DESCRIPTION:

Mass media are a critically important part of the modern world, shaping virtually all aspects of daily life from our understanding of the world around us and our nation’s contemporary affairs to our own identities, attitudes and beliefs. We are so saturated with media imagery that we often aren’t even aware of our immersion in the vast sea of media forms that constitute the “white noise” of our culture.

Sonoma State University and the Project Censored Media Research Organization present a series of dialogues that strive to “observe the unobserved” while improving media literacy and critical thought about our contemporary media age through an examination and exchange of ideas. Taking a variety of disciplinary perspectives that include history, linguistics, sociology, politics, economics and cultural studies, the Modern Media Dialogues examine the nature of information distribution in the most complex media system that has ever existed. The aim of the series is to debate the possible dysfunctions present in the existing media system and to consider the potential solutions available to those interested in improving or replacing current policies.

MODERN MEDIA
DIALOGUE SERIES

Sponsored by Sonoma State University, the Hutchins Dialogue Center, and the Project Censored Media Research Group

Spring 2010 semester
Wednesdays 5 PM
Ives 101
Warren Auditorium
Free to all

Hosted by Professors Benjamin Frymer
and
Margaret Anderson

Coordinated by Kate Sims, Emily Wilson
and Maria Tzouvelekis

Parking in Lot G (Cost: $2.50)

For more information:

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MEDIA, CULTURE
AND NEWSMAKING
IN THE
INFORMATION AGE

SONOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
THEMES

The dialogues are organized around eight themes (based loosely on the “eight myths” proposed by Dr. Robert McChesney in his 2004 book The Problem of the Media).

Each of the dialogue sessions will address one or more of the following assertions:

1. Mainstream media outlets merely reflect reality, they do not shape it. Therefore, the range of opinions or debate received through them is roughly accurate, unbiased.
2. The current commercial media system is the result of natural law. It was the intention of the Founding Fathers, and a valid result of democracy. A free press means allowing media company owners to do what they need to in order to earn a profit.
3. The interest and opinions of the general public have been taken into account and are properly represented when Washington insiders debate and then decide media policy.
4. Current commercial media offers both the highest quality of journalism available and the level of journalism necessary in a democracy.
5. News media in the United States have an ideological bias.
6. The commercial media system gives people what they want, as indicated by ratings. The best policy is to let the market sort it out.
7. The nature of the media is determined by the technologies available. All we have to do is let technology work its magic.
8. The current media system is the best option, no alternatives are available. The only choices are corporate control or government control.

CURRICULUM

The course will consist of a series of 14 lectures/dialogues with guest speakers each week. The series will provide a forum for students, academics and community members who seek to better understand the current system to learn from, and engage in conversation with, local and national experts in the study of media and practice of journalism.

Guest speakers will interrogate important issues regarding media representations and reception by diverse audiences, the impact of mass media on politics, economics and social relations, and the vital role of the news media in a democracy. Learning objectives of the series include developing critical media literacy skills and general awareness of the vast power mass media plays in modern societies; expanding and deepening dialogue skills through conversation about the role of media in people’s lives; and broadening and sharpening reading and analytical skills.