

## Reading the Media Instructions

The purpose of this learning opportunity is to think critically about media content and its social meaning, and to apply sociological concepts to understand media messages.

To complete this assignment, you first need to identify a short example of media content. This may be a video clip from television or a movie, an audio clip from a CD or the radio, an article or image from a newspaper or magazine, or an excerpt from a book or webpage. Your example should be about 5 minutes in length; if it is from a broadcast medium, it should last 5 minutes, and if it is from a print medium, it should be something that can be read in 5 minutes. Choose your example carefully so that you can provide a meaningful analysis.

Next, you should consider the *sociological* meaning of your example of media content. In other words, what can we infer from your example about the social conditions that produced the content and that gives meaning to the content. Can we understand something about ownership of the media from this content? About how the media portray social statuses and roles? About how the media frame particular issues? About the use of language and images to influence how people think? Derive a clear message from your content, and hone the message so you can deliver it in about 7 minutes.

Note that you are not discussing the topic of the article or report; rather, you are considering HOW the article covers the topic, and what that can tell us about society. For example, if you find an article about a fire at a nightclub, your report will not be about a club that caught fire, nor about fires or nightclubs. Rather, you might consider how the topic is reported. Perhaps the nightclub is in a wealthy neighborhood and attracts an elite clientele; consider the language the article uses to report on this event. Perhaps they report it as a tragedy, whereas if the fire is in a club located in an industrial neighborhood, with a working class clientele, the article may report it as unfortunate, but use words that hint that the people deserved it for spending a night in a sinful locale. This is an example of framing; how the perceptions of the reporter frames the way he/she reports the news, and in turn influences how readers and viewers perceive the event.

On the day your are assigned to do your analysis, bring your example of media content to share with the class. If you have a video or DVD, we can show it on the smart cart, and if you have printed material, bring enough copies for everyone (currently 18 students and one for the professor). Your presentation will last 15 minutes, which includes 5 minutes to show the content, about 7 minutes of analysis, and 3 minutes for questions from classmates.