

## THE MEDIAWATCH PROJECT

Gender and Media, Spring 2007

A little background: when we conceived of this program, we decided that it would be very productive and proactive to engage in a sustained media research project for the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the quarter. We are studying identity and media theory and engaging in the practice of making media messages. Now we want to combine all of these and see if we can present an up-to-date assessment of the state of gender portrayal in the mass media in the United States right now. We expect we will uncover some new trends and ideas but also will probably find evidence that some things have not changed too much since many of the studies that we have read were conducted. But we won't really know until you complete your Mediawatch projects!

**Who?** Teams of Four (make a liaison that supports your interests and complements your strengths).

**What?** A three part Media-Monitoring project that will combine quantitative research, qualitative research and interpretation, and creative re-vision.

**When?** Final presentations in Week 10 (W-F, regular class times). Each team will have 45 minutes.

### Part One

**Selecting a sample.** You and your team first need to identify your subject of study. You may choose a genre (children's cartoons, the soap opera, reality television etc.), a series (the full season of a current television series; this also would involve a genre study), or a discrete time period on one network (Fridays 7-10 on Fox or Thursday night on ABC etc.) as your focus. This project is designed to study and analyze repeating patterns in media so a random sample of Hollywood films would not be eligible. Your decision should be informed by several questions: a. why is this a good choice for gender studies?, b. do you have access to the media materials i.e., can you easily record programming for your study, and c. do you have a research question to support your selection i.e., what might you learn through your research and study? **Your team will need to write up a rationale for your choice that you will announce in class on Wednesday, May 2 and further develop for inclusion in your Research Plan Outline.** You will need to meet outside of class to accomplish this and to write up the rationale collaboratively.

### Part Two

**Developing a Research Methodology** During the next two weeks we will be completing a pilot study as a kind of rehearsal for our Mediawatch projects. Drawing from the findings and methodology of the 2005 Global Media Monitoring

Project we will be conducting our own monitoring of broadcast news on April 30, 2007 (more on this in a separate hand-out). So you will have some very relevant experience with one approach to a Mediawatch. There are other ways to proceed, however, including content analysis. With your team you will need to devise a systematic method for coding your sample. Your research methodology should include a research question, a method of sampling (a set of elements to code), a practical discussion of how and when you will monitor your media programming, and how you will analyze your data. Please review our pilot project on monitoring news and an additional handout from *Gender Setting: New Agendas for Media Monitoring and Advocacy* (Gallagher, 2001) before you begin to finalize your research methodology. In addition some team members should survey what other media researchers have written about similar kinds of programs and be prepared to incorporate these other perspectives into your Research Plan (this would involve some library research as well as on line research). **Your team must present a Research Plan Outline that includes your research methodology to the entire class on Wednesday, May 9. A written copy is also due at this time.**

### **Part Three**

**Conducting the Media-Monitoring** Your sample size represents an important decision as you and your team will be conducting the coding and analysis during the last 5 weeks of the quarter. Your sample should be reasonably exhaustive and inclusive. "Exhaustive" or "inclusive" are relative terms. If you have selected a genre study, you will need to propose how many hours of soap operas or cartoons etc. that you intend to watch, code and analyze. If you select a series, a full season would be the minimum (obviously, unless you were already recording a season of X this year, you may need to do a 2006 season of a popular series that is available on DVD through Netflix or for purchase or even on line). If you are proposing a block of time of a network, you will need to figure out how you could make a selection of material for review. **Your timetable for the actual media monitoring (when, what, how long) should be included in your Research Plan Outline due on Wednesday, May 9.** Your faculty and peers will help you assess if your plan is "exhaustive" and "inclusive."

### **Part Four**

**Analyzing Your Findings** At the very least the analysis of your findings will involve tabulating all of your codings and determining a way to present these numerical values in your final report. You may need a bit of help with some of this. Faculty can help as can the friendly folks at the QuaSR Center, Lib. 2304 (Quantitative and Symbolic Reasoning Center). You will probably need to figure out a way to calculate and present percentages, you might have the need to determine some averages or mean values, utilize tables or graphs and or even utilize some other quantitative strategies. We do not expect you to do high-level statistics but at least

your team needs to develop a way to keep track of your findings, to make simple comparisons, and to generalize your results for your audience (the Gender and Media class!).

### **Part Five**

**Framing Your Qualitative Analysis** In the News Media-Monitoring pilot studies you also coded news stories that might be useful for future study. See the link on our website to an example of Qualitative News Analysis for the 2005 Global Media Watch Project. Read this before you develop your own qualitative area of inquiry. Some research questions are not easily quantifiable but rather, consist of observations about what would be good for future studies or provide a more nuanced approach to your subject. We want you to feel free to include qualitative thinking in your own study but of course you will need to determine how you would like to focus this based on the nature of the media materials you are monitoring. What additional questions are you interested in and how can you observe these in your sample? You will present these findings at your final presentation and also, use them for **Part Six Re-Visioning**.

### **Part Six**

**Re-Visioning** Part of your final presentation will be a digital video production that you and your team produce. Your team must complete **one** of the following:

1. Media Deconstruction: produce a short video (5 min. max) that utilizes aspects of your quantitative and qualitative analysis to visually deconstruct one or two examples from your study. You will use "appropriated" footage from your monitoring to creatively help the viewer understand your observations.
2. Different Approaches: produce a short video (5 min. max) that provides an alternative version of one aspect of your media monitoring material. Parody, role-reversals, satire, and other strategies that you devise would be appropriate here. Format: miniDV or DVD.

### **Part Seven**

**Presenting Your Study** During Week Ten you and your team will present your findings orally and visually to the entire class. Your presentation must include

1. your research methodology,
2. your findings,
3. your quantitative and qualitative analysis,
4. your re-visioning experiment and
5. time for feedback from the class.

Total time: 45 minutes including Q and A. In addition your team will submit a collaborative written report (typed and double-spaced) of your Mediawatch project that summarizes the above essentials. This is due at the time of your presentation. Be sure to use this opportunity to demonstrate your engagement with the theoretical materials that we have covered this quarter (especially the written texts).

**Due Dates at a Glance:**

**Wednesday, May 2** Present and turn in Rationale for Study

**Wednesday, May 9**

1. Present and turn in Research Plan Outline (which includes revised rationale, research methodology, timeline for media monitoring.) Typed and double-spaced.
2. Present your team's News Media-Monitoring findings.

**Wednesday, May 30 and Thursday, June 1** Group conferences with Faculty

**Wednesday, June 6-Friday, June 8:** Final Presentations and written reports