MASS MEDIA & SOCIETY
COM 226
FALL 2008
1:00 pm – 2:50 pm T/TH

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Office Hours: T/Th 3:00  pm – 4:00 pm  (and by appointment)

NOTE: To take this course you must have passed COM 101, if you have not completed these
prerequisites and still wish to take this course, please see the instructor.

READINGS

& other handouts

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course addresses these overarching questions: What effect does the mass media have on us
and on our society? During this class we will explore these questions using a social science
perspective. Specifically, we will examine the impact of media violence, media portrayals,
television and children, thin-ideal media, physiological responses to media, and more. This
course has been designed to provide you with the most current understanding provided by the
social scientific research in each of these areas.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

• To introduce students to an important Communication issues concerning the media and
  its effect on individuals and on society.
• To reinforce and apply students' knowledge of social scientific research methods used in
  Communication and to help students become critical consumers of research in general.
• To allow students to become experts concerning at least one important media effect.
• To help students develop the skills required to conduct and report social scientific
  research.
• To encourage students to consider and discuss ideas thoughtfully and critically.
• To allow and encourage students to have fun while learning.
INSTRUCTOR'S PHILOSOPHY

First, learning involves more than memorizing facts and figures. The most useful learning is about how to think, both creatively and critically; how to find and use information; and how to express ideas effectively in writing and speech. These skills are not learned by just listening to lectures and parroting back information in tests. This class therefore takes a "learn by doing" approach, in which students actively discuss ideas, participate in exercises, write and rewrite papers, share their work with each other, etc.

Second, students are more likely to learn when the subject matter is interesting and the time spent in a classroom is pleasant, enjoyable, even entertaining. I think the topics of the course are very interesting, and I'll do my best to make the class both interesting and enjoyable. But making the class enjoyable is something both professor and students must work at: Your enthusiasm, participation in discussions, suggestions, and feedback are all essential.

I encourage you to get together with each other (and with me) outside of class, either in person or over the phone or via electronic mail, to discuss the readings and writing assignments, and to help prepare for the tests. One of the best ways to learn anything, and one of the most enjoyable, is to talk about it with others.

IMPORTANT RULES AND POLICIES

A few rules are necessary to make this class a successful experience for all of us.

Coming in late, leaving early. Please DON'T DO IT! This can be very distracting for everybody. (If you know you will have to come to class late or leave early please tell me beforehand.)

All writing assignments in this course must be typed, double spaced, on standard white 8.5 x 11 inch paper.

Policy on Late Assignments

In a class in which the assignments are numerous late policies are necessary. When completing assignments always allow extra time for unanticipated delays.

- All assignments are due at the end of class on the days designated on the schedule. Late assignments will be accepted only during the one week following the date on which they were due, and THE GRADE WILL BE REDUCED BY 1 FULL GRADE (e.g., a B paper receives a C). NO ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED AFTER 7 DAYS BEYOND THE DUE DATE. Printer problems, etc. are not an excuse for a late assignment. If your printer fails, bring the assignment to me on disk, in Microsoft Word for Windows format or save as DOS Delimited Text. Always keep a paper copy of your assignments.
• Missed exam - there will be no make-up exams. If you miss the exam because of a documented emergency (e.g., serious illness or hospitalization, death in your family) the points will be moved to the final exam. Documentation must be provided for any emergency.
• Class exercises and activities. Graded in-class exercises and ungraded in-class activities (these contribute to your participation grade) cannot be made up.

COURSE GRADING

The course grades will be based on the following:

I. EXAMS 60% (each worth 20%)

There are Three in-class exams. These exams will include materials covered in the readings, class discussions, and any other materials from class (i.e., movies, websites seen in class). The exams will be a combination of multiple choice, true/false, matching, and short-answer questions.

II. Paper 25%

You will write a 4-5 page paper on a media effect topic of interest. Your paper should offer a clear summary of the research and a discussion of how it related to your topic. The paper will include at least 3 scholarly sources.

III. Research Assignment assignments (10%)

You are expected to participate in research outside of class. You must complete the research project in order to receive credit.

IV. In-Class participation (5%)

This includes attendance, in class activities, participation in class discussions, completion of assignments on time, etc.

ACADEMIC HONESTY AND PLAGIARISM

There are many forms of plagiarism: repeating another person's sentence as your own, adopting a particularly apt phrase as your own, paraphrasing someone else's argument as your own, or even presenting someone else's line of thinking in the development of a thesis as though it were your own. It is perfectly acceptable to [use the ideas and words of other people], but we must never submit someone else's work as if it were our own, without giving appropriate credit to the originator.
[Here are some specific guidelines to follow:]

(a) Quotations. Whenever you use a phrase, sentence, or longer passage written (or spoken) by someone else, you must enclose the words in quotation marks and indicate the exact source of the material. This applies also to quotations you have altered.

(b) Paraphrasing another's language. Avoid closely paraphrasing another's words: substituting an occasional synonym, leaving out or adding an occasional modifier, rearranging the grammar slightly, just changing the tenses of verbs, and so on. Either quote the material directly, using quotation marks, or put the ideas completely in your own words. In either case, acknowledgment is necessary. Remember: expressing someone else's ideas in your own way does not make them yours.

(c) Facts. In a paper, you will often use facts that you have gotten from a lecture, a written work, or some other source. If the facts are well known, it is usually not necessary to provide a source. (In a paper on American history, for example, it would not ordinarily be necessary to give a source for the statement that the Civil War began in 1861 after the inauguration of Abraham Lincoln.) But if the facts are not widely known or if the facts were developed or presented by a specific source, then you should identify the source for the facts.

(d) Ideas. If you use an idea or ideas that you learned from a lecture, written work, or some other source, then you should identify the source. You should identify the source for an ideas whether or not you agree with the idea. It does not become your original idea just because you agree with it.

In general, all sources must be identified as clearly, accurately, and thoroughly as possible. When in doubt about whether to identify a source, either cite the source or consult your instructor.

CLASS SCHEDULE
(subject to change)

Course Schedule: Readings

Week 1

course intro; overview; syllabus-- ice-breaker
Understanding Media Effects  Chapter 1

Week 2

Historical Perspective  Chapter 2
Scientific Method  Chapter 3
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Week 11

News Effects Chapter 14
Communication Campaign Effects Chapter 15

Week 12

Media Effects on Health Chapter 16
Advertising Effects Chapter 17

Week 13

Mass Mediated Political Communication Effects Chapter 18
Effects of Minority Portrayals Chapter 19

Week 14

Media Entertainment Effects Chapter 20
New Communication Technologies Chapter 21

Week 15

Presentations

Exam 2

FINAL EXAM MEETING – Thursday, December 8, 1-3 pm

The instructor reserves the right to amend this syllabus as necessary.