

# SOCI/MDST 2555 Media, Culture & Society

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**Course duration:** September 2–December 2, 2025 | Monday & Wednesday 10:00AM-11:30AM

**Location:** RB-2024

**Course D2L platform:** <https://lakeheadu.desire2learn.com/d2l/login>

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**office hours:** Monday & Wednesday 11:45AM–12:45PM

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## COURSE DESCRIPTION

The aim of SOCI/MDST 2555 is twofold: (1) to offer a conceptual understanding of mass media from a uniquely sociological viewpoint; and (2) to consider the principal issues of contemporary media in the context of society and culture. Thus, on one hand, the course will be focused on defining the media, understanding its principal structural elements, and considering its power and effect; on the other, the course will explore the media as an integral part of society's cultural makeup and assess critically some of the most important aspects of media's role in and impact on creating and shaping the parameters of what we come to recognize as ourselves, our culture and our society.

As indicated by its title, the course is focused on exploring the three foundational sociological categories: 'media', 'culture', and 'society'. The basic assumption behind the course is that these categories cannot be understood separate from one another, and that—in light of the course's theme(s)—understanding media as a socio-cultural reality of contemporary society ultimately rests on coming to terms with media's nature, logic of operation and effects within the context of something sociologists label as 'culture' and 'society'. Media, in other words, is not a universe onto itself, separate and independent from society and its cultural realities. Rather, it is something that both creates and is created by society and its cultural demands and, therefore, something that has to be examined and explained as one of constitutive parts of the larger realities of society and its culture. Thus, the objective of the course is to explore various relationships and connections between media, culture and society, and offer an understanding of how the working of society and its culture informs and is informed by the working of the media.

Our exploration of media, culture and society will take two forms: conceptual and practical-empirical. The purpose of the former is to provide a general theoretically-informed framework for understanding media and its relationship to culture and society, while the purpose of the latter is to look at specific issues of media and culture as they pertain to contemporary society. In addition, the objective of the conceptual exploration of media, culture and society is to provide an analytical lens through which the practical realities of contemporary society and its media and culture can be understood in sociologically meaningful ways.

The issues of media, culture and society are alive, dynamic and vibrant, and the most effective way to explore them is through dialogue and exchange of ideas. SOCI/MDST 2555, therefore, is constructed as a combination of formal lectures and structured class discussions/debates. The aim of the lectures is to provide the foundation for constructing a conceptual framework for understanding the nature of—and interrelationships between—media, culture and society from a uniquely sociological viewpoint. The purpose of class discussions/debates is to create an interactive learning environment for hands-on sociological explorations of specific practical issues and problems of

media and culture in the context of contemporary society. All students are expected to take an active role in class discussions/debates.

## COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The objective of the course is to provide students with a comprehensive sociological understanding of the issues related to media, culture and society. By the end of the course, the diligent student will possess a considerable theoretical, conceptual and practical-empirical competence in looking at/thinking about media, culture and society from a uniquely sociological viewpoint, as well as have developed sensibility with regards to the main practical issues/problems of media, mass communication and culture in the context of contemporary society.

## REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

We will be using the following required textbooks:

- *MediaMaking: Mass Media in a Popular Culture* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), by Lawrence Grossberg *et al.* Thousands Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2006. ISBN: 9780761925446

**NOTE:** the textbook is not available at the University bookstore and should be purchased online, where available.

All additional course resources will be available at our Desire2Learn course platform.

As the course in great measure relies on your active interest and participation, you are expected to have read your weekly assignments *before* coming to class.

## METHOD OF EVALUATION

Your performance in the course will be evaluated on the basis of the following:

**Midterm Exam** (50%): Wednesday, October 22, by 10PM

**Final Exam** (50%): Friday, December 5, by 10PM

Both **exams** will be a combination of definitions and short-essay answers. Please note that *there will not be any multiple choice or true/false questions*. There will be some choice regarding the range of possible answers. You will be responsible for course readings, lecture materials, and anything else presented during our class time. There will be a pre-exam review session with the purpose of clarifying difficulties and problems encountered during your preparation for the test. You will have an assigned length of time to work on and submit your answers through our D2L course platform. The final exam is non-cumulative. **Exam submissions are time sensitive and late submissions will not be accepted. Both exams are closed book and students are expected to act in good faith.**

**Assignment/Exam Integrity:** I understand and agree that:

1. Unless otherwise allowed by the course instructor, I must complete the assignments in this course without the assistance of anyone else.
2. Unless otherwise allowed by the course instructor, I must not access any sources or materials (in print, online, or in any other way) to complete any course exam.
3. I further understand and agree that, if I violate either of these two rules, or if I provide any false or misleading information about my completion of course assignments or exams, I may be prosecuted under the *Lakehead University Student Code of Conduct – Academic Integrity*, which requires students to act ethically and

with integrity in academic matters and to demonstrate behaviours that support the University's academic values.

**Please note:** the penalty for violating Exam/Assignment Integrity policy on an exam is failing the course. For more details, please see **A Note on Plagiarism** below.

## EVALUATION CRITERIA

The following grading scale will be applied in evaluating your course work:

### **90-100% (A+)**

*Outstanding Performance:* superb mastery of the principles and materials treated in the course; exceptional fluency in communicating that mastery and a high degree of originality and independence in applying material and principles.

### **80-89% (A)**

*Excellent Performance:* comprehensive in-depth knowledge of the principles and materials treated in the course; fluency in communicating that knowledge and originality and independence in applying material and principles.

### **70-79% (B)**

*Good Performance:* thorough understanding of the breadth of materials and principles treated in the course and ability to apply and communicate that understanding effectively.

### **60-69% (C)**

*Satisfactory Performance:* basic understanding of the breadth of principles and material treated in the course and an ability to apply and communicate that understanding competently.

### **50-59% (D)**

*Marginal Performance:* adequate understanding of most principles and material treated in the course, but significant weakness in some areas and in the ability to apply and communicate that understanding.

### **40-49% (E)**

*Failure:* inadequate or fragmentary knowledge of the principles and material treated in the in the course, or failure to complete the work required in the course.

### **1-39% (F)**

*Failure:* inadequate or fragmentary knowledge of the principles and material treated in the in the course, or failure to complete the work required in the course.

### **0% (F)**

*Academic Dishonesty:* demonstrable violation of the academic rules of conduct as defined by Lakehead University academic standards.

Your grade is a reflection of your performance in the course. This is the only criterion for your final course mark. *There will be no rescaling of grades at the end of the course* and no adjustments except for legitimate clerical errors. Please take note of that.

According to Lakehead University defined standards, grade 0-49% constitutes unsatisfactory academic performance and means failing the course; 50-59% is a minimally accepted level of performance for passing the course, while 90-100% constitutes outstanding performance. For details on evaluation and grading see your Lakehead University 2025-2026 Academic Calendar, section University Regulations (V Standing).

If you wish to review your course work, you can do so within *one week from the day your mark* has been posted.

**A Note on Plagiarism:** Lakehead University defines plagiarism as follows:

1. Plagiarism of ideas as where an idea of an author or speaker is incorporated into the body of an assignment as though it were the writer's idea, i.e. no credit is given the person through referencing or footnoting or end noting.
2. Plagiarism of words occurs when phrases, sentences, tables or illustrations of an author or speaker are incorporated into the body of a writer's own, i.e. no quotations or indentations (depending on the format followed) are present but referencing or footnoting or end noting is given.
3. Plagiarism of ideas and words as where words and an idea(s) of an author or speaker are incorporated into the body of a written assignment as though they were the writer's own words and ideas, i.e. no quotations or indentations (depending on format followed) are present and no referencing or footnoting or end noting is given.

**Penalties for plagiarism** are strictly enforced and are as follows:

1. The minimum penalty for a candidate found guilty of plagiarism, or of cheating on any part of a course, will be a zero for the work concerned
2. A candidate found guilty of cheating on a formal examination or a test, or of serious or repeated plagiarism, or of unofficially obtaining a copy of an examination paper before the examination is scheduled to be written, will receive zero for the course and may be expelled from the University.

For more details, see your Lakehead *University 2025-2026 Academic Calendar*, section University Regulations (IX Academic Misconduct). Also, see the "Student Code of Conduct – Academic Integrity".

## GENERAL POLICIES

**Academic Statement:** Students is asked to consider submitting, via our D2L platform (under Assignments), a brief statement about their academic background as it relates to the Sociology program in general and this course in particular. The statement will help me get a better sense of you as a student. All the information provided in the academic statement will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

**Email:** Emailing is to be regarded as an official form of communication. Only emails sent through Lakehead University account will be read and replied to. All other email messages will be ignored.

**Cell phones:** Cell phones are to be turned off during lectures (except under exceptional circumstances in which approval has been granted by the instructor).

**Notebooks/portables:** Use of notebook computers and/or portable devices during lectures is **not allowed** (except under exceptional circumstances in which approval has been granted by the instructor).

**Audio/video devices:** Use of audio/video recording devices during lectures is **not allowed** (except under exceptional circumstances in which approval has been granted by the instructor).

**Discussion Forum:** This is an on-line extension of an in-class interaction and should be treated as such. Please use appropriate language and tone when participating. Crude, disrespectful, inflammatory, offensive and/or confrontational Forum participation will not be tolerated and will result in the ban from the Forum.

## **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

Class attendance is not mandatory but is highly recommended. If you decide to attend, you are expected to arrive on time and be respectful to other students in class. Disruptive and otherwise inappropriate behaviour in the classroom will not be tolerated. Students engaged in such behaviour will be dealt with accordingly.

## **DISCLAIMERS**

**Disclaimer I:** The information in this syllabus is subject to change. Any changes will be announced and discussed in class before being implemented.

**Disclaimer II:** By taking SOCI/MDST 2555 you acknowledge that you have read and understood—and are in agreement with—the course contents and policies, as outlined and explained in this syllabus.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

(subject to change; any changes will be announced through D2L platform)

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| <b>Week 1</b><br>(Sept. 2-5)         | Course introduction; syllabus walk-through; introductory review  |
| <b>Week 2</b><br>(Sept. 8-12)        | <b>Weekly reading:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Narratives of Media History” (Chapter 2 in <i>MediaMaking</i>)</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Week 3</b><br>(Sept. 15-19)       | <b>Weekly readings:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Media in Context” (Chapter 1 in <i>MediaMaking</i>)</li> <li>• “Media People and Organizations” (Chapter 3 in <i>MediaMaking</i>)</li> </ul> |
| <b>Week 4</b><br>(Sept. 22-26)       | <b>Weekly reading:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Media and Money” (Chapter 4 in <i>MediaMaking</i>)</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Week 5</b><br>(Sept. 29 - Oct. 3) | <b>Weekly reading:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Media and Politics” (Chapter 11 in <i>MediaMaking</i>)</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Week 6</b><br>(Oct. 6-10)         | <b>Weekly reading:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The Media, the Public, and Normative Theories” (Chapter 12 in <i>MediaMaking</i>)</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Week 7</b><br>(Oct. 13-17)        | <b>FALL STUDY BREAK: NO CLASSES</b>  |
| <b>Week 8</b><br>(Oct. 20-24)        | <b>MIDTERM EXAM: WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 22</b>   |
| <b>Week 9</b><br>(Oct. 27-31)        | <b>General readings:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Meaning” (Chapter 5 in <i>MediaMaking</i>)</li> <li>• “The Interpretation of Meaning” (Chapter 6 in <i>MediaMaking</i>)</li> </ul>          |
| <b>Week 10</b><br>(Nov. 3-7)         | <b>General reading:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Ideology” (Chapter 7 in <i>MediaMaking</i>)</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Week 11</b><br>(Nov. 10-14)       | <b>General reading:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Producing Identities” (Chapter 8 in <i>MediaMaking</i>)</li> </ul>   |

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| <b>Week 12</b><br>(Nov. 17-21) | <b>General readings:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Consuming the Media” (Chapter 9 in <i>MediaMaking</i>)</li> <li>• “Media and Behavior” (Chapter 10 in <i>MediaMaking</i>)</li> </ul> |
| <b>Week 13</b><br>(Nov. 24-28) | <b>General reading:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Media Globalization” (Chapter 13 in <i>MediaMaking</i>)</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Week 14</b><br>(Dec. 1-5)   | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>FINAL EXAM:</b> FRIDAY, DECEMBER 5</p>  |