

**USC Annenberg School of Communication**  
**COMM 313: Communication and Mass Media (4 units)**  
**Spring 2020**  
**Schedule # 20499R**

Professor: Carmen M. Lee, PhD

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Office Hours: Tues. and Thurs., 10:00-12:00 noon,  
Wed. 10:00-11:30 a.m., & by appt.

Office: ASC 121-F

Office Telephone: (213) 740-9897

Meeting Time: **Mon. & Wed., 3:30-4:50 p.m.**

Class Location: **ANN L105A**

*Teaching Assistant*

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*Office Hour(s)*

TBA

TBA

\*All Teaching Assistants are located in ASC G4 (Annenberg School of Communication, Front Lobby - 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 Learning Outcomes

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:

- Discuss media effects theories and how they help explain research findings;
- Explain 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;
- Explain 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/Materials

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

[Available at the [USC Bookstore](#) or Online via [Cengage](#), [Vital Source](#), [Amazon](#)]

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

Recommended Supplemental Materials

American Psychological Association (2020). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. [Available at [USC Libraries](#)]

Course Requirements

1. Class Participation

**This course depends on each participant for its energy and vitality!** Students are expected to: (1) read the assigned readings *before* class, (2) come to each class prepared to discuss the subject matter, and (3) actively participate in the class. Participation does not just mean talking! Good participation involves coming to class 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.** Based on both objective (quantifiable; e.g., class attendance, speaking in class, attentiveness, attending office hours/scheduled appointments, engagement with course material via Bb) and subjective (qualitative; e.g., contributing meaningful questions/answers, illustrating comprehension of course material) assessment, participation scores shall be at the discretion of the Instructor. The ‘average’ participation score is 15 points; noteworthy participation will receive more points. Class participation is worth 5% of your grade.

There are no ‘excused’ or ‘unexcused’ absences. Starting Week 4, **if students miss more than five (5) classes their final course grade will be lowered** (e.g., from B+ to B, B to B-, etc.). USC university policy indicates that “no portion of the grade may be awarded for class attendance, but non-attendance can be the basis for lowering the grade, when clearly stated on the syllabus” (UCOC, March 2019). Attendance will be taken regularly, at different times and in various ways (e.g., sign-in sheet, etc.). If you are not there when attendance is taken then you will be considered absent. Finally, falsely presenting attendance for another student or allowing a fellow student to do the same for you (e.g., by signing the attendance sheet), is a violation of academic integrity (and will be dealt with accordingly).

Students who miss a class are expected to have read the material and actively find out what they missed. You should approach another classmate for missed notes and, if clarification is needed, meet with your Instructor. **Instructor lecture notes or PowerPoint slides are not provided to students in this course.**

## 2. Exams

There will be three (3) exams given throughout the course. The exams are NOT cumulative; however, concepts do build upon each other. Both lecture material and assigned course readings will be covered on the exam; therefore, attending all lectures and erudition of all assigned readings is essential. Exams *may* consist of true/false, multiple-choice, short answer, and essay questions. There will be a review prior to each exam. 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 are in the hospital, there was a death in the family, etc.), it is your responsibility to: (1) inform your Instructor prior to the scheduled exam time, and (2) provide the Instructor with verifiable written documentation of the emergency (e.g., medical note from a certified physician). If your excuse is deemed valid and can be verified, you will be allowed to make up the missed exam (*in a timely manner*) at the discretion of the Instructor. Exam I will be held on **February 10, 2020**; Exam II will be held on **March 30, 2020**; Exam III will be held on **Friday, May 08, 2020 (2:00 - 4:00 p.m.)**.

## 3. Reaction Papers

You will be assigned a series of reaction papers. A reaction paper features your intellectual response to a mass media topic covered in lecture/readings. 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 2 to 4 double-spaced, typed pages. All reaction paper descriptions are presented on Blackboard. Reaction Papers turned in late will result in a **5 point deduction for each day** after the deadline. The reaction papers are due by 11:59 p.m. [via Turnitin on Blackboard] on the following due dates: **#1: Feb. 14 (Week 5); #2: Mar. 13 (Week 9); #3: Apr. 10 (Week 12); #4: May 01 (Week 15).** Reaction papers are worth 35% of your final grade.

### Grading Timeframe and Missing or Inaccurate Score Inquiries/Disputes

For effective learning, students should receive timely feedback on assignments and exams. Therefore, *every attempt* will be made to grade assignments/exams and post grades within 7-10 days (from the due date). Scores for all assignments and exams are regularly updated on Blackboard. You are responsible for notifying the Instructor **within one (1) week** of a score posting if you think a score is missing or inaccurate. Moreover, you only have this period of time to contest a score on an assignment/exam. If you fail to inquire/notify us of any discrepancy, missing score, or contest a score within one week of the date the score is posted, no further changes will be made.

Extra Credit Opportunities

There *may* be extra credit opportunities available. Extra credit is not guaranteed as it is dependent on the need of research participants in departmental research *or* a relevant Annenberg School of Communication sponsored event. *If* extra credit opportunities are made available, students can receive 2 points for each half-hour of participation (max. 8 points).

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	02/10/20
Exam II	60%	80	03/30/20
Exam III		80	05/08/20
Reaction Papers	35%	140	02/14, 03/13, 04/10, 05/01
<b>Total</b>		<b>400 pts. possible</b>	

**IMPORTANT:** Grades are based on the work completed from the first and last day of class. Per USC policy, “No student is allowed to re-take a final examination or do extra work in a course after the semester has ended for purposes of improving his or her [or their] grade.”

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>
376-400	94-100	A	292-307	73-76	C
360-375	90-93	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

**What does a letter grade mean?**

Enrollment in this course does not mean you earned an “A” in this course. Doing the bare minimum is not A-level work. Description of letter grades are below.

<u>Letter Grade</u>	<u>Description</u>
A	Excellence; demonstrates <i>extraordinarily</i> high achievement; comprehensive knowledge and understanding of subject matter; all expectations met and exceeded; no substantive shortcomings or only minor shortcomings.
B	Good; moderately broad knowledge and understanding of subject matter; explicitly or implicitly demonstrates good, if not thorough understanding; only minor substantive shortcomings.
C	Satisfactory/Fair; reasonable knowledge and understanding of subject matter; directions are followed, most expectations are met but with at least one significant shortcoming; despite any shortcomings, demonstrates basic level of understanding.
D	Marginal; minimal knowledge and understanding of subject matter; more than one significant shortcoming; deficiencies indicate only the most rudimentary level of understanding.
F	Failing; unacceptably low level of knowledge and understanding of subject matter; assignments not completed or directions not followed; deficiencies indicate lack of understanding.

## Course Policies

### Academic Integrity Policy

The 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 ([USC Catalogue, 2019-2020](#)).

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](#) (see University Governance, Section 11.00).

The university does not tolerate discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment. You are encouraged to report incidents to the Office of Equity and Diversity <http://equity.usc.edu> or to the Department of Public Safety <http://adminopsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety>. This is important for the safety of the whole USC community. Another member of the university community (e.g., 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 Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention and Services (RSVP) webpage <http://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp/> describes reporting options and other resources.

### Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity in a Crisis

In case of a declared emergency if travel to campus is not feasible, USC executive leadership will announce an electronic way for instructors to teach students in their residence halls or homes using a combination of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technologies. See the university's site on **Campus Safety and Emergency Preparedness**.

### 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 **during 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 DSP. Your cooperation is appreciated. Disability Services & Program contact information: (213) 740-0776 or <https://dsp.usc.edu>.

### Student-Athlete Travel Excuse Letters

Prior to a university-sponsored away competition, Student-Athletes are responsible for providing their 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.

### Email Policy

Email *can be* an effective communication tool. However, it also can produce more confusion than clarity and be an inefficient use of time. Emails should be limited to quick questions and scheduling appointments; they should not be seen as an alternative to attending class lectures, office hours, or a scheduled appointment. Before emailing, make sure you consult the course syllabus, lecture notes, handouts, and the course website to see if the answer to your question is there. **Although responses may be provided quickly, you should give us 48 hours to reply to your email. If you do not receive a response within 48 hours, please follow-up via email or in person.**

Classroom Comportment

Students are expected to engage in behaviors that enhance the learning environment. The Instructor 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. **Disruptive behaviors may adversely affect your overall course grade.**

Computer Access

USC Annenberg has a policy that requires that all students enrolled in an Annenberg class bring their own laptop device to campus. Windows OS and Mac OS software (including SPSS) necessary to complete assignments in this course are available on computers in the following USC Computing Centers: Ahmanson Information Commons at Leavey Library, King Hall (KOH 206), and Waite Phillips Hall (WPH B34). Moreover, all currently enrolled students (with a valid ID) are eligible for the [USC Computing Center Laptop Loaner Program](#). It is your responsibility to ensure that you have access to a computer that can perform the necessary functions for completion of assignments.

Laptops/Electronic Devices

**Laptops/Tablets may be used during class for note-taking purposes only.** Please do not use devices for any purpose unrelated to our class as this may result in a suspension of use by the entire class for the semester. Other electronic devices (e.g., cell phones, iPods, etc.) should be turned off/silenced and put away. If you need to use your phone for any reason, please excuse yourself from the classroom.

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 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.

Intellectual Property

The syllabus, lectures, handouts, and Blackboard content fall under personal and university-wide intellectual property policies. Anything other than personal use (e.g., organized recording, duplication, or distribution) on your part represents a violation of copyright and fair use laws.

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, 2019-2020).

Turnitin.com

Students agree that by taking this course all required papers might be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers 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 papers in such a way that no personal identifying information is included.

Learning Experience Evaluations

Learning Experience Evaluations will be conducted on the last day of the class. This will be your opportunity to provide feedback about your learning experience in the class. This feedback helps the instructor determine whether students are having the intended learning experiences for the class. It is important to remember that the learning process is collaborative and requires significant effort from the instructor, individual students, and the

class as a whole. Students should provide a thoughtful assessment of their experience, as well as of their own effort, with comments focused on specific aspects of instruction or the course. Comments on personal characteristics of the instructor are not appropriate and will not be considered. For this feedback to be as comprehensive as possible, all students should complete the evaluation.

### **Consultations**

You are more than welcome to contact me in my office, email me, attend office hours, or set up a meeting time. Please do not wait until the night before an assignment is due or an exam to realize that you do not understand something. If you experience difficulty in this course for any reason, please do not hesitate to contact me.

### **Additional Resources**

**Student Health Counseling Services [24/7 on call]:** (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.

**USC Department of Public Safety, University Park Campus [24/7 on call]:** (213) 740-6000 or [dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu)  
Non-emergency assistance or information.

**USC Emergency, University Park Campus [24/7 on call]:** (213) 740-4321 or [dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu), [emergency.usc.edu](http://emergency.usc.edu)  
Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

**LiveSafe Mobile Safety App:** <http://dps.usc.edu/services/safety-app/>  
Managed by the USC Department of Public Safety and the USC Department of Emergency, this free downloadable app [Google or Apple] can be used to initiate contact with emergency responders around both USC campuses. The features include: immediate “push button” calls to DPS, easy reporting for suspicious activity or crimes in progress, and location services to notify friends of your route through campus.

**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.

**USC Support and Advocacy:** (213) 821-4710 or [studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa](http://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa)  
Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

**Diversity at USC:** (213) 740-2101 or [diversity.usc.edu](http://diversity.usc.edu)  
Information on events, programs and training, the Provost’s Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

**Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) | Title IX:** (213) 740-5086 or [equity.usc.edu](http://equity.usc.edu), [titleix.usc.edu](http://titleix.usc.edu)  
Information about how to get help or help a survivor of harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants. The university prohibits discrimination or harassment based on the following protected characteristics: race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, medical condition, mental disability, marital status, pregnancy, veteran status, genetic information, and any other characteristic which may be specified in applicable laws and governmental regulations.

**Bias Assessment Response & Support:** (213) 740-2421 or [studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support](http://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support)

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions for appropriate investigation and response.

**Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) [24/7 on call]:** (213) 740-4900 or [engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp](http://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp)

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

**National Suicide Prevention Lifeline [24/7 on call]:** (800) 273-8255 or [suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

## Course Schedule\*

	Date	Topic	Readings
Week 1	Jan. 13 Jan. 15	Introduction to the Course Understanding Mass Communication & Media Effects	Syllabus <sup>T</sup> Sparks (Chpt. 3, pp. 72-73 <u>only</u> )
Week 2	Jan. 20 Jan. 22	<b>No Class – Martin Luther King’s Birthday</b> Scientific Study of Media Research	<sup>T</sup> Sparks (Chpt. 1 & Chpt. 2)
Week 3	Jan. 27 Jan. 29	Historical Overview of Media Effects Research Audiences: Identification, Interaction, & Gratification	<sup>T</sup> Sparks (Chpt. 3, pp. 54-72 <u>only</u> ) <sup>T</sup> Sparks (Chpt. 4); <sup>Bb</sup> Nielsen (2019)
Week 4	Feb. 03 Feb. 05	Unique Audiences: Children and Adolescents Unique Audiences & Exam I Review	<sup>T</sup> Sparks (Chpt. 7) -----
Week 5	Feb. 10 Feb. 12	<b>Exam I</b> Violence and Mass Media: Content ○ <b>Reaction Paper #1 due [Fri., Feb. 14]</b>	-----
Week 6	Feb. 17 Feb. 19	<b>No Class – President’s Day</b> Violence and Mass Media: Content (cont.).	<sup>T</sup> Sparks (Chpt. 5)
Week 7	Feb. 24 Feb. 26	Violence and Mass Media: Effects Sex and Mass Media: Content	<sup>Bb</sup> Huesmann & Taylor (2006) <sup>T</sup> Sparks (Chpt. 6)
Week 8	Mar. 02 Mar. 04	Sex and Mass Media: Effects Stereotypes and Mass Media: Gender	<sup>Bb</sup> Collins et al. (2004) <sup>T</sup> Sparks (Chpt. 10, pp. 253-265 <u>only</u> ); <sup>Bb</sup> Smith et al. (2019)
Week 9	Mar. 09 Mar. 11	Stereotypes and Mass Media: Gender (cont.) Stereotypes and Mass Media: LGBT ○ <b>Reaction Paper #2 due [Fri., Mar. 13]</b>	<sup>Bb</sup> Karsay et al. (2018) <sup>Bb</sup> Smith et al. (2019)
<b>Spring Break (March 15 – March 22)</b>			
Week 10	Mar. 23 Mar. 25	Stereotypes and Mass Media: Disability & Mental Health Exam II Review	<sup>Bb</sup> Smith, et al. (2019); <sup>Bb</sup> Fawcett (2015)
Week 11	Mar. 30 Apr. 01	<b>Exam II</b> Stereotypes and Mass Media: Ethnic/Racial Groups	<sup>Bb</sup> Bogle (2004); <sup>Bb</sup> Ramirez-Berg (2002)
Week 12	Apr. 06 Apr. 08	Stereotypes and Mass Media: Ethnic/Racial (cont.). Persuasion ○ <b>Reaction Paper #3 due [Fri., Apr. 10]</b>	<sup>Bb</sup> Mastro & Greenberg (2000); <sup>Bb</sup> Smith et <sup>T</sup> Sparks (Chpt. 8)
Week 13	Apr. 13 Apr. 15	Mass Media and Health: Tobacco & Alcohol Mass Media and Health: Campaigns	----- <sup>T</sup> Sparks (Chpt. 9)
Week 14	Apr. 20 Apr. 22	News and Politics News and Media Effects	<sup>T</sup> Sparks (Chpt. 10, pp. 266-278 <u>only</u> ) <sup>Bb</sup> Dixon & Williams (2015)
Week 15	Apr. 27 Apr. 29	Diffusion of Innovations New Technology/Change Agency & Course Wrap-Up ○ <b>Reaction Paper #4 due [Fri., May. 01]</b>	----- <sup>T</sup> Sparks (Chpt. 11); <sup>Bb</sup> Smith et al.
<b>Finals Week</b>		<b>Exam III (Friday, May 08, 2020; 2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.)</b>	

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

<sup>T</sup>Course Textbook (Sparks)<sup>Bb</sup>Blackboard Reading