

Instructor
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Office Hours
Thursday: 3-6 (sign-up)
And by Appointment



Graduate Assistants
Erin Ash
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Course Overview:

Aside from working and sleeping, individuals in the United States spend more time consuming media than any other single activity. By the time the average person reaches the age of 65, he or she will have spent over six full years of life watching television – not to mention the additional time spent reading newspapers and magazines, listening to radio, using the Internet, and playing videogames. Given the centrality of media in the lives of most people, it is imperative that we understand and critically explore the variety of ways in which we perceive and are influenced by media messages. The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the study of the effects of media on individuals and on society. This course will overview a broad range of media theories that have examined media as a social force, that have explored factors that affect individuals' selection of and perceptions of media messages, and that have studied how media affect viewers' attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. These theories will be used to examine a variety of different types of content, including media violence, portrayals of race and gender, politics, advertising, and entertainment, among others.

Course Goals:

- 1) To increase your understanding of the role of media in the lives of individuals and society
- 2) To enhance your awareness of how media use and media content affects your own and others' attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors
- 3) To increase your knowledge of media-effects theories that help explain and predict media influence
- 4) To assist you in developing greater media literacy skills and critical viewing of media content, and a more nuanced understanding of how various forms of media function in your own lives and in society

Readings:

- Harris, R. J. (2009). *A cognitive psychology of mass communication* (5th ed.). New York: Taylor & Francis.
 - Additional readings (articles / essays)
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Evaluation:

There are two grading distributions in the course: one that includes quizzes, and one that does not. During the last week of the semester, each student individually will have the opportunity to indicate which distribution that he/she wants applied to his/her course grade. The grade distribution that includes the quizzes will be employed for students who do not indicate their preference by 5 p.m. on the final day of class. Final grades in the class will be determined on the basis of the percentage of total points possible for the grading distribution employed.

Grading Distribution that Includes Quizzes	Grading Distribution that Does Not Include Quizzes
3 Tests: 60%	3 Tests: 90%
X Quizzes: 30%	2 Media Assignments: 8%
2 Media Assignments: 8%	2 Research Participants: 2% (1% each)
2 Research Participations: 2% (1% each)	2 Research Participants: 2% (1% each)

In this course: A = 92-100%; A- = 90-91; B+ = 88-89; B = 82-87; B- = 80-81; and so forth...

Components of Evaluation:

Tests: Three multiple choice tests (30-40 research findings, and application of theories to actual and hypothetical media examples. Questions on the test will be taken from course content and from the readings. The final test is not cumulative. Please note that all three tests must be taken to receive a passing grade in this course. The final test will be given on the last day of class. However, an exam time is reserved during exam week. Should the university be closed for any reason (e.g. inclement weather), the third test for everyone in the class will be given during the exam-week time. Please be aware of this and adjust your travel schedule accordingly. Should it be necessary that you take the third test other than on the last day of class, you must let me know NO LATER than the day of the second test. Students who, for legitimate reasons, must take the final test other than the last day of class will take the test during the scheduled time of exam week provided that they let us know no later than the day of the second test.

Media Assignments: Two media assignments are to be completed during the three test periods in the class. The media assignments must be posting during different test periods—in other words, **you cannot post two assignments during the same test period.** The final posting for the 3rd exam period is due on the last day of class for everyone – regardless of when the final test is taken. Otherwise, you are free to choose the test periods during which time you would like to post (i.e., 1st and 2nd, 1st and 3rd, 2nd and 3rd). These assignments require you to locate an example of media content (e.g., video, magazine ad, web page, etc.) that illustrates theories, concepts, models, or arguments under consideration in the class, to provide a written explanation of how your example is relevant to course topics, and to post your example and written explanation to a class bulletin board on Angel. For example, a student may submit a magazine advertisement to illustrate gender roles, providing a written explanation of how their advertisement illustrates research pertaining to media consumption and eating disorders. Alternatively, a student may submit a video of a clip from a reality-based program, providing a written explanation of

how the interaction of the characters in the program, as well as the uncertainty of the outcome, illustrate entertainment theories based on perceived disposition of characters and outcome uncertainty.

Requirements for this assignment:

- Your posting needs to include an example from media. If you have any questions as to whether or not your example is appropriate, please ask!
- Your explanation of the relevance of your media example must clearly reference concepts, theories, or arguments discussed in class or in the readings. In other words, it must be evident that you are in this class – a posting that could have been made prior to taking this class or reading the materials in the class would not be relevant.
- Your explanation must be in your own words. If you reference some other work (e.g., the text book, readings, etc.), you must use proper citation formatting.
- Your explanation should be at least 100 words in length.
- Your explanation must use correct grammar and spelling.
- Your explanation and media example should be respectful -- avoiding offensive or inappropriate content or reactions.
- You should avoid using the same clip as used in previous postings. Consequently, the earlier you post, the greater selection you will have.
- Within a given test period, your postings are due no later than the date/time that the test is given. After that, the posting to the bulletin board for that test period will be disabled. You are encouraged to post your assignment early than the absolute deadline, however.
- **Only two postings will be counted as part of the course grade. If more than two are erroneously completed, only the first two will be counted.**

This assignment will be evaluated both in terms of how relevant the example is to the concepts and theories covered in the course, as well as in terms of the accuracy, completeness, and clarity of the written explanation. Students are encouraged to post their media assignment at any time leading up to the due date. Reactions to classmates' postings are welcome and encouraged.

Quizzes: Unannounced quizzes will be given periodically throughout the semester. These quizzes will be very brief (e.g., approximately 5 questions), and they will pertain to materials covered during class and in the readings. These quizzes will typically be given at the end of class, though may be given at any time, including online. *If you are late to a class when a quiz has begun or if you leave a class early prior to when a quiz is administered, you will not have the opportunity to take the quiz.* **The two lowest quiz grades will be dropped; Make-up quizzes will not be given.** Consequently, you may miss two quizzes without it affecting your quiz score. So (for example), if there is an emergency of some sort that prevents you from taking a quiz, then you could be assured that this quiz will be dropped, as two quizzes are always dropped. However, if you've already missed two quizzes, then this situation will mean that three quizzes are then missed, but only two will be dropped. Please be reminded that it is your choice whether or not to include the quiz grades in your final score in the class. However, prior data in the course shows that students who take the quizzes (i.e., who attend class) score between 10-20 percentage points higher than students who miss quizzes.

Research Participation: Because this course pertains to research in media effects, you will have the opportunity to receive credit in the course by participating in ongoing research in the College of Communications or by completing an alternate assignment in lieu of a research participation opportunity. These opportunities will be discussed during class time when they arise. Please note that to earn this credit, you must either participate in a study or complete the alternate assignment associated

with the specific study by the due date given—late participation or assignments will not be available. Should more than two participation opportunities arise during the class, you will be given extra credit for participation beyond the two-participation requirements.

Course Policies:

Interactions in Class:

- Participation: Even though this is a large class, students are expected and encouraged to participate in class discussions. As the instructors for the course, we very much value and respect your contribution, feedback, and questions. Please know that your input will always be taken seriously -- we are here to help you, and we want for you to succeed. We also want to learn from your insights and contributions. So please participate -- we will all benefit!
- Avoiding Distractions: Because certain behaviors can be distracting for both students and the instructors, you are asked to refrain from the following (and similar) behaviors during class time: Using a cell phone (texting or calling), reading (books, magazines, etc.), working puzzles (crosswords, sudoku), sleeping, eating loudly, etc. These types of behaviors are distracting to other classmates, and they also make it difficult for the instructor to lead the class. Consequently, if you engage in these types of distracting behaviors, I will ask you to either refrain from doing the behavior or to leave the classroom so that you do not detract from the learning environment. If you are unable/unwilling to do either of these two options, the class will be dismissed and test/quiz questions that would have otherwise been taken from the course lecture will be taken entirely from the readings.

Attendance: It is expected that you attend every class meeting. There will be many concepts and issues covered in class that are not addressed in the readings. Please note that it is not sufficient only to read others' lecture notes or look at lecture slides without coming to class. Doing so will almost certainly reduce your mastery of the course materials. ***If you miss do miss a class, it is your responsibility to get notes and a review from a classmate. Please do not ask or expect the instructors to repeat materials covered in class because you were not there.***

Contact with Instructors:

- Should you have questions, concerns, or comments about any aspect of this class, you are more than welcome to visit the instructors during their office hours or during other arranged appointments. You should first arrange to meet with a graduate teaching assistant for the course, after which time you should feel free to meet with the professor if you continue to have questions/concerns/comments you would like to share.
- Should you be interested in “going over” your test, you need to save e-mailed information concerning the test sent by Schreyer Testing center. Then you should make an appointment with a graduate teaching assistant, bringing the e-mail from Schreyer with you, as well as your notes for the course. If, after this meeting, you continue to have questions, you should plan to meet with the professor.
- We will do our best to answer any e-mail within a reasonable period of time (e.g., 3 days). However, we request that you treat e-mail as professional correspondence (i.e., include salutations, appropriate subject lines, etc.). ***We will not respond to e-mail that is treated as casual correspondence (e.g., filled with typos, written as a phone text message, lacking identification of sender, using an abrupt/unprofessional tone, etc.).***
- Please note that all e-mails to graduate assistants and the professor should be sent via Angel. If you send a message from outside of Angel, we will kindly remind you to please resend the message from

within Angel. It goes without saying, then, that you should use your PSU e-mail address when corresponding with the instructors.

Missed/Late Work: Missed/late work is not an option in this class. The tests/quizzes are to be taken at the schedule times. Rides home, late nights, etc. do not constitute reasons for taking a test/quiz at alternate time. Deadlines for assignments are firm. Late assignments will receive no credit. Please do not ask for exceptions to these policies – doing so will result in our referring you to this section of the syllabus.

Changes in Grades: Changes to course grades will be made only when there is an error in recording the grade. Inevitably there will be people who are “close” (e.g., a point away). Opportunities for extra credit in the course are designed to address this very situation. Please do not ask the instructors to change a grade “because you are close,” “because you need it for your GPA,” etc. As is obvious, it is imperative that we treat all students equally in the course and make sure that any opportunities for improvement in the course be available to everyone.

Notification of Grade Errors: After each quiz, assignment, or test, students will be notified when the scores are posted on Angel. If there is any error in the recording of grades, students will have one week to notify the instructor of the course of this error. After one week, the scores are final and will not be changed. Consequently, it is important that each student check his/her scores as soon as their availability on Angel is announced.

Angel: Please be aware that every assignment, lesson, folder, and activity on Angel records log-in activity, including the time when the item was accessed by each student, and the IP address of the computer logging in. Consequently, all Angel activity is recorded by user, time/date, and location.

Academic Integrity: Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly and creative activity in an open, honest and responsible manner, free from fraud and deception, and is an educational objective of the College of Communications and the university. Cheating, including plagiarism, falsification of research data, using the same assignment for more than one class, turning in someone else's work, or passively allowing others to copy your work, will result in academic penalties at the discretion of the instructor, and may result in the grade of "XF" (failed for academic dishonesty) being put on your permanent transcript. In serious cases it could also result in suspension or dismissal from the university. As students studying communication, you should understand and avoid plagiarism (presenting the work of others as your own). A discussion of plagiarism, with examples, can be found at: <http://tlt.its.psu.edu/plagiarism/tutorial/>. The rules and policies regarding academic integrity should be reviewed by every student, and can be found online at: www.psu.edu/ufs/policies/47-00.html#49-20, and in the College of Communications document, "Academic Integrity Policy and Procedures." Any student with a question about academic integrity or plagiarism is strongly encouraged to discuss it with his or her instructor.

Note To Students With Disabilities: Penn State welcomes students with disabilities into the University's educational programs. If you have a disability-related need for reasonable academic adjustments in this course, contact the Office for Disability Services, ODS located in room 116 Boucke Building at 814-863-1807(V/TTY). For further information regarding ODS, please visit their web site at www.equity.psu.edu/ods/. Instructors should be notified as early in the semester as possible regarding the need for reasonable academic adjustments.

Additional Readings (in alphabetical order)

- Bartholomew, R. E. (1998, November). The martian panic sixty years later: What have we learned? *Skeptical Inquirer*, 22 (6). Available from <http://www.csicop.org/si/9811/martian.html>.
- Bushman, B. J., & Anderson, C. A. (2001). Media violence and the American public: Scientific facts versus media misinformation. *American Psychologist*, 56(6-7), 477-489. Available from CSA Psyarticles database.
- Campbell, S. W., & Ling, R. (2008). Effects of mobile communication. In. J. Bryant & M. B. Oliver (Eds.), *Media effects: Advances in theory and research* (3rd ed.) (pp. 592-606). New York: Routledge.
- Cantor, J. (2008). Fright reactions to mass media. In. J. Bryant & M. B. Oliver (Eds.), *Media effects: Advances in theory and research* (3rd ed.) (pp. 284-303). New York: Routledge.
- Goldstein, J. (1999). The attractions of violent entertainment. *Media Psychology*, 1, 271-282. Available from LEA Online database.
- Lee, K. M., Peng, W., & Park, N. (2008). Effects of computer/video games, and beyond. In. J. Bryant & M. B. Oliver (Eds.), *Media effects: Advances in theory and research* (3rd ed.) (pp. 551-556). New York: Routledge.
- Metzger, M. B. (2009). The study of media effects in the era of Internet communication. In R. Nabi & M. B. Oliver (Eds.), *Handbook of media processes and effects* (pp. 561-576). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Meyrowitz, J. (1999). Understandings of media. *et Cetera*, 56(1), 44-52. Available from Proquest database.
- Oliver, M. B. (2009). Entertainment theory. In R. Nabi & M. B. Oliver (Eds.), *Handbook of media processes and effects* (pp. 161-175). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Perloff, R. M. (2008). Mass media, social perception, and the third-person effect. In. J. Bryant & M. B. Oliver (Eds.), *Media effects: Advances in theory and research* (3rd ed.) (pp. 252-268). New York: Routledge.
- Postman, N. (1980, March). Television news narcosis. *The Nation*, 230, 245-246. Available from The Nation Archive database.
- Shrum, L. J., Burroughs, J. E., & Rindfleisch, A. (2005). Lifestyles of the rich and famous: Does television make us more materialistic? [Summary of Television's cultivation of material values. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 32, 473-479]. Available from <http://www.acrwebsite.org/>.
- Sunstein, C. (2001, June). Boycott the Daily Me! *Time Magazine*, 157(22). Available from <http://www.time.com/time/interactive/politics/undemocratic.html>
- Wilson, B. J., & Drogos, K. L. (2009). Entertainment theory. In R. Nabi & M. B. Oliver (Eds.), *Handbook of media processes and effects* (pp. 469-485). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Course Schedule and Readings*

H = Harris Text

AR = Additional Readings

Readings are due on the day that they are assigned.

Date	Topic	Readings
Tue, Aug 23	Introduction & Overview of Course	
Thu, Aug 25	War of the Worlds	H: Chapter 1 AR: Bartholomew
Tue, Aug 30	Medium Theory: No Sense of Place	AR: Meyrowitz
Thu, Sep 1	Medium Theory: Amusing Ourselves to	AR: Postman
Tue, Sep 6	Medium Theory (continued); Explanation of Media Assignment	
Thu, Sep 8	Medium Theory in the Land of the Internet	
Tue, Sep 13	Social Scientific Approaches to Media Influence	H: Pages 21-32 (in Chapter 2)
Thu, Sep 15	Popular Perceptions of Media Influence	H: Pages 32-44 (in Chapter 2) AR: Perloff
Tue, Sep 20	Uses and Gratifications & Entertainment Theory	H: Chapter 3 AR: Oliver
Thu, Sep 22	Uses and Gratifications & Entertainment Theory	
Tue, Sep 27	Wrap up/Review	
Thu, Sep 29	Test 1	
Tue, Oct 4	Children & Media	AR: Wilson
Thu, Oct 6	Children & Media	AR: Cantor
Tue, Oct 11	Media Violence – Effects	H: Chapter 9
Thu, Oct 13	Media Violence – Effects	AR: Bushman & Anderson
Tue, Oct 18	Media Violence & Enjoyment	AR: Goldstein
Thu, Oct 20	Media Violence & Enjoyment	
Tue, Oct 25	Wrap up/Review	
Thu, Oct 27	Test 2	
Tue, Nov 1	News and Politics	H: Chapter 7 & 8 AR: Sunstein
Thu, Nov 3	Mobile Communication	AR: Campbell & Ling
Tue, Nov 8	Internet Communication	AR: Metzger
Thu, Nov 10	Representation	H: Chapter 4
Tue, Nov 15	Sports	AR: Chapter 6
Thu, Nov 17	TBA	
Tue, Nov 22	Thanksgiving Break	
Thu, Nov 24	Thanksgiving Break	
Tue, Nov 29	Advertising & Persuasion	H: Chapter 5 AR: Shrum
Thu, Dec 1	Advertising & Persuasion (continued)	
Tue, Dec 6	Wrap up/Review	
Thu, Dec 8	Test 3	

* Every effort will be made to adhere to this class schedule. However, the instructor reserves the right to modify the schedule due to the inclusion of additional materials, extended class discussion, inclement weather, etc.