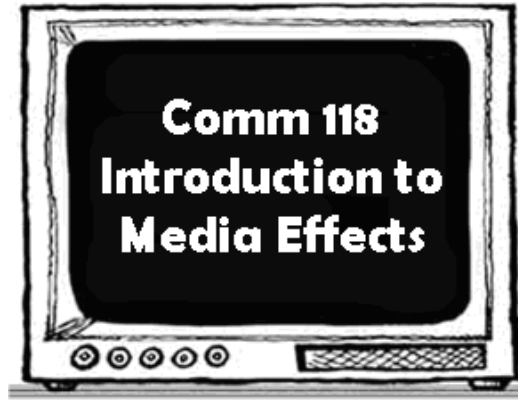


**Instructor**  
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**Office Hours**  
T: 2:30-4; Th: 11-12:30  
(signup)  
And by Appointment



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**Office Hours**  
T: 1:00 – 2:30;  
Th: 3:00 – 4:30  
And by Appointment

**Spring 2007**

### **Course Overview:**

Aside from working and sleeping, individuals in the United States spend more time consuming media than any other single activity. By the time the average person reaches the age of 65, he or she will have spent over six full years of life watching television – not to mention the additional time spent reading newspapers and magazines, listening to radio, using the Internet, and playing videogames. Given the centrality of media in the lives of most people, it is imperative that we understand and critically explore the variety of ways in which we perceived and are influenced by media messages. The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the study of the effects of media on individuals and on society. This course will overview a broad range of media theories that have examined media as a social force, that have explored factors that affect individuals' selection of and perceptions of media messages, and that have studied how media affect viewers' attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. These theories will be used to examine a variety of different types of content, including media violence, portrayals of race and gender, politics, advertising, and entertainment, among others.

### **Course Goals:**

- 1) To increase your understanding of the role of media in the lives of individuals and society
- 2) To enhance your awareness of how media use and media content affects your own and others' attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors
- 3) To increase your knowledge of media-effects theories that help explain and predict media influence
- 4) To assist you in developing greater media literacy skills and critical viewing of media content, and a more nuanced understanding of how various forms of media function in your own lives and in society

### **Readings:**

- Harris, R. J. (2004). *A cognitive psychology of mass communication* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Additional readings (articles / essays)

## **Evaluation:**

Evaluations for the course will be based on in-class tests, media assignments/posts, and research participation. There are a total of 150 points in the class. The breakdown of grades is as follows:

- 3 Tests: 120 points (40 points/each)
- 3 Media Assignments: 18 points (6 points/each)
- 2 Research Participations: 12 points (6 points/each)

## **Components of Evaluation:**

**Tests:** Three tests will be given in this course to assess basic understanding of media-effects theories, research findings, and application of theories to actual and hypothetical media examples. Questions on the test will be taken from course content and from the readings. Please note that all three exams must be taken to receive a passing grade in this course.

**Media Assignments:** These assignments (handed in three times) require you to locate an example of media content (e.g., video, magazine ad, etc.) that illustrates theories, concepts, models, or arguments under consideration in the class, to provide a written explanation of how your example is relevant to course topics, and to post your example and written explanation to a class bulletin board on Angel. For example, a student may submit a magazine advertisement to illustrate gender roles, providing a written explanation of how their advertisement illustrates research pertaining to media consumption and eating disorders. Alternatively, a student may submit a video of a clip from a reality-based program, providing a written explanation of how the interaction of the characters in the program, as well as the uncertainty of the outcome, illustrate entertainment theories based on perceived disposition of characters and outcome uncertainty.

Requirements for this assignment:

- Your posting needs to include an example from media. If you have any questions as to whether or not your example is appropriate, please ask!
- Your explanation of the relevance of your media example must clearly reference concepts, theories, or arguments discussed in class or in the readings. In other words, it must be evident that you are in this class – a posting that could have been made prior to taking this class or reading the materials in the class would not be relevant.
- Your explanation should be at least 100 words in length.
- Your explanation must use correct grammar and spelling.
- Your explanation and media example should be respectful -- avoiding offensive or inappropriate content or reactions.
- Your postings are due no later than the date/time that each of the three tests is given.

This assignment will be evaluated both in terms of how relevant the example is to the concepts and theories covered in the course, as well as in terms of the accuracy, completeness, and clarity of the written explanation. Students are encouraged to post their media assignment at any time leading up to the due date. Reactions to classmates' postings are welcome and encouraged.

**Research Participation:** Because this course pertains to research in media effects, you will have the opportunity to receive credit in the course by participating in ongoing research in the College of Communications or by completing an alternate assignment in lieu of a research participation opportunity. These opportunities will be discussed during class time when they arise. Please note that to earn this credit, you must either participate in a study or complete the alternate assignment associated with the specific study by the due date given—late participation or assignments will not be available.

## Course Policies:

### Interactions in Class:

- **Participation:** Even though this is a large class, students are expected and encouraged to participate in class discussions. As the instructors for the course, we very much value and respect your contribution, feedback, and questions. Please know that your input will always be taken seriously -- we are here to help you, and we want for you to succeed. We also want to learn from your insights and contributions. So please participate -- we will all benefit!
- **Avoiding Distractions:** Because certain behaviors can be distracting for both students and the instructors, you are asked to refrain from the following behaviors during class time: Using a cell phone (texting or calling), reading (books, magazines, etc.), working puzzles (crosswords, sudoku), sleeping, eating loudly, etc. If you must engage in those behaviors, I will understand that you have made those behaviors a priority over being in class for the day, and you will be asked to leave the classroom so that your priorities do not distract from the learning environment

**Attendance:** It is expected that you attend every class meeting. There will be many concepts and issues covered in class that are not addressed in the readings. Please note that it is not sufficient only to read others' lecture notes or look at lecture slides without coming to class. Doing so will almost certainly reduce your mastery of the course materials. If you miss do miss a class, it is your responsibility to get notes and a review from a classmate. Please do not ask or expect the instructors to repeat materials covered in class because you were not there.

### Contact with Instructors:

- Should you have questions, concerns, or comments about any aspect of this class, you are more than welcome to visit the instructors during their office hours or during other arranged appointments. You should first arrange to meet with the graduate teaching assistant for the course, after which time you should feel free to meet with the professor if you continue to have questions/concerns/comments you would like to share.
- We will do our best to answer any e-mail within a reasonable period of time (e.g., 3 days). However, we request that you treat e-mail as professional correspondence (i.e., include salutations, appropriate subject lines, etc.). E-mail that is treated as casual correspondence (e.g., filled with typos, lacking identification of sender, using an abrupt/unprofessional tone, etc.) will be returned to the sender for revision. Please note that you should use your PSU e-mail address when corresponding with the instructors.

**Missed/Late Work:** Missed/late work is not an option in this class. The exams are to be taken at the schedule times. Rides home, exams in other classes, late nights, etc. do not constitute reasons for taking the exam at alternate time. Deadlines for assignments are firm. One letter grade will be deducted for each day an assignment is late beyond the deadline. Please do not ask for exceptions these policies – doing so will result in our referring you to this section of the syllabus.

### **Academic Integrity**

Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly and creative activity in an open, honest and responsible manner, free from fraud and deception, and is an educational objective of the College of Communications and the university. Cheating, including plagiarism, falsification of research data, using the same assignment for more than one class, turning in someone else's work, or passively allowing others to copy your work, will result in academic penalties at the discretion of the instructor, and may result in the grade of "XF" (failed for academic dishonesty) being put on your permanent transcript. In serious cases it could also result in suspension or dismissal from the university. As students studying communication, you should understand and avoid plagiarism (presenting the work of others as your own). A discussion of plagiarism, with examples, can be found at: <http://tlt.its.psu.edu/suggestions/cyberplag/cyberplagstudent.html>. The rules and policies regarding academic integrity should be reviewed by every student, and can be found online at: [www.psu.edu/ufs/policies/47-00.html#49-20](http://www.psu.edu/ufs/policies/47-00.html#49-20) , and in the College of Communications document, "Academic Integrity Policy and Procedures." Any student with a question about academic integrity or plagiarism is strongly encouraged to discuss it with his or her instructor.

### **Note To Students With Disabilities**

Penn State welcomes students with disabilities into the University's educational programs. If you have a disability-related need for reasonable academic adjustments in this course, contact the Office for Disability Services, ODS located in room 116 Boucke Building at 814-863-1807(V/TTY). For further information regarding ODS, please visit their web site at [www.equity.psu.edu/ods/](http://www.equity.psu.edu/ods/). Instructors should be notified as early in the semester as possible regarding the need for reasonable academic adjustments.

**Course Schedule and Readings\***  
**H = Harris Text**  
**AR = Additional Readings**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Readings</b>
Tues, Jan 16	Introduction & Overview of Course	
Thur, Jan 18	War of the Worlds	H: Chapter 1 AR: Bartholomew
Tues, Jan 23	Medium Theory: No Sense of Place	AR: Meyrowitz
Thur, Jan 25	Medium Theory: Amusing Ourselves to Death	AR: Postman
Tues, Jan 30	Medium Theory (continued); Explanation of Media Assignment	
Thur, Feb 01	Social Scientific Approaches to Media Influence	H: Pages 18-27 (in Chapter 2)
Tues, Feb 06	Popular Perceptions of Media Influence	H: Pages 27-52 (in Chapter 2) AR: Perlof
Thur, Feb 08	Uses and Gratifications & Mood Management	AR: Zillmann
Tues, Feb 13	Uses and Gratifications & Mood Management	
Thur, Feb 15	Children's Understanding of Media	H: Chapter 5
Tues, Feb 20	Wrap up/Review	
Thur, Feb 22	Test 1	
Tues, Feb 27	Children's Emotional Responses to Media	AR: Cantor
Thur, Mar 01	Children's Emotional Responses to Media (contin).	
Tues, Mar 06	Media Violence – Content	H: Chapter 9
Thur, Mar 08	Media Violence – Effects	AR: Bushman & Anderson
Tues, Mar 13	Spring Break	
Thur, Mar 15	Spring Break	
Tues, Mar 20	Media Violence – Effects (contin.)	
Thur, Mar 22	Media Violence & Enjoyment	AR: Goldstein
Tues, Mar 27	Media and Sexuality	H: Chapter 10
Thur, Mar 29	Media and Sexuality (continued)	
Tues, Apr 03	Wrap up/Review	
Thur, Apr 05	Test 2	
Tues, Apr 10	Stereotyping of Social Groups	H: Chapter 3
Thur, Apr 12	Stereotyping (continued)	
Tues, Apr 17	News and Politics	H: Chapter 7 & 8 AR: Sunstein
Thur, Apr 19	News and Politics (continued)	
Tues, Apr 24	Advertising & Persuasion	H: Chapter 4
Thur, Apr 26	Advertising & Persuasion (continued)	
Tues, May 01	Wrap up/Review	
Thur, May 03	Test 3	

\* Every effort will be made to adhere strictly to this class schedule. However, the instructor reserves the right to modify the schedule due to the inclusion of additional materials, extended class discussion, inclement weather, etc.

### Additional Readings

- Bartholomew, R. E. (1998, November). The martian panic sixty years later: What have we learned? *Skeptical Inquirer*, 22 (6). Available from <http://www.csicop.org/si/9811/martian.html>.
- Meyrowitz, J. (1999). Understandings of media. *et Cetera*, 56(1), 44-52. Available from Proquest database.
- Postman, N. (1980, March). Television news narcosis. *The Nation*, 230, 245-246. Available from The Nation Archive database.
- Perloff, R. M. (1999). The third-person effect: A critical review and synthesis. *Media Psychology*, 1, 353-378. Available from EBSCO Host Research Database.
- Zillmann, D. (1988). Mood management through communication choices. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 31, 327-340. Available from Proquest database.
- Cantor, J. (2004). "I'll never have a clown in my house": Why movie horror lives on. *Poetics Today: International Journal for Theory and Analysis of Literature and Communication*, 25(2), 283-304. Available from Project Muse Premium Collection database.
- Bushman, B. J., & Anderson, C. A. (2001). Media violence and the American public: Scientific facts versus media misinformation. *American Psychologist*, 56(6-7), 477-489. Available from CSA Psyarticles database.
- Goldstein, J. (1999). The attractions of violent entertainment. *Media Psychology*, 1, 271-282.
- Sunstein, C. (2001, June). Boycott the Daily Me! *Time Magazine*, 157(22). Available from <http://www.time.com/time/interactive/politics/undemocratic.html>