

Spring 2018  
with Eric Thomas  
University of Kansas

# Syllabus

# J101: Media & Society

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

[INTRODUCTION](#)

[WHAT YOU WILL LEARN](#)

[WHAT MATERIALS YOU WILL NEED](#)

[HOW YOU'LL EARN YOUR GRADES](#)

[CLASS COMMUNICATION](#)

[OTHER NOTES](#)

## INTRODUCTION

How do the media dominate your life?

Florida Georgia Line. Cara Delevingne. Clayton Kershaw. Queen Bey. Amitabh Bachchan. Cristiano Ronaldo. Chance the Rapper. The Menzingers. Luis Fonsi & Daddy Yankee. Frank Ocean. Kerry Washington. James Bay. Sam Hunt. Gal Godot. Jason Aldean. Chris Pine. Kendrick Lamar. JLo, JLaw, LeBron, Ellen, Kendall, Oprah, Taraji, Drake, Serena, Selena, Donald, Katy, Taylor, the Vanderpumps.

Chances are you recognize many of these names. And chances are you know some (or maybe many) details about the lives of these people. You may know more about them than you do some of your own friends or family. You may not know these people personally, but you know them through the media.

In our class, we're going to talk about the power of the media and the media's effects on our everyday lives and how the media influence our values and viewpoints.

Welcome to Journalism 101, a course about media, society, and culture.

We use mass media every day for information and entertainment. We use mass media so much, it's hard to imagine what even one day would be like without the stories, photographs, songs, advertisements, and news we get from books, television, mobile phones, radio, tablets, and the Internet. Because media are so much a part of our lives, we don't often stop to really think about the images we

see, the messages we hear, or the information we receive. That's the purpose of this course—to help us think about media information and influences.

## WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

### In this course, you will:

- Think critically and analyze the media messages you see and hear;
- Consider how mass media shapes your personal views, ideas, and perspectives, as well as how media shape our culture;
- Understand the history of mass media to assess how the media landscape has changed and continues to evolve;
- Think about the relationship between media and audiences and learn how media work to meet the needs of diverse audiences;
- Understand better how the First Amendment affects the media messages we transmit and receive;
- Learn how technology affects access to knowledge and information around the globe;
- Think about the relationship between media and economics—how media are financed, who owns the media, and how ownership affects the information we get.

### How you'll learn in a large class

Look around. Gobs of students are in this class. Learning in a large class can be difficult—it is easy to feel lost and get distracted, and it can be intimidating to ask questions or voice your opinions. So, as the instructor, I will try to do several things to make this feel like a smaller class and to make you feel more comfortable and less anonymous.

First, think of the classroom as a lab, where you'll interact, discuss, and learn. We will have lectures, but there will be plenty of time for you to talk and to ask questions. The best way for you to learn is to be involved. You're in charge of your learning.

Talk to me. In class. Out of class. I will be happy to meet with you individually to discuss your ideas and concerns. You can stop by during office hours or make an appointment.

While my responsibility as a teacher is to create an environment where you can learn, you have some responsibilities as a student. You want to:

- Come to class. (I take attendance, so that's a thing.)
- Listen and ask questions.
- Complete assignments on time and correctly.
- Inform me of any problems that interfere with your learning, including jail time and hospitalizations, when they happen.

# WHAT MATERIALS YOU WILL NEED

## Top Hat app

I have used the Top Hat ([www.tophat.com](http://www.tophat.com)) app in other courses with great results and student engagement. Aside from driving up attendance substantially, students reported being more engaged in class. Also, the average grade in my classes improved during semesters with Top Hat.

You will be able to submit answers to in-class questions using an app for Apple or Android smartphones and tablets. Or you can use a web browser on a laptops or tablet. Or, you can respond via simple text message. So, here we go.

## How do I get Top Hat?

An email invitation will be sent to you by email, but if don't receive this email, you can register by simply visiting our course website: <https://app.tophat.com/e/596752> . Our Course Join Code is **596752**

Top Hat will require a paid subscription: [www.tophat.com/pricing](http://www.tophat.com/pricing). I would recommend purchasing a two-semester membership to Top Hat because it is likely you will also use the app in Journalism 300 with myself or Carol Holstead.

Should you require assistance with Top Hat at any time, please contact their Support Team ([support@tophat.com](mailto:support@tophat.com)) with the in-app support button, or by calling 1-888-663-5491.

## What is Top Hat used for?

TopHat will be used in class for three main functions:

- **ATTENDANCE:** At the start of each class a code will be projected on the screens. It is your responsibility to input that code by the start of the class. If you are late and miss the opportunity to input the code, that is the same as an absence. **Warning:** TopHat is super-savvy and can now track your location when you input the code. If you are in your bed inputting a code that your friend texted you, I will know. And to me, that cheating is the same as plagiarism, and therefore has the same consequences.
- **DISCUSSION:** In a class this size many students with great ideas are hesitant to speak out. I get it. Therefore, I will use TopHat to pose questions to the class. You can review the responses from other students in class, and we will discuss some of the stellar submissions.
- **ARE YOU LISTENING?** It's fair game to embed some simple questions into the lecture as well. These will mostly be multiple-choice questions that track to see who's conscious and who is lost in Jayhawk basketball online message boards.

## Textbook

**“Media & Culture” (11th Edition) by Campbell, Martin and Fabos – Bedford/St.Martin’s ISBN 978-1-4576-6874-6 (Paperback)** The 11th edition is updated with more recent examples, but the 10th edition is also OK for this course. Exam content will be present in both texts.

There are several ways to obtain your textbook. You can purchase or rent the book from the KU bookstore. You can buy the book from Amazon or another independent bookseller. Additionally, you can buy or rent the book online from the publisher. I will put a hard copy of the book on reserve in the Resource Center, 2nd Floor, Stauffer-Flint Hall. You can read it there, but you can’t check it out for dorm use.

## HOW YOU’LL EARN YOUR GRADES

Most students are concerned about grades and how they can do well in their courses. In J101, your grades will be based on your performance on three exams, the completion of one blog entry, Top Hat points and course pre- and post-tests.

Here’s how all your grades will be calculated for J101 (430 points)

- Exam 1: 100 points possible
- Exam 2: 100 points possible
- Exam 3: 100 points possible
- Media blog post: 50 points possible
- Course pretest and posttest for the KU Core: 20 points
- Top Hat Attendance: 30 points possible
- Top Hat Questions: 30 points possible

The exams will cover the assigned readings for the course, as well as any guest speakers and discussions we have in class, so take notes carefully. Your notes will be your study guide. I don’t do review sessions, unless I think they’re vital.

## Exams

Here are the exam dates:

- Exam 1: Tuesday, Feb. 15 from 9:30-10:45 a.m.
- Exam 2: Thursday, April 3 from 9:30-10:45 a.m.
- Exam 3: Monday, May 7 from 7:30 a.m. to 9 a.m.

This is your final exam. It starts at 7:30 a.m on Monday, May 7. The university sets the time for this exam, so I can’t change it. You need to plan to be here. This exam is not cumulative—it will cover material from roughly the final third of the course. The final exam will last 90 minutes

Everyone will take the exams, including the final exam, at the same time on the same day. No make-up tests will be given. Make plans to be in class and on time. The only exceptions for these exam dates will be for students who are required to attend or participate in official

university-sponsored events or students who are ill and have documentation. If you're participating in a school-sponsored event, please bring a university letter before the exam.

If you are ill, you need to let me know in advance that you'll miss the exam, and you need to bring a note from your doctor or Watkins Health Center. Weddings, surprise plane tickets from parents, parties, job interviews, court appearances, jail time, job conflicts, tickets to sporting events or concerts, and early vacations/breaks are not valid reasons for missing tests or taking them early.

Don't even ask.

Let me say that again. Don't ask.

## Media Blog Post

In addition to your exams, you'll complete one blog entry, and you'll post it on the course Blackboard site. The blog should be your original work (no one else's), and it should be original to this class. Don't recycle an assignment from another class, last semester, or from high school. If you do, and I question it, you'll receive a 0 for the assignment.

There will be two options to prompt your writing for the Media Blog Post. I will post them at the start of February on Blackboard.

Plan to write five to six paragraphs about your chosen topic and post your blog entry on the course Blackboard site by 11 p.m. on Tuesday, April 19. Detailed directions will be on the course Blackboard site. Read them. Follow them.

The most-common mistake on the blog entry is turning in the wrong format. **You will submit your entry as a PDF to Blackboard.** If you don't, it doesn't count.

Here's how I will evaluate your media blog post:

- **50 points** – The blog entry is clearly written and organized. It shows careful thought and analysis. It answers the questions outlined for the assignment directions. It shows creativity and originality. Anyone reading this blog would find it informative and entertaining. There are no grammar and spelling mistakes. Work is posted on time.
- **20 points** – The blog entry is posted on time, but it is not well organized or well written. It's too brief and it's thoughtless. The blog entry did not adequately answer the questions in the assignment. There are numerous spelling and grammar errors. There wasn't much effort put into the assignment; the student did the minimum required and nothing more. Anyone reading this blog would find it boring and uninformative.
- **0 points** – The student did not turn in the work on time or did not present original work. Or, those who don't read this and post in a document form other than a PDF. (Yes, multiple students do this every semester. Will it be you?)

It can take two to three weeks to read these entries and record grades, so be chill. Please.

You will also complete a pre- and post-test for the course. It's KU's way of seeing if you learned anything that meets the KU Core standard this class is supposed to meet. Completion of each test is worth 10 points. You can't fail these tests, so consider these easy points, because they are.

## Top Hat Attendance

Yes, indeed, I have an attendance policy. You will use the Top Hat app to sign into class starting week 2.

It is your responsibility to be present and have Top Hat ready on a device at the start of class. This device can be as simple as a flip phone (You can text your attendance to Top Hat). You can also use Top Hat through a laptop, tablet or smartphone. We will not give credit for students who approach us after lecture to say the app wasn't working, their device wasn't charged or whatever other technology excuse.

To avoid the nonsense associated with "excused" and "unexcused" absences, know that you have **three free absences**. Use your freebies for sleeping, court dates, funerals, altered states, sick days or when you leave campus and just don't want to come back for class. I don't have to know why you aren't in class (except if you have to miss an exam). If you are sick, don't bring me a doctor's note and expect me to give you an "excused" absence. It's just one of your absences. If you are sick enough to miss multiple class days, contact the AAAC office and ask counselors there to intervene on your behalf.

There's a process. Respect it. I will.

If you use a fourth absence, your Top Hat attendance grade will drop to 0. You will lose all your attendance points. Attendance with Top Hat is all-or-nothing. You don't earn partial points for missing more than three classes.

Please remember that tardy counts as absent for the sake of attendance. However, if you are tardy, you can still participate and earn points that day through discussion questions and other Top Hat questions. See "Top Hat Questions" below.

If you have some sort of catastrophic occurrence that alters the course of your academics, I will work with you to figure out how best to deal with J101. This includes multiple days in the hospital or a life event that requires you to miss weeks of school. Again, contact the AAAC. Don't wait until the end of the semester and plead that forgiveness should be retroactive. It won't be.

## Top Hat Questions

During lectures I will present "Discussion" questions and "Are You Listening?" questions. Top Hat totals your points on these questions as the semester rolls along so you can track your progress. At the end of the semester, we will transfer the points earned through Top Hat over to Blackboard. If you have earned 90 percent of the possible points in Top Hat, we will award 27/30 points in Blackboard that will influence your final grade in the course.

As with Top Hat attendance above, it is your responsibility to have a device capable of electronically responding to questions for each lecture. Also, responding to questions while not attending lecture constitutes academic dishonesty. Come to class and this is all very simple.

## How I'll report your grades

Grades give you feedback on your progress in J101. Remember, grades are earned, not given.

Research suggests a correlation between class attendance and good grades, so attend class if you want to do well. I will make every effort to keep an accurate record of your grades and to post your test scores quickly. A computer scores the test; usually it takes the testing center about 48 hours to return the test scores to me. I'll post all grades on the course Blackboard site, and the computer will calculate your final grade for you.

Although you will receive numerical grades on your blog and exams, your final grade for this class will be a letter grade. Here is how the numbers translate:

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

Students often ask questions about “rounding up” grades—that is, if the final grade contains a fraction, students want to know what happens. Nothing happens. There has to be a line somewhere. I don't round up. I don't grade on a curve.

If, after your first (or second) exam, you're worried, sign up to do a hot topic presentation for extra credit. That may help your grade jump up to the next letter at the end of the semester.

If a grade is posted incorrectly—it sometimes happens in a class this large—or if a grade isn't recorded, let us know by email as soon as possible. Don't wait until the end of the semester. Definitely don't wait until the final grades have been posted, and everyone has gone home for break.

## A word about your mom and dad

This is college and your grades are your responsibility. You – not your parents – need to take care of business in this class. Should you not get the grades you want, I suggest using the following checklist:

- Did you show up for class, awake, alert and ready to learn?
- Did you pay attention in class? Really? Or did you just scroll and text?
- Did you take notes? You know, real, comprehensible notes?
- Did you study for several hours a week (at least) outside of class?
- Did you take care on the assignments? Did you submit them on deadline and correctly?
- Did you work ahead in class; not waiting until the last minute to do assignments or ask for assistance?
- Did you keep track of your attendance, to ensure its accuracy?

I will be happy to talk with you about your performance in class and the class material, but I don't do parent-teacher conferences. Please do not have your parents call or write me. I will not

talk with them concerning your performance or grades in the class, with or without your permission.

## How you'll get extra credit

The only way to get extra credit in J101 is to earn it. You can do that one of three ways. You can't do more than one, so choose wisely.

### Write Now topic presentation

You may earn as much as 10 points extra credit by presenting on a Write Now presentation. These presentation will be familiar to you, because I will often start lecture with one. The presentation will follow a simple format and connect to both the chapter we are reading and current events. For instance, in the coming weeks we will read a chapter about journalism ethics and I will lecture on it. So, you might choose the current event of Stephen Miller of the White House and Jake Tapper of CNN arguing before Tapper abruptly ended the segment. A presentation about that would connect 1) the chapter, 2) the lecture and 3) current events.

These presentations demand that you . . .

1. READ AHEAD: you can't know what topic to choose without knowing the chapter.
2. SIGN UP: I need to know what lecture you are proposing to present. Only one Write Now topic per lecture is allowed. First come, first served.
3. PREPARE A SLIDEDECK: I will have a template for the slidedeck that you should use.
4. EMAIL ME YOUR TOP HAT QUESTION: Your presentation will end in a question that can spur discussion on Top Hat. I need that question at least two days before you present.
5. SHOW UP AND PRESENT: This extra credit requires that you present to the class.

You will find a more detailed description of this extra credit assignment on Blackboard under Course Documents. Please note that there are a limited number of lectures to present Write Now. Once the slots for Write Now are filled, that's it.

### Research experiment

I will announce more details about the schedule for this extra-credit opportunity via Blackboard. Students can earn 10 points for this activity which involves participating in a research experiment organized by a KU academic researcher.

### KSPA events

The Kansas Scholastic Press Association sponsors two events each spring on KU's campus for high school students to learn more about journalism and compete in contests. As the executive director, I will recruit your help and reward you with extra credit. Volunteer slots for these events are first-come, first-served. **The twist?** If you fail to show for the extra credit volunteer opportunity, I will deduct 10 points from your attendance in addition to your not earning the extra credit points. Please only sign up if you are sure you can help.

# Class Communication

## Teaching Team

Eric Thomas,  
Journalism Instructor & executive director of Kansas Scholastic Press Association  
317 Stauffer Flint Hall  
[ericthomas@ku.edu](mailto:ericthomas@ku.edu)

Jill Hinrich Howell  
Graduate Teaching Assistant  
113 Stauffer Flint Hall  
[jill.hinrichhowell@ku.edu](mailto:jill.hinrichhowell@ku.edu)

Feel free to contact us if you have questions or problems. Email is best. If you're going to email one of us and you want a response, you might want to read the "how to" document on Blackboard.

## Office Hours

You can also visit us during our office hours or make an appointment.

- **Thomas office hours:** Wednesdays from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Appointments welcome.
- **Howell office hours:** Tuesdays from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. & by appointment Thursday.

## How you'll demonstrate professional behavior

Most of you are going to college because you want to get a good job. In the School of Journalism and Mass Communications, we want to prepare you as well as we can. That's why in all your journalism classes there is an emphasis on professional behavior.

Professional behavior means that your actions in the classroom mirror your actions in the workplace. As your professor, my responsibility is to create an environment for students who want to learn. Help me help you.

- Attend class. Any materials from class—including discussions, comments from guest speakers, and audio/video clips—may be included on the exam. If you don't come to class, talk with a fellow student about what you missed. Try to avoid disrupting class by wandering in late. We will judge.
- Don't go into text message overdrive while in class. An entire class period spent on your phone is 75 minutes you won't get back.
- You're trying to balance academics with a social life and maybe a job. It's a lot of pressure, and it can be exhausting. I sympathize with the demands on your time. However, when you come to class, stay frosty. Don't use class time for naps. Seriously, go find a bed – or at least a sofa.

- Every instructor knows the ruse: you act like you are taking notes while you are really updating Facebook or scrolling Instagram. Every instructor can recognize the panicked look and flurry of keystrokes to your browser window. Plus, everyone behind you can see your desktop – and will judge those outfits you put into your shopping cart while you pretend to take notes. And just stop with the cat videos. You know who you are.
- You cannot be two places at once. If you have a job that conflicts with class, you need to drop this class. Don't leave class early to get to your job or the bus.
- Please don't work on other assignments while you're in J101. You may think it's multi-tasking, but I consider it rude. (Because it is rude.)
- Many of you will try to game the attendance system. Because...college. Know this: If I find how and with whom, I will consider it cheating. Ugh.

## Plagiarism and fabrication

In this class, and in all journalism classes, honesty and integrity are critical. Any work you do must be original and reflect your own ideas, thoughts, and research. In a work setting, if you choose to violate professional standards, you will be fired. In this class, if you choose to violate the standards for academic integrity, you'll fail the course, and you may be expelled from or denied admission to the School of Journalism.

Here is the journalism 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. In this course, the penalty for plagiarism, fabrication or falsification is a failing grade for the semester. Additional penalties can include expulsion from the School of Journalism. 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 even more clarification on academic dishonesty:

If you use or attempt to use any unauthorized materials during a test, or if you give any unauthorized materials to someone else during a test, this is cheating. Unauthorized materials include written materials, such as notes. Unauthorized materials also include any forms of nonverbal communication (one cough, the answer is A; two coughs, the answer is B, etc.).

Plagiarism is stealing. You take someone else's ideas, thoughts, or words, and you present them as your own original work. This includes taking ideas from written sources, such as books, as well as materials on the Internet. Cutting and pasting materials from the Internet and presenting that work as if it was your own in the Media Blog Post is plagiarism. There may be times when you want to incorporate another person's ideas, opinions, and words into the blogs you write to make a point or to provide background. If you do, it is essential that you attribute that information—that you explain where the information came from and give credit where credit is due.

Fabrication and falsification mean that you made it up. This can include making up an entire interview or embellishing a fact, quote, or statistic in the blog to make it sound better.

We will discuss these issues further in class. Questions? Contact me.

## What's also boring, but important to note

### Journalism School Policy on Classroom Attendance:

No student may add a journalism class after the 20th day of a semester. Students must attend their classes and laboratory periods. Instructors may take attendance into account in assessing a student's performance and may require a certain level of attendance for passing a course. Instructors may choose to drop students from a course, based on attendance, without consent.

The School of Journalism reserves the right to cancel the enrollment of students who fail to attend the first class or laboratory meeting.

The KU Office of Student Financial Aid is required by federal law to determine whether students who receive aid are attending each class in which they are enrolled. Instructors are required to report to that office absences of students who have stopped attending and names of those who have enrolled but never have attended. Students who do not attend classes may be required to repay federal and/or state financial aid.

### Copying or Recording

Course materials prepared by the instructor, as well as content of all lectures presented by the instructor, are the instructor's property. Video/audio recording of lectures is prohibited if I don't give consent.

On request, the instructor usually will permit students to record lectures, on the condition that the individual making the recording only uses such recordings as a study aid. Unless the instructor gives explicit permission, recordings of lectures may not be modified and must not be transferred or transmitted to any other person, whether or not that individual is enrolled in the course.

### Where you'll find course materials

I will use the course Blackboard site to keep you up-to-date on class activities. I'll post a copy of the syllabus and class reading assignments on Blackboard, and I (or Jill) will post grades there as well. You will upload your Media Blog Post to this site as a pdf. Occasionally, I may post news articles or links to articles that class members think are interesting. If you have an article, video, or idea you'd like to share, you can send it to me to post on Blackboard. Please let me know immediately if you have problems accessing Blackboard.

### Where to go if you have special learning needs or life gets complicated

If you have a problem or concern that may affect your learning, contact the AAAC so the folks there can work with you and me toward your success in J101. Student Access Services, part of

the Academic Achievement & Access Center, works with all units to help students with disabilities, be they physical, medical, sensory, psychological, or related to attention or learning.

The Office of the Vice Provost for Student Success coordinates the University response to campus and individual student emergencies. The Office of the Vice Provost is also the contact when students are involved in a serious incident away from the Lawrence campus. The Office will offer information, counseling, and support to students, their families and others affected by the incident.

To report an extended illness or accident that keeps you away from class, contact the Academic Achievement and Access Center at (785) 864-4064, [www.achievement.ku.edu](http://www.achievement.ku.edu). AAAC counselors will talk with parents or guardians and pass any details I need to know along to me.

## Gun policy

Individuals who choose to carry concealed handguns are solely responsible to do so in a safe and secure manner in strict conformity with state and federal laws and KU weapons policy. Safety measures outlined in the KU weapons policy specify that a concealed handgun:

- Must be under the constant control of the carrier;
- Must be out of view, concealed either on the body of the carrier, or backpack, purse, or bag that remains under the carrier's custody and control;
- Must be in a holster that covers the trigger area and secures any external hammer in an un-cocked position;
- Must have the safety on, and have no round in the chamber.

## Tests and guns

Instructors are allowed by Kansas Board of Regents policy, to require backpacks, purses and other bags be placed in an area not directly next to students during exams, and as such those items will not be under the constant control of the individual. Students who choose to carry a concealed handgun in a purse, backpack, or bag must review and plan each day accordingly, and are responsible for making alternate arrangements as necessary. The university does not provide appropriate secured storage for concealed handguns.

Individuals who violate the KU weapons policy may be asked to leave campus with the weapon and may face disciplinary action under the appropriate university code of conduct.

## Finally . . .

I reserve the right to alter this semester's schedule as I see fit to help your particular class learn. I will advise you of changes in class or by email - to help you prepare accordingly.