

MediaLIT Course Syllabus (MCO425x)

Welcome to the course!

Please take the time to review this syllabus thoroughly. It has all the information you need to take part in this course. After you have read the syllabus, if any part of the course is unclear, please read the course Question and Answer (Q & A) forum *carefully*. It's possible your question has already been asked and answered. If your question has not been asked or answered, please use the forum, where your instructor or teaching assistants will respond promptly. Your question will likely be relevant to others. The course team will be upvoting and answering the most frequently asked questions (FAQs). Note: edX, the hosting platform for the course, provides technical support (see below).

How to get the most out of this course

In order to get the most out of this course you should ensure you engage in the following activities:

- Review weekly readings, lectures and interview excerpts;
- Actively participate in weekly discussion forum conversations and blog posting;
- Take and pass the weekly quizzes.

Instructor Information

Dan Gillmor, Author and Professor at the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Arizona State University. Learn more about Dan at <http://dangillmor.com/about>

Course Instruction Team

In addition to Dan as the lead instructor for this course, Kristy Roschke will be the assistant instructor; we'll introduce several other teaching assistants who will be joining in and supporting your learning experience. The full team will ensure that the course stays current, relevant, and safe, and will be responding and engaging with you in the discussion forum and in the course live sessions. The course will be intentionally "live"--we didn't just put everything in a bottle for you to open. We'll bring breaking news and relevant current events directly into the content and conversations. We hope you'll join us as active participants.

Course Communication

Because of the high number of registered participants, Dan and other instructors will not be able to reply to individual emails. So as noted above, please post questions or problems in the MediaLIT Course Question and Answer (Q & A) discussion forum. Instructors will make every effort to respond within 48 hours. You can often save yourself (and us!) some time by carefully checking the forum to see if your question has already been asked. Participants are encouraged to answer each others' questions.

Important: Please check the **Course Info** area frequently. We'll be posting updates there on a regular basis.

Technical Support

See <https://www.edx.org/about/student-faq>

Time Zone Differences

All course due dates and times reference California time, Pacific Daylight Time, which will be GMT - 7.00 for the duration of the course. We will repeat this information several times, and it is especially important if you are planning to attend any of the live sessions. The link that follows here may help clarify what time it is in California during the course <http://www.greenwichmeantime.com/time-zone/usa/california/time/>

Course Description

This course is a modified version of Dan Gillmor's upper-level undergraduate course at the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Arizona State University. From the edX About Page, here is the course description:

Media literacy helps us understand, analyze and create media. While we rely on good journalism to provide accurate information, we also have responsibilities of our own in this media-saturated environment. We can no longer be passive consumers of media. We need to be active users of media, as readers, listeners, viewers and creators, so we are all better informed. Our goal is to help you do just that.

In this course, you'll hear from some amazing folks who are part, or keen observers, of the news industry—more about them below.

Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for this course.

Course Time Commitment

In this 7-week course we ask you to watch lectures and interviews; do short readings; participate in the discussion forum; and complete several media-creation assignments. Expect to spend approximately 3-5 hours per week actively participating in this course. We'll post material for the upcoming week on Sundays at 11:59pm PDT.

Course Objectives:

At the completion of this course, you will be able to :

- Describe the changes that have transformed the way we create and consume media
- Understand essential principles for being an active media consumer
- Utilize tactics to tame the information deluge and be better informed
- Analyze how media are used to persuade
- Evaluate the tools and techniques of media creation
- Employ a “slow news” approach, especially as a consumer of news
- Put media in an ethical and legal context

Course Elements

- Instructor Lecture Videos
- Guest Lecture Videos
- Readings
- Discussion Forums (ungraded)
- Blog Posts (mix of graded and ungraded)
- Peer Assessment (graded)
- Quizzes (graded)
- Pre- and Post-Course Surveys (ungraded)
- Supplemental materials for people who want to go deeper

Course Activities:

Readings

You should complete all readings before viewing the video lectures. Many of the lectures synthesize and expand on the reading materials. You'll get more from the course by doing the reading first.

Mediactive Book

You will be asked to read a few chapters from *Mediactive*, by course instructor Dan Gillmor. The book, first published in 2009, is available under a [Creative Commons](#) license, which means it's free to download. (You'll learn more about Creative Commons during Week 6 of the course.)

Additional Readings

Readings will be taken from a variety of media sources. In a given week you might have material from traditional news organizations, blogs, social media and more. Our only criterion is quality and relevance. As noted, some of the readings will come from breaking news. (We hope you'll let us know, in the appropriate forum, about items you think will make useful reading.)

Lectures

Each week there will be several instructor video presentations.

Interviews

Each week there will be a selection of short interview segments from a variety of guests including journalists and other media experts. Among the guests are Jimmy Wales, co-founder of Wikipedia; Margaret Sullivan, public editor of the New York Times; Baratunde Thurston, author and comedian; and many others.

Discussion Forums

Our conversations are an integral part of the course. We'll use the edX Discussion Forum for these purposes:

- **General Q&A discussion** – A general Q&A discussion board will be set up at the beginning of the course. Please use this board to post and answer questions regarding the course. If you are experiencing any difficulty accessing materials, or experience any challenges with inappropriate peer behavior, this is the best communication channel to use.
- **Weekly conversations** – Each week there will be a conversation discussion board. We'll create one or more conversation threads that you can discuss with others in the class related to the week's topics. The goal here is to deepen your understanding of the material, and collaborate with your peers in the process. We'd like you to post twice or more in the weekly conversations, and comment on others' posts at least twice.
- **Blog Posting discussion forum** – There will be a separate blog discussion board for each week. This is where you should prepare and post your blog assignments. We'll tell

you more about this in the “Before the Course Begins” material, but here’s the gist: You’ll be critiquing media yourself, on a topic you choose.

- **General conversation** -- whatever else you want to discuss.

Posting and reading in the discussion forums can feel overwhelming at first. But if you’ve used Facebook you already know how online conversations can work, so don’t worry too much about this! Please watch the MediaLIT Discussion Guide video for our best advice on how to manage your experience.

We (your course instruction team) won’t just start a thread and leave on vacation. We’ll join you in the discussion forums. Among other things we’re looking forward to doing is highlighting some of the interesting things you’re saying, and commenting ourselves.

Discussion Forum Etiquette

We have two fundamental community rules: Be civil, and don’t post offensive or illegal stuff.

Your instruction team will moderate the forums. If you spot something you think violates our community rules, you can flag the post for our attention.

For more information on the discussion forum, please see below and refer to the discussion forum details <https://www.edx.org/blog/getting-most-out-edx-discussion-forums>.

Graded Assessments

Quizzes

There will be six weekly quizzes in this course, in weeks one through six. Quizzes will assess your knowledge of the week’s materials, including lecture videos and readings. Each quiz will consist of 20-25 multiple choice and/or true-false questions. Needless to say, it’s “open book” -- just like real life. We’ll post the quiz by Thursday each week, and it’s due on Sunday.

“Blogging” Assignments

You won’t actually be creating a blog in the technical sense. What we’re looking for here is your writing about how media -- of all kinds -- treat a topic you care and know a lot about. In effect, we’re inviting you to become the best media critic on that topic. Look for detailed information on how this will work.

Peer Assessments

This is a fancy way of saying we'll ask you to read several other participants' "blog posts" and give them your feedback. Again, we'll explain this in more detail when the course gets under way.

Course Grading

What's the point of grading, in a course that you're not taking for academic credit? It's a measure -- just one measure -- of how well you understand the material. (We promise not to use trick questions.) Here's how we'll score:

Quizzes (6) = 70% of score

Peer Assessment Assignment = 5% of score

Peer Assessment Participation = 5% of score

Week 6 Blog Post = 10% of score

Week 7 Blog Post = 10% of score

Final "grades" are based on the number of points you earn on the quizzes, and peer assessments. Good news: There's no final exam.

If you want to earn the edX "Honor Code Certificate of Completion," you'll need to complete all the graded assignments by Sunday, August 23, 2015 at 11:59pm PDT, and get a total score of at least 60%.

As you were told when you registered, participants who opt for the higher level proof of completion can pay (\$25) for an "ID Verified Certificate of Completion." It's possible that certificates may be used to satisfy professional development requirements. Information about ID Verified Certificates can be found at the following edX link:

<https://www.edx.org/verified-certificate>

Course Timeline

Week 1 – Monday through Sunday - July 6 through July 12

How media have changed; key principles for becoming an active *user* of media; and why media/news literacy is so important in a data-saturated environment. What it means to be a critical thinker. There will be a graded quiz this week.

Week 2 – Monday through Sunday - July 13 through July 19

Be skeptical of everything, but not *equally* skeptical of everything. Why judgement is so important. More on why we all need a personal credibility scale. We'll look at the two-sides

fallacy, understanding risk (statistical), social media and the velocity of information. There will be a graded quiz this week.

Week 3 – Monday through Sunday - July 20 through July 26

Where to find credible information, and spot bad information (“crap detection”). Slant vs. opinion; astroturfing and native advertising. There will be a graded quiz and a live session with the instructors this week.

Week 4 – Monday through Sunday - July 27 through August 2

Opening our minds: Escaping echo chambers and filter bubbles. Recognizing “confirmation bias” in ourselves, not just others. Seeking out opposing views and other cultural worldviews. There will be a graded quiz and graded peer assessment this week.

Week 5 – Monday through Sunday - August 3 through August 9

Literacy is also creation: Principles of creating media with integrity: Ownership of media, tools for creating media, legal and ethical issues in media creation, integrity in creating media. There will be a graded quiz this week.

Week 6 – Monday through Sunday - August 10 through August 16

Trust and reputation in a saturated media landscape. How media providers engender trust (or mistrust), fact-checking, transparency, community. How we in the audience can help our information providers be more trustworthy. Why we -- audiences and information providers alike -- need to adopt a “slow news” approach. There will be a graded quiz this week and blog post assignment this week.

Week 7 - Monday through Sunday - August 17 through August 23

Next steps: How you can put all of this into long-term action; why you should be a media literacy advocate (and how to do it). Plus: resources for parents and teachers. There will be a graded blog post assignment this week. There may be a live wrap-up session this week.

Course Policies

Online Course Requirements

EdX is the learning environment that you will use for most of the course. There will be two optional live events scheduled using Google Hangout (On Air). All course interaction will utilize Internet technology. You are also invited to join the course [Facebook page](#), to follow the course [Twitter feed](#), and to use Twitter and other social media to share what you are learning. The course hashtag is #ASUMediaLIT - if you're not certain what a hashtag is, or how to use one to participate in information sharing during a course, click the link that follows here for a quick introduction: [Link to wikipedia description of hashtags](#).

Submitting Assignments

All assignments will be managed and tracked within the edX platform.

Assignment Deadlines

Late assignments will not be accepted and will not count toward your course grade (important if you are following the ID Verified track).

Subject to Change Notice

All material, assignments, and deadlines are subject to change. It is your responsibility to stay in touch with announcements and the course team through the discussion boards, and to review the course site regularly.

Academic Integrity

As with our community guidelines, the basic idea is simple: Behave with integrity. We don't expect anyone to do otherwise, but people who violate the rules can lose their course-registration privileges. Please review edX's Terms of Service at the link that follows here: <https://www.edx.org/edx-terms-service>