

**New Paltz Central School District**  
**English**  
**Understanding Media**  
**(One Semester Course)**

Unit	Essential Questions	Skills	Assessments
1. Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the mass media industries?</li> <li>What does media literacy mean?</li> <li>What unspoken messages are being sent through the media?</li> <li>Why is it important to evaluate the media?</li> <li>What are the positive aspects of the media?</li> <li>How can the media be used in negative ways?</li> <li>What are the three eras of communication?</li> <li>What is “shrinkage” in terms of media ownership in the US?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Define, explain, and discuss the various media</li> <li>Examine various examples of media literacy and explore why media literacy is important</li> <li>Explain/compare personal degrees of media literacy</li> <li>Classify the pro/con aspects of the mass media industries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Class discussions of essential questions</li> <li>Personal Media Behavior Assignment</li> <li>Cooperative group analysis of various media</li> </ul>
2. Mass Media Industries: Print Media <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Books</li> <li>Newspapers</li> <li>Magazines</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is the history of print media?</li> </ul> <p><u>Books</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are books “dead”?</li> <li>What are publishing houses doing to lead readers (especially teens) back to books?</li> </ul> <p><u>Newspapers</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“News is not what happened – it’s what someone said has happened” (Anonymous) What does this mean? What makes an event newsworthy?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore the history of print media</li> <li>Compare/contrast personal reactions to various print media to people in previous generations</li> <li>Examine the ways in which different media present the same story (newspaper vs. magazine, for example)</li> <li>Discuss the responsibilities of newspapers and determine why readership is declining</li> <li>Classify items that are newsworthy</li> <li>Identify sensationalism in news articles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Class and small group discussions of essential questions</li> <li>Print Media Interview Assignment (assess the impact of print media)</li> <li>News Story Analysis</li> <li>Cooperative Group Magazine Analysis</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the elements of newsworthy news?</li> <li>• What are the responsibilities of newspapers?</li> <li>• Why is there a decline in newspaper readership?</li> <li>• How did competition in newspapers breed sensationalism?</li> <li>• How is technology transforming the newspaper industry?</li> </ul> <u>Magazines</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How are magazines different from other print media?</li> <li>• What is freelancing?</li> <li>• How have magazines influenced social change?</li> <li>• How have magazines fostered the arts?</li> <li>• How do magazines represent Americans and American values?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examine the ways in which newspapers are changing</li> <li>• Discuss the impact magazines have had in terms of social protest/change, their highly specialized readership, and their impact upon the arts</li> </ul>	

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3. Mass Media Industries: Recordings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is the history of recordings?</li> <li>What is the connection between music and history?</li> <li>How has downloading affected the recording industry?</li> <li>What are the ethical issues behind these changes in recordings?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore the history of recording</li> <li>Identify/compare songs of social protest: Civil Rights/Vietnam era through today</li> <li>Define and support opinions regarding the downloading of recordings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Class and small group discussions of essential questions</li> <li>Identify and summarize a current song of social protest</li> <li>Song analysis: What makes a good song good?</li> <li>Debate: To Download or to Not Download – That is the Question</li> <li>Wal-Mart is the world’s largest retailer – and it has the power to demand that artists change their CD covers (and even their lyrics) in order for CDs to be sold at Wal-Mart. Is this positive or negative?</li> </ul>
4. Mass Media Industries: Radio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is the history of radio? How did people use radio for entertainment and how is this different from how we use this medium today? How did radio unify people during its Golden Age (1929-1948)?</li> <li>How was radio significant in US history?</li> <li>What was the “War of the Worlds”?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore the history of radio</li> <li>Analyze “War of the Worlds” to understand the impact of radio as a medium</li> <li>Classify commercials in terms of radio sponsorship</li> <li>Summarize/compare definitions of talk radio</li> <li>Identify the differences in usage between radio and television</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Class and small group discussions of essential questions</li> <li>Format and Demographics project – what is the connection between the format of a particular radio station, its demographics, and its advertising?</li> <li>Medium Comparison – Why would some advertisers choose to promote their products on radio over TV (or other media)?</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is commercial sponsorship?</li> <li>• How do different songs gain play-time on the radio?</li> <li>• Why might music be censored?</li> <li>• What is the history behind the rise of talk radio?</li> <li>• How did the rise of television change radio?</li> <li>• What is the future of radio?</li> </ul>		
5. Mass Media Industries: Film	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the history behind film?</li> <li>• Why are films rated? Does the rating of a film influence your decision to see it?</li> <li>• The Motion Picture Code (1930) states that “the sympathy of the audience shall never be thrown to the side of crime, wrongdoing, evil or sin” so that no film “will lower the moral standards of those who see it” - is this upheld today?</li> <li>• The Hayes Production Code (1930) said that motion pictures had a “moral obligation” to discourage crime and that movies could not illustrate criminals as heroic (or worthy of imitation) – is this code upheld today?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classify films in terms of genre/audience rating: drama, action, western, documentary, comedy, animation</li> <li>• Examine the Motion Picture Code and the Hayes Production Code and compare the differing values (1930 vs. today) in terms of criminal depiction</li> <li>• Support opinions of child actors in terms of the Coogan Law (1939)</li> <li>• Discuss the relationship between film and changes in society throughout history (black listing, our opinions regarding race, war, etc.)</li> <li>• Read/discuss/analyze the essay “Why We Watch Horror” by Stephen King</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class and small group discussions of essential questions</li> <li>• Film synopsis (genre, summary, explanation of rating, etc.)</li> <li>• Debate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Millions of dollars are spent on product placement in popular films – is this money well spent?</li> <li>○ Why do film stars make so much money when compared to the rest of society?</li> <li>○ Product Placement in Film – Taking Advantage of a captive audience?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coogan’s Law (1939) requires that a percentage of a child actor’s money (now 15%) must be put aside for the child to collect when he/she is 18. Is this sufficient? What are the pros/cons of being a child actor?</li> <li>• Depictions of Hollywood – How does the rest of the world see the US?</li> <li>• Does watching violent film (and other media) make people violent? Does it desensitize viewers to real life violence?</li> <li>• What is the relationship between theme and society in popular film (e.g., why were most WWII movies pro-war while most Vietnam movies were anti-war)?</li> <li>• Why was there widespread blacklisting in the film industry in the 1950s?</li> <li>• Why do film stars make so much money? What does this illustrate about our culture/values?</li> </ul>		

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6. Mass Media Industries: Television	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the history behind television?</li> <li>• What is the connection between TV and our economy?</li> <li>• What does television illustrate about American life and values?</li> <li>• What was the Quiz Show scandal?</li> <li>• How has television transformed politics?</li> <li>• What are the demographics of NPHS? What products would advertisers be interested in illustrating on NPZ?</li> <li>• What is the Public Broadcasting System (PBS)? From where does PBS get its funding?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compare the representation of American family life from the 1950s to the present day</li> <li>• Examine the quiz show scandal – why was it such a scandal at the time?</li> <li>• Define and compare the ways in which minorities have been represented in the medium of TV</li> <li>• Analyze local demographic data</li> <li>• Discuss ideas regarding product placement on TV</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class and small group discussion of essential questions</li> <li>• Survey: Television: Is This your Life?</li> <li>• Debate: Television is the greatest/worst invention of the 20<sup>th</sup> century</li> <li>• Project: TV Families: From “I Love Lucy” to “The Simpsons” (what changes in society are illustrated, e.g., gender, race, etc.?)</li> </ul>
7. Mass Media Industries: Digital Communications and the Web	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How is the web different from other media?</li> <li>• How significant is Internet fluency in the new millennium?</li> <li>• What is intellectual property?</li> <li>• How has the web altered our purchasing habits?</li> <li>• How can we discriminate between accurate/inaccurate online data?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define the ways in which the web is different from other media</li> <li>• Support opinions regarding intellectual property and the idea of ownership</li> <li>• Compare shopping experiences (in store vs. online)</li> <li>• Analyze Internet sources for accuracy</li> <li>• Predict what will happen if the “digital divide” continues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class and small group discussions of essential questions</li> <li>• Advertising: Web vs. In-Store</li> <li>• Find and analyze an inaccurate online source</li> <li>• Current issue examination</li> </ul>

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8. Media Support Industries: Advertising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does advertising work?</li> <li>• How do ads appeal to consumers?</li> <li>• What do ads illustrate about our American values?</li> <li>• How is advertising different within different media?</li> <li>• What is wrong with advertising?</li> <li>• What is the future of advertising?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compare/analyze various advertisements for symbolism/imagery/stereotypes, etc.</li> <li>• Examine the content of ads through history</li> <li>• Read excerpts from <i>Why We Buy</i> by Paco Underhill</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class and small group discussions of essential questions</li> <li>• Truth in Advertising: which products are as good as their advertisements</li> <li>• How to look at an image – what human motivations is each focused upon? (Cooperative group presentation of student-selected advertisements)</li> <li>• Write an advertisement, complete with a simple, catchy slogan, for a specific product (then another group will analyze the ad)</li> <li>• Product Demographic Project (where would you advertise for a specific product?)</li> <li>• Prophet Wise Project- describe a product you are or would be – a prophet for</li> </ul>
9. Media Support Industries: Public Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are public relations?</li> <li>• How did PR evolve?</li> <li>• How has the Internet affected PR?</li> <li>• What is a PSA? How effective are PSA's?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyze the essay "Learning the Hard Way" by Michael Denne.</li> <li>• Read excerpts from <i>Generation Me</i>, by Jean Twenge</li> <li>• Read "Don't Drink and Drive: Assessing the Effectiveness of Anti-Drinking Campaigns"</li> <li>• View: "Anti-Piracy PSA"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class and small group discussions of essential questions</li> <li>• Assessment of PSAs</li> <li>• Cybersmear examination</li> </ul>

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10. Media Issues and Global Outlook: News and Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How has news evolved?</li> <li>• What is objectivity?</li> <li>• How might ethnocentrism affect the news (and the idea of newsworthiness)?</li> <li>• What impact does cultural climate have upon the news?</li> <li>• Is the Internet replacing broadcast news?</li> <li>• Speed – but at what impact? Getting the story faster is increasingly important, but what is the cost?</li> <li>• Have reality shows and infomercials blurred news?</li> <li>• What is the difference between news and propaganda?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compare presentations of issues on a news program (e.g., CNN) vs. a satire of the same event/issue</li> <li>• Contrast objectivity vs. agenda-setting</li> <li>• Predict what will happen to the credibility of the news in terms of the speed the American public demands – will the Internet and, especially, blogging become even more significant in terms of obtaining news?</li> <li>• Analyze/compare WWII propaganda (American and German)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class and small group discussions of essential questions</li> <li>• Blogging: How has it impacted the news?</li> <li>• Compare a current event on a traditional news program with the treatment of the same topic on a satirical program (e.g., CNN vs. “The Daily Show”)</li> </ul>
11. Media Issues and Global Outlook: Social and Political Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there a relationship between media and behavior? To what extent is behavior impacted by the media?</li> <li>• The media have an impact upon society; how do the media also reflect social/cultural values?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support and compare opinions regarding the connection between media and behavior</li> <li>• Identify and examine the ways the media represents values</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class and small group discussions of essential questions</li> <li>• Debate: Media Does/Does Not Impact Behavior</li> <li>• Interview Project: What information impacts us (socially, politically, etc.) – and what type of information persuades us to act? What does this reveal about our behavior?</li> </ul>



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12. Media Issues and Global Outlook: Law and Regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does the Constitution affect the media?</li> <li>• Should the press be restricted? Why or why not?</li> <li>• What should be done to protect children from sexually explicit materials?</li> <li>• Should schools have the power to limit the information in student publications? What should be restricted?</li> <li>• Why was Section 215 of the Patriot Act written?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read the First Amendment and describe the reasons why the government has restricted its protections</li> <li>• Examine the Child Online Protection Act and identify ways/reasons why children need more protection than adults online</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class and small group discussions of essential questions</li> <li>• Debate: The Hazelwood Case: Should schools be allowed to restrict student information?</li> <li>• Section 215 of the Patriot Act: Does this trample upon personal freedoms?</li> </ul>
13. Media Issues and Global Outlook: Ethical Practices and Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the Four Ethical Dilemmas?</li> <li>• What is the Code of Ethics of the Society of Professional Journalists?</li> <li>• How do you balance public information and personal privacy?</li> <li>• How do conflicts of interest impact the news?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore the Four Ethical Dilemmas and the Code of Ethics of the Society of Professional Journalists</li> <li>• Discuss the reasons why information may be restricted in certain cases</li> <li>• Examine the impact of Jayson Blair and the staging of sensational events on TV news programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class and small group discussions of essential questions</li> <li>• Examine a true current event and write a documentary–style “staged” illustration to prove a certain point</li> <li>• Ethical Debate: Information Distribution</li> </ul>

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14. Media Issues and Global Outlook: International Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the connection between politics and the media?</li> <li>• How much freedom should be allowed for our free press? Should the press be free to print secret government documents? Do the TV networks have a responsibility to provide worthwhile programming, and who decides what is worthwhile?</li> <li>• Western Europeans watch less than half as much TV as Americans – how does this impact their ideas about the news and other media?</li> <li>• Why have some governments priced Internet access out of the reach of the average consumer?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examine and compare the models of media control to determine what each illustrates about a country's politics</li> <li>• Discuss the ways different countries use the media to control beliefs/behaviors</li> <li>• Compare international TV habits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class and small group discussions of essential questions</li> <li>• Research and compare news/TV habits in another country vs. the US</li> <li>• Debate: How much freedom should the free press have in the US?</li> </ul>