

**221-46000 Senior Seminar: Topics in Media Effects
Spring, 2005
Section 03 Communication and the Human Spirit**

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Informed by social science and cultural and/or critical theories, the Senior Seminar: Topics in Media Effects seminars offer in-depth explorations and analyses of the complex relationship among the mass media, individuals, society, and/or culture. Topics vary based on student demand and on faculty expertise and research interest. This course is a senior-level capstone seminar for Television/Radio and Journalism majors.

This semester we will be focusing upon issues of communication and spirit by various social action and/or faith communities in and around Ithaca. This will provide each of us the opportunity to examine the ways in which the human spirit motivates citizens to act, while also examining our own experiences with these issues. It is intended to provide a forum for the analysis and critique of the ways in which processes of communication facilitate or hinder the human spirit, and the major issues confronting communications students, practitioners and students in a time of major flux. Throughout the semester, we will reflect upon, and discuss critically, the ways in which citizens are informed, express themselves, and participate in constructive dialogue about these issues, and what this may mean for our future.

Over the course of the semester, we will be examining a variety of current issues upon which we will be basing our discussions. These will be derived from a number of required readings, and will be supplemented by your own readings and works outside the course. You are expected to draw upon these in class discussions and in course assignments, and show detailed knowledge of the readings.

The objective here is decidedly not to proselytize, nor to denigrate, any thing or anyone. Rather, the goal is to develop a respectful but critical understanding of the human spirit, and the ability to think and write about its themes in ways that both promote your spiritual journey and develop your skills as a communications practitioner.

Textbooks

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There are four required textbooks for this course.

- Patricia Hersch. ***A Tribe Apart: A Journey Into the Heart of American Adolescence***. New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1998.
- Frances Moore Lappé and Anna Lappé. ***Hope's Edge: The Next Diet for a Small Planet***. New York: J.P. Tarcher, 2003.
- Parker Palmer. ***A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life***. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004.
- Rachel Naomi Remen. ***Kitchen Table Wisdom: Stories That Heal***. New York: Riverhead Books, 1996.

Each of these books is available for sale in the Ithaca College Bookstore. I have chosen them as vehicles to give us fruitful points of departure for class discussion and analysis. There will be additional readings distributed during course which you will be expected to read and to analyze.

Course Structure and Assignments

This course is designed to be a seminar in which you will actively engage some of the issues of the day, and reflect on them in light of class readings and contemporary communication practices. I also want you to take the active lead in class discussions. I plan to lead the class at the beginning of the semester as we frame the issues to be addressed, but I want you to take the lead throughout the bulk of the semester. As you are about to embark upon your professional life, I want you critically to examine the structures and functions of the world into which you are about to enter.

To facilitate this, I want you to work a few hours each week of the semester in a local volunteer organization of your choice.* I also expect that you will keep current with course readings.

As this is a senior-level seminar, I want you to be responsible for the conduct of the class and of the discussions. You will be placed in one of four groups, each of which will be responsible for leading the class discussions in a given week. To prepare adequately for the discussions, I want you to write a journal every week reporting and analyzing the issues you think are most salient in your readings, in your community volunteer projects and in class discussions. What were the major issues discussed in the readings? How do they relate to your experience in the volunteer agency you are working in? What are you finding most interesting? Why? Most troubling? Why? Most inspiring? Why? How do the issues involved compare or contrast with what you have been learning up to now? The journals should provide you a forum for reflection, feedback, to pose questions, to vent. Each week's journal should be at least 4 pages long. They

* Some suggested choices: Ithaca Rape Crisis, Loaves and Fishes, Southside Community Center, Planned Parenthood, Greater Ithaca Activities Center, Child Sexual Abuse Project, Learning Web Youth Outreach, Battered Women Tompkins County Task Force, Longview Senior Center, etc. Your choice should be derived from your interest.

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should be typed (or computer-generated type), double-spaced and stapled. I will collect them from you every four weeks. I will collect all of your journals, bound together, at the end of the semester. The journals will be worth 40 per cent of your final course grade.

You may use your journals to lead the class discussion, and I will collect them at the end of class. Participation in these discussions in each class is worth 20 per cent of your final grade.

Your semester-long assignment will be to create a media project or write a final paper bringing together what you have learned from the readings and your volunteer experiences. You should show careful reading and reflections on the readings, and applications to your life. You should focus on the major beliefs and practices of your volunteer organization, illustrative people whom you encounter, some of the issues in which they are engaged, how they fit (or don't) into the community at large, or some other relevant topic of your choosing. A one-page written proposal for your final project or paper will be required from you on February 23/24, focusing on what you plan for your paper, what resources you will use in its construction, and who will be involved. After you hand in your written proposal, please schedule an individual meeting with me within the next week to discuss your paper. You will also be responsible for turning in a written update on your project, which will be due March 29/30. The final project or paper is due April 19/20. This project or paper will be worth 40 per cent of your final grade. All project styles and lengths need to be negotiated with me. All papers will be typewritten (or computer-generated type), double-spaced, and stapled. No late projects or papers will be accepted.

Your final grade will be based upon active and informed class and volunteer participation (20%), your journals (40%), and the final paper (40%). Joining and remaining in this class means that everyone will behave professionally -- that is, attending all class and volunteer responsibilities, behaving cooperatively and respectfully toward each other, sharing group responsibilities equally, keeping an open mind to accuracy, fairness, and new ideas. But, as seniors, I really don't have to tell you this, right?

Please note: Special services are available to students with disabilities. These services are confidential, but to access them you must (1) register and (2) request an Accommodation Plan with (1) the Affirmative Action Officer and (2) Coordinator of Academic Support for Students with Disabilities.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week Dates

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| 1 | January 18/20 | Introduction to course and Hand out syllabus |
| 2 | January 25/27 | NOTE: Form discussion groups.
<u>Readings</u> You are expected to have the reading assignments done by the date assigned.
Hersch: Prologue, Introduction and Chapters 1-4 |

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Lappé & Lappé: pp. 3-12
Remen: Forward and Introduction

- 3 February 1/3
Readings
Hersch: Chapters 5-8
Lappé & Lappé: Chapter 1
Remen: Part I
- 4 February 8/10
Readings
Hersch, Chapters 9-12
- 5 February 15/17 Group A leads the discussions this week.
Readings
Hersch: Chapters 13-16
Remen: Part II
- 6 February 22/24 Group B leads the discussions this week.
Readings
Hersch: Chapters 17-20
NOTE: Final Project/Paper Proposal due today.
- 7 March 1/3 Group C leads the discussions this week.
Readings
Hersch: Chapters 21-22
Palmer: *Gratitudes* and *Prelude*
Remen: Part III
- SPRING BREAK March 5-13
- 8 March 15/17 Group A leads the discussions this week.
Readings
Hersch: Chapters 19-22
Palmer: Chapters I and II
Remen: Part IV
- 9 March 22/24 Group B leads the discussions this week.
Readings
Palmer: Chapters III and IV
Lappé & Lappé: Chapters 2 & 3
Remen: Part V

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- 10 March 29/31 Group C leads the discussions this week.
Readings
 Palmer: Chapters V and VI
 Lappé & Lappé: Chapters 4 & 5
 Remen: Part VI
NOTE: Written project/paper updates are due March 29/30.
- 11 April 5/7 Group A leads the discussions this week.
Readings
 Palmer: Chapters VII and VIII
 Lappé & Lappé: Chapters 6 & 7
 Remen: Part VII
- 12 April 12/14 Group B leads the discussions this week.
Readings
 Palmer: Chapter IX
 Lappé & Lappé: Chapters 8 & 9
 Remen: Part VIII
- 13 April 19/21 Group C leads the discussions this week.
Readings:
 Lappé & Lappé: Chapters 10 & 11
 Hersch: *Epilogue* and *Postscript*
 Remen: Part IX
NOTE: Final project/paper due April 19/20.
- 14 April 26/28
 Palmer: Chapter X
 Lappé & Lappé: *Epilogue, Entry Points* and *The Five Thought Traps & The Five Liberating Ideas*
- 15 May 2-6 FINAL EXAMINATION WEEK
 Final Examination scheduled Wednesday, May 4, 10:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

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