

Communication 326: Mass Media and the Audience

Spring 2020

Instructor's Name: Marisa A. Smith
Course Classroom: Lincoln Hall 1057
Office: 4070 Lincoln Hall (Pod A)
Office Hours: W/F 11 AM to noon (or by appointment)
E-mail: masmit11@illinois.edu
Course Director: Travis Dixon

Course Objectives:

Welcome! This course presents information on mass media audiences, mass media use, and the impact of media. During the course, you will be challenged to consider the following questions:

- What media do you use?
- Why do you use this media?
- Given the media you consume, how might it affect you?

This course will examine individual differences pertaining to audience experiences, reasons for mass media use, social cognition, and how the conceptualization of the audience is changing in the face of new media technologies. By the end of the class you will understand the ways in which audience members use media and the effects of mass media on audience members.

Required Text:

Sanborn, F. W. & Harris, R. J. (2019). *A Cognitive Psychology of Mass Communication* (7th ed.). New York: Routledge.

Additional readings will be available on Moodle (<https://learn.illinois.edu>)

Textbook Resources:

A copy of the textbook is on reserve in the Communications Library:

<https://www.library.illinois.edu/commedia/>

Our Classroom: This course encourages different perspectives of media use and media effects related to factors such as gender, race, nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, political orientation, and other relevant identities. Furthermore, this course seeks to foster understanding and inclusiveness related to such diverse perspectives. Students must remain committed to building a positive, inclusive class environment; respecting each other, your instructor, and the learning process. We argue ideas in this classroom, not each other. Refrain from using any language that reflects bias against any individual, group, or culture.

Please do not hesitate to let me know of any problems that arise during our classroom discussions. Moreover, please let me know if I say something that makes you uncomfortable at any point in this class. You can tell me or leave an anonymous note addressed to me with the Communication Department main office, located on the third floor of Lincoln Hall.

Academic Integrity: Plagiarism (passing off someone else's idea as your own) is subject to university procedures and carries serious penalties, ranging from a grade of zero on the assignment to failure for the course. In all cases of plagiarism, a letter will be filed with the dean of the student's college. If you are worried about whether you're attributing information to your sources correctly, please reach out to me for assistance. You may review the University of Illinois plagiarism policy at <http://www.library.illinois.edu/learn/research/academicintegrity.html>

Accommodation Policy: Students with disabilities needing appropriate academic accommodations should contact me as soon as possible to ensure their needs are met in a timely manner. In addition to bringing the disability to my attention, you should also contact the Division of Rehabilitation Education Services (DRES). DRES is located at 1207 S. Oak St., Champaign. You can reach DRES by calling (217) 333-4602 or visiting <http://disability.illinois.edu/>. If accommodations are needed for exams, please notify the instructor and provide documentation at least two weeks prior to the exam. Also, if accommodations are needed for daily class meetings (e.g., notetaking, preferential seating, etc.), please notify me as soon as possible so that I can address your needs.

Exams and Attendance

Exams (45%): You will have three non-cumulative exams in this course. Exams will be a combination of multiple-choice, true/false, and short answer questions. Exam questions will come from the textbook, readings, lecture, and class activities. Each exam is worth 75 points for a total of 225 points during the semester.

Attendance and Class Participation (5%): I want us all to work together in making this course as interactive as possible. Everyone uses media. Consequently, I expect everyone to contribute to class discussions and activities. Come to class every day prepared to share your thoughts, comments, and questions with your fellow classmates. Have you watched or listened to media that is connected to the course material? Did something provided in the reading stand out to you? Did any questions arise as you read for class? These are examples of questions that will help facilitate class participation. If you come across a news article that relates to the class, please send it my way. I will provide one extra credit point for the article.

Writing Assignments

Media Journal (10%): The first step to understanding your media use and your role as an audience member is to constantly document and reflect upon your media use. During the course of the semester I want you to keep a journal where you critically think about your media use and the course material. The assignment is an opportunity to reflect on your own terms. I will not read your journal entries, but rather visually check for its completion. You will complete 10 journal entries for a total of 50 points. You may use any means of journal keeping; however, the journal must be hand-written. Feel free to use a traditional journal, a blue book, loose-leaf papers in a binder, or any other method for keeping track of your journal. Most prompts will be open-ended. That is, you will be able to write about whatever you find relevant. For other entries, I will provide prompts for your journal entries.

Audience Member Self-Assessments (20%): You must complete at least two Audience Member Self-Assessments (50 points each). Additional information for the paper is provided on Moodle.

Final Paper Options (20%): The final paper provides students with an opportunity to 1) reflect on their personal media use, 2) reflect on their individual characteristics, and 3) apply their knowledge of media effects theory. Students will select a form of media they use (e.g., radio, music, television, social media) and reflect on their use of the medium. Considering their media use and individual characteristics, students will apply a media effect theory discussed in class and speculate potential effects (i.e., behavioral, attitudinal, cognitive, physiological). The final paper is worth a total of 100 and due **Wednesday, May 6th**.

Additional information for both options is provided on Moodle.

Course Grading

Students can earn a total of 500 points in this class. The points are distributed as follows:

Assignment	Point Value	Your Score
Exams	225	
Final Paper	100	
Attendance/Participation	25	
Audience Member Self-Assessments	100	
Media Journal	50	
TOTAL POINTS	500	

Final Grades are determined by the following point system:

500-485..... A+	379-365..... C
484-465..... A	364-350..... C-
464-450..... A-	349-330..... D+
449-430..... B+	329-315..... D
429-415..... B	314-300..... D-
414-400..... B-	299 and below... F
399-380..... C+	

Course Policies

Grading: Grades will be posted to Moodle. You are welcome to discuss any questions you may have regarding grades during my office hours or by appointment. I will not discuss grades via email. Students who wish to discuss their grade must allow at least 24 hours after reviewing their graded assignment.

Tardiness: Every class period will begin with a discussion. If you are late, you will interrupt your classmates' discussion and learning opportunity. I expect you to arrive to class on time to prevent classroom disruptions.

Late work: All assignments are due on Moodle (<https://learn.illinois.edu>) by 11:59 pm on the specified due date. Late assignments will receive a 10 percent deduction for each 24-hour period it is late (including weekends).

Make-Up Exams: Exams must be taken on the scheduled day. No make-up exams will be administered, except in cases of a documented medical or family emergency or for a university

excused absence. It is the student's responsibility to: (1) inform the instructor PRIOR to the scheduled due date or exam time, and (2) provide the instructor with written documentation of the emergency (e.g., medical note from a certified physician).

Readings: In order to actively participate in class, you need to complete the assigned readings prior to class.

Extra Credit: Students may receive up to 10 points of extra credit (2% of the final grade). Extra credit opportunities will be available on Moodle. Also, I am notorious for typos. If you notice one, please disclose it after our class meeting. If you find a typo, I will provide one extra credit point (max two points).

Religious Holidays: Students who observe religious holidays that conflict with class sessions should notify me via email within the first two weeks of the semester.

Technology: Cellular phones must be turned off or silenced before class starts. Laptops are allowed in the classroom. However, there is evidence that people take better notes by hand (and remember more). More important, using laptops tends to invite inattention and distracts people around you. If for any reason you feel you must use a laptop to take notes, please see me so we can discuss the best location for you to sit so that you minimize distractions for other students. Lecture notes will be available on Moodle to supplement your notes. **NOTE:** The lecture notes are meant to aid students in note taking. The notes are not a direct replica of the lecture slides used in class.

Office Hours: I want everyone to succeed in this course. Please utilize my office hours if you have any questions or if you simply want to review the course material. If you are not available during my office hours, I am available by appointment.

Email: Email is a great way to ask questions about the course or assignments. However, email is not a substitute for reading the syllabus. That said, I ask that you read the syllabus prior to any email to determine whether or not the answer to your question is available in the syllabus. I typically respond to emails within 24 hours (excluding weekends). If you do not receive a reply within 24 hours, please send a follow-up email.