

COMM313 Communication and Mass Media
Summer 2018 Syllabus
9:30 am – 1:40 pm Tues/Thurs
ANN 406

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Office Hours: 3-4 pm Tues.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces key theories and research in mass communication, focusing on how and why mass media can influence the attitudes of audience members. How various marginalized groups and identities have been portrayed in U.S. media – and the effects of these portrayals – is highlighted.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Understand key theories, perspectives, and challenges in media research
- Identify ways in which people's social identities media choices influence psychological, social, and other outcomes
- Apply established knowledge of media effects to current situations and examples
- Link media research to social and policy issues

COURSE TEXT

- Sparks, G. G. (2015). *Media effects research: A basic overview* (5th ed.). Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.
- Additional readings posted on Blackboard

GRADING

Percentages are calculated by taking the total points earned in the course and dividing by the total possible points (1000).

A: 92.6 – 100	B-: 79.6 – 82.5	D+: 67.6 – 69.5
A-: 89.6 – 92.5	C+: 77.6 – 79.5	D: 62.6 – 67.5
B+: 87.6 – 89.5	C: 72.6 – 77.5	D-: 59.6 – 62.5
B: 82.6 – 87.5	C-: 69.6 – 72.5	F: Under 59.5

COURSE POLICIES

- **Respect:** A goal for our classroom is for everyone to feel confident that they will be treated with respect by their peers both during class discussion and when they present.
- **Academic Integrity:** Your work in this class must be your own. Any attempt to represent others' work as yours will receive a zero on the assignment in question and will be reported to the relevant academic office. Please talk with me if you are confused or unsure if something would be considered cheating or plagiarism.
- **Assignment Submission:** All assignments will be submitted through Blackboard via Turnitin. If you are unable to submit your assignment on time to Blackboard for a technical reason, email me your assignment before the deadline, explaining the issue encountered.

- **Assignment Deadlines:** Late assignments will receive a deduction of 5 points if submitted within 24 hours of the deadline, a deduction of 10 points if submitted within 48 hours of the deadline, and so on (5 points deducted per 24-hour period). If you have an emergency, please email me before the deadline and provide documentation of the emergency at that time or as soon as documentation is available.
- **Email:** I will make every effort to respond to your emails within 24 hours of them reaching my inbox. If 24 hours has passed and I haven't responded, please feel free to follow up to ensure I received your message.
- **Technology:** You may use computers and other technology in class at your discretion. It is your responsibility to ensure you are following the material and engaged in classroom discussion. Participation is part of your grade, and excessive use of technology not related to class activities may affect your participation grade.
- **Special Accommodations:** If you need academic accommodation based on a disability, you are required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please bring your letter to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is in 3601 Watt Way in Grace Ford Salvatori Hall, Rm. 120 and is open 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is 213-740-0776.

OVERVIEW OF ASSIGNMENTS

- **Goals Exercise:** During the first day of class, you'll be prompted to reflect on why you are taking this course and what you hope to learn, achieve, or do through taking it, perhaps including your career goals. You'll have time to write a reflection paper (about one page in length) to submit through Turnitin before the class session ends. These papers will not be graded for APA Style.
- **Media Use Reflection Paper:** For this assignment, you will need to keep a journal-style record of your media use throughout the course of one day. This should include the timing (e.g., 9 am) and duration (e.g., "for seven minutes," "glanced at lock screen for notifications") of your use of media (e.g., TV, social media, online news, print materials, movies, videogames). Then, review your journal record and write a paper (minimum of two pages, double-spaced, APA Style, including title page) reflecting on your media use. Areas to consider addressing include how much total time you spent using media, what types were used, whether you were surprised or not in reviewing your record, what factors influenced your media use, and how media affected you and/or other people. Both the journal record and reflection paper should be submitted together as one Word or PDF document through Turnitin.
- **Media Critique:** This paper asks you to critique an existing mediated representation of a marginalized group, historical or current. You may identify a mass media source of your choice, such as a news article, TV storyline, or film. In your paper, provide a brief description of the representation (and a link to the material, scanned copy, or other access to the original representation, when possible). Then, evaluate and critique the representation and discuss its likely audience(s) and potential effects on those individuals or groups. Use a theory or theories discussed in class or the readings to frame for your argument. Consider potential unintended effects of the representation. This paper should be three to four pages, double-spaced, not including references. The entire paper (title page and reference page included) should be in APA Style.
- **Midterm Exam:** This exam will cover content from the first half of the course, both lecture material and content from the readings. Questions will be multiple choice and short essays, and the exam will be administered in class. Your exams will be returned

to you in class for you to review (then re-collected). In the rare event that an extreme emergency arises (e.g., you are hospitalized, there is a death in your immediate family), it is your responsibility to 1) inform me prior to the scheduled exam time that you will be absent and 2) provide documentation for the cause of the absence.

- **Final Exam:** This exam will cover content from the second half of the course ONLY. This includes lecture material and readings. Similar to the Midterm, questions will be multiple choice and short essays, administered in class. If you would like to review your exam after scores are posted, please make an appointment to meet with me.
- **Group Presentation:** For this assignment, you will be asked to apply the concepts, theories, and approaches you have learned in this course to design and propose a mass media “intervention” (e.g., a TV storyline or a public service announcement). Elucidate the social group and/or issue(s) addressed and your target audience. Explain your theoretical framework and discuss existing research informing your proposal. Address the resources your project would require to be implemented (e.g., costs, partnerships). Presentations should take 20-25 minutes, with 10-15 minutes of Q&A after. Visual aids are encouraged but not required. Please email me your slides and any other media prior to the start of class, so we can have all materials queued before beginning presentations.
- **Final (Group) Paper:** This paper extends your final presentation, providing a more detailed account of your approach and addressing any issues that arose during your Q&A. Total paper length (double-spaced, not including title page and references) should be ten to twelve pages. APA Style throughout (including title page and references) is required. This paper is due through.
- **Participation and Attendance:** Your attendance is important to your success in this class. Emergencies accompanied by documentation (e.g., hospitalization, a death in the family) will be considered excused absences. Any more than four unexcused absences will result in a one-third deduction to your final grade (e.g., A to an A-, A- to a B+, B+ to a B, etc.).

GRADING BREAKDOWN

Assignment	Total Points	Deadline
Papers/Presentations		
Goals Exercise (In Class)	50	Tues., 5/17
Media Use Reflection Paper	100	Tues., 5/22
Media Critique	100	Thurs., 6/7
Midterm Exam	150	
Group Presentation	150	Thurs., 6/21
Final Exam	150	Tues., 6/26
Final Paper	200	Tues., 6/26
In-Class Activities		
Participation and Attendance	100	Ongoing
Total Points: 1000		

COURSE SCHEDULE

The assigned readings should be read before the class under which they are listed.

Week 1

- Thurs., 5/17 Course Overview and Syllabus, Understanding Mass Communication and Media Effects, Historical Perspectives
Readings: Sparks Ch. 3
 1. Svoboda, E. (2015). How stories change hearts and brains. *Aeon Magazine*.
 2. Curran, J. P. (2005). What democracy requires of the media. *The Institutions of American Democracy: The Press*, 120-140.

Week 2

- Tues., 5/22 Scientific Study of Media
Due (Turnitin): Media Use Reflection Paper
Readings: Sparks Ch. 1, 2
- Thurs. 5/24 Cultivation of Attitudes (Guest Lecture)
Readings: Sparks Ch. 8 (pp. 189-196 only)
 1. Signorelli, N., & Morgan, M. (Eds.). (1990). *Cultivation analysis: New directions in media effects research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishers.

Week 3

- Tues. 5/29 Advertising and Promotion through Mass Media (Guest Lecture)
Readings: Sparks Ch. 8 (pp. 203-208, 214-219 only)
 1. Dyer, R. (2000). The role of stereotypes. *Media studies: A reader*, 245-51.
- Thurs. 5/31 Understanding Audiences: Social Identity, Parasocial Relationships, Uses and Gratifications
Readings: Sparks Ch. 4, 7

1. Schiappa, E., Gregg, P. B., & Hewes, D. E. (2005). The parasocial contact hypothesis. *Communication Monographs*, 72(1), 92-115.

Week 4

- Tues. 6/5 Representations of Race, Gender, and Sexuality
Readings: Sparks Ch. 10 (pp. 253-269 only)
1. Dixon, T. L., & Maddox, K. B. (2005). Skin tone, crime news, and social reality judgments: Priming the stereotype of the dark and dangerous black criminal. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 35(8), 1555-1570.
 2. Gillig, T. K., Rosenthal, E. L., Murphy, S. T., & Folb, K. L. (2017). More than a media moment: The influence of televised storylines on viewers' attitudes toward transgender people and policies. *Sex Roles*, 1-13.
- Thurs. 6/7 Representations of Disability, Mental Health, and the Elderly
Due (Turnitin): Media Critique
Readings:
1. Schwartz, D., Blue, E., McDonald, M., Giuliani, G., Weber, G., Seirup, H., & Perkins, A. (2010). Dispelling stereotypes: Promoting disability equality through film. *Disability & Society*, 25(7), 841-848.
 2. Quintero Johnson, J. M., & Riles, J. (2016). "He acted like a crazy person": Exploring the influence of college students' recall of stereotypic media representations of mental illness. *Psychology of Popular Media Culture*.

Week 5

- Tues. 6/12 Midterm Exam
- Thurs. 6/14 Violence in the Media
Readings: Sparks Ch. 5

Week 6

- Tues. 6/19 Narrative Persuasion and Entertainment Education
Readings: Sparks Ch. 8 (pp. 200-201, 210-214 only)
1. Moyer-Guse, E. (2008). Toward a theory of entertainment persuasion: Explaining the persuasive effects of entertainment-education messages. *Communication Theory*, 18, 407-425.

- Thurs. 6/21 Group Presentations

Week 7

- Tues. 6/26 Final Exam
Due (Turnitin): Final Paper