COMM. 418
Media Effects
Spring 2014
(Course Information Available on ANGEL: https://cms.psu.edu/default.asp)

Instructor:
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Office Hours:
Tues and Thur– 5:00 to 6:00 pm; Fri – 2:00 to 3:30 pm
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Teaching Assistants:

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Meeting Times:
Tuesdays & Thursdays - 2:30 pm to 4:25 pm

Meeting Location:
Rm. 113, Keller Bldg. (unless otherwise indicated)

Description: This course will investigate the vast body of empirical work on the effects of both media content and media technology upon audiences, with particular emphasis on the theoretical mechanisms governing these effects. In keeping with the media-effects research tradition in the field of communication, the course will primarily focus on social and/or behavioral approaches to inferring effects of media. It will emphasize the classic empirical approach to advancement of knowledge by way of theory-testing and theory development.

Themes: The following are the overarching themes of this course:
- the social-psychological effects of media on their audiences,
- critical exploration of theory and research in media effects, and
- contribution to advancement of knowledge in media effects.

Goals: To help you learn
- about the psychological factors underlying media-effects theories and research findings,
- how to apply empirically derived knowledge to everyday media situations,
- how to derive communication strategies from media-effects theories and research,
- about integrating media-effects research to inform policy issues, and
- to conduct original research to investigate effects of newer media.

Textbook and Readings: There is no textbook for this course. However, students are required to download readings from ANGEL in preparation for each class meeting and the examinations.

Requirements:

Class Participation   (30 percent of the grade),

Your class participation score will be based on your
- attendance   (5%)
- involvement in class meetings   (5%)
- group discussions   (5%)
- motivated discussion questions   (15%)

Paper Critique & Discussion Facilitation   (5 percent),
Exams   (40 percent), and
Group Project   (25 percent)

Attendance is mandatory, and prior permission should be obtained from the instructor in case of emergency absences. Your active involvement in class meetings, as indicated by your participation during lectures and responses to discussion facilitation, will be rewarded. Your ability to integrate theoretical material from class meetings and readings in your group response to discussion topics will be another grading event. Starting 01/21, you will take turns facilitating a class discussion about one of the readings assigned for that day. How well you come prepared to conduct the class discussion will account for 5% of your total grade. Motivated discussion questions will begin the next week (01/21) and end at the beginning of April (04/03). During this period, all students will be required to submit at least one motivated discussion question (MDQ) for each class meeting, that is, two MDQs per week. The question should be mailed to sss12@psu.edu and CC'ed to yxh185@psu.edu and tfw119@psu.edu by **8 am** on the day of the class. Some of these questions will be used for in-class discussion as well as bulletin-board discussions on ANGEL. Your question should be (a) relevant to the readings and lectures of that week, and will be graded for its (b) level of profound curiosity. It should ideally (c) integrate the readings for the class meeting with

your own media experiences, and (d) make references to classroom discussions and material learned in other classes, especially those outside Communication. The question should focus on (e) theoretical issues of media effects, i.e., why and how an effect appears to occur, instead of merely wondering whether a given effect is true or not. A question that is thoughtful as well as thought-provoking will be awarded full points whereas one that perfunctorily seeks factual answers will be awarded minimal points, if at all. More details on grading criteria will be provided as the semester progresses.

Structure: After the first week of introduction to media effects, the class is divided into four parts: The first part of the semester will be devoted to readings and discussions pertaining to theoretical processes by which media and their messages have an effect on individuals. In the second part, students will use the Media Effects approach to study media technologies, with an emphasis on newer digital media. The third part of the semester will focus on effects of specific genres of media content (e.g., news, entertainment, advertisement) as well as particular elements of media messages (e.g., sex, violence, health, politics). The fourth and final part of the class is devoted to conducting an original piece of media-effects research by way of the Group Project.

Paper critique: Starting January 21st, students will take turns presenting critiques of media effects research articles (downloaded from ANGEL) during each class meeting. The student responsible for a given article is expected to distribute a handout and make a 8-minute presentation of the article in the class, followed by about 7 minutes of questions from the instructor and fellow students. This exercise will count for 5 percent of the final grade in the course. Each critique will be graded on a ten-point scale as follows: One point each for correct identification of concepts and statement of research question, three points for description of methods used, two for interpretation of results, and three points for a detailed theoretical and methodological critique of the study (which includes coming up with creative alternative explanations and discussion points for the class to think about as a way to expand/redesign). Students going early in the semester may have an opportunity to do more than one paper critique, depending upon availability. The average score across two or more critiques will be used to compute the overall "critique score" for the semester. PLEASE NOTE THAT YOU SHOULD UPLOAD BOTH YOUR POWERPOINT PRESENTATION AND YOUR HANDOUT (WORD DOCUMENT) ON ANGEL AT LEAST 24 HOURS BEFORE YOUR PRESENTATION.

Group project: The group project is devoted to applying the media-effects research tradition for studying the impact of various new personal and social media, from computers to mobile devices to microblogs. For this project, each team will come up with one or two variables related to either (a) personalization/customization or (b) interface cues that

appear on digital media interfaces. Then, each team will systematically design a quantitative study (for example, a survey or an experiment) that will investigate how these technological elements shape psychological effects of newer media. If particular student groups would like to study media effects outside the realm of newer media technologies, we will allow that upon prior consultation with the instructor. Details regarding the conduct of group project will be spelled out as the semester progresses.

Schedule: The schedule includes the main topics for each class meeting and the reading required for that meeting. The lectures will not repeat material in the readings; rather, they will add more depth and attempt to synthesize existing material. Therefore, it is very important to keep up with the readings. This will not only aid you in your class participation but also help you do well on the exams and group project work.

INTRODUCTION

01/14   INTRODUCTION TO THE CLASS

01/16   INTRODUCTION TO THE MEDIA EFFECTS PARADIGM

PART 1: MEDIA-EFFECTS PROCESSES

01/21   DUAL PROCESS MODELS OF PERSUASION
Petty, Cacioppo, & Schumann (1983)
Chaiken (1980)

01/23   SOCIAL LEARNING
Nabi & Clark (2008)
Harrison & Cantor (1997)

01/28   PRIMING
Bushman (1998)
Harris, Bargh, & Brownell (2009)

01/30   CULTIVATION
Romer, Jamieson, & Aday (2003)
Shrum (2001)

02/04   THIRD PERSON EFFECT & AUDIENCE ACTIVITY
Chen (2011)
Tal-Or, Cohen, Tsfati, & Gunther (2010)

02/06   EXAM 1

PART 2: EFFECTS OF MEDIA TECHNOLOGY

02/11 MEDIA-EFFECTS APPROACH FOR STUDYING TECHNOLOGY
Sundar (2009)
Lee & Sundar (2009)

02/13 EFFECTS OF TECHNOLOGICAL AFFORDANCES AND CUES
Sundar (2008)
Lee & Sundar (2012)

02/18 EFFECTS OF ADAPTIVE AND TAILORED MEDIA
Sundar & Marathe (2010)
Sundar, Oh, Bellur, Jia, & Kim (2012)

02/20 EFFECTS OF MODALITY
Sundar (2000)

02/25 EFFECTS OF AGENCY
Stavrositu & Sundar (2012)

02/27 EFFECTS OF INTERACTIVITY
Guillory & Sundar (2013)
Sundar, Xu, & Bellur (2010)

03/04 EFFECTS OF NAVIGABILITY
Balakrishnan & Sundar (2011)

03/06 EXAM 2

PART 3: EFFECTS OF MEDIA CONTENT AND CONTEXT

03/18 EFFECTS OF VIOLENT MEDIA, PART 1
Bushman & Anderson (2009)
Hasan, Bègue, & Bushman (2013)

03/20 EFFECTS OF VIOLENT MEDIA, PART 2
Ramos, Ferguson, Failing, & Romero-Ramirez (2013)
Ferguson & Rueda (2010)

03/25 EFFECTS OF NEWS AND POLITICAL COMMUNICATION
Lefevere, De Swert, & Walgrave (2011)
Meraz (2009)

03/27 EFFECTS OF ADVERTISING & MARKETING COMMUNICATION
Torres & Briggs (2007)
Peters & Leshner (2013)

04/01	EFFECTS OF SEX IN THE MEDIA
	Ferguson (2012)
	Hald, Malamuth, & Lange (2013)

04/03	EFFECTS OF HEALTH COMMUNICATION
	Wagner & Sundar (2008)
	Crum & Langer (2007)

04/08	EXAM 3

PART 4: GROUP PROJECT
(Meetings with a * mark will involve a Lab Component*)*

04/10	PRIMER ON DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICAL ANALYSIS*
04/15	PRIMER ON INFERENTIAL STATISTICAL ANALYSIS*
04/17	DATA ANALYSIS*
04/22	DATA INTERPRETATION*
04/24	REPORT & PRESENTATION PLANNING*
04/29	GROUP PROJECT PRESENTATION — PART I
05/01	GROUP PROJECT PRESENTATION — PART II

☺ NO FINALS!! ☺

The instructor reserves the right to alter the syllabus during the semester.

Attendance Policy: Attendance is mandatory for every class meeting. If a student needs to miss a class, prior permission must be obtained from the instructor.

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. In serious cases it could also result in suspension or dismissal from the university or in the grade of "XF' (failed for academic dishonesty) being put on your permanent transcript. Any student with a question about academic integrity or plagiarism is strongly encouraged to discuss it with his or her instructor.

As students studying communications, 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.psu.edu/plagiarism/student-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.

List of Electronic Course Reserves Readings
(Readings accessible via ANGEL)

Balakrishnan, B., & Sundar, S. S. (2011). Where am I? How can I get there? Impact of navigability and narrative transportation on spatial presence. *Human Computer Interaction*, *26*, 161-204.

Bushman, B. (1998). Priming effects of media violence on the accessibility of aggressive constructs in memory. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 24*(5), 537-545.

Bushman, B., & Anderson, C. A. (2009). Comfortably number: Desensitizing effects of violent media on helping others. *Psychological Science, 20*(3), 273-277

Chaiken, S. (1980). Heuristic versus systematic information processing and the use of source versus message cues in persuasion. *Journal of Personality and Psychology, 39*(5), 752-766.

Chen, G. M. (2011). Tweet this: A uses and gratifications perspective on how active Twitter use gratifies a need to connect with others. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *27*(2), 755-762.

Crum, A. J., & Langer, E. J. (2007). Mind-Set Matters Exercise and the Placebo Effect. *Psychological Science*, *18*(2), 165-171.

Ferguson, C. J. (2010). Positive female role-models eliminate negative effects of sexually violent media. *Journal of Communication, 62*(5), 888-899

Ferguson, C. J., & Rueda, S. M. (2010). The hitman study: Violent video game exposure effects on aggressive behavior, hostile feelings, and depression. *European Psychologist, 15*(2), 19-108

Hald, G. M., Malamuth, N. N., & Lange, T. (2013). Pornography and sexist attitudes among heterosexuals. *Journal of Communication, 63*(4), 638-660.

Harris, J., Bargh, J., & Brownell, K. (2009). Priming effects of television food advertising on eating behavior. *Health Psychology, 28*(4), 404-413.

Harrison, K., & Cantor, J. (1997). The relationship between media consumption and eating disorders. *Journal of Communication*, 47(1), 40-67.

Hasan, Y., Bègue, L., & Bushman, B. J. (2013). Violent video games stress people out and make them more aggressive. *Aggressive Behavior, 39*, 64-70

Guillory, J., & Sundar, S. S. (in press). How does website interactivity affect our perceptions of an organization? *Journal of Public Relations Research*.

Lee, E-J., & Sundar, S. S. (2009). Human-computer interaction. In C. R. Berger, M. E.Roloff, & D. R. Roskos-Ewoldsen (Eds.), *The Handbook of Communication Science (2nd ed.)* (pp. 507-523). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Lee, J. Y., & Sundar, S. S. (2012). To tweet or to retweet? That is the question for health professionals on Twitter. *Health Communication, 28* (5), 509-524.

Lefevere, J., De Swert, K., & Walgrave, S. (2012). Effects of popular exemplars in television news. *Communication Research*, *39*(1), 103-119.

Meraz, S. (2009). Is there an elite hold? Traditional media to social media agenda setting influence in blog networks. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 14*, 682-707.

Nabi, R. L., & Clark, S. (2008). Exploring the limits of social cognitive theory: Why negatively reinforced behaviors on TV may be modeled anyway. *Journal of Communication*, *58*(3), 407-427.

Peters, S., & Leshner, G. (2013). Get in the Game: The Effects of Game-Product Congruity and Product Placement Proximity on Game Players' Processing of Brands Embedded in Advergames. *Journal of Advertising, 42*(2-3), 113-130.

Petty, R., Cacioppo, J., & Schumann, D. (1983). Central and peripheral routes to advertising effectiveness: The moderating role of involvement. *Journal of Consumer Research, 10,* 135-146.

Ramos, R. A., Ferguson, C. J., Frailing, K., & Romero-Ramirez, M. (2013). Comfortably numb or just another movie? Media violence exposure does not reduce viewer empathy for victims of real violence among primarily Hispanic viewers. *Psychology of Popular Media, 2*(1), 2-10

Romer, D., Jamieson, K. H., & Aday, S. (2003). Television news and the cultivation of fear of crime. *Journal of Communications, 53*(1), 88-104.

Shrum, L. J. (2001). Processing strategy moderates the cultivation effect. *Human Communication Research*, *27*(1), 94-120.

Stavrositu, C., & Sundar, S. S. (2012). Does blogging empower women? Exploring the

role of agency and community. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 17,* 369-386.

Sundar, S. S. (2000). Multimedia effects on processing and perception of online news: A study of picture, audio, and video downloads. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 77(3), 480-499.

Sundar, S. S. (2008). The MAIN model: A heuristic approach to understanding technology effects on credibility. In M. J. Metzger & A. J. Flanagin (Eds.), *Digital media, youth, and credibility* (pp. 72-100). Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Sundar, S. S. (2009). Media effects 2.0: Social and psychological effects of communication technologies. In R. L. Nabi, & M. B. Oliver (eds.), *Media processes and effects* (pp. 545-560). CA: Sage.

Sundar, S. S., & Marathe, S. S. (2010). Personalization vs. customization: The importance of agency, privacy and power usage. *Human Communication Research, 36,* 298-322.

Sundar, S. S., Oh, J., Bellur, S., Jia, H., & Kim, H. S. (2012). Interactivity as self-expression: A field experiment with customization and blogging. *Proceedings of the 2012 Annual Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI'12),* 395-404.

Sundar, S. S., Xu, Q., & Bellur, S. (2010). Designing interactivity in media interfaces: A communications perspective. *Proceedings of the 28th International Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI'10),* 2247-2256.

Tal-Or, N., Cohen, J., Tsfati, Y., & Gunther, A. C. (2010). Testing causal direction in the influence of presumed media influence. *Communication Research, 37*(6), 801-824

Torres, I. M., & Briggs, E. (2007). Identification effects on advertising response. *Journal of Advertising, 36*(3), 97-108.

Wagner, C., & Sundar, S. S. (2008). The curiosity-arousing function of anti-drug ads. *The Open Communication Journal*, 2, 43-59.