising and the Construction of Violent . . .," p. 349; Lind, "Masculinity and Race in the Media," p. 220.
Oct. 31	Bad guys: Negative images of men in the media	Dines, "Ralph, Fred, Archie, and Homer," p. 575; Dines, "King Kong and the White Woman," p. 451..
Nov. 2	Queer Eyes for the Straight Guys and Girls: Images of gays and lesbians	Dines, "Popular Culture and Queer Representation," p. 98; Dines, "Selling Sexual Subjectivities," p. 302.  <b>News feature due.</b>
Nov. 7	Out of the closet and into the living room: Images of gays on TV	Dines, "Representing Gay Men on Television," p. 597; Dines, "What's Wrong with This Picture?," p. 608.
<b><i>Diversity in popular culture</i></b>		
Nov. 9	Buy, buy, baby, buy, buy: Diversity and advertising	Dines, "Image-based Culture," p. 249; Dines, "The New Politics of Consumption," p. 183.
Nov. 14	All you need is cash: Money, wealth and media.	Mantsios, "Media Magic:" Ehrenreich, "The Silenced Majority. Class handouts.  <b>Outline for advocacy reports due.</b>

Nov. 16	Sneaker wars: PR and marketing dilemmas	Dines, "Nike, Social Responsibility, and the Hidden Abode of Production," p. 196
Nov. 21	Of Mouse and Men: The Disney Effect	Lind, "Race, Hierarchy, and Hyenaphobia . . .," p. 177; Dines, "You Never Had a Friend Like Me," p. 204.
Nov. 23	No class.	Happy Thanksgiving
Nov. 28	Hate crimes: The ugly side of free speech.	Lind, "Cyber-hate and the Disinhibiting Effects . . .," p. 258; Class handouts.
Nov. 30	Advocacy journalism: Changing the world one story at a time.	"Lynch Laws in America;" "Killers' Confession;" "And the Band Played On;" "Why I Want a Wife." Class handouts.
Dec. 5	No class	One-on-one meetings with Prof. Barnett to discuss final projects.
Dec. 7	Class wrap-up; evaluations; discuss advocacy reports.	<b>Advocacy reports due in class.</b>

## Background Report

You'll prepare a five- to six-page report on a diverse population group. You should not be a member of this group. The goal of this project is to help you learn about other people in our community.

Think of this report as having three parts:

**Part 1** – Background information on the group – tell me about the group's presence or absence locally, at the state level, at the national level, and the international level if appropriate. You can use the Internet for your research. You also may want to interview an "expert."

**Part 2** – Review news articles on this population group. Use the LexisNexis Academic database or the American Newspapers database. LexisNexis Academic allows you to look up TV transcripts, magazines, general-interest newspapers, or college newspapers. You may want to select one or two news sources, to determine how the sources covered the diverse population group. What type of stories were written?

**Part 3** – Based on what you've read about the group, what news stories do you think are missing? If you could write news stories about this group, what stories would you write?

You'll use this background report later in the semester when you write your news feature profile story.

## Evaluation Sheet for Background Report

**Presentation** – This report follows directions. It provides background information on a diverse population group. The group is clearly defined in the report. The report was turned in on deadline. (10 points)

Excellent                      Good                              Fair                              Poor                              Unacceptable

**Grammar and spelling** – The paper follows grammar and spelling rules. (10 points)

Excellent                      Good                              Fair                              Poor                              Unacceptable

**Context** – The report is thorough and comprehensive. It provides background on the presence or absence of the group in the local, state, and national level (international level, if appropriate). (20 points)

Excellent                      Good                              Fair                              Poor                              Unacceptable

**Themes** – The report provides information on how news sources have previously covered this group. The information identifies trends and themes in news coverage. The report demonstrates that the student has done thorough research on media coverage. (30 points)

Excellent                      Good                              Fair                              Poor                              Unacceptable

**Future issues** – The report provides information on how the media has covered the group in the past. The report identifies key issues that have been missing in media coverage. The report provides several stories ideas for the future. These ideas demonstrate creativity and insight into the needs of this diverse group. (30 points)

Excellent                      Good                              Fair                              Poor                              Unacceptable

**Comments on what you did well, what you will want to work on:**

## **Guidelines for News Feature / Diversity Interview**

**Plan due—Oct. 17**

**Paper due—Nov. 2**

Your task is to interview someone who is not like you and to write a news feature story about the person. This can be someone who is a different religion, race, class, or ethnic background. You want to use your interview as an opportunity to learn how this person believes differences in perspectives and experiences have affected his/her life.

As you think about the assignment, consider whom you might interview. It's always good to have a first choice and a back-up in case someone doesn't have time to talk with you.

Contact your first-choice by telephone or e-mail to determine whether he/she is interested in the interview. Explain that this is a class assignment, and that the article may be published in a student newspaper or magazine. You might start out by saying, "Hi, my name is Mary Smith. I'm working on an assignment for my diversity and media class in the School of Journalism at the University of Kansas. This class focuses on issues such as race, class, gender, and ethnicity. I wanted to talk with you about your experiences at KU. Would you have time to talk with me?" Or if you interview someone outside the university, you might say, "I wanted to talk with you about your work at Fleishman Hilliard PR agency." Or you could just say, "I wanted to talk with you about your life in Kansas City."

Be sure to explain to the person that you have a deadline. If he/she can't talk with you before the deadline, you'll have to find someone else to interview.

Plan to spend at least 45 minutes to 1 hour with the person you interview. You should plan to conduct the interview in person. A telephone interview is second choice. Do not interview him/her by e-mail, but you can use e-mail to ask follow-up questions. In your paper, explain where and when the interview took place. Be sure to provide the individual's e-mail address and phone number in case I have questions. Be sure to provide notes from your interview.

It's always a good strategy to start an interview by asking general open-ended questions. For instance: "How long have you lived in Topeka? Tell me about your life here." You can also phrase questions this way: "Tell me about your childhood. What do you remember about where you grew up?" Or, "Tell me about your work experiences. What are you doing now?" People generally love to talk about their families, so that's something you will want to ask about as well.

You will want to interview the person about their present life/work, but you also will want to ask about past experiences. You can ask the person about education, previous training, or other jobs, family.

You also will want to ask about barriers and challenges he/she faced, and you'll want to ask for examples.

And you'll want to give your article/report context. Use your background report for this.

In your article, try to capture the flavor of the person's life. You may include observations about the physical surroundings of their work or home environment. You can make notes about the individual's physical or behavioral traits ("an imposing figure at 6-feet, 3-inches," or "greeted her family members with a warm smile"). Keep an accurate record of your conversations.

Remember to be courteous and to thank the person for their time. Remember that you don't have to agree with the person you interview—you don't have to even like him/her—but you want to be respectful and to give them plenty of time to talk. They are entrusting you with their story. Tell their story as accurately and truthfully as you can.

For this article, you will want to incorporate comments from two live sources, in addition to the person you interviewed. These sources can be friends, family members, co-workers, fellow students. You must include their names, e-mails, and phone numbers at the end of the story in case I have questions.

You also should include materials from your background paper in your news feature article.

## Diversity Interview Evaluation Sheet

I'll carefully read your papers and write comments about what you did well and what you might do to improve your work. This sheet will give you an idea of how your work will be evaluated.

\_\_\_ **Presentation** – The paper follows directions. The focus is on the person interviewed and his/her perceptions. The student has included the date and time of the interview, plus contact information. The student has included contact information for other news sources. The student met deadlines for the story budget and the final story. (10 points)

Excellent                      Good                              Fair                              Poor                              Unacceptable

\_\_\_ **Grammar and spelling** – The paper is free from grammatical and spelling errors. (10 points).

Excellent                      Good                              Fair                              Poor                              Unacceptable

\_\_\_ **Background** – Although the paper focuses on one individual, the news feature provides background information on the diverse population group to which the individual belongs. The news feature provides context on the group. (20 points).

Excellent                      Good                              Fair                              Poor                              Unacceptable

\_\_\_ **Content** – The paper is thorough. The student has asked relevant and interesting questions. There are no unanswered questions for the reader. The student has described the person's life/work and explained how diversity is a factor. The paper shows the student has an understanding of the key concepts and theories we have discussed in class. This paper shows originality and independent thought. (30 points)

Excellent                      Good                              Fair                              Poor                              Unacceptable

\_\_\_ **Writing** – This paper is well-written and well-organized. Writing is concise and clear. The student tells a story in an interesting way. (30 points)

Excellent                      Good                              Fair                              Poor                              Unacceptable

Total = 100 points

Comments on what you did well, what you want to work on:

## Media Advocacy Report

Plan due – Monday, November 7

Report due – Wednesday, December 7

Ever wish you were in charge of what's in the media? Now's your chance to speak out.

In this assignment, you'll work as a media monitor, then write an advocacy report to a media producer. Your report will acknowledge what the media producer is doing well and make suggestions for how the producer could change the product to better incorporate diversity issues.

To get started, you want to get specific. You want to narrow down the research project to make it manageable and interesting. Start by thinking about a topic in which you're really interested—advertising portrayals of gays, women as news sources, media images of Muslims, portrayals of the elderly. Then think about a medium in which you're interested—books, TV, magazines, Internet, newspapers. Then, you can get even more specific—romance novels, TV sit-coms, fashion magazines, Internet Web sites for youth, local newspapers. Think about the population you want to advocate for—Hispanics, African-Americans, women, immigrants, men. Finally, select a very narrow topic that you would like to study that incorporates diversity in the media. Some examples: Images of masculinity in beer commercials or in action movies, body image of women in celebrity magazines, the presence or absence of African-Americans on soap operas, depictions of the elderly in comic strips. You can narrow the topic even further—presence of African-American characters on “One Life to Live.” Portrayals of elderly in “For Better, For Worse” comic strip. In your paper, you'll want to explain why this is an important topic.

Do some research on the topic you've chosen. You'll want to spend some time in the library and on the Internet looking for articles. You can use the articles to provide context and background for your report. Also, you may use some of the materials as evidence to support your claims. Just be sure to attribute the information to the correct sources.

Once you've decided upon your topic, determine how you will study or monitor the subject. You won't be able to watch every TV show or see every movie about your topic. Instead, select a small “sample” that you feel is representative of what you're studying. This might be a week's worth of newscasts or newspapers, several months worth of magazines, a month of Monday Night football games, five Web sites. In your paper, you'll want to explain why studying this particular topic and medium is worthwhile (Monday Night Football has an audience of 2 million viewers; these five Web sites receive more than 10,000 hits per month).

Develop a worksheet to help you keep track of what you watched, heard. Don't rely on memory. You can use the media diversity diary format to help you, or you can keep a journal. **You must turn in your worksheets with the assignment.**

You want this report to be addressed to a specific individual. It must be a real person. Somewhere in your report, indicate why you're writing to this particular individual. (As the head writer for *That 70s Show*, you . . .)

In your report, tell the media producer what you think he/she is doing well. Give specific examples from your media monitoring notes. Tell the producer what he/she can improve to incorporate diversity. Again, give specific examples from your media monitoring. Finally, tell the producer what you'd like them to do next, and be specific. Do you want them to add a Latina character to the cast of *Hope and Faith*? Hire a woman to cover sports for the Lawrence Journal-World? These suggestions should flow logically from the research you've done.

Your final report should be 10 to 12-typed, double-spaced pages. You will turn it in instead of taking a final exam. The paper is due the last day of class, Wednesday, December 7.

A word or caution from someone who spent many years of her life as a student: Give yourself plenty of time. Don't wait till the week before and frantically try to put your paper together. You want to monitor the media, then give yourself some time (at least a few days) to think about what you saw and heard before you start writing. You are welcome to ask someone else, including students in this class, to read a draft of your paper.

## Evaluation Sheet for Media Advocacy Report

\_\_\_\_ **Presentation** – The paper followed directions. The student selected an appropriate topic and time frame. He/she met deadlines for the plan and the final paper. (10 points)

Excellent                      Good                              Fair                              Poor                              Unacceptable

\_\_\_\_ **Grammar and spelling** – The paper is free from grammar and spelling errors. (10 points)

Excellent                      Good                              Fair                              Poor                              Unacceptable

\_\_\_\_ **Context** – The papers provides relevant background. It synthesizes information from a variety of secondary sources. The paper provides background and explains why this topic is important. (10 points)

Excellent                      Good                              Fair                              Poor                              Unacceptable

\_\_\_\_ **Content** – The paper is thorough. It offers a representative sample. The paper demonstrates careful and thoughtful monitoring of a media issue. The work demonstrates independent and original thought, creativity. The student has provided notes of his/her monitoring activity. The analysis is systematic—not random thoughts. (20 points)

Excellent                      Good                              Fair                              Poor                              Unacceptable

\_\_\_\_ **Application** – The papers demonstrates that the student understands key concepts of diversity discussed in class and is able to apply them in another setting. The paper demonstrates critical thinking about a media issue. (20 points)

Excellent                      Good                              Fair                              Poor                              Unacceptable

\_\_\_\_ **Persuasiveness** – The paper uses evidence (from secondary research and personal observations) to make critical points. Arguments are logical, well-thought-out. If I were the media producer, I'd be convinced. (20 points)

Excellent                      Good                              Fair                              Poor                              Unacceptable

Total = 100 points

Comments: