

## COMM 363: Media Consumption

Fall 2015 / MW 5:00-6:20PM/ANN 210

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Office Hours: M/W 3:30-4:30 and by appointment

### Course Description

In this class, we will examine how audiences are understood as media consumers and how media organizations' understanding about their audiences are deeply interconnected with their marketing/branding, distribution, and programming (as well as audience measurement) strategies. We will also explore how media organizations' perception of the audience have transformed over time as the media environment changed and what broader sociocultural implications of changes are taking place in the conceptualization of media audience. We begin this course with the premise that the audience is a social construction, a necessary fiction. In the first part of the course we will explore various methods and approaches that have been used to understand, decipher, measure, and (re-)conceptualize the audience. We will see how a particular understanding of the audience is reflected in media organizations' industrial strategies, although these strategies do not necessarily produce results that match the original intentions. With the development of time and place-shifting, commercial-skipping technologies and unprecedented content choice, audiences are considered to have more "control" over their media consumption than ever. Furthermore, with the proliferation of interactive technologies, audiences are perceived as not just media consumers but also media producers who have the power to create and distribute content. In the second part of the course we will critically interrogate this notion of audience "control" and "empowerment." Lastly, we will examine how social media have come to play a significant role in our media consumption and how the media industry is taking note (and advantage) of this.

### Class Readings

All readings are posted on Blackboard. You are expected to complete readings by the start of lecture and be prepared to actively participate in class discussions.

### Course Requirements

#### Attendance: Required

Attendance is mandatory and will be taken each class. Because this is a discussion-oriented class, your attendance and participation will play a vital role in enriching your learning experience. You will be given **three (3)** free unexcused absences. Four or more absences will result in an automatic half grade deduction from your overall grade for each unexcused absence. Missing more than seven classes without discussing the situation with the instructor **will** result in a failing grade for the course.

\* Excused absences are granted *only* for the following reasons: serious illness (which must be documented with a doctor's certificate), a death in the family (again, documentation is required), or, in very rare cases, a school-related event that requires your presence and that you have arranged with the

professor well in advance (e.g. an out-of-town university competitive event in which you are required to participate, a religious holiday, or a job interview). In order for an absence to be excused, documentation must be provided (a note from a coach, letter scheduling the interview, etc.).

The following types of situations are NOT considered excused absences: social events, meetings of Greek or service organizations, entertaining out-of-town visitors, holiday plans, going to weddings or to visit relatives, or any other circumstance that is extracurricular and at which your attendance is optional and secondary to your schoolwork.

#### Participation (10%)

I expect you to come to class on time and be prepared to discuss the assigned readings each week. This grade will reflect not only your participation, but also whether you have prepared the readings for thoughtful discussion in class. You should be able to respond to questions about the assigned readings and offer opinions and insight into the topics addressed. Poor attendance will adversely affect your participation grade. If you miss more than three classes, you **will not** receive the full participation grade.

#### Blog Posts (20%)

You will post a 250+ word blog entry that engages with the ideas in the readings, previous class discussions, and additional materials you found for 10 of the weeks. All of your blog posts are due by Sunday at 5 pm.

#### Leading Class Discussion (10%)

Early in the semester you will sign up to be a discussion leader for a topic of your interest. You will prepare at least three thought-provoking questions that we can use for class discussion. The quality of our class discussions will depend on your discussion points that nicely summarize and reflect the assigned readings (as well as previous readings, class lectures and class discussions). You will email me the discussion questions **24 hours** prior to your scheduled discussion leading day. If you fail to email me with the discussion questions before class, you will lose at least half the grade for this assignment.

#### 2 Papers (10% & 20% Each, Total: 30%)

You will write two papers (5 page and 8 page respectively) on topics that will be announced later in the semester. I will provide you with guidelines for each paper assignment.

\* Late Policy: No extensions will be given unless you have truly extenuating circumstances. In these cases, you must speak with me **before** the assignment is due to make an arrangement. Technology excuses are not acceptable. **Assignments turned in late without an approved extension will be marked down a letter grade for every day late. After five days late, the assignment will earn a 0!** Please do not hesitate to contact me to discuss assignments.

#### Mid-term Exam (30%)

The mid-term exam will be a mixture of multiple choice, short answer, and short essay questions. The exam will evaluate both your understanding of the readings and topics covered in class and your ability to synthesize ideas across the course.

#### **Course Grading Policy**

You will receive details about each assignment/exam separately. **All assignments need to be completed and handed in on time to avoid a grade reduction. If you are unable to turn in an assignment due to illness or a personal emergency, you must provide written documentation that will allow you to be excused, or discuss your situation with me in a timely manner. Do not wait until the end of the semester to sort things out.**

In order to pass this class you will need to complete ALL of the assignments. Failure to complete one or more of them will result in an F in the class.

Grades will be assigned as follows:

A	outstanding, thoughtful and enthusiastic work
B+/B	above average work, demonstrating good insight into assignment
B-/C+	needs improvement on ideas, argument and follow through
C and below	fulfilling the bare minimum and showing little understanding of the material

Each assignment will be worth 100 points and will be converted to a percentage score depending upon the weight assigned to each. Your percentage scores won the assignments will be totaled and translated to a letter grade per the scale shown below:

A	= 100-94	C	= 76-74
A-	= 93-90	C-	= 73-70
B+	= 89-87	D+	= 69-67
B	= 86-84	D	= 66-64
B-	= 83-80	D-	= 63-60
C+	= 79-77	F	= 59-0

If you have concerns regarding a grade on a given assignment, you must appeal it in writing, stating the reasons why you feel the grade is inaccurate, within one week of receiving the graded assignment. No late appeals will be accepted for review.

## **Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems**

### Academic Conduct

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Section 11, *Behavior Violating University Standards* <https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct>.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* <http://equity.usc.edu> or to the *Department of Public Safety* <http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>. This is important for the safety of the whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. *The Center for Women and Men* <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/> provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage <http://sarc.usc.edu> describes reporting options and other resources.

### Annenberg School of Communication Academic Integrity Policy

Students are prohibited from committing or attempting to commit any act that constitutes academic misconduct. Students should not give or receive (or attempt to give or receive) unauthorized help on assignments or examinations without express permission from the instructor. You cannot turn in someone else’s work and you cannot turn in material you have used in other classes, whether at USC or elsewhere.

You should also properly acknowledge and document all sources of information (e.g. quotations, paraphrases, ideas) and use only the sources and resources authorized by the instructor.

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 receive a failing grade for this course, will be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards and may be dismissed from the School of Communication.

#### Support Systems

A number of USC's schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the *American Language Institute* <http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. *The Office of Disability Services and Programs* [http://sait.usc.edu/academicssupport/centerprograms/dsp/home\\_index.html](http://sait.usc.edu/academicssupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html) provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, *USC Emergency Information* <http://emergency.usc.edu> will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

#### Disability

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in 120 Grace Ford Salvatori Hall and is open 8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

#### **Other Classroom Policies**

##### Getting to Class Late and Leaving Early

Late arrivals and early departures distract and disrupt class. Your professor can find them to be especially annoying and disrespectful. If you have to miss more than 15 minutes of class, either at the beginning or the end, please consider not coming and getting the notes from another student. If you have to leave 15 minutes or less before class ends, let me know before class, sit near the door, and leave the classroom quietly.

##### Discriminatory Conduct (such as sexual harassment)

The University as well as this class will not tolerate discriminatory conduct. It poisons the work and learning environment of the University and threatens the careers, educational experience, and well-being of students, faculty, and staff. Such behavior will not be allowed in this classroom.

##### Noise-Making Devices and Computer Use in Class

All noise-making electronic devices (cellphones, mp3 players, etc.) are disruptive. Please remember to turn them off at the beginning of class and put them in your bag or backpack. Use of computer in the classroom is a privilege. You may use a computer in the classroom only for note taking and not recreation. If I notice that you are abusing this privilege by using your computer for recreational purposes (e.g. watching videos, checking emails or Facebook, etc.), I will ask you to leave and mark you as absent for that class period.

## Schedule of Classes, Topics & Readings

### **Week One: Media Industry's Understanding of the Audience**

Monday, 24 August: Introduction and Overview

Wednesday, 26 August:

- Jason Toyne, Chapter 3. "The Media's View of the Audience" in *Media Production* (pp. 92-132).

### **Week Two: Audience as Commodity**

Monday, 31 August:

- Dallas Smythe, Chapter 16. "On the Audience Commodity and Its Work" In *Media and Cultural Studies: Keywords* (pp. 185-203).
- Sut Jhally & Bill Livant (1986), "Watching as Working: The Valorization of American Consciousness" in *Journal of Communication* 36(3), pp. 124-143.

Wednesday, 2 September:

- Philip Napoli, Chapter 1. "The Audience Marketplace" In *Audience Economics* (pp. 15-35).
- Jon Gertner (2005), "[Our Ratings, Ourselves](#)" In *The New York Times Magazine* (10 April).

### **Week Three: Controlling the Audience**

Monday, 7 September:

**Labor Day – No Class!**

Wednesday, 9 September:

- Chuck Tryon, Chapter 2. "Restricting and Resistant Mobilities" In *On-Demand Culture* (pp. 41-57).
- Philip Napoli, Chapter 4. "Contesting Audiences" In *Audience Evolution* (pp. 117-148).

### **Week Four: Audience Fragmentation**

Monday, 14 September:

- Chris Anderson (2004), "[The Long Tail](#)" *Wired* 12(10).
- Philip Napoli, Chapter 2. "The Transformation of Media Consumption" In *Audience Evolution* (pp. 54-87).

Wednesday, 16 September:

- Joseph Turow, Chapter 6. "Tailoring Differences" in *Breaking Up America* (pp. 125-156).

### **Week Five: Active Audience/Resistant Reader**

Monday, 21 September:

- Stuart Hall, Chapter 6. "Encoding/Decoding" in *The Cultural Studies Reader* (pp. 90-103).
- David Morley, Chapter 3. "Interpreting Television: The *Nationwide* Audience" (pp. 69-110) and Chapter 4. "The '*Nationwide* Audience: A Critical Postscript" (pp. 111-122) in *Television, Audiences, and Cultural Studies*.

Wednesday, 23 September:

- Henry Jenkins, Chapter 1. ““Get a Life!: Fans, Poachers, Nomads” in *Textual Poachers* (pp. 9-49).

### **Week Six: Female Audience**

Monday, 28 September:

- Janice Radway, Chapter 22, “Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature” in *The Audience Studies Reader* (pp. 219-225).
- Kumarini Silva et al., “Commentary and Criticism on *Fifty Shades of Grey*,” in *Feminist Media Studies* (pp. 556-570).

Wednesday, 30 September:

- Katherine Sender, Chapter 14. “Dualcasting: Bravo’s Gay Programming and the Quest for Women Audiences” in *Cable Visions* (pp. 302-218).
- Julia Himberg (2014), “Multicasting: Lesbian Programming and the Changing Landscape of Cable TV” in *Television & New Media* 15(4), pp. 289-304.

### **Week Seven: Branding the Audience**

Monday, 5 October

- Avi Santo, Chapter 1. “Para-Television and Discourses of Distinction: The Culture of Production at HBO” In *It’s Not TV: Watching HBO in the Post-Television Era* (pp. 19-45).
- Janet McCabe & Kim Akass, Chapter 5. “Sex, Swearing and Respectability: Courting Controversy, HBO’s Original Programming and Producing Quality TV” in *Quality TV* (pp. 62-76).

\* Suggested Readings:

- Taylor Nygaard (2013), “Girls Just Want to Be “Quality”: HBO, Lena Dunham, and *Girls*’ Conflicting Brand Identity” in *Feminist Media Studies* 13(2), pp. 370-374.
- Jonathan Gray (2015), “*Sesame Street*’s New Landlord” in *Antenna* (<http://blog.commart.wisc.edu/2015/08/15/sesame-streets-new-landlord/>).

Wednesday, 7 October

- Sarah Banet-Weiser, Chapter 11. “The Nickelodeon Brand: Buying and Selling the Audience” In *Cable Visions* (pp. 234-254).

### **Week Eight: Creating the Market**

Monday, 12 October:

**Mid-term Exam!**

Wednesday, 14 October:

- Arlene Davila, Chapter 3. “Images: Producing Culture for the Market” In *Latinos Inc.* (pp. 88-125).
- Madhavi Mallapragada (2014), “The Market of the Future... and Now: Media Industries in the US and the Race to Capitalize on “Multicultural” Consumers” in *FlowTV* (<http://flowtv.org/2014/05/market-of-the-future/>).
- Amanda Ciafone (2014), “#AmericasBeautifulIsProblematic: Coca-Cola’s Use of America’s Beauty” In *FlowTV* (<http://flowtv.org/2014/02/americaisbeautifulisproblematic/>).

## Week Nine: Gaming Market

Monday, 19 October:

- Stephen Kline, Nick Dyer-Witheford, & Greig de Peuter, Chapter 11. “Designing Militarized Masculinity: Violence, Gender, and the Bias of Game Experience (pp. 246-268).
- John Vanderhoef (2013), “Casual Threats: The Feminization of Casual Video Games” in *Ada: A Journal of Gender, New Media, and Technology* 2 (<http://adanewmedia.org/2013/06/issue2-vanderhoef/>).

Wednesday, 21 October:

- Helen Lewis (12 June, 2012), “Dear the Internet, This is Why You Can’t Have Anything Nice” in *New Statesman* (<http://www.newstatesman.com/blogs/internet/2012/06/dear-internet-why-you-cant-have-anything-nice>).
- Adrienne Shaw, Chapter 1. “From *Custer’s Revenge* and *Mario* to *Fable* and *Fallout*: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in Digital Games” in *Gaming at the Edge*.

\* Suggested Readings (on Gamergate):

- Nick Wingfield (2014, 15 October), “Feminist Critics of Video Games Facing Threats in ‘GamerGate’ Campaign” in *The New York Times* ([http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/16/technology/gamergate-women-video-game-threats-anita-sarkeesian.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/16/technology/gamergate-women-video-game-threats-anita-sarkeesian.html?_r=0)).
- Brianna Wu (2014, 16 October), “It Happened to Me: I’ve Been Forced Out of My Home and am Living in Constant Fear Because of Relentless Death Threats From Gamergate” in *XOJane* (<http://www.xojane.com/it-happened-to-me/brianna-wu-gamergate>).

## Week Ten: Fans, Surplus Fans, and Anti-Fans

Monday, 26 October:

- Lincoln Geraghty, Chapter 1. “Contesting Comic Book Guy: Stereotypes of the Nerd, Fan, and Cult Collector in Film and Television” in *Cult Collectors* (pp. 13-31).
- Jonathan Gray (2003), “New Audiences, New Textualities: Anti-Fans and Non-Fans” In *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 6(1), pp. 64-81.

Wednesday, 28 October:

- Victoria K. Gosling, Chapter 18. “Girls Allowed? The Marginalization of Female Sports Fans” In *Fandom* (pp. 250-260).
- Venetia Laura Delano Robertson (2013), “Of Ponies and Men *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic* and the Brony Fandom” In *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 17(1), pp. 21-37.
- Angela Watercutter (2014, 11 March). “Bronies are Redefining Fandom – and American Manhood” in *Wired* (<http://www.wired.com/2014/03/bronies-online-fandom/>).

## Paper Assignment #1 Due!

## Week Eleven: Fan Engagement and Its Values

Monday, 2 November:

- Henry Jenkins, Chapter 2. “Buying into *American Idol*: How We are Being Sold on Reality TV” In *Convergence Culture* (pp. 59-92).

Wednesday, 4 November:

- Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford, and Joshua Green, Chapter 4. “What Constitutes Meaningful Participation” In *Spreadable Media* (pp. 153-194).

- Mark Andrejevic (2009). Chapter “Exploiting YouTube: Contradictions of User-Generated Labor” in *The YouTube Reader* (pp. 406-423).

### **Week Twelve: YouTube and Becoming Famous**

Monday, 9 November:

- Jean Burgess & Joshua Green, Chapter 3. “YouTube’s Popular Culture” in *YouTube* (pp. 38-57).
- Farhad Manjoo (2013, 20 June), “Screen Capture” in *Slate* ([http://www.slate.com/articles/technology/technology/2013/06/television\\_vs\\_youtube\\_american\\_tv\\_habits\\_can\\_t\\_be\\_beat\\_but\\_google\\_is\\_trying.single.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/technology/technology/2013/06/television_vs_youtube_american_tv_habits_can_t_be_beat_but_google_is_trying.single.html)).

Wednesday, 11 November:

- Alice Marwick (2015), “Instafame: Luxury Selfies in the Attention Economy” in *Public Culture* 27(1), pp. 137-160.
- Rex Sorgatz (2008), “The Microfame Game” in *New York Magazine* (<http://nymag.com/news/media/47958/>).
- Alex Williams (2015, 6 February), “15 Minutes of Fame? More Like 15 Seconds of Nanofame” in *The New York Times* ([http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/08/style/15-minutes-of-fame-more-like-15-seconds-of-nanofame.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/08/style/15-minutes-of-fame-more-like-15-seconds-of-nanofame.html?_r=0)).

### **Week Thirteen: Rethinking TV**

Monday, 16 November:

- Michael Newman (2012), “Free TV: File-Sharing and the Value of Television” In *Television & New Media* 13(6), pp. 463-479.
- Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford, and Joshua Green, Chapter 3. “The Value of Media Engagement” In *Spreadable Media* (pp. 113-152).

Wednesday, 18 November:

- Chuck Tryon, Chapter 3. “Make Any Room Your TV Room” In *On-Demand Culture* (pp. 58-75).

### **Week Fourteen: Social TV**

Monday, 23 November:

- Willa Paskin (2013), “[Can I Watch Scandal by Only Reading Twitter?](#)” In *Slate* (3 November).
- Chuck Tryon, Chapter 6. “The Twitter Effect” In *On-Demand Culture* (pp. 117-135).

Wednesday, 25 November:

**No Class – Thanksgiving Break (November 25 – 29)!**

### **Week Fifteen: TV Glut, Binge Watching, and Algorithmic Programming**

Monday, 30 November:

- Alan Sepinwall (2015, 18 August), “‘Peak TV in America’: Is There Really Too Much Good Scripted Television?” in *HitFix* (<http://www.hitfix.com/whats-alan-watching/peak-tv-in-america-is-there-really-too-much-good-scripted-television>).
- Amanda Lotz (2014, 29 October), “Binging Isn’t Quite the Word” in *Antenna* (<http://blog.commarks.wisc.edu/2014/10/29/binging-isnt-quite-the-word/>)

- Mareike Jenner (2014), “Is This TVIV? On Netflix, TVIII and Binge-watching” in *New Media and Society*, pp. 1-17.

Wednesday, 2 December:

- Andrew Leonard (2013, 1 February), “How Netflix is Turning Viewers into Puppets” in *Salon* ([http://www.salon.com/2013/02/01/how\\_netflix\\_is\\_turning\\_viewers\\_into\\_puppets/](http://www.salon.com/2013/02/01/how_netflix_is_turning_viewers_into_puppets/))
- Philip Napoli (2014), “On Automation in Media Industries: Integrating Algorithmic Media Production into Media Industries” in *Media Industries* 1(1) (<http://www.mediaindustriesjournal.org/index.php/mij/article/view/14/60>).
- Timothy Havens (2014), “Media Programming in an Era of Big Data” in *Media Industries* 1(2) (<http://www.mediaindustriesjournal.org/index.php/mij/article/view/43/82>).

**Wednesday, 9 December:**

**Paper Assignment #2 Due!**