A complete upper division or graduate course outline for examining the media's effects on sex role stereotyping of women in society is presented in this paper. Various sections of the paper include (1) course objectives designed to explore how the media portrays women, how the media treats the changing role of women in society, and whether the media serves to advance the acceptance of women in new roles; (2) a course schedule including topics and readings for each of ten weeks; (3) discussions of course evaluation policies and policies on late papers and missed examinations; (4) project assignments; and (5) a bibliography containing references to books, periodicals, papers, and audiovisual materials suggested for use in the course outline. Suggestions for the format of the class meetings are given and discussions of the two primary texts for the course, "Hearth and Home: Images of Women in the Mass Media," edited by Gaye Tuchman, Arlene Kaplan Daniels, and James Benet, and "Women and the Mass Media: Sourcebook for Research and Action," edited by Matilda Butler and William Paisley, are provided. (MKM)
WOMEN AND MASS MEDIA

COURSE OUTLINE

by

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WOMEN AND MASS MEDIA

COURSE OUTLINE

In the past decade, both women and the mass media have played increasingly active roles in society. Women have attempted to explore new roles and dimensions only recently available to them, and the mass media have become the largest communicating forces in our society. These changes have been a mixed blessing for the student of communication. The rate at which information is diffused via the media has certainly increased our accuracy about and knowledge of the world around us. The negative effect of the broad availability of mediated information is that our attitudes and beliefs are quite frequently and unknowingly affected by what the media have to offer. Each of us does not necessarily have the training and ability to determine and perhaps offset the effects of a nearly constant bombardment of mediated messages. This dilemma becomes apparent when the content focus is the role of woman in our society. When the members of a cultural subgroup, such as women, seek to alter traditional roles and norms, they are faced with changing the media's portrayal of and information about themselves. The intersection of women's attempts to alter their societal roles and the part played in the process by the mass media is the focus of this course.

The course primarily seeks to examine the media's effect on the sex-role stereotyping of women in society. The process of examination includes exploring the effect of the media on establishing societal values and analyzing mediated messages. Accordingly, the course will explore three primary questions:

1. How do the media portray women?
2. How do the media treat the changing role of women in society?
3. Do the media serve to advance the acceptance of women in new roles?
Objectives of the Course

Upon completion of this course each of you should be capable of:

1. Understanding the role of the mass media in reflecting women's roles in society and in shaping women's images and expectations.
2. Identifying sex-role stereotyping which occurs in the media.
3. Analyzing the treatment of women's issues in different media.

In addition to these primary course objectives, you should acquire a greater awareness of the functions and effects of the mass media on contemporary society, as well as a greater sensitivity to the impact of the spoken and written word.

The purpose of these objectives is to help provide learning experiences which will, in turn, help the student to answer the primary questions of the course. For example, when the student is capable of identifying sex-role stereotyping in the media, s/he will be better prepared to answer the question "How do the media portray women?"

Format

This course outline is designed for an upper division and/or graduate four-unit class, meeting for two hours, twice a week in the quarter system. The course can be readily changed for use in a semester system and can be adapted to a three or five-unit course. Separate course units could also be used within other established courses, such as classes in women's studies, journalism, social movements, mass media and human communication. The format of class meetings is lecture by the instructor, exposure to media presentations, student-centered discussions and student-project presentations. Lecture information is designed to introduce students to the basic principles and concepts from which the course will develop. Opportunities for personal interaction among students are provided by class discussions. A series of
media presentations will offer class members some common examples for analysis and discussion, and will create a forum for the expression of students' own ideas and concerns about women and mass media.

**Readings**

There are two primary texts for the course. The first, *Hearth and Home: Images of Women in the Mass Media* edited by Gaye Tuchman, Arlene Kaplan Daniels and James Benet, provides an excellent introduction to the portrayal of women in the mass media and explores these images as found in television, in women's magazines and in newspapers. The second text, *Women and the Mass Media: Sourcebook for Research and Action* edited by Matilda Butler and William Paisley, examines the psychological and social portrayal of women in media and documents the growing participation of women in media organizations. Included in the text are theoretical and historical studies and suggestions for legal, economic and social action to promote unbiased media content. A third text which will be on reserve in the library is *Women and the News* edited by Laurily Kier Epstein. This text discusses current problems concerning how the news media report about women and how this reporting can be improved. Three current concepts in news media research are examined in relation to the problems women face when dealing with the news media: agenda-setting, access to the media and definitions of news worthiness.

In addition, there will be several suggested readings on reserve in the library. These materials are included in the bibliography. You will also be encouraged to regularly read the *Media Report to Women: What Women are Doing and Thinking About the Communications Media*, a monthly publication of the Women's Institute for Freedom of the Press (available in the library).

**Course Evaluation**

Your grade for the course will be based on your accumulated scores
(100 possible points) for one examination, an oral presentation and one paper. Due dates and descriptions for each of these assignments are listed below.

1. The **Examination** will be administered during the sixth week of the course, and will be short answer and objective in nature. It will cover all materials from the first half of the class. The examination will be returned and critiqued during the seventh week of the course. The examination is worth 25 points.

2. The **Oral Presentations** will begin the eighth week of the course and continue through and including the first class session of the tenth week. Exact details of the oral presentation follow the listing of course projects. The oral presentation is worth 25 points.

3. A **Paper** which focuses on your project will be due one class meeting following your oral presentation. Exact details of the paper follow the listing of course projects. This assignment is worth 25 points.

4. **Responsibilities to the Class** such as attendance, participation and attitude comprise the remaining area of course evaluation. Discussion is a momentary phenomenon and as such your attendance and participation affect not only yourself but the effectiveness of the entire class. For this reason, 25 points are set aside for instructor and peer evaluation of your contribution to the classroom experience.

**Policy on Late Papers and Missed Examinations:** The dates for assignments will be followed without exception. You have ample time to prepare for all assignments. A 10% reduction in grade for each day late will be assessed for papers and presentations, and no make-up or late examinations will be given.

**Grading:** Letter grades will be determined on the basis of the following point distribution.
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**Project Assignment**

Choose one of the following project options. You will share the knowledge gained through your project with the rest of the class in oral presentation. You will also share your knowledge with the instructor in a written project report.

1. Select two hours worth of prime-time (8-11 p.m.) television programming. Survey the commercials seen during the two hours and keep track of the following for each sex: occupational status of the main characters, stereotypes, age and physical settings. What conclusions would you draw from this limited sample if you were a visitor from another planet unfamiliar with humans? Do you find the portrayals in any way objectionable? Why or why not?

2. What were the advertising world's portrayals of and approaches to women prior to the 1970's? Select ten years between 1920 and 1970 and investigate old magazines from that period. Also select a sample of current magazine advertisements. Then, in each sample, answer the following questions: What were women in ads like? What kinds of messages were directed to women? Drawing upon your findings, compare the role of women in the ads of the particular decade you have investigated and their role in ads today.

3. Write a letter of complaint to the source of a mass media message which
you find offensive. I expect you to find factual evidence and to provide thorough documentation for your complaint. Send copies of your letter to other appropriate regulatory or control persons or agencies.

4. Select two hours worth of Saturday morning children's programming. In the shows, survey the occupational role models presented for male and female characters. How wide a range of jobs is presented for men and for women? Does this effect the impact of female characters in any plot? Ask yourself: "Are the occupational roles of women in children's shows suitable models for a daughter of my own to copy?"

5. Research and write a biographical sketch on a woman who has worked or is working in mass media production or news and who could serve as a positive role model.

6. Create a non-sexist television series. Develop character sketches for the main roles and suggest five plot ideas. Include an explanation of what is behind the selection of characters and situations and a description of the audience the series is designed to attract. Also include a list of prospective advertisers with an explanation of why they would be appropriate for the series.

7. How are women of the 1980's portrayed in articles and features in contemporary women's magazines? Choose four women's magazines to compare. Categorize the topics of the articles in these magazines. How accurately do the topics of these magazines reflect the attitudes and behaviors of the contemporary woman? Why or why not? Discuss the possibility of an "agenda-setting" function by these magazines.

Include the Following in Your Oral Presentation

1. A rationale explaining why the project you chose is important.
2. A brief summary of research and knowledge that is related to your efforts.
3. A description of the procedure you followed to complete your project.
4. A summary of what you found, discovered, concluded or created.
5. Finally, a summary of the significance of your completed project. What does it mean or do?

Include the Following in Your Written Presentation

1. An introduction explaining the purpose of your project and why it is important.
2. A brief review of other research that is related to your interests. Be sure that you include related course readings.
3. A description of the process you followed to complete your project. This methods section should also include careful definitions of the major concepts with which you are working.
4. A presentation of your findings, creation or results.
5. A summary of the conclusions you draw from your findings, creation or results, and the social significance of your project.
6. Finally, a bibliography of all materials used in your paper.

Time and Length of Presentations

The oral presentation should be approximately ten minutes in length. The written presentation should be approximately ten, double-spaced, typed pages.

Course Schedule - Topics and Readings

Week 1

Introduction of the course and explanation of goals, expectations and assignments. We will begin a brief discussion of the subject area of the course and of stereotypes in general. Some of the questions to be discussed are:

1. What is stereotyping?
2. What is the meaning of stereotyping?

3. Why does stereotyping occur?

4. And, does stereotyping present a problem in our society today?

During the second class meeting of Week 1 we will see and discuss the documentary film, "Growing Up Female."

For this week you should read:

1. The "Antecedents" section in Butler and Paisley.

2. Tuchman's introduction and Gerbner's, "The Dynamics of Cultural Resistance" in Hearth and Home.

3. Rice's, "Women out of the Myths and Into Focus" in Epstein. The following articles which are on reserve. (All reserve readings can be found in the bibliography.)


5. Annette U. Rickel and Linda M. Grant's, "Sex-Role Stereotypes in the Mass Media."

Week 2

This week we will discuss some of the differing ideas presented in the readings. An understanding of the reflection and symbolic annihilation hypotheses is central to our discussion. Tuchman's introduction to Hearth and Home provides an explanation and examples of both hypotheses. During the second class meeting, we will apply both the reflection and symbolic annihilation hypotheses to the film. "Journalism: Mirror Mirror on the Wall."

Questions to explore include:

1. Does media content reflect the personalities of the creators?

2. Does media content reflect the economic values of those who control the channels of communication?
3. Does media content reflect dominant societal values?
4. How do the media deal in symbols and symbolic representation?
5. And, how are women condemned, trivialized or absent from media content?

Readings in preparation for week 3:

1. Graber, "Agenda-Setting: Are There Woman's Perspectives?" in Epstein?
3. The entire "Sexism in Media Content" section of Butler and Paisley.

Read also the following articles which are on reserve:

4. Zena Beth Guenin's, "Women's Pages in the 1970's."
5. Sharyne Merrit and Harriet Gross, "Women's Page/Lifestyle Editors."

Week 3

This week we will begin to focus on the content of particular media. During the first class session we will discuss the readings and look for their application in newspapers. Discussion questions include:

1. How do editors determine what is news?
2. How do the newspapers report about women?
3. Where is women's news found in newspapers?
4. And, how does the paradigm of agenda-setting apply to women's issues?

During the second class session we will see "Covering Women's News" and "Women's Page Photos."

Reading in preparation for Week 4:


The following articles which are on reserve:

2. Bestsellers Staff, "Magazines that Grow & Change with the Women Who Read Them."
4. Alison Poe's, "Active Women in Ads."

Week 4

Continuing our focus on the content of particular media, this week we will be discussing women's magazines and advertising. The two media presentations we will see this week are, "Killing Us Softly: Advertising Image of Women" and "Women Behind the Camera." Questions for discussion include:

1. How have the advertisements in women's magazines changed over time?
2. How do contemporary women's magazines differ from earlier ones?
3. How would you like to see women portrayed in ads?
4. And, how might women's magazines better suit the needs of women in the 1980's?

Readings in preparation for week 5:


The following articles which are on reserve:

3. Charlotte G. O'Kelly and Linda Edwards Bloomquist's, "Women and Blacks on TV."
4. Mary B. Cassata and Niki Sher's, "You've Come a Long Way Baby... from Minnie Mouse to Wonder Woman."
5. Carol Traynor Williams, "It's Not So Much, You've Come a Long Way Baby -- As You're Gonna Make it After All."

Week 5

Television content will be the focus of this week's lecture, discussion and media presentations. Discussion questions central to the effect of media
content on children include:

1. How early in life do children observe and grasp the role structure of our society?

2. How does the women's movement effect children's ideas about appropriate sex-roles in our culture?

3. And, what influence do the media have on children's perceptions of appropriate lifestyles relative to sex?

We will see two recently produced videotapes that were aired nationally by the Public Broadcasting Service: "ERA: A Family Matter", and "Who Remembers Mama?"

Readings in preparation for Week 6:

1. Read the entire section on "Institutional Sexism in the Media" in Butler and Paisley.

The following articles which are on reserve:

2. Gaye Tuchman's, "Impact of Mass Media Stereotypes on Full Employment of Women."


Week 6

"Who Controls the Media?" and "Where are the Women in Media?" will be the focus of this week's sessions. When discussing media control, it is important to note that control is not a one-way direction of influence. In fact, control is most frequently a struggle or compromise between a number of participants: the owners or executives who control the means of communication, the advertisers, the social critics, the government, the various citizens groups, the creators of the media content and the receivers. Our discussion will address this process of compromise among these parties. An examination will be given during the final hour of the second class session.
Readings in preparation for Week 7:

2. Smith's, "Access to the Media: Balancing Feminism and the First Amendment" in Epstein.
3. Robinson's, "Women, Media Access and Social Control," in Epstein.
4. The entire "Indications for Research and Action" section in Butler and Paisley.

The following article which is on reserve:


Week 7

As our final unit of material, we will be discussing women and their access to the media. These questions will direct our discussion:

1. Historically, how have women gained access to the media?
2. By which media have women been most accepted?
3. What can the average consumer do to gain access to the media?
4. And, ideally, what kind of representation should women have in the media?

We will see two films this week: "Women in Communication" and "Eye of the Story." Your examinations will also be returned this week.

Weeks 8 & 9

Class time will be devoted to the presentation of your projects. You will be asked to help in the evaluation process.

Week 10

The first class session will be used to hear the remaining oral presentations. The final class meeting will be used to review, summarize and
evaluate the course.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books


Article illustrates how new women's magazines adjust and survive by staying in close touch with cultural trends.


This chapter speaks to several important issues such as socialization of children, advertising and the American woman, women in soaps and prime-time and women in the industries.


Reviews the status of women's pages since 1969 including content, role portrayal, women's managing control, and their implications.


Article focuses upon the impact of advertising on female stereotypes and suggests an advertising "checklist" for reducing that impact.


Explores how the TV networks cover women's news and list "10 sins" they commit in their coverage.

Charts the changes in "The Mary Tyler Moore Show" which illustrate how television characters develop and grow over time. Also discusses MTM's characterization and its relationship to the women's movement. Provides a good model for the analysis of a single television drama.

Periodicals


Sey Chassler, editor of Redbook, encouraged all women's magazine editors to include articles on the ERA in their July 1976 bicentennial issues. This study presents the results of a content analysis of the 28 cooperating magazines.


"Who controls television content?" is the central question of this discussion. The author contends control is not exercised by any one participant, rather control is the result of a give-and-take struggle between several involved parties.


Re-examines advertising's portrayal of women and blacks in the mass media through replication of any comparison with early studies. Results indicate negative stereotyping still holds.


Conclusions support the belief that women editors of women's/lifestyle pages are more likely than men editors to include stories about women's movement and social events.


Presents content analyses of a variety of network television messages which indicate the continued under representation of both females and blacks.

Authors describe an ordinal continuum of media sexism for men and women. The study tests the scale's usefulness and some intuitive assumptions about the characteristics of four magazines: *Time, Newsweek, Playboy, and MS.*


Investigating advertising in family and women’s magazines in the years 1928, 1956 and 1972, this study found more numerous and more varied ads portraying active women in 1928 than in 1956 and 1972.


Examines content analyses of school curriculum and the mass media to determine what messages about sex-roles are offered to children. The long-range effects of continued exposure to these sources for sex-role socialization are discussed. Includes summary of research documenting sex-role stereotyping.


Identifies and categorizes student perceptions of sexism. Respondents describe critical incidents involving sexism, and identify words and phrases, nonverbal behaviors and media representations which they perceive as sexist.

**Miscellaneous**


Surveys research on the images of women in textbooks, feature films, television programs, newspapers, magazine advertisements, children's literature, cartoons, and modern fiction. Includes bibliography of research studies in these areas.

Historically, reviews complaints made to the Federal Communications Commission by women and minorities on the basis of the Fairness Doctrine. Includes suggestions for citizens groups wishing to make complaints.


Presents an analysis of the characters in prime-time and weekend daytime network television drama and viewer conceptions associated with exposure to these dramas. Reports are based on 10 years of monitoring 1,365 programs, analyzing 16,888 characters and conducting surveys of viewers.


A study of women workers in the economy and how women are depicted in the media. Argues that the depiction of women by the media serves as a constraint on the full utilization of women in the economy. Ten policy suggestions are made.


Both of these studies examine the portrayal of women and non-whites in American television programming.

Audio Visual Materials

ERA: A FAMILY MATTER
1978 Color 30 min. Videotape
Producer: Victoria Costello with Kim Spencer and Henri Norris
Distributor/Rental and Purchase Information: Transcultural Communications, Inc. 1508 19th Street, Washington, D.C. 20024 ($200/purchase price)

Documentary follows actress Jean Stapleton and schoolteacher/ minister's wife Laurabelle Yader as they march and lobby for the equal rights amendment. Aired nationally by the Public Broadcasting Service.
EYE OF THE STORM
No date Color 24 min. 16 mm film

The stories of three women -- a systems analyst, a manager and a secretary -- are used to typify the problems women face trying to compete in business. Illustrates how stereotypes and myths prevent industry from utilizing the full potential of women. Shows the importance of not wasting human resources in this time when conservation of resources is stressed.

COVERING WOMEN'S NEWS
No date Color 30 min. 16 mm film
Producer: The New York Times

A look at how one large metropolitan daily covers news and information of concern to women.

GROWING UP FEMALE
1971 Black & White 55 min. 16 mm film
Distributor/Renter: New Day Films

Documentary film which explores the social forces that shape the self-conceptions of women. Film traces the lives of six women of different races, ages and class backgrounds.

IMDGENE CUNNINGHAM, PHOTOGRAPHER
No date Color 20 min. 16 mm film
Distributor: American Film Institute, Kennedy Center, Washington, O.C. 20566.

Portrays one of photography's pioneers, Cunningham. Provides a sense of her achievement and a feeling for her vitality and endurance through interviews, candid footage and a look at her work.

JOURNALISM: MIRROR MIRROR ON THE WALL
1968 Black & White 52 min. 16 mm films
Distributor/Purchase Information: University of California, Berkeley; or may be purchased from Indiana University Audio-Visual Center ($265/purchase price).

Examines media coverage of the "Jeanette Rankin Brigade"--early women's march against the Vietnam war which presented petitions to Mike Mansfield and John McCormick. Film compares print and television coverage of the protest.
KILLING US SOFTLY: ADVERTISING'S IMAGE OF WOMEN
1979 Color 30 min. 16 mm film
Rental and Purchase Information: Humboldt State University, Arcata California, 95524, and Cambridge Distributors. ($365/purchase price)

Film based on a slide presentation by Jean Milbourne. Provides evidence and examples of advertising's sexist portrayal of women. Includes recent examples in the media.

LAST OF THE GREAT MALE CHAUVINISTS
1976 Color 27 min. 16 mm film
Distributor/Rental Information: University of California Extension Media Center, Berkeley, California 94720. ($32/one day rental price)

Timely drama of a middle-aged woman's struggle for independence and fulfillment after her three children have left home for college. Starring Kim Hunter and Don Porter.

NEVER GIVE UP
1975 Color 28 min. 16 mm film

An overview of the life and work of one of photography's greatest--Imogene Cunningham.

WHO REMEMBERS MAMA?
1977 Color 60 min. Videotape
Producers: Cynthia Selzman Mondell and Allen Mondell
Distributor: Dallas Chapter of Women in Communications, Inc. and KERA-TV, Dallas, Texas.


WOMEN BEHIND THE CAMERA
No date 25 min. Audiotape-3 3/4 ips, reel or cassette.
Producer: Carolyn Carter and the National Press Photographers Association, Inc.
Distributor/Rental Information: Charles Cooper, P.O. Box 1146, Durham, North Carolina 27702. ($5/rental fee)

A discussion of how women can affectively and uniquely serve a newspaper, the types of assignments for which they are especially qualified and what they can add through the women's point of view to the photographic report. Ms. Carter, the producer, has 15 years experience as a photographer on the "Atlantic Journal."
WOMAN'S GAME, THE
No date  28 min.  16 mm film
Producer: U.S. Office of Education
Distributor: Modern Talking Picture Service, 2323 New Hyde Park Road,
New Hyde Park, N.Y. 11042.

A sensitive and topical film recorded in locations across the
U.S., this film is of interest to men and women of all ages. A fourth-
grade class, their teacher, and five women talk about new educational
opportunities for women.

WOMEN IN COMMUNICATIONS
1975  Color  15 min.  16 mm film
Distributor: BFA Educational Media, 2211 Michigan Avenue, Santa Monica,
California  90404.

Presents the opportunities and roles of three women who work
in the media--a free-lance cinematographer, a disc jockey and a reporter.

WOMEN'S PAGE PHOTOS
No date  40 min.  83 slides  Slide-tape presentation
(Kodak Carousel trays with cassette audio tapes)
Producer: Barbara Somerville and the National Press Photographers
Association, Inc.
Distributor/Rental Information: Charles Cooper, P.O. Box 1146, Durham,
North Carolina  27702 ($5/rental fee).

Women's page pictures can be boring cliches or can offer a
challenge to the news photographer. This presentation provides one woman
editor's view of the subject.

Additionally, a catalogue of films is available through Women Make Movies,
Inc.--a "non-profit educational organization devoted to the development of a
strong feminist media which accurately reflects the lives of women."