

**USC Annenberg School of Communication**  
**COMM 203: Communication and Mass Media (4 units)**  
**Fall 2015**  
**Schedule # 20366R**

Professor: Dr. Carmen M. Lee

**Email:** [carmenml@usc.edu](mailto:carmenml@usc.edu)

Office Hours: Tues., 11:00-1:00 p.m.

Wed. 2:30-3:30 p.m., & by appt.

Office: ASC 121F

Office Telephone: (213) 740-9897

Meeting Time: **Mon. & Wed., 12:00-1:50 p.m.**

Class Location: ASC G26

<i>Teaching Assistants</i>	<i>Email Address</i>	<i>Section(s):</i>	<i>Office Hour(s)</i>
Traci Gillig	<a href="mailto:tgillig@usc.edu">tgillig@usc.edu</a>	Th., 10:00-10:50 a.m.	Mon., 10:30-11:30 a.m.
Ruthie Kelly	<a href="mailto:ruthkell@usc.edu">ruthkell@usc.edu</a>	Fri., 8:00-8:50 & 9:00-9:50 a.m.	Mon., 11:00-12:00 noon
Nahoi Koo	<a href="mailto:nahoikoo@usc.edu">nahoikoo@usc.edu</a>	Fri., 10:00-10:50 & 11:00-11:50 a.m.	Tues., 3:30-4:30 p.m.
Marina Litvinsky	<a href="mailto:litvinsk@usc.edu">litvinsk@usc.edu</a>	Th., 9:00-9:50 a.m.	Tues., 1:00-2:00 p.m.

\*All Teaching Assistants are located in ASC G4 (Annenberg School of Communication, Ground Floor)

Course Description

This course takes an empirical look at the impact of the mass media on individuals and society. First, an overview of the history of media effects research will be presented. Focus will be placed on the paradigm shifts in media effects and the implications of these changes for understanding how individuals are influenced by mass media. Second, the major theoretical perspectives used to explain the influences of the mass media (e.g., priming theory, social cognitive theory) as well as the methods employed to test such effects (e.g., content analysis, surveys, experiments, longitudinal studies) will be discussed. Third and most importantly, a substantial portion of the course content will focus on the intended and unintended effects of different types of media content on individuals and society.

Course Objectives

The major objective of this course is to provide an extensive examination of the effects of the mass media. By the end of the semester, you will be able to:

- Understand an array of media effects theories and how they help explain research findings;
- Discuss the ways in which mass media effects is studied;
- Illustrate how media selection and avoidance habits influence individuals on a cognitive, affective, physiological, and behavioral level;
- Apply empirically derived knowledge to everyday media situations;
- Understand how media effects research can be used to inform policy issues;
- Recognize some of the unanswered questions in the field and offer possible answers to those questions.

Required Readings:

Sparks, G. G. (2015). *Media effects research: A basic overview* (5th ed.). Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.

All additional required readings/course materials will be made available on Blackboard (Bb).

Recommended Supplemental Materials:

American Psychological Association (2009). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

## Course Requirements

### **Responsible attendance is expected.**

Students who do miss a class and/or section meeting are expected to have read the material *and* actively find out what they missed. You should approach another classmate for missed lecture notes and, if clarification is needed, meet with your Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) and/or Instructor. Instructor lecture notes or PowerPoint slides are not provided to students in the course. If a student is missing a class/section on the day an assignment is due, the student should make arrangements for that assignment to be turned in on time.

#### 1. Class Participation/Preparation

**This course depends on each participant for its energy and vitality!** Students are expected to: (1) read the assigned readings *before* class/section, (2) come to each class/section prepared to discuss the subject matter, and (3) actively participate in the class/section. Participation does not just mean talking! Good participation involves coming to class/section on time with questions about the readings to share with the class, volunteering answers to questions that are insightful, actively listening to others' contribution to discussion, and moving the discussion along toward a shared understanding. Weekly attendance is expected and essential for participation credit. Participation is worth 5% of your final grade.

#### 2. Exams

There will be three (3) exams given throughout the course. The exams are NOT cumulative; however concepts do build upon each other. Exams *may* consist of true/false, multiple-choice, short answer, and essay questions. There will be a review prior to each exam. The review will consist of students asking questions to verify lecture and reading content, but not re-lecturing of course material. All exams are to be taken in class on the designated exam dates. Your exams will not be returned to you, but you are welcome to peruse your exam during office hours or a scheduled appointment. Each exam is worth 20% of your final grade.

In the rare event that an *extreme* emergency arises (i.e., you were in the hospital, there was a death in the family, etc.), it is your responsibility to: (1) inform your GTA or Instructor prior to the scheduled exam time, and (2) provide the GTA or Instructor with verifiable written documentation of the emergency (e.g., medical note from a certified physician). If your excuse can be verified, you will be allowed to make up the missed exam at the discretion of the GTA/Instructor. Exam I will be held on **September 21, 2015**; Exam II will be held on **November 2, 2015**; Exam III will be held on **December 11, 2015 (11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.)**.

#### 3. In-Class Reaction Papers

You will be assigned a series of *in-class* reaction papers. A reaction paper features your intellectual reaction to a mass media topic covered in lecture. You might be asked to: (a) juxtapose theories/research findings/arguments presented, (b) discuss potential implications for theory, research, or "real world" application, or (c) critique an idea and suggest an alternative. The reaction papers will vary in length from one-half to one full page. In-class assignments (e.g., reaction papers) are not subject to make-up as they are dependent on attendance. Reaction papers are worth 15% of your final grade.

#### 4. Discussion Sections

Discussion sections are a significant component of the course. They are not simply a time to review material covered in lecture or in the readings. While discussion sections do allow for opportunities to clarify course material, they also allow for more in-depth discussion and analysis of some of the major themes addressed in the course. Your Graduate Teaching Assistant, as the section leader, will provide you with more information about what will occur in the discussion sections. If you miss more than four (4) discussion sections, this will adversely affect your grade in the course (i.e., score reduced ½ a letter grade).

Assessment:

You will be assessed on the following requirements:

<u>Requirements</u>	<u>% Of Final Grade</u>	<u>Point Equivalent</u>	<u>Date Due</u>
Class Participation	5%	20	<i>weekly</i>
Exam I		80	09/21/15
Exam II	60%	80	11/02/15
Exam III		80	12/11/15
In-Class Reaction Papers	15%	60	<i>vary</i>
Discussion Section	20%	80	<i>weekly</i>
<i>Total</i>		<i>400 pts. possible</i>	

Grading

The following scale will be used to assign final course grades:

<u>Points</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Grade</u>	<u>Points</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Grade</u>
372-400	93-100	A	292-307	73-76	C
360-371	90-92	A-	280-291	70-72	C-
348-359	87-89	B+	268-279	67-69	D+
332-347	83-86	B	252-267	63-66	D
320-331	80-82	B-	240-251	60-62	D-
308-319	77-79	C+	0-239	≤59	F

NOTE: There is no “curving” or “rounding up” for individual assignments or final grades.

Course PoliciesAcademic Integrity Policy

The Annenberg School of Communication maintains a commitment to the highest standards of ethical conduct and academic excellence. Any student found responsible for plagiarism, fabrication, cheating on examinations, or purchasing papers or other assignments will be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards and may be dismissed from the School of Communication. There are no exceptions to the school’s policy (University of Southern California Catalogue, 2014-2015, p. 352).

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one’s own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another’s work as one’s own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles as set forth in [SCampus](#).

Disability Service Accommodations

If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need accommodations for this class, it is your responsibility to contact Disability Services and Programs (DSP). You need to make a request with DSP for each academic term that accommodations are desired. To avoid any delay in the receipt of your accommodations, you are encouraged to do this no later than the first week of class. Students taking courses in the Annenberg School of Communication will need to share and discuss their letters with their Instructor and forward a letter to the Office of the Director (ATTN: DSP). Please note that accommodations are not retroactive, and that accommodations based upon disability cannot be provided until you have presented your Instructor with an accommodation letter from DPS. Your cooperation is appreciated. Disability Services & Program contact information: (213) 740-0776 or [http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home\\_index.html](http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html)

### Student-Athlete Travel Excuse Letters

Prior to a university-sponsored away competition, Student-Athletes are responsible for providing their GTA or Instructor with a Competition Excuse Letter (provided by their academic counselor) for the classes missed while on the road. It is the responsibility of the Student-Athlete to provide the letter prior to leaving on their trip and to make arrangements for a make-up of any missed assignments or exams.

### Classroom Comportment

Students are expected to engage in behaviors that enhance the learning environment. The Instructor/GTA is responsible for optimizing learning for not only individual students but for all students in the course. Thus, disruptive behaviors will not be tolerated. These behaviors include: not listening, pretending to listen while secretly texting or using electronic devices, speaking without being recognized, making fun or otherwise berating/disparaging the remarks of another person, etc. While most students generally earn an average amount of class/section participation credit, disruptive behaviors will adversely affect class/section participation credit.

### Laptops/Electronic Devices

**Laptop computers may not be used during class. Also, other electronic devices (e.g., cell phones, tablets, iPods/iPads, etc.) should be turned off/silenced and put away.** If you need to use your phone for any reason, please excuse yourself from class.

### Late Assignments

Turning in any assignment late will result in **30% deduction for each day** after the deadline. The GTA/Instructor may refuse to accept late work. For all types of excuses, students will receive point deductions and should provide their GTA/Instructor with formal, written documents/evidences. The GTA/Instructor has the right to decide on the exact amount of total points deducted, depending on the evaluation of the legitimacy of the excuse.

### Incomplete Work (IN)

A mark of incomplete is used to reflect work not completed because of documented illness or some other emergency occurring after the twelfth week of the semester; arrangements for the IN and its completion should be initiated by the student and agreed by the Instructor prior to the final exam. Incompletes will be given only when all University requirements pertaining to them are met. Marks of IN must be completed within one year from the date of the assignment of the IN (USC Catalogue, 2014-2015, p. 24).

### Turnitin.com

Students agree that by taking this course all written assignments *may* be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All written assignments submitted to Turnitin.com will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. You may submit your written assignments in such a way that no personal identifying information is included.

### Recording Policy

Students may not record any portion of a classroom lecture, discussion, or review **without the prior and explicit written permission of the course Instructor.** The unauthorized use of any form of device to audiotape, photograph, video-record or otherwise reproduce (in whole or in part) lectures, course notes, or teaching materials provided by the Instructor is forbidden. Students registered with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) who are unable to take or read notes have the right, once Instructor approval is granted, to *audio* record class lectures for their personal study only. Lectures recorded for this purpose may not be shared with other people without the consent of the Instructor. Furthermore, permission granted for recording of a lecture, discussion, or review also requires the observation of privacy guidelines and regulations for students in the class whose presence or statements might also be recorded.

**Consultations**

As your Instructor, I am here to facilitate your learning. You are more than welcome to email me, attend office hours, stop by my office, Google voice/text me, and/or set up a computer-mediated appointment with me. Do not wait until the night before (or day of) an assignment due date to realize that you do not understand what is expected of you. If you experience difficulty in this course *for any reason*, please do not hesitate to contact me.

**Additional Resources**

**Student Counseling Services: (213) 740-7711 or <http://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling/>**

Student Counseling Services Counseling Center provides mental health treatment for students as well as assistance with developmental issues (e.g., intimate relationships, cultural adjustment, and identity development). Moreover, they provide assistance to students struggling with emotional urgent concerns. Student Counseling Services is located in Engemann Student Health Center, 1031 W. 34<sup>th</sup> Street.

**ITS Customer Support Center (CSC): (213) 740-5555 or <http://itservices.usc.edu/students/>**

The ITS Customer Support Center (CSC) provides support to the USC community for connecting to the USC Network and using supported applications. For help with network connectivity and software, contact CSC. Walk-in support is available in Leavey Library's Information Commons.

## Course Schedule\*

	Date	Topic	Reading(s)
Week 1	Aug. 24	Introduction to the Course	Syllabus
	Aug. 26	Understanding Mass Communication & Media Effects	<sup>Bb</sup> Eveland (2003)
	<i>Aug. 27/28</i>	<i>Discussion Section</i>	
Week 2	Aug. 31	Historical Overview of Media Effects Research	<sup>T</sup> Sparks (Chpt. 3)
	Sept. 2	Scientific Study of Media Research	<sup>T</sup> Sparks (Chpts. 1 & 2)
	<i>Sept. 3/4</i>	<i>Discussion Section</i>	
Week 3	Sept. 7	<b>Labor Day Holiday - No Class!</b>	-----
	Sept. 9	Scientific Study of Media Research (cont.).	<sup>Bb</sup> Nielsen (2015)
	<i>Sept. 10/11</i>	<i>Discussion Section</i>	
Week 4	Sept. 14	Unique Audiences: Children and Adolescents	<sup>Bb</sup> Strasburger & Wilson (2014); <sup>T</sup> Sparks (Chpt. 7)
	Sept. 16	Audiences: Identification, Interaction, & Gratification	<sup>T</sup> Sparks (Chpt. 4)
	<i>Sept. 17/18</i>	<i>Discussion Section</i>	
Week 5	Sept. 21	<b>Exam I</b>	-----
	Sept. 23	Violence and Mass Media: Content & Effects	<sup>T</sup> Sparks (Chpt. 5); <sup>Bb</sup> Martins & Wilson (2012)
	<i>Sept. 24/25</i>	<i>Discussion Section</i>	
Week 6	Sept. 28	Violence and Mass Media: Content & Effects (cont.).	<sup>Bb</sup> Hetsroni (2007a); <sup>Bb</sup> Anderson & Bushman (2001)
	Sept. 30	Violence and Mass Media: Content & Effects (cont.).	<sup>Bb</sup> Schultz et al. (2013)
	<i>Oct. 1/2</i>	<i>Discussion Section</i>	
Week 7	Oct. 5	Sex and Mass Media: Content & Effects	<sup>T</sup> Sparks (Chpt. 6); <sup>Bb</sup> Hetsroni (2007b)
	Oct. 7	Sex and Mass Media: Content & Effects (cont.).	<sup>Bb</sup> Collins et al. (2004)
	<i>Oct. 8/9</i>	<i>Discussion Section</i>	
Week 8	Oct. 12	Stereotypes and Mass Media: Gender	<sup>T</sup> Sparks (Chpt. 10, pp. 253-265 <u>only</u> ); <sup>Bb</sup> Smith, et al. (2015)
	Oct. 14	Stereotypes and Mass Media: Gender (cont.).	<sup>Bb</sup> Grabe, et al. (2008)
	<i>Oct. 15/16</i>	<i>Discussion Section</i>	
Week 9	Oct. 19	Mass Media and the Social Identity Approach	-----
	Oct. 21	Stereotypes and Mass Media: Minority Groups	<sup>T</sup> Sparks (Chpt. 10, pp. 266-278 <u>only</u> ); <sup>Bb</sup> Mastro & Greenberg (2000)
	<i>Oct. 22/23</i>	<i>Discussion Section</i>	
Week 10	Oct. 26	Stereotypes and Mass Media: Minority Groups (cont.)	<sup>Bb</sup> Calzo & Ward (2009)
	Oct. 28	Stereotypes and Mass Media: Minority Groups (cont.)	<sup>Bb</sup> Inzlich et al. (2012)
	<i>Oct. 29/30</i>	<i>Discussion Section</i>	
Week 11	Nov. 2	<b>Exam II</b>	-----
	Nov. 4	Persuasion	<sup>T</sup> Sparks (Chpt. 8)
	<i>Nov. 5/6</i>	<i>Discussion Section</i>	
Week 12	Nov. 9	News and Politics	<sup>T</sup> Sparks (Chpt. 9); <sup>Bb</sup> Dixon et al. (2015)
	Nov. 11	News and Politics (cont.).	-----
	<i>Nov. 12/13</i>	<i>Discussion Section</i>	
Week 13	Nov. 16	Advertisement and Promotion	<sup>Bb</sup> Wilcox et al. (2004)
	Nov. 18	Mass Media and Health: Tobacco & Alcohol	<sup>Bb</sup> Bryant et al. (2013)
	<i>Nov. 19/20</i>	<i>Discussion Section</i>	
<b>NCA Convention (November 19 – November 22)</b>			
Week 14	Nov. 23	Mass Media and Health: Campaigns	<sup>Bb</sup> Noar (2006)
	Nov. 25	<b>No Class/Section (University Holiday- Thanksgiving)</b>	-----
	<i>Nov. 26/27</i>		
Week 15	Nov. 30	Diffusion of Innovation & New Technology	<sup>T</sup> Sparks (Chpt. 11)
	Dec. 2	New Technology (cont.) & Course Wrap-Up	-----
	<i>Dec. 3/4</i>	<i>Discussion Section</i>	
<b>Finals Week</b>		<b>Exam III (Friday, December 11; 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.)</b>	

\*Course schedule/content subject to change at Instructor discretion

<sup>T</sup>Course Textbook<sup>Bb</sup>Blackboard Reading