COMM738A Mediated Communication: Media Effects

Spring 2024 | Th 3:30-6:30pm | MMH 0110 | Zoom

Note. This syllabus may be modified to accommodate guest speakers, weather conditions, or class requirements. Students will be promptly informed about significant changes, especially those that could impact grading or assignments.

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This advanced graduate seminar offers an in-depth exploration of the various theories and research studies on the impact of both traditional and contemporary media on individuals and society. Central to this course is the examination of how media content and its consumption influence people's perceptions of social reality, shape public opinions, attitudes, and behaviors, and the psychological mechanisms that drive these processes. The first part of the seminar is dedicated to a comprehensive study of key theories and models in media effects, incorporating a range of perspectives such as agenda setting, framing, priming, and cultivation theory. The latter half of the course delves into the specific roles media play in shaping individual viewpoints and public discourse in diverse areas, including entertainment and social media, advertising, public health, and politics. This course emphasizes critical understanding and analysis, urging students to not only describe but also seek explanations for complex media phenomena. Students will emerge with a nuanced understanding of the intricate effects of media in a rapidly changing media landscape and will be equipped with analytical skills necessary for conducting their own media-focused research projects.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon completing this course, students are expected to:

- demonstrate a thorough understanding of fundamental theories and models in media studies, such as agenda setting, framing, priming, and cultivation theory, and their relevance in analyzing media effects.

- gain insight into the psychological mechanisms that underlie media consumption and its effects, enabling a deeper understanding of how media shapes individual and collective attitudes and behaviors.

- be able to critically analyze and synthesize media content, moving beyond mere description to seek explanations for complex media phenomena.

- acquire the necessary analytical skills to independently conduct research in the field of media studies, including designing and implementing media effects research projects.

- be able to assess the role and impact of different media platforms in shaping public discourse and individual viewpoints, including entertainment and social media.

- be able to critically examine and articulate the influence of media on individual perceptions, social realities, public opinions, and behaviors, integrating insights from diverse media contexts such as advertising, public health, and politics.

COURSE MATERIALS
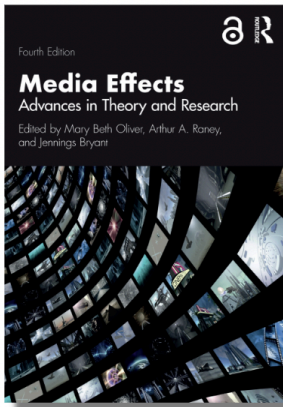
Required textbook:

Oliver, M. B., Raney, A. A., & Bryant, J. (Eds.). (2019). *Media effects (4th edition)*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Additional required readings are available [here](#).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Class Participation (40 points)

Our seminar is structured around discussion of the assigned readings. It is therefore essential for students to arrive at class well-prepared for critical analysis of these materials. Active engagement in discussions and other class activities is not just encouraged but expected. Points for class participation, reflective of the depth and quality of engagement, will be given at the professor's discretion.

Discussion Questions (60 points, 5 points/week for 12 weeks)

Every student, including those designated as discussants, must submit a minimum of two discussion questions per assigned reading to ELMS-Canvas by **Wednesday noon**, prior to the Thursday class of that week. These questions should be thoughtfully crafted to engage with central themes and arguments presented in the readings. They should invite consideration of various aspects such as theoretical approaches, methodological concerns, ethical considerations, practical implications, and/or the broader significance of the work. The evaluation of these discussion questions will be based on their quality, which includes criteria like depth of insight, pertinence to the subject matter, and their ability to foster engaging and meaningful classroom discussions.

Discussant (40 points, 20 points/week for 2 weeks)

In this seminar, each student will take on the role of a discussant for **two** separate class sessions, either individually or in partnership with another student. The primary duty of the discussant(s) is to spearhead and steer the class discussion on the assigned readings. For each reading, the discussant(s) will commence with a succinct presentation of the material, limited to 5 minutes and no more than 5 PowerPoint slides. This is followed by a 30-minute class discussion, driven by the submitted discussion questions. These questions may be selected entirely or partially for the discussion. It's often beneficial to display these questions, along with the names of the contributors, in the PowerPoint presentation, categorizing them by themes for clarity. The effectiveness of a discussant will be assessed based on two key aspects: 1) the quality of their overview presentation, and 2) their success in actively involving the entire class in substantial dialogues about the readings and the central theme of the week. In instances where the discussant role is shared, the group will be evaluated collectively.

Research Paper (100 points)

A major requirement of this course is the completion of a research paper, which each student will individually compose in the form of an original research proposal. Ideally, the paper should be inspired by one of the topics discussed in this seminar, but it can also explore any area of interest within the realm of media effects. The essence of an original research proposal is to provide a comprehensive plan for gathering empirical data to validate hypotheses or answer specific research questions. Your research proposal should encompass the following elements:

- Introduction: Establishing the context and rationale for your research.
- Literature Review: Critically analyzing and synthesizing relevant studies to build the foundation for your research.

- Hypotheses and/or Research Questions: Clearly articulating your theoretical model, hypotheses, or research questions.
- Proposed Methodology: Detailing the methods for data collection and the structure of your study.
- Analytic Approach and Expected Findings: Outlining the analytical techniques you'll use and predicting potential outcomes.
- Concluding Discussion: Reflecting on the anticipated learnings, the theoretical and practical implications, and the limitations of your research.

A succinct, two-page outline (single-spaced), is required by Week 6. This preliminary sketch must articulate your research questions or hypotheses, offer a rationale, and describe the study design, specifying the methodology, procedures, and how key variables will be measured. By Week 15, a complete draft of the full paper is due. This draft should span 15-20 pages (double-spaced, excluding references, tables/figures), and must conform to the APA style guidelines (7th edition). In Week 16, students will have the opportunity to present their research papers, offering a forum for feedback and discussion. Following these presentations, a final, polished version of the paper should be submitted in the subsequent week. All submissions, including the outline, draft, and final paper, should be uploaded to ELMS-Canvas. Specific due dates for major deliveries:

- Two-page outline   by noon 02/29
- Complete paper draft   by noon 05/02
- Presentation   during class time on 05/09
- Final paper   by noon 05/16

The following rubric will be used to grade the final paper.

Section	Criteria	Points	Description
1. Introduction	Context and Relevance	7	Effectively establishes the research context and its relevance to media effects.
	Rationale and Justification	8	Clearly articulates the rationale for the research, including why it is important.
2. Literature Review	Depth of Analysis	7	Demonstrates a thorough understanding and critical analysis of existing literature.
	Synthesis	8	Effectively synthesizes the reviewed literature to build a strong foundation for the research.
3. Hypotheses/Research Questions	Clarity and Relevance	6	Presents clear, concise, and relevant hypotheses or research questions.
	Theoretical Underpinning	4	Demonstrates how the hypotheses or questions are grounded in theory.
4. Proposed Methodology	Methodological Soundness	10	Describes a methodologically sound approach to data collection.
	Feasibility and Appropriateness	10	Methodology is feasible, appropriate for the research questions/hypotheses, and well-justified.
5. Analytic Approach and Expected Findings	Analytical Techniques	7	Outlines appropriate and robust analytical techniques.
	Expected Findings	8	Clearly articulates expected findings and their potential significance.
6. Concluding Discussion	Insights and Implications	5	Insightfully discusses the expected learnings and implications for theory and practice.
	Limitations	5	Thoughtfully reflects on the limitations and potential challenges of the proposed research.
Overall Quality and Originality	Innovation	7	Demonstrates originality and innovation in the research topic and approach.
	Contribution to Field	8	Potential to contribute significantly to the field of media effects.
Additional Criteria	Writing Quality	5	The proposal is well-written, clear, and adheres to academic standards.
	APA Style Compliance	5	Strict adherence to APA style 7th edition, including citations and formatting.
Total Points		100	

Note. Although not required, you are encouraged to collect data for your research project and incorporate actual results in your final paper.

GRADING

Category	Points	Percentage
Class Participation	40	17%
Discussion Questions (12 weeks)	60	25%
Discussant (2 weeks)	40	17%
Research Paper	100	42%
Total	240	100%

Final grades will be based on the percentage of points earned. The following scale will be used:

UMD 4.0 Scale (account: ARHU)

Name	Range	
A+	100%	to 97%
A	< 97%	to 93%
A-	< 93%	to 90%
B+	< 90%	to 87%
B	< 87%	to 83%
B-	< 83%	to 80%
C+	< 80%	to 77%
C	< 77%	to 73%
C-	< 73%	to 70%
D+	< 70%	to 67%
D	< 67%	to 65%
D-	< 65%	to 61%
F	< 61%	to 0%

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week	Date	Topics	Readings/Notes
1	Th 01/25	▪ Introduction	
2	Th 02/01	▪ Framing and agenda setting	
3	Th 02/08	▪ Cultivation theory	
4	Th 02/15	▪ Priming	
5	Th 02/22	▪ Third-person effect/presumed influence	
6	Th 02/29	▪ Hostile media	Paper outline due at noon
7	Th 03/07	▪ Media and emotion	
8	Th 03/14	▪ Media choice and selective exposure	
9	Th 03/21	▪ *Spring break!*	
10	Th 03/28	▪ Entertainment media	
11	Th 04/04	▪ Social media	
12	Th 04/11	▪ Advertising	
13	Th 04/18	▪ Media and public health	
14	Th 04/25	▪ Media and politics	
15	Th 05/02	▪ Guest speakers	Complete paper draft due at noon
16	Th 05/09	▪ Student research presentations	
	Th 05/16		Final paper due at noon

<div align="center">**ASSIGNED READINGS**</div>

Week 2 (Th 02/01): Framing and agenda setting

1. Media Effects Chapter 4 "News Framing Theory and Research"

2. Druckman, J. N. (2001). On the limits of framing effects: Who can frame? *Journal of Politics, 63*, 1041-1066.

3. Cacciatore, M. A., Scheufele, D. A., & Iyengar, S. (2016). The end of framing as we know it… and the future of media effects. *Mass Communication and Society, 19*(1), 7-23.

4. Strömbäck, J., & Kiousis, S. (2010). A new look at agenda-setting effects: Comparing the predictive power of overall political news consumption and specific news media consumption across different media channels and media types. *Journal of Communication, 60*, 271-292.

Week 3 (Th 02/08): Cultivation theory

1. Media Effects Chapter 5 "Cultivation Theory, Media, Stories, Processes, and Reality"

2. Shrum, L. J. (2001). Processing strategy moderates the cultivation effect. *Human Communication Research, 27*, 94-102.

3. Appel, M. (2008). Fictional narratives cultivate just-world beliefs. *Journal of Communication, 58*, 62-83.

4. Niederdeppe, J., Fowler, E. F., Goldstein, K., & Pribble, J. (2010). Does local television news coverage cultivate fatalistic beliefs about cancer prevention? *Journal of Communication, 60*, 230-253.

Week 4 (Th 02/15): Priming

1. Media Effects Chapter 6 "Media Priming and Accessibility"

2. Arendt, F. (2017). Impulsive facial-threat perceptions after exposure to stereotypic crime news. *Communication Research, 44*(6), 793-816.

3. Van Duyn, E., & Collier, J. (2019). Priming and fake news: The effects of elite discourse on evaluations of news media. *Mass Communication and Society, 22*(1), 29-48.

4. Holman, L., & McKeever, R. (2017). The Andrea Yates effect: Priming mental illness stereotypes through exemplification of postpartum disorders. *Health Communication, 32*(10), 1284-1296.

Week 5 (Th 02/22): Third-person effect/presumed influence

1. Sun, Y., Pan, Z., & Shen, L. (2008). Understanding the third-person perception: Evidence from a meta-analysis. *Journal of Communication, 58*, 280-300.

2. Lyons, B. A. (2022). Why we should rethink the third-person effect: disentangling bias and earned confidence using behavioral data. *Journal of Communication, 72*(5), 565-577.

3. Gunther, A. C. & Storey, J. D. (2003). The influence of presumed influence. *Journal of Communication, 53*, 199-214.

4. Hong, Y., & Kim, S. (2020). Influence of presumed media influence for health prevention: How mass media indirectly promote health prevention behaviors through descriptive norms. *Health Communication, 35*(14), 1800-1810.

Week 6 (Th 02/29): Hostile media

1. Vallone, R. P., Ross, L., & Lepper, M. R. (1985). The hostile media phenomenon: Biased perception and perceptions of media bias in coverage of the "Beirut Massacre." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 49*, 577-585.

2. Gunther, A., & Schmitt, K. (2004). Mapping boundaries of the hostile media effect. *Journal of Communication, 54*, 55-70.

3. Huge, M., & Glynn, C. J. (2010). Hostile media and the campaign trail: Perceived media bias in the race for governor. *Journal of Communication, 60*, 165-183.

4. Schulz, A., Wirth, W., & Müller, P. (2020). We are the people and you are fake news: A social identity approach to populist citizens' false consensus and hostile media perceptions. *Communication Research, 47*(2), 201-226.

Week 7 (Th 03/07): Media and emotion

1. Media Effects Chapter 11 "Media and Emotion"

2. Dunlop, S., Wakefield, M., & Kashima, Y. (2008). Can you feel it? Negative emotion, risk, and narrative in health communication. *Media Psychology, 11*, 52-75.

3. Young, D. G. (2008). The privileged role of the late-night joke: Exploring humor's role in disrupting argument scrutiny. *Media Psychology, 11*, 119-142.

4. Dal, A., & Nisbet, E. C. (2022). To share or not to share? How emotional judgments drive online political expression in high-risk contexts. *Communication Research, 49*(3), 353-375.

Week 8 (Th 03/14): Media choice and selective exposure

1. Media Effects Chapter 10 "Media Choice and Selective Exposure"

2. Slater, M. D. (2007). Reinforcing spirals: the mutual influence of media selectivity and media effects and their impact on individual behavior and social identity. *Communication Theory, 17*, 281-303.

3. Knobloch-Westerwick, S., & Meng, J. (2009). Looking the other way: Selective exposure to attitude-consistent and counterattitudinal political information. *Communication Research, 36*, 426-448.

4. Tsfati, Y., & Nir, L. (2017). Frames and reasoning: Two pathways from selective exposure to affective polarization. *International Journal of Communication, 11*, 22.

Week 10 (Th 03/28): Entertainment media

1. Media Effects Chapter 21 "Entertainment and Enjoyment as Media Effect"

2. Slater, M. D., Rouner, D., Long, M. (2006). Television dramas and support for controversial public policies: Effects and mechanisms. *Journal of Communication, 56*, 235-252.

3. Nabi, R. L. (2009). Cosmetic surgery makeover programs and intentions to undergo cosmetic enhancements: A consideration of three models of media effects. *Human Communication Research, 35*, 1- 27.

4. Long, J. A., & Eveland Jr, W. P. (2021). Entertainment use and political ideology: Linking worldviews to media content. *Communication Research, 48*(4), 479-500.

Week 11 (Th 04/04): Social media

1. Media Effects Chapter 24 "Social Media"

2. Bond, R. M., Fariss, C. J., Jones, J. J., Kramer, A. D., Marlow, C., Settle, J. E., & Fowler, J. H. (2012). A 61-million-person experiment in social influence and political mobilization. *Nature, 489*(7415), 295-298.

3. Guess, A. M., Malhotra, N., Pan, J., Barberá, P., Allcott, H., Brown, T., ... & Tucker, J. A. (2023). How do social media feed algorithms affect attitudes and behavior in an election campaign?. *Science, 381*(6656), 398-404.

4. Nyhan, B., Settle, J., Thorson, E., Wojcieszak, M., Barberá, P., Chen, A. Y., ... & Tucker, J. A. (2023). Like-minded sources on Facebook are prevalent but not polarizing. *Nature, 620*(7972), 137-144.

Week 12 (Th 04/11): Advertising

1. Media Effects Chapter 18 "Advertising Effects and Advertising Effectiveness"

2. Matthes, J. (2019). Uncharted territory in research on environmental advertising: Toward an organizing framework. *Journal of Advertising, 48*(1), 91-101.

3. Kees, J., & Andrews, J. C. (2019). Research issues and needs at the intersection of advertising and public policy. *Journal of Advertising, 48*(1), 126-135.

4. Thomas, V. L., & Fowler, K. (2021). Close encounters of the AI kind: Use of AI influencers as brand endorsers. *Journal of Advertising, 50*(1), 11-25.

Week 13 (Th 04/18): Media and public health

1. Media Effects Chapter 20 "Media Effects and Health"

2. Willoughby, J. F., & Noar, S. M. (2022). Fifteen years after a 10-year retrospective: The state of health mass mediated campaigns. *Journal of Health Communication, 27*(6), 362-374.

3. Hornik, R., Binns, S., Emery, S., Epstein, V. M., Jeong, M., Kim, K., ... & Gibson, L. A. (2022). The effects of tobacco coverage in the public communication environment on

young people's decisions to smoke combustible cigarettes. *Journal of Communication, 72*(2), 187-213.

4. Nan, X., Thier, K., & Wang, Y. (2023). Health misinformation: What it is, why people believe it, how to counter it. *Annals of the International Communication Association*, 381-410.

Week 14 (Th 04/25): Media and politics

1. Media Effects Chapter 3 "The World of News and Politics"

2. Conway, B. A., Kenski, K., & Wang, D. (2015). The rise of Twitter in the political campaign: Searching for intermedia agenda-setting effects in the presidential primary. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 20*(4), 363-380.

3. Fridkin, K., Kenney, P. J., & Wintersieck, A. (2015). Liar, liar, pants on fire: How fact-checking influences citizens' reactions to negative advertising. *Political Communication, 32*(1), 127-151.

4. Iyengar, S., Lelkes, Y., Levendusky, M., Malhotra, N., & Westwood, S. J. (2019). The origins and consequences of affective polarization in the United States. *Annual Review of Political Science, 22*, 129-146.