

# Media and Culture

richard CAMPBELL

**cul·ture** (kul'chər)*n.*  
1. The symbols of expression  
that individuals, groups,  
and societies use to make sense  
of daily life and to articulate  
their values

[www.mediaculture.com](http://www.mediaculture.com)

An Introduction to Mass Communication

"We are not alone."

For my great family—Chris, Caitlin, and Dianna  
(who introduced me to *The X-Files* and  
occasionally like to watch a TV show  
without my critical interruptions)

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The mass media play a role in all of our autobiographies. We watch television and go to movies to find stories that remind us of our own experience or transport us to remote times and places. We read books and magazines for clues to the past and help with the present. We scan newspapers and surf the Net for information and affirmation. We go to the mass media for stories about our neighbors and our world.

*Media and Culture* offers a personal and global journey through the media landscape. As a textbook for an introductory mass media course, it provides maps and tools for navigating the cultural terrain. It invites students to evaluate the mass media and shape their direction. As citizens and consumers, we have choices. We can watch the media as detached observers, praising the media when they perform well and blaming them for our social predicaments. Or we can become active players. We can analyze the stories that media industries tell and sell. We can even challenge our media to perform at high levels and encourage them to serve our democratic ideals.

The journey through the media landscape is different for each of us and for each generation. For my grandmother, who died in 1994 at age ninety-two, the mass media played an important role. Over the years, especially after she could no longer read the *Dayton Daily News*, she watched a lot of television. Her favorite shows included *Lawrence Welk*, soap operas, studio wrestling, *Dallas*, *60 Minutes*, and the national news. A fervent FDR Democrat, my grandmother was no couch potato. She talked politics with her TV set. She occasionally yelled at Ronald Reagan and Mike Wallace. Her own views on Serbian-Croatian conflicts were shaped not only by her childhood but by years of exposure to American media.

For my children's generation, the mass media play another role. They grew up watching *Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood* and *Sesame Street*. As they got older, they introduced their wary parents to MTV and *Beavis and Butt-head*. Over the years, we watched *The Simpsons*, *Northern Exposure*, *Seinfeld*, and the Chicago Bulls as a family. Eventually, my son began devoting more energy to music and his guitar—to blues, rock, and jazz—and less to television. My daughter, meanwhile, read hundreds of R. L. Stine books and at age ten fell in with the Mighty Morphin Power Rangers. At age twelve she outgrew them, discovering old horror movies and *The X-Files*, whose viewing became another family ritual.

The mass media are part of everyone's life story. But to understand our lives in the context of a larger world, we need some distance from personal history. We need to stand back from our experience and view the media's impact through a larger lens. And that is where this book comes in.

*Media and Culture* asks each of us to become critical consumers of the media and engaged citizens in the society that the media help shape. *Media and Culture* offers directions for surveying the cultural landscape and tools for critiquing the media's influences on democratic life and consumer culture. In probing historical events and contemporary trends in mass communication, the book asks students to become cultural activists—to investigate and challenge the power of the mass media in daily life.

### A Critical Viewpoint

*Media and Culture* introduces students to four stages of the critical thinking and writing process: description, analysis, interpretation, and evaluation. The text uses these stages to examine the historical context and current processes that shape the mass media as part of American culture. This critical framework structures chapter content, and the Critical Process exercises at the end of each chapter provide opportunities for students to engage in critical inquiry.

### Media Technology and Convergence

*Media and Culture* examines the key technological developments that have changed the world, from the printing press and telegraph (with its electronic dots and dashes) to television and the Internet (with its digital ones and zeroes). The text takes us on a journey from the Industrial Age to the Information Age, explaining the phenomenon of media convergence: the confluence of home, school, and business computers, TV sets, telephones, radio, CD players, VCRs, e-mail, video games, newspapers, fax machines, magazines, and communication satellites.

The organization of *Media and Culture* takes into account the dramatic influences of electronic and digital communication on the social world. Since converging forms of mass communication integrate aspects of print, electronic, and digital culture in daily life, the text begins with the stories of media convergence. Rather than starting chronologically with the oldest mass medium, the book, the industry chapters open with the media students know best: music, radio, television, cable, and film. Placing past and present communication developments within a contemporary perspective, *Media and Culture* then looks at older media within the context of the new forms that have reshaped print culture.

### A Cultural Perspective

An understanding of culture is indispensable for understanding the contemporary mass media as well as their history. Culture provides the framework in which all media develop, and in turn people use media frames to give meaning to their lives. Using a narrative approach, *Media and Culture* investigates the media as part of the rituals of everyday culture. Most mass media, whether news, prime-time television, magazines, film, paperback novels, or advertising, use storytelling to tap into our shared beliefs and values, and so does *Media and Culture*. Each chapter presents the events and issues surrounding media culture as compelling stories that map the uneasy and parallel developments of consumer culture and democratic society.

### Values and Ethics

To develop a critical perspective toward the mass media, students need to incorporate values and ethics into the way they experience the media in daily life. Media books often ghettoize the subject of ethics by treating it as a separate, isolated chapter near the end of the book. *Media and Culture*, however, weaves discussions about values into the larger story. The text looks at how values are depicted in mass communication and at ethical questions that challenge media practitioners.

## Media Economics and Democracy

To become better citizens and discerning consumers, students must pay attention to the complex relationship between democracy and capitalism, between the marketplace of ideas and the global consumer market. To that end, *Media and Culture* addresses the significance of the dramatic rise in multinational media systems. It invites students to explore the implications of the 1996 Telecommunications Act and the tight control that a handful of mammoth international companies exercise over the production and distribution of commercial mass media. Ownership issues are therefore an integral part of the individual media chapters. In addition, Chapter 13 looks critically at the global picture and encourages students to participate in the debates over ownership. Each chapter ends with a discussion of the impact of various mass media on the nature of democratic life.

## organization of the text

*Media and Culture* is divided into five parts. Part 1, “Mass Media and the Cultural Landscape,” establishes the foundation for the book. Chapter 1 defines the text’s key concepts and introduces critical processes for investigating media industries and issues. Chapter 2 introduces the newest mass medium, the Internet, and the concept of *media convergence*, the integration of print, electronic, and digital mass communication.

Part 2, “Sounds and Images,” covers the media that students know well—music (Chapter 3), radio (Chapter 4), television (Chapter 5), cable (Chapter 6), and movies (Chapter 7). These media have had the most dramatic impact on the cultural landscape during the twentieth century. The chapters in Part 2 provide historical and industry overviews and examine each medium’s social, economic, and cultural impact.

Part 3, “Words and Pictures,” covers the first media—the print and early image industries that made mass communication possible. These mass media, which pioneered engraving, photography, and advertising, include newspapers (Chapter 8), magazines (Chapter 9), and books (Chapter 10). These media had their greatest impact during America’s formative years, yet they endure and remain central to daily life. They have proven their adaptability in the face of the new media industries that emerged during the twentieth century.

Part 4, “The Business of Mass Media,” examines advertising (Chapter 11) and public relations (Chapter 12), both thriving, independent industries that provide crucial support for the mass media. The chapters offer a historical overview of these professions, examining how they are organized and the social and ethical issues their practitioners face. In addition, a separate chapter on media economics and the cultural marketplace (Chapter 13) introduces economic analysis, critiques trends in media consolidation, and examines the ways that companies operate on a global level.

Part 5, “Democratic Expression and the Mass Media,” takes up a range of key issues affecting media and culture: values, ethics, and journalism (Chapter 14); media effects and cultural approaches to research (Chapter 15); and legal controls and freedom of expression (Chapter 16). This concluding section addresses such important subjects as the public journalism movement, mainstream and alternative research strategies, and the impact of the First Amendment on the mass media.

## chapter highlights

In *Media and Culture*, each chapter has a consistent structure and many special features:

- *Preview Stories*. Every chapter opens with a recent or historical media story that foreshadows issues and concepts raised in the chapter.
- *Case Studies*. Every chapter highlights an individual, industry, or issue that captures the spirit of a particular medium. Sample case studies feature Madonna, the Web, radio talk shows, Ted Turner, racism and movie theaters, Dorothy Day and I. F. Stone, the *Utne Reader*, comic books, women and advertising, television ratings, *60 Minutes*, and copyright violations and rap music.
- *Examining Ethics*. These dynamic, visual sections focus on ethical issues in the mass media, including such topics as teens and TV talk shows, television's impact on community values, Nike and sneaker commercials, PR and sweatshops, book censorship, and hidden TV news cameras.
- *Tracking Technology*. Old and new innovations in media technology are highlighted in these sections, which feature discussions of such topics as free expression in cyberspace, shortwave radio, communication satellites, movie delivery, alternative zines, and the Internet's Project Gutenberg.
- *The Global Village*. International developments in mass communication are another featured subject. Explorations of world music, the global digital revolution, and television in Brazil are among the topics covered.
- *Review Questions*. Summary questions at the end of each chapter help students reflect on the major concepts and issues examined in the text.
- *Questioning the Media*. A series of open-ended questions challenge students to think about issues beyond those examined in the chapter. Valuable in provoking class discussions, these questions ask students to think about the media's influence, both on their own lives and on the larger society.
- *The Critical Process*. Each chapter features an assignment or activity that challenges students to build on the critical approach outlined in Chapter 1. These projects include critiquing magazine advertising, examining newspapers' international coverage, studying an independent publisher or record label, and thinking about distinctions between high and low culture.



## the media and culture program

*Media and Culture* is also available for purchase in combination with *What's Next in Mass Communication: Readings on Media and Culture* and/or *Media Career Guide*. Please use the correct ISBN for the combination selected when ordering through a campus bookstore.

*Media and Culture*: 0-312-11961-5

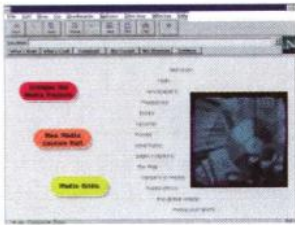
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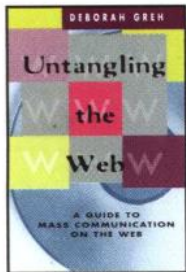
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To help students further expand their perspective on the role of the media in contemporary culture, the *Media and Culture* program offers the following additional resources.

### www.mediaculture.com



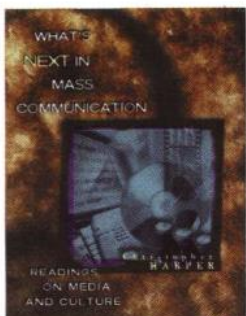
By visiting [www.mediaculture.com](http://www.mediaculture.com), students gain a further appreciation for the media's role in our consumer culture. The interactive study guide gives students the opportunity to critique the media and to examine the advantages and pitfalls of using the Web as a source for academic work, news, and entertainment. Students and professionals can take part in discussions on provocative media topics. Media critics examine the cultural implications of the latest-breaking changes in the media field. The Web site features our "Careers Workbench," which provides guidance on media careers today. Numerous links to hundreds of mass communication sites will give students further information about the world of advertising, newspapers, electronic media, public relations, and more.



### *Untangling the Web: A Guide to Mass Communication on the Web*

by Deborah Greh, St. John's University

For instructors and students who are inexperienced online, *Untangling the Web* offers practical advice on accessing information through the Internet. It also provides ideas for incorporating the Web site exercises and resources for *Media and Culture* into the multimedia classroom.



### *What's Next in Mass Communication: Readings on Media and Culture*

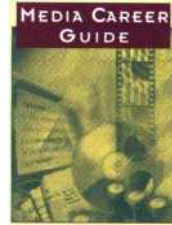
by Christopher Harper, Ithaca College

This collection of readings reflects the transformation of mass media today and important social issues of the digital age. As its title suggests, this anthology focuses on the future, asking students to question the roles of journalists, viewers, and readers as we move toward the new millennium and beyond. Covering both electronic and print media, the selections engage students in compelling debates on such hot topics as: the controversial "computer gaps" based on race, age, or income; the longevity of television and newspapers; the pros and cons of public journalism; online vs. printed magazines; trends for niche publications; advertising campaigns of the future; and privacy in cyberspace. Chapters open with overviews of the topics and close by asking students to consider and debate the issues raised by the selections.

## ***Media Career Guide: Preparing for Jobs in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century***

by James Seguin, Robert Morris College

Designed for students considering a major in communication studies and mass media, this practical and student-friendly guide includes a comprehensive directory of media jobs, practical tips, career guidance that encourages specialized reading, print and electronic research, guided self-assessments, and sample cover letters and resumes for communication/media jobs.

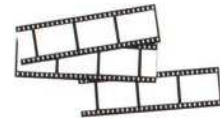


James Seguin

## **The St. Martin's Video Library**

by Bettina Fabos, University of Iowa, Christopher Martin, University of Northern Iowa, and Richard Campbell

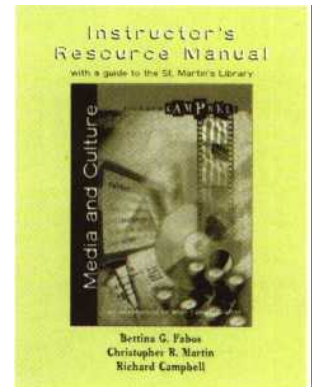
The St. Martin's Video Library consists of more than one hundred high-interest contemporary and historical media documentaries and media-related entertainment films, organized around compelling cultural, ethical, and economic issues explored in *Media and Culture*. Instructional resources are included in the *Instructor's Resource Manual* to help instructors make the most of the videos in the classroom. Upon adoption of *Media and Culture*, instructors are eligible to select video materials from the library, building their own library over time with continued purchase of new texts from St. Martin's.



## ***Instructor's Resource Manual***

by Bettina Fabos, University of Iowa, Christopher Martin, University of Northern Iowa, and Richard Campbell

The *Instructor's Resource Manual* is especially useful for schools offering multiple sections of introduction to mass communication. It includes course syllabi for a range of teaching approaches, suggestions for lesson plans, video tips and activities, and general guidelines and hints for novice teaching assistants. The manual features a comprehensive section for teaching assistants on leading discussion sections, filled with numerous small-group activities and discussion questions to complement the critical process sections found in the text. Instructors are encouraged to take advantage of the resources on the Web site and to contribute to the instructional materials available for *Media and Culture* by responding to the Web site questionnaire or to the form that concludes the *Instructor's Resource Manual*.



## **Testing Program**

*Media and Culture* offers a complete testing program, available in print and for Windows and Macintosh environments. Each chapter includes multiple-choice, true-false, and fill-in-the-blank exercises, as well as short- and long-answer essay questions. Sample midterm and final examinations are also included in the testing program. Instructors are encouraged to mix and match, add and delete, and experiment with these innovative testing materials.





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—Richard Campbell

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