Course Title: Journalism and Society: Cultural Context of African Media
Course Number: V54.9503.003
Instructor: Gadzekpo, Audrey
Activity: Lecture and Lab.
Credit Hours: 4
Semester: Fall

Course Description
The class will explore the socio-cultural and philosophical context of the media industry and the practice of mass communication in Africa in general, and Ghana in particular. This broad perspective will be examined against the background notion that the media do not function in a vacuum. Thus, students will examine how these contexts, informed by the dominant philosophies and macro-institutional practices of society, mitigate or even dictate the operations of the media. As a special focus, we will examine the significance of the liberalization of the airwaves in emerging democracies such as Ghana.

Desired outcomes
At the end of the semester students will:

- Be able to demonstrate background knowledge of African media in general, and the Ghanaian media environment in particular.
- Be familiar with various theoretical approaches to be able to critically examine Ghanaian media
- Be able to critique media texts and enhance their critical thinking and understanding of the interplay between media and the social world.

Assessment Components
- A short book/article review on the African media (15%)
- A paper of about 1500 words that evaluates a contemporary media event in Ghana in relation to the theories discussed during the course (30%)
- Class participation and presentations (15%)
- A final exam (40% of grades)

COURSE OUTLINE
Week 1
Introduction to the course: The shape of media in Africa, including a historical perspective.

Week 2
The nature of the media in Ghana, with a historical perspective.

Week 4
Mass media as cultural and socializing institutions: A general discussion on the reflective and reflexive nature of the media and the role of media in the process of social change.

Week 5
Mass media and democracy in Africa and Ghana. We will discuss the changing political context of media practice.

Week 6
Understanding the newsroom: A visit to selected newsrooms in Ghana. This will help put in context our next discussion on news room and media culture.

Week 7
Media culture and public interest – this includes discussions on what values determine selection of news and programming; also a revisiting of issues involving public interests, community interests, etc.

Week 8
Economics of the Media Industry. We will examine how economic and business considerations affect the operations of media and determine media content.

Week 9
Contemporary Broadcasting: We will discuss the emergence and role of commercial FM stations in Ghana.

Week 10
The other tiers of broadcasting. We will look at public service broadcasting and community radio.

Week 11
New Media and the effect of globalization. We discuss growing trends in the context of global media influences.

Week 12
Media and popular culture. Discussions will examine the notion of popular culture and media role in shaping popular culture, particularly music and film.

Week 13
Week Critiquing the media: We will watch and critique a film together in class.

Week 14
Final perspectives on audience and reception/ media effects on society. This discussion will focus more on the audience in the context of the larger discussions we have had all semester long.

Week 15: Final exam
READING LIST

1. On Ghana and Africa Media


Yankah, Kwesi. Language, the Mass Media and Democracy in Ghana. (Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences Annual Lecture in the Humanities, 2004).


2. On Media Culture in General


