

Media and Screen Studies (MSCR)

MSCR 1000. Media and Screen Studies at Northeastern. (1 Hour)

Intended for freshmen media and screen studies majors and combined majors. Introduces students to the liberal arts in general. Offers students an opportunity to become familiar with media and screen studies as a major discipline; to develop the academic skills necessary to succeed (analytical ability and critical thinking); to become grounded in the culture and values of the university community (including advising); and to develop interpersonal skills—in short, to become familiar with all the skills needed to become a successful university student.

MSCR 1100. Film 101. (4 Hours)

Focuses on the ways in which cinematic language and representations have developed since the late-nineteenth century, how representations of human difference vary in distinct cultural contexts, and how particular filmmakers and historical/national movements have challenged certain representations and ideologies. This range of representations and discourses includes blackface performance and other racist tropes, ethnographic studies of indigenous people as “exotic” curiosities, films noir that demonize independent women, postwar Italian neorealism’s revolutionary focus on the plight of the poor, films by and about marginalized ethnicities in the U.S. and the global south, banned films that highlight the condition of women in post-revolution Iran, and contemporary Hollywood’s treatment of homosexuality and masculinity.

Attribute(s): NUpath Difference/Diversity

MSCR 1220. Media, Culture, and Society. (4 Hours)

Introduces the study of media, including print, radio, film, television, and digital/computer products. Explores the ideological, industrial, political, and social contexts that impact everyday engagements with media. To accomplish this, students examine how media products are developed, how technological changes impact the production and consumption of media, how political processes are influenced by media, how people interpret and interact with media content, and how media influence cultural practices and daily life.

Attribute(s): NUpath Interpreting Culture, NUpath Societies/Institutions

MSCR 1230. Introduction to Film Production. (4 Hours)

Offers an introduction to production that blends theory and practice of film/video production through an examination of exemplary works, aesthetic strategies, production techniques, and the dynamic relationship between media makers, subjects, viewers, and technology. Offers students an opportunity to gain fundamental moving-image fluency using widely accessible media production tools including camcorders, mobile phones, and digital single-lens-reflex cameras.

Attribute(s): NUpath Creative Express/Innov, NUpath Interpreting Culture

MSCR 1320. Media and Social Change. (4 Hours)

Explores media’s role in movements for social, economic, and cultural change. Specifically examines how people use media technologies to organize themselves and communicate their message to wider audiences in order to achieve social change. As a way to develop and improve ethical reasoning, students are asked to think about the accountability of media institutions and actions of groups and individuals who use media technologies and tactics in the name of social change.

Attribute(s): NUpath Ethical Reasoning

MSCR 1420. Media History. (4 Hours)

Examines the historical relationships between media, culture, and society with a focus on the role of media technologies as tools of communication. Emphasizes the broad social and cultural conditions that shape media and the ways in which people experience culture and understand meaning. Introduces the concept of mediation to analyze how different forms of communication have emerged in different historical moments. Critically examines past interactions between media and culture, and also examines the emergence of historically specific conceptions of audience, identity, content, industry, information, perception, and so forth.

MSCR 1990. Elective. (1-4 Hours)

Offers elective credit for courses taken at other academic institutions. May be repeated without limit.

MSCR 2160. Narrative Filmmaking. (4 Hours)

Introduces narrative filmmaking without synch sound. Offers students an opportunity to create several short projects without dialogue. The successful student leaves the course with a portfolio of work, a basic knowledge of video cameras, and one editing software program (either Avid or Final Cut Pro). Focuses on storytelling through visuals.

Attribute(s): NUpath Creative Express/Innov

MSCR 2220. Understanding Media. (4 Hours)

Designed to give students a foundation in the theories and methods of analysis in cultural and media studies. Positioned between the introductory MSCR classes and the higher-level theory classes. Offers students an opportunity to learn the how and why of media and cultural studies, focusing on the foundational assumptions, theories, and methods of the discipline.

Prerequisite(s): MSCR 1220 (may be taken concurrently) with a minimum grade of D-

Attribute(s): NUpath Interpreting Culture

MSCR 2255. New Media Workshop. (4 Hours)

In New Media Workshop, students learn foundational tools and techniques of new media production with a focus on the cultural and expressive implications of using new media forms, including hypertext, games, maps, augmented reality, and virtual reality. Students create a portfolio of projects to explore and refine the relationship of form and of content in new media. Topics include nonlinear storytelling, play and games, place-based storytelling, interactivity, and immersion.

MSCR 2300. Television: Text and Context. (4 Hours)

Introduces students to critical television studies. Topics include visual language (use of image, music, graphics, editing, and sound); narrative structure; and genre. Specific critical approaches include semiotics, narrative and genre analysis, feminist analysis, and ideological analysis of representation.

Attribute(s): NUpath Interpreting Culture

MSCR 2325. Global Media. (4 Hours)

Covers global dynamics of media and media systems. Specifically seeks to introduce students to the nuances of globalization and cultural performance through media structures. Introduces a wide variety of topics that fall in the intersection between globalization and media and the ways in which they operate socially and culturally. The course focuses broadly on understanding—in both theoretical and practical ways—how and why global media function as they do and how they contribute to knowledge formation and social justice within various cultural contexts.

Attribute(s): NUpath Difference/Diversity, NUpath Societies/Institutions

MSCR 2330. Film Genres. (4 Hours)

Examines a number of foundational texts on genre analysis. Addresses how and why films are classified according to particular iconographies, tropes, and narrative structures and the ways in which audiences coalesce around and appropriate particular genres for building communities. Studies some of the most iconic of genres—the Western (the mythologized and preindustrial past), film noir (the present time of industrial and postindustrial capitalism and urbanization), and science fiction (the imagined future)—from their origins; through their classical period; and, ultimately, to generic revision, self-reflexivity, hybridity, and parody.

Attribute(s): NUpath Interpreting Culture

MSCR 2335. Race and Social Justice in American Film. (4 Hours)

Offers an in-depth analysis of and reflection upon films and how they influence our perceptions of race in the United States. Examines how race and its representation shapes the development, production, distribution, and marketing of American documentaries and dramas. Uses screenings, readings, lectures, discussions, and writing to explore the power of films to reflect and reinforce long-standing ideologies of race and analyze how traditionally underrepresented groups have historically shaped counter-narratives.

Attribute(s): NUpath Difference/Diversity

MSCR 2336. American Film and Culture. (4 Hours)

Surveys the rise of American film from the late nineteenth century to the present. Examines key films, directors, major themes, and film forms and techniques. Includes lectures, screenings, and discussions. Students who do not meet course prerequisites may seek permission of instructor.

Attribute(s): NUpath Interpreting Culture

MSCR 2337. True Crime Media. (4 Hours)

Analyzes the narrative conventions of the true crime genre and explores the historical and cultural origins of true crime as a storytelling mode. Examines the industry conditions that affect true crime coverage and analyzes the social and political dynamics that shape and are shaped by true crime narratives in commercial media.

Attribute(s): NUpath Interpreting Culture

MSCR 2391. Character, Conflict, and Dialogue. (4 Hours)

Focuses on practical ways to write dimensional characters, drive story conflict, and craft authentic dialogue in screenwriting. Introduces techniques to shape characters by specifically exploring the internal world of the character wherein they may either face or resist conflict, deal with or deny unexpected change, and embrace or abandon meaningful relationships. Covers the creation of a detailed character biography, compelling backstory, and psychological profile for each major character in order to believably inform their conscious and unconscious actions and behavior. Explores various dialogue techniques with which a character may express themselves tied directly to the character's life experiences, personality, outlook, and behavior.

MSCR 2450. Sound Cultures. (4 Hours)

Explores the intersection of sound, media, and culture. Introduces students to theories and methods to analyze media technologies, cultural practices, and politics of sound. Examines how considerations of power shape the ways people create, amplify, and use sound in media, with an ear toward identity, representation, and complex relationships of technology and culture. Engages a variety of sound media, sonic cultural practices, and sound technologies through a variety of in-class activities and projects. Offers students an opportunity to apply these ideas to highly relevant, real-world personal, political, and cultural questions about sound, media, and power in everyday life.

Attribute(s): NUpath Interpreting Culture

MSCR 2455. Disinformation and Other Media Disorders. (4 Hours)

Examines the long history of new media that have been said to threaten existing social orders—from 18th-century pamphlets to Nazi propaganda films and astrology columns to generative AI. Illuminates the central role that media genres, technologies, practices, and institutions have played in creating the modern category of “society” itself. Explores the relationship between media and private life, markets, and the state using a diverse set of case studies. Canonical and contemporary theories introduce key concepts ranging from stereotypes, ideology, and publicity to moral panic, agnotology, and disinformation.

Attribute(s): NUpath Societies/Institutions

MSCR 2505. Digital Feminisms. (4 Hours)

Explores the unique ways that feminist activism and theory are impacted by the increasing digital nature of our world. From hashtags to Tumblr, feminists are using digital tools and platforms to aid in the pursuit of social justice. Offers students an opportunity to develop a timeline that traces feminists' engagement with the Internet, new media, and technological innovations from the late seventies to the present. Examines the strengths and challenges that the digital world creates for feminist engagement. MSCR 2505 and WMNS 2505 are cross-listed.

Attribute(s): NUpath Creative Express/Innov, NUpath Interpreting Culture

MSCR 2600. Cloud, Closet, (Drop)Box. (4 Hours)

Explores the multiple and complicated ways in which our lives and ways of thinking are impacted by what things we decide to keep and how we organize access to them, i.e., storage, defining media as technologies that help organize information. Uses readings, podcasts, short films, and TV shows to examine storage to understand the emergence of the cloud and other contemporary media “containers.” Considers what the future of storage holds as individuals and institutions try to find space and time to store and retrieve our data, memories, clothes, food, and more.

Prerequisite(s): ENGW 1102 with a minimum grade of C or ENGW 1111 with a minimum grade of C or ENGW 1113 with a minimum grade of C or ENGW 1114 with a minimum grade of C

Attribute(s): NUpath Writing Intensive

MSCR 2895. Film Analysis. (4 Hours)

Introduces the ways in which films are produced, marketed, and distributed, along with the basic elements of film grammar, from shot construction to editing to sound. Offers students an opportunity to learn how film analysis is conducted, including an introduction to the study of film genre, film history, and film theory. Covers basic concepts regarding the relationship between film and culture, including national and regional identity; the relationship between a film “text” and the audience; and the relationship between film and other forms of cultural production such as art, literature, music, and theatre. Aims to provide a nuanced understanding of a variety of cinematic works as products of specific cultures, times, and places.

Attribute(s): NUpath Interpreting Culture

MSCR 2990. Elective. (1-4 Hours)

Offers elective credit for courses taken at other academic institutions. May be repeated without limit.

MSCR 2991. Research in Media and Screen Studies. (1-4 Hours)

Offers an opportunity to conduct introductory-level research or creative endeavors under faculty supervision.

MSCR 3330. Documentary Film Ethics. (4 Hours)

Explores the history and style of documentary cinema, focusing on the ethics and social impact of various documentary techniques. Introduces theories and methods to analyze and evaluate the ethical dimensions of documentary filmmaking and viewership. Explores how ethical considerations shape the aesthetic choices that documentary filmmakers make and how these choices relate to justice, fairness, and the rights and responsibilities of viewers and filmed subjects. Through discussions of various documentaries, offers students an opportunity to apply these ideas to highly relevant and real-world personal, social, political, historical, and economic questions and situations that are featured in these films.

Prerequisite(s): ENGW 1102 with a minimum grade of C or ENGW 1111 with a minimum grade of C or ENGW 1113 with a minimum grade of C or ENGW 1114 with a minimum grade of C

Attribute(s): NUpath Ethical Reasoning, NUpath Writing Intensive

MSCR 3389. Screenwriting. (4 Hours)

Approaches the unique narrative form of the dramatic short film, with the goal of having students produce a short film screenplay (under twenty minutes in length) which could eventually be shot. Takes students through the storytelling process, from conception to visualization, dramatization, characterization, and dialogue, ending in a project which should reflect the student's own personal voice and unique vision. Offers students an opportunity to work on many writing exercises involving free association, visualizations, and character explorations, and to evaluate and critique each other's work in a workshop setting.

Attribute(s): NUpath Creative Express/Innov

MSCR 3390. Screenwriting: Feature Films. (4 Hours)

Features an array of screenwriting tools and techniques used in the process of developing ideas into screenplays for feature films. Offers instruction in writing highly effective scenes; building compelling and dimensional characters; crafting authentic dialogue; and a variety of methods to add texture, depth, and meaning to a story. Students develop an outline for a feature film that they refine through ongoing in-class workshops based on informed and supportive collaboration. The cumulative nature of the course encourages students to learn, practice, and demonstrate a wide range of foundational skills they can continue to build upon to finish their feature film screenplay and apply to any future screenplay ideas.

MSCR 3392. Gender and Film. (4 Hours)

Examines the representation of gender in film. Uses concepts and research from film and media studies to investigate the influences and consequences of gender representations in film. WMNS 3392 and MSCR 3392 are cross-listed.

Attribute(s): NUpath Difference/Diversity

MSCR 3420. Digital Media Culture. (4 Hours)

Investigates social and cultural dynamics emerging parallel to the spread of digital technologies, from the 1960s to the present. Analyzes the impact of technologies (such as computers, mobile phones, and video games) on media products and practices (such as remix culture, social media, and surveillance). Offers students an opportunity to develop the skills that are necessary to critically examine and write about digital media content and the technologies necessary for their consumption.

Prerequisite(s): ENGW 1111 with a minimum grade of C or ENGW 1102 with a minimum grade of C or ENGW 1113 with a minimum grade of C or ENGW 1114 with a minimum grade of C

Attribute(s): NUpath Writing Intensive

MSCR 3422. Media Audiences. (4 Hours)

Explores how mass media audiences interpret and actively use media messages and products as listeners, readers, and consumers. Examines the different stages of ethnographic research, audience meanings and interpretations, pleasure and fandom, the role of media in everyday life, and the use of ethnographic research methods in communication studies. Students who do not meet course prerequisites may seek permission of instructor.

Prerequisite(s): ENGW 1102 with a minimum grade of C or ENGW 1111 with a minimum grade of C or ENGW 1113 with a minimum grade of C or ENGW 1114 with a minimum grade of C

Attribute(s): NUpath Writing Intensive

MSCR 3437. Media and Identity. (4 Hours)

Examines representations of identity (race, gender, sexuality, and class) in the media, investigates their influences, and considers their repercussions. The class especially focuses on understanding identity as a construction, rather than as inherently "natural." Broadly, we discuss the relationship between identity and media representations; more specifically, we look at cultural texts, sites, and practices where the existing racial categories mix, merge, and/or rub up against each other in ways that problematize the naturalness of essentialized identities. Students who do not meet course prerequisites may seek permission of instructor.

Prerequisite(s): MSCR 1220 with a minimum grade of D-

Attribute(s): NUpath Difference/Diversity

MSCR 3446. Documentary Production. (4 Hours)

Focuses on single-camera video production in service of crafting documentary stories. Offers students an opportunity to learn nonfiction storytelling by examining documentary history and theory as well as participating in screenings, workshops, and hands-on projects designed to prepare them to take an idea and develop it into a final five-to-seven-minute final documentary short. Requires supplemental technical assignments for students with no previous production experience.

Attribute(s): NUpath Creative Express/Innov

MSCR 3450. Directing Video. (4 Hours)

Students will deconstruct existing fiction films and scripted television/web examples and, in their own pieces, study dramatic structure and implement tone across all technical departments. Students will practice the director's role in communicating vision through casting, scene study, mise-en-scène and post-production, including picture editing, sound design, musical score, graphics and color correction.

MSCR 3600. Film Theory. (4 Hours)

Explores the movement from modernist concern with the art object to postmodern concerns with subjectivity and spectatorship, race, and gender. Requires a paper using formalist analysis and later revision using cultural analysis, psychoanalysis, philosophy of perception, race studies. Also offers students an opportunity to learn research methods in cinema studies and perform a metacritical review of their own work and to present their findings from film journals, databases, Web sites, blogs. Presents the relation of perception to reality; levels of representational realness; reception theory; digitalization in its relation to movement and meaning. Seeks to enable students to recognize structures and problems for analysis in a film and to apply appropriate theoretical models to analyze these structures.

Prerequisite(s): ENGW 1102 with a minimum grade of C or ENGW 1111 with a minimum grade of C or ENGW 1113 with a minimum grade of C or ENGW 1114 with a minimum grade of C

Attribute(s): NUpath Interpreting Culture, NUpath Writing Intensive

MSCR 3700. Queer Media. (4 Hours)

Examines queer representation within media, ranging from film and television to social networks and video games. Offers students an opportunity to read, present, and write about theories of difference from a diverse range of perspectives within the interdisciplinary fields of queer theory and media studies.

Prerequisite(s): ENGW 1102 with a minimum grade of C or ENGW 1111 with a minimum grade of C or ENGW 1113 with a minimum grade of C or ENGW 1114 with a minimum grade of C

Attribute(s): NUpath Difference/Diversity, NUpath Writing Intensive

MSCR 3920. Topics in Film Studies. (4 Hours)

Focuses on a specific issue and topic in film studies. Course content varies from semester to semester.

MSCR 3973. Special Topics in Media and Screen Studies. (4 Hours)

Addresses issues in communication and media as well as developments in the production of television and video. Course content may vary from year to year. Students who do not meet course prerequisites may seek permission of instructor. May be repeated up to four times.

MSCR 3990. Elective. (1-4 Hours)

Offers elective credit for courses taken at other academic institutions. May be repeated without limit.

MSCR 4208. TV History. (4 Hours)

Explores U.S. network television in the “precable” era, which ranges from 1949 to the 1980s. Studies television programming through its historical, cultural, and industrial contexts. The media studies component of the class considers topics such as aesthetics, narrative, genre, and representation.

Prerequisite(s): ENGW 1102 with a minimum grade of C or ENGW 1111 with a minimum grade of C or ENGW 1113 with a minimum grade of C or ENGW 1114 with a minimum grade of C

Attribute(s): NUpath Writing Intensive

MSCR 4602. Media and Democracy. (4 Hours)

Introduces the role of the media in democratic societies. Explores a number of important questions, including what is democracy? What types of information do citizens of a democracy need in order to participate in the governance of their lives? In our increasingly digital world, where do political discussions happen? Are the media responsible for keeping the public informed? Who constitutes the “public”? Are we citizens? Consumers? Producers? Who decides? In order to address these questions, students have the opportunity to become conversant in a variety of modern and contemporary theoretical and critical perspectives on the relationship between the media, democracy, and what has come to be known as the public sphere. Students who do not meet course prerequisites may seek permission of instructor.

Prerequisite(s): MSCR 3423 with a minimum grade of D- or MSCR 3435 with a minimum grade of D- or MSCR 3437 with a minimum grade of D-

Attribute(s): NUpath Ethical Reasoning, NUpath Societies/Institutions

MSCR 4623. Media and Screen Studies Capstone. (4 Hours)

Focuses on key concepts and ideas from media and screen studies to prepare students to complete a final project in a format of the student’s choice: research paper, short narrative film, documentary, podcast, photo essay, or short film screenplay.

Prerequisite(s): MSCR 1220 with a minimum grade of D- or COMM 1220 with a minimum grade of D-

Attribute(s): NUpath Capstone Experience

MSCR 4970. Junior/Senior Honors Project 1. (1-4 Hours)

Focuses on in-depth project in which a student conducts research or produces a product related to the student’s major field. Combined with Junior/Senior Project 2 or college-defined equivalent for 8 credit honors project. May be repeated without limit.

MSCR 4990. Elective. (1-4 Hours)

Offers elective credit for courses taken at other academic institutions. May be repeated without limit.

MSCR 4991. Research. (4 Hours)

Offers an opportunity to conduct research under faculty supervision.

Attribute(s): NUpath Integration Experience

MSCR 4992. Directed Study. (1-4 Hours)

Offers independent work under the direction of members of the department on a chosen topic. Course content depends on instructor. May be repeated without limit.

MSCR 4994. Internship. (4 Hours)

Offers students an opportunity for internship work. May be repeated without limit.

Attribute(s): NUpath Integration Experience

MSCR 5300. Media and Technology Ethics. (4 Hours)

Studies technology ethics from the perspective of media and technology studies. Case studies raise specific issues such as selfhood, autonomy, privacy, as well as the implications of such technology for important moral concepts such as agency, responsibility, and privacy; inclusion and opportunity; surveillance and security; and truth, deliberation, public rationality, and disinformation. Offers students an opportunity to identify and distinguish ethical challenges particular to information and media technology.

Attribute(s): NUpath Ethical Reasoning

MSCR 6100. Digital Media: Theory and Practice. (4 Hours)

Introduces the practice of media making for graduate students with little to no experience producing media. Covers the foundational language of images, movement, editing, and sound by creating work in stand-alone media such as short fiction and documentary, serial (multipart) media, and sound editing for podcasting. Examines the theories of power and representation that are integral to media making. No previous experience with media production is necessary.

MSCR 6310. Critical Data Studies. (4 Hours)

Raises critical questions about how society and culture interact with data, acknowledging that data is at the core of our culture and social organization. Emphasizes how data is produced, circulated, and used in different ways, taking an interdisciplinary approach rooted in media studies critiques of technology and power. Case studies discuss what it means to locate the making and using of data within social relations of power, that is, to critically analyze data.

MSCR 6320. Digital Technologies and Global Society. (4 Hours)

Presents key empirical and conceptual foundations to provide tools to address the complex challenges that digital technologies pose in a global context of social relations of power. Emphasizes the origins of the contemporary internet in imperial and military history and explores alternative possibilities that never came to be realized. A series of case studies, drawn primarily from the Global South, analyze power dynamics to highlight the pressing ethical and political questions raised by cutting-edge technologies.

MSCR 6330. Democracy, Technology, and Equality. (4 Hours)

Considers via an interdisciplinary approach how the development and use of digital technology by different political actors shapes and transforms democratic societies. Uses case studies to emphasize debates about the type and quality of information in democracies, as well as concerns about polarization and a general fraying of social cohesion.

MSCR 6340. Race and Technology. (4 Hours)

Investigates how individual and collective beliefs about what it means to be a human of a particular race, ethnicity, or caste is reflected in contemporary and emergent technologies. From biometric scanners at the airport to social media interfaces, the tech tools people use every day are shaped by the sociocultural constructs of race and racial hierarchies, with an array of consequences. Grounded in the theories of communication and media studies, it is an expansive interdisciplinary investigation of how our understanding of who we are shapes what we create and how what we create, re-creates us.