

**Comparative Mass Media in London**  
**MCOM 3503 – Cross-Cultural Communication**  
**MCOM 3513 – Special Topics in Mass Communication**

Summer 2020 – 6 credits  
Telephone: xxxxxxxxxxxx

Dr. Jim Sernoe  
E-Mail: jim.sernoe@msutexas.edu

MSU Course Equivalents

MCOM 3503 – Cross-Cultural Communication and MCOM 3513 – Special Topics in Mass Communication are currently electives in the mass communication degree, but students who participate in British Studies will be allowed to substitute them for required courses. Students need to meet with the department chair to determine which courses will be replaced.

Course Objectives/Description

- Learn the basics about how the mass media operate in Great Britain
- Learn the basics about media ethics and freedom of expression in Great Britain
- Compare and contrast British and American media systems

In many ways, British media have historically served as models for American media. Early book publishing, newspapers, advertising, public relations and other forms of media were adapted in the United States, and now for 300-plus years media in both countries have influenced each other. This course will give students an introduction to various forms of British media as well as opportunities to see the similarities and differences in the ways they function, interact with their audiences, and influence the societies in which they operate.

Prerequisites

- Completion of MCOM 1233 – Introduction to Mass Communication or Consent of Instructor

Reading

I have decided not to use a formal textbook this summer. Required reading will consist of printed handouts or documents on Dropbox or Google Docs (the class will decide early in the term which format we all prefer to use). Readings will be supplemented by considerable outside assignments/research and, importantly, class discussion.

## Grading

Please note that the program consists of two courses, and students are required to enroll in and complete the requirements for both. Please note also that this is not a traditional reading/lecture/exam course. I have never believed in that format, and I definitely do not think it is useful for a study abroad program. Grading elements and standards reflect the experiential nature of this course instead of a traditional course with traditional exams.

Quick Reports – 15 percent: Students will work in small groups to collect info. in advance of each day's activity, followed by a short, informal presentation to the rest of the group. A separate handout on format and expectations will be distributed.

Journals – 35 percent: Students are required to make daily entries based on that day's classes/activities. A separate handout on format and expectations will be distributed.

Term Project – 35 percent: You will have two options, both of which will require significant research as well as a presentation to the class. A separate handout on the options and related requirements will be distributed. Regardless of the option selected, one component will need to be completed before we leave London, while the other component will be completed after we return to the United States. The presentations will take place on **Friday, July 31**. The written project will be due on **Aug. 31, 2020, at 9 a.m.** **Plan ahead. There will be no extensions!**

For all assignments and class activities, you will be required to think critically about the topics being discussed and present your analysis coherently. A textbook or rote memorization can not help you in this class. As a result, I'm not interested in true-false or multiple choices tests.

Attendance/Attitude/Participation – 15 percent: **Perfect** attendance is required. I will go to great lengths to attain full attendance. Missing any class or event will result in a lower course grade unless you provide evidence that I should excuse the absence – for each class or event you miss that is not excused, your grade will be lowered by one letter grade. If you have to miss a class or a deadline for any reason, please contact me IN ADVANCE to let me know. **CONTACTING ME IN ADVANCE DOES NOT AUTOMATICALLY EXCUSE AN ABSENCE**, but it is a lot better than contacting me after the fact. If you fail to contact me before the next class period to explain an absence, it will be very difficult for me to excuse the absence. Please remember that leaving early for side trips, staying out too late and working on assignments are not valid excuses for missing class or arriving late.

As one of my former colleagues says, in the “real world,” you can not do your job if you are not present to do it. Employers do not generally tolerate such behavior, and employees who offer weak, irritating excuses frequently find themselves unemployed and

unemployable. The same rules apply in this course, even though it is summer and we are in London.

**IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO SEE ME IF YOU MISS CLASS.** I will not chase students around the city.

A related note: You are required to be on time and I have little tolerance for those who are late. Tardiness will be noted and could lower your final grade. I am not above embarrassing students who walk in late. Two late arrivals will be considered the equivalent of a missed class (see notes above). In addition to my annoyance with students who late to my classes in the United States, we have the added responsibility of frequently traveling across the city and even the country. We can NOT miss trains.

Attitude/Class Participation: The success of this course will depend on students attending regularly and discussing the topics at hand. Please note that we will discuss each speaker, activity or event as a class immediately afterward. As stated above, this isn't the type of course in which you memorize information, spit it back to me on an exam, and forget what you've learned as you walk out of the exam room. Because this is an upper-level course, corresponding attitudes and work ethics are required.

A related note: Cellular phones, pagers and other similar devices will not be tolerated. In my mind, they are a sign of a bad attitude. I will not tolerate annoying jingles and beeps. If you own such a device, turn it off (not on vibrate) or somehow make sure it doesn't make any noise while I am trying to conduct class (or worse, when a guest speaker has taken time to come to speak to us) (or worse, we are at an off-campus event). If cell. phones become more than a one-time problem, I reserve the right to lower your final semester grade and/or take further disciplinary actions.

Sending and receiving text messages during class will not be tolerated.

Unfortunately, laptop computers, iPhones and other similar equipment will not be allowed in class for note-taking. Although I realize this is a convenient way to take notes, past students have abused the privilege by using the equipment to surf the Internet, send e-mail, and troll Facebook. I will not tolerate this kind of distraction. I will, however, allow the use of technology for legitimate class reasons only with my express permission.

Related: Recording any part of the class is prohibited, unless it is part of a reasonable accommodation under ADA, or by obtaining written consent by the instructor.

Why am I so adamant about technology? As a colleague once said, "Learning requires attention and focus." Despite the current generation's approaches to multi-tasking, my

experience has been that the brain cannot perform two high-level functions at once, and multi-tasking is a myth. We can't learn, pay attention to class material, and monitor our text-messages all at once. I reserve the right to ask you to leave immediately or to embarrass you mercilessly if your beepers/phones/pagers/etc. make noise during class or if I see you using a device when it has nothing to do with the in-class topic at hand.

Appropriate conduct – in the classroom, with the instructor and in any other class-related situations – is required at all times. The instructor has the right to remove disruptive, disrespectful students (or students creating any other kinds of problems) from the classroom and take other disciplinary actions as necessary.

Appropriate attire – in the classroom, with the instructor and in any other class-related situations – is required at all times. We may visit sites where casual clothing is not appropriate. You will receive advance notice of proper attire.

You are required to remember that you are representing the department, the university and in some ways all Americans during your time here. As such, you are expected to conduct yourself in ways that will not bring embarrassment to the department or university. It is on you to meet responsibilities in such a way that Londoners do not say, "Those students from (MSU/Texas/The United States) are so obnoxious."

If you cannot make it a priority to behave responsibly and professionally, please drop now. If you cannot make it a priority to represent the department and the university in ways that will keep our reputation intact, please drop now.

**I reserve the right to drop any student with an F if he/she has excessive absences, late arrivals or missed assignments; engages in disruptive behavior; has a poor attitude; or in any other way is clearly not taking the class seriously.**

**By accepting this syllabus and remaining enrolled in this course, you are indicating that you understand my expectations for students concerning attendance, attitude, work ethic and participation.**

Two final notes on grading: Critics from both within and outside of higher education have accused faculty of engaging in "grade inflation," the idea that grades don't truly reflect quality and instead have been devalued to the point that an A means very good, a B means average, and anything less than a B is failing. I'm not sure whether those people would include me in their criticisms, but I do know I try my best to adhere to the system as I understand it: an A means outstanding, a B means above average, and a C means average. Please remember these interpretations as the semester progresses.

Please remember also that attending every class and completing every assignment do not constitute outstanding quality or guarantee an A for the course. Attending every class and completing every assignment are only prerequisites for achieving a desired grade in the class. Too many students have argued that these are the reasons they deserved an A in the class, and I do not buy into this way of thinking.

**By accepting this syllabus and remaining enrolled in this course, you are indicating that you understand the grading policies for the course. If you have questions, you should see me as soon as possible.**

### Grading

Don't cheat.

**"Not everyone cheats. Not everyone cuts corners. There isn't a diploma in the world that's more valuable than your integrity. And you can't buy your integrity back." – Jason Gay, commenting in The Wall Street Journal on the recent admissions scandals involving celebrities and the wealthy, March 14, 2019, p. A16.**

The **MSU Student Honor Creed**, written and adopted by the 2002-2003 MSU Student Senate, covers expectations related to cheating and other forms of academic dishonesty. The main statement from this document is:

**"As an MSU student, I pledge not to lie, cheat, steal, or help anyone else to do so."**

All students in my courses are expected to abide by this student-produced document, as well as all other related university policies. I will provide copies of the MSU Student Honor Creed to any student who requests one. It is also on page 6 of the 2019-2020 MSU Student Handbook (the handbook is also available online at <https://msutexas.edu/student-life/assets/files/handbook.pdf>).

In addition, the university requires faculty to provide this statement to all students:

By enrolling in this course, the student expressly grants MSU a "limited right" in all intellectual property created by the student for the purpose of this course. The "limited right" shall include but shall not be limited to the right to reproduce the student's work product in order to verify originality and authenticity, and

educational purposes.

**By accepting this syllabus and remaining enrolled in this course, you are indicating that you understand the statement provided above and agree to comply with it.**

I require **complete** honesty in producing your work. Working professionals are often encouraged to confer with their colleagues on strategies and wordings, but there is a difference between advice and blatant plagiarism.

I also realize it will be very easy to confer with colleagues on take-home assignments, but you should realize that instructors can usually identify when students have worked together. I also realize the Internet provides a convenient source of information, but students need to be aware that proper citation will be required.

Past students will tell you I take this issue very seriously and have not hesitated to confront them. A slightly higher grade on an assignment is not worth the extremely unpleasant experience of taking an accusation of academic dishonesty through the university hierarchy. Please don't force me to do it.

**I reserve the right to drop any student with an F if he/she engages in any form of academic dishonesty. I further reserve the right to recommend other sanctions as may be appropriate. Students are also encouraged to consult the following sources for additional discussion of students' rights and responsibilities regarding cheating, attendance and general conduct:**

- The MSU Student Honor Creed
- The 2019-2020 MSU Undergraduate Catalog, available online at <https://catalog.msutexas.edu/>
- The 2019-2020 MSU Student Handbook (the handbook is also available online at <https://msutexas.edu/student-life/assets/files/handbook.pdf>).

**By accepting this syllabus and remaining enrolled in this course, you are indicating that you understand the seriousness of academic dishonesty and realize I will impose the harshest sanctions possible if I can prove you have engaged in academic dishonesty. You are also indicating that you understand what constitutes academic dishonesty; I will not tolerate the excuse that the student did not know he/she was engaging in academic dishonesty.**

### Privacy

Federal privacy law prohibits me from releasing information about students to certain parties outside of the university without the signed consent of the student. Thus, in almost all cases I will not discuss your academic progress or other matters with your parents. Please do not have them contact me. Regardless of these important legal considerations, it is my general policy to communicate with the students, not their parents, even when a student has signed a consent form. College students are adults and are expected to behave accordingly.

### Special Accommodations

Students with disabilities or who are in need of special arrangements should see me prior to departure and work with the MSU Office of International Education well in advance. I will do what I can within reason to accommodate your needs. Please note that in order to qualify for consideration of special accommodations, you must be registered with the MSU Office of Disability Support Services (and the Office of International Education for this program), and I must have a memo on file, along with the Special Accommodations Request form.

If you have specific medical information that needs sharing or you need specific accommodations in case of emergencies or emergency evacuations, please see me as soon as possible.

If you have outside circumstances that may affect your performance in this class – including but not limited to food insecurity, inadequate housing, family issues – please contact me if you are comfortable in doing so. I may be able to refer you to resources that will help you address the situation.

Please note that all information provided to me remains confidential.

### Course Organization and Schedule

This course will be run as a seminar, with the expectations that students will arrive for class prepared and that the course will proceed with far more discussion than lecture.

The success of this format depends on your willingness to **actively participate** in class discussions and other activities.

This is the **TENTATIVE** course schedule. For a number of reasons, this schedule is likely to change. **Please note that the schedule below includes due dates, events/field trips and projects for our class, as well the list of events for all students in all courses.**

**I reserve the right to change the class schedule if circumstances make it necessary.**

Chances are good that you will receive at least one revised schedule before the term is over. If reading assignments or deadlines change, I will tell you well in advance. Please note that the reading and general workloads are likely to vary considerably from week to week.

It is imperative that you complete the readings before we begin discussing each unit.

Please note that class meetings for Quick Reports, Debriefing and/or other work will be added, usually before or after an event or guest speaker.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Speaker/Remarks</b>	<b>Room</b>
<b>Thursday 2nd July</b>	<b>Leave United States</b>		
<b>Friday 3rd July</b>	<b>Arrive London</b>		
<b>Friday 3rd July</b>	<b>Opening Night Event</b>		
<b>Saturday 4th July</b>	<b>Orientation Day</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Noon – Arts Auditorium</li><li>• 1:30 – Class Meeting</li><li>• 2:30 – Walking Tour of London/ Mass Comm. Class Activities</li></ul>		
<b>Sunday 5th July</b>	<b>11 a.m. – St. Paul’s Cathedral</b>  <b>1 p.m. – Hyde Park/Speakers’ Corner</b>  <b>4 p.m. – London Eye</b>		



<b>Date</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Speaker/Remarks</b>	<b>Room</b>
<b>Monday 6th July</b>	<b>Course Introduction</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Syllabus</li> <li>• Course Expectations and Procedures</li> <li>• Journal Instructions</li> </ul>	<b>Dr. Sernoe</b>	
<b>Monday 6th July</b>	<b>Course Introduction</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Differences Between the American System and the British System: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Free Expression</li> <li>○ Other Legal Aspects</li> <li>○ Ownership</li> <li>○ Economics</li> <li>○ Ethical Standards</li> <li>○ Intersections of Media/Society, Media/Individuals</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Final Project Instructions</li> </ul>	<b>Dr. Sernoe</b>	
<b>Tuesday 7th July</b>	<b>Academic Day</b>		
<b>Wednesday 8th July</b>	<b>Academic Day</b>		
<b>Thursday 9th July</b>	<b>Academic Day</b>		
<b>Friday, 10th July, 9 a.m.</b>	<b>First Journal Submission Due, 9 a.m.</b>		

<b>Date</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Speaker/Remarks</b>	<b>Room</b>
<b>Friday, 10th July – Sunday, 12th July</b>	<b>Non-Academic Days</b>  <b>Optional (and highly recommended) Excursion to Dover</b>		<b>Please remember that if you plan to leave campus, you must leave a copy of your travel plans with Dr. Mills/Study Aboard Office</b>  <b>Please remember also that traveling alone is prohibited</b>
<b>Monday 13th July</b>	<b>Academic Day</b>		
<b>Tuesday 14th July</b>	<b>Academic Day</b>		
<b>Wednesday 15th July</b>	<b>Academic Day</b>		
<b>Thursday, 16th July, 9 a.m.</b>	<b>Second Journal Submission Due, 9 a.m.</b>		
<b>Thursday, 16th July, 9 a.m.</b>	<b>Project Memos Due, 9 a.m.</b>		

<b>Date</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Speaker/Remarks</b>	<b>Room</b>
<b>Thursday 16th July – Monday 20th July</b>	<b>MINI-BREAK</b>		<p><b>Please remember that if you plan to leave campus, you must leave a copy of your travel plans with Dr. Mills/Study Aboard Office</b></p> <p><b>Please remember also that traveling alone is prohibited</b></p>
<b>Tuesday 21st July</b>	<b>Academic Day</b>		
<b>Wednesday 22nd July</b>	<b>Academic Day</b>		
<b>Thursday 23rd July</b>	<b>Academic Day</b>		
<b>Thursday, 23rd July</b>	<b>Project Update Appointments</b>		
<b>Friday, 24th July, 9 a.m.</b>	<b>Third Journal Submission Due, 9 a.m.</b>		

<b>Date</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Speaker/Remarks</b>	<b>Room</b>
<b>Friday, 24th July – Sunday, 26th July</b>	<b>Non-Academic Days</b>		<p><b>Please remember that if you plan to leave campus, you must leave a copy of your travel plans with Dr. Mills/Study Aboard Office</b></p> <p><b>Please remember also that traveling alone is prohibited</b></p>
<b>Monday 27th July</b>	<b>Academic Day</b>		
<b>Monday 27th July</b>	<b>Project Update Appointments</b>		
<b>Tuesday 28th July</b>	<b>Academic Day</b>		
<b>Wednesday 29th July</b>	<b>Academic Day</b>		
<b>Thursday 30th July</b>	<b>Academic Day</b>		
<b>Thursday 30th July</b>	<b>Project Update Appointments</b>		
<b>Thursday 30th July</b>	<b>Final Journal Submission Due</b>		
<b>Friday 31st July</b>	<b>Presentations/Class Projects</b>		

<b>Date</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Speaker/Remarks</b>	<b>Room</b>
<b>Friday 31st July</b>	<b>Final Class Activities</b>		
<b>Saturday, 1st August – Sunday, 2nd August</b>	<b>Non-Academic Days  Optional Excursion to Stonehenge/Bath</b>		<b>Please remember that if you plan to leave campus, you must leave a copy of your travel plans with Dr. Mills/Study Aboard Office  Please remember also that traveling alone is prohibited</b>
<b>Monday 3rd August</b>	<b>Return to U.S.  Bus leaves campus at 5 a.m.</b>		
<b>Monday 31st August</b>	<b>Final Projects Due, 9 a.m.</b>	<b>Dr. Sernoe</b>	<b>D204 Fain Fine Arts Center</b>