

## **COMM 363: Media Consumption**

Fall 2018 / MW 12:00-1:50PM/ANN 209

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Office Hours: M/W 11:00-11:50 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, an imaginary entity. 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. Throughout this course, we will critically interrogate this notion of audience "control" and "empowerment." We will also 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. In addition, we will explore how social media have played a role in encouraging audiences to adopt fan-like practices as they consume, engage, discuss, and analyze media texts they are interested in and how this has brought shifts in the production and distribution of media texts globally.

### **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. Considering that a significant amount of material covered in lecture is not in the reading, it is important that you attend class regularly. You will be given **two (2)** free unexcused absences. **Three 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). 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 ask questions, discuss the assigned readings, and make insightful and substantive contributions in every class. You should be able to respond to questions about the assigned readings and offer opinions and insights into the topics addressed. Poor attendance will adversely affect your participation grade. If you have a good attendance record but don't actively participate in class discussions, you can't expect to get a good participation grade (in other words, participation grade will not be based solely on attendance). Each class participation will be graded based on the demonstration of your preparation and the level of involvement and contribution to class discussions.

### Discussion Leading (10%)

Early in the semester, you will sign up to be a discussion leader for a topic of your interest. You will prepare 3 thought-provoking questions that we can use for class discussion. The questions must cut across class readings, integrating their contributions to a particular theme. The quality of our class discussions will depend on your discussion points that not only nicely summarize but also reflect and engage critically with the assigned readings (as well as previous class readings, lectures, and discussions). You will prepare a study guide that contains a short summary of the readings (a paragraph for each reading) with your discussion questions and upload it to the discussion forum available on the class blackboard before coming to class on the day of your discussion leading.

## 2 Topical Papers (30% - 15% each)

You will be required to write **two** 5 page papers that are related to class topics. Further details about this assignment will be provided in a supplemental handout.

## Mid-Term Exam (20%)

The mid-term exam will include short and long answer 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. Make sure you keep up with the readings and take good notes on them (and on class discussions) to do well in the exam.

## Final Paper Proposal, Presentation, & Paper (30% = Proposal 5% + Presentation 5% + Final Paper 20%)

You will be asked to write a final paper on a topic that we discussed in class or a topic that you would like to explore that is related to this class. You will turn in a research paper that is 10-12 pages and present your findings at the end of the semester. The topic for your research paper **must be** approved in advance by the instructor. I will ask you to submit a 1-2 page proposal that explains your topic, research purpose and questions, and methods for approval early in the semester.

\* 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.

## **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 no 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/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 in the back of the classroom, 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.

### Seating and Discussion

Despite the fact that this is a large class, we love discussions and encourage you to raise your hand during lecture and ask questions, make comments, or ask for clarification of points you may not have understood. Please sit toward the front and center during lecture, so that you can hear the lecture and be heard when you ask questions. When you do ask a question or make a comment, please speak up – even if the professor can hear you, your classmates need to be able to as well.

### 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 stow 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 we notice that you are abusing this privilege by using your computer for recreational purposes (e.g. watching videos, checking emails or Facebook, etc.), we will ask you to leave and mark you as absent for that class period.

