In this course we will explore the role of women as producers and as consumers of the media. The primary emphasis will be on print - women's magazines and feminist alternatives - but frequent reference will be made to other forms. The first section of the course will deal with representations of women in the mainstream media and with various strategies for "reading" these. By addressing specific issues - women in the workforce, women as mothers, women organizing - we will investigate how the media construct both reality and what it means to be female. We will consider recent suggestions that women use the media to understand and, to a certain degree, to resist cultural definitions.

The issue of ownership and control of the media will provide the link between the first and second half of the course. Based largely on analysis by women working in publishing, as well as in radio and television, we will take a brief look at the media as corporate industries within a capitalist and patriarchal society.

From there, we will move on to challenges and alternatives to the mainstream media. We will review the history of women's efforts to establish media of their own. And, we will focus in particular on contemporary feminist publishing, the presses and periodicals (more than 500 last year in North America alone) that make up the women in print network. Through discussion of issues which have arisen in the process of developing an independent feminist press, we will consider both the possibilities and the problems of alternative media. Two panel discussions with women working in mainstream and alternative broadcast media, will help us draw further comparisons between the two forums.

Our sources for the course as a whole will be mainly North American, but international material and references will be included whenever possible.

REQUIRED READING

The required reading will consist of a package of reprints drawn from various sources. In addition, back issues of Media Report to Women (a bi-monthly summary of media analysis and action) will be placed on reserve and the instructor will make available to students her collection of feminist periodicals.

ASSIGNMENTS

The grade for the course will be based on a journal (25%), a presentation or short paper (15%), a final project or essay of 8-10 pages (50%), and participation (10%). Collaborative work will be welcome.

Prerequisites: 60 credit hours