

**COMM 613, SPRING 06
MEDIA ENTERTAINMENT: THEORY AND RESEARCH**

INSTRUCTOR

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OFFICE HOURS

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COURSE INFORMATION

Location & Times

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Entertainment is a huge business in America and abroad. It has also become an important interest area within the field of communication. Scientific examination of entertainment is long overdue, given the overwhelming portion of American's leisure time dedicated to entertainment consumption. In this course we will explore speculation, theory, and research regarding why we enjoy reading, listening to, and watching all sorts of entertainment fare.

Readings and lectures will consider work on effects and appeal of media entertainment, emphasizing emotional reactions. Topics include key concepts of entertainment research such as mood management, and the respective features and emotional/social-psychological effects of genres such as comedy, mystery, thriller, sports, music, horror, and erotica.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to theory and research on media entertainment—more specifically, (1) to help the student develop an understanding of what entertainment is, how it works, and what it does for people; (2) to examine and grapple with a number of perplexing theoretical and practical issues involved in developing useful theories of entertainment.

EVALUATION

Your grade will be determined according to your performance on the following:

- First exam: 35%
- Second exam: 45%
- Homework: 20% (2 assignments, each worth 10%)

Exams. The exams will cover the material discussed in class and the readings and will consist of multiple choice and short answer questions. Examinations are not cumulative. It is important to note that lecture will include information that is not contained in the readings and not all of the readings

will be discussed in class. As a result, to do well on the exams, students must attend each class and do all of the readings. The questions will be designed to test not only your recall of information, but also your ability to apply the information to real-world situations and specific media content. In addition, questions will be designed to tap your ability to compare theories and critically evaluate their relative strengths and weaknesses.

Homework #1. Watch an entertainment program in its entirety. In most cases, this will be a movie or an entertainment show. Describe the program. Then, using theories you learned in class, explain what could motivate the audience to watch the show (“entertainment use motivations”), how the audience can relate to the character(s), and how the characters’ presentation supports this relating. This homework assignment must be typed and should be **NO MORE THAN 2** pages in length (double spaced). Please do not choose the same program as your class fellows.

Homework #2. Watch an entertainment program in its entirety. In most cases, this will be a movie (if you choose to address music videos, please cover 3 videos). Describe the program. Then, using entertainment theories you learned in class, explain why the program is appealing to the audience and also what aspects might not be appealing for some viewers. For example, explain the elements of the show that are likely to attract certain viewers, to instigate certain emotional reactions, lead to negative or positive effects, and so on. Feel free to draw on other information you’ve learned in class to supplement your analysis. This homework assignment must be typed and should be **NO MORE THAN 2** pages in length (double spaced). Please address a different program than in the first homework, and please do not choose the same program as your class fellows.

STUDY GUIDANCE

You will find study questions on the Course Website that reflect the course material and that should be a great help for you to work on the content, either individually or together with classmates. You can answer these questions, discuss them in a group, and send me your carefully written responses in case you are uncertain or desire feedback. Your instructor can provide individual feedback or use responses to clarify questions in class.

POLICIES

Exams: Both exams are to be taken on the designated exam dates. It is your responsibility to note the day/time of exams/assignments **NOW** and make sure you will be able to attend all the exams and complete the assignments. If you have any schedule conflicts, you should either rearrange your schedule so that you can complete all of the work or drop the class. No make-ups are allowed except in the case of an extreme emergency. Having more than one exam on a particular date does not qualify as an extreme emergency. In the rare event that an emergency arises, it is the student’s responsibility to 1) inform the instructor prior to the exam time, and 2) provide the instructor with written documentation of the emergency (e.g., medical note from certified physician).

Assignments: All assignments are due at the beginning of the class period. Assignments received after that time are considered late. Late assignments will lose an entire letter grade for each day that they are late (e.g., an “A” paper that is received one day late will receive a “B”). This policy applies to weekends as well. Assignments that are late but are received on the same day that the assignment was due will be counted as one day late (and will lose a full letter grade). Assignments that are more than 4 days late will not be accepted and will receive a zero. All assignments must be typed (this includes homework assignments). Only paper copies of assignments will be accepted. Attachments

to emails or other electronic submissions will not be accepted. Students must use correct spelling and grammar in all written and oral assignments. Grades on poorly written assignments will be lowered by up to 10 percent. In-class activities and exams may be handwritten. All other submitted work must be typed. All written assignments must conform to guidelines established in the Fifth Edition of the American Psychological Association's (APA) Publication Manual.

Attendance: Attendance is required. Students are required to provide official written documentation for excused absences. Excuses for university-sponsored activities must be presented in advance of the absence and arrangements for work missed for such activities must be made prior to such absences. No excuses or documentation will be accepted more than two weeks after the absence.

Readings & Participation: All readings should be done prior to the assigned class period. Students are expected to participate fully and positively in class discussions and activities.

Course Communication: Some course materials will be presented online, and some course communication will use online channels. Hence, it is absolutely essential that you have access to the Internet and a working OSU e-mail address. Online discussions, chat and other forms of online interaction may be conducted through WebCT.

Re-take exams: Students who "need" this course to graduate should work especially hard to ensure that they will pass this class. There will NOT be opportunities for students to re-take exams or re-complete assignments in order to raise their grade. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that he or she receives a passing final grade by working diligently and responsibly throughout the quarter. Exceptions will NOT be made.

Academic Misconduct: It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term "academic misconduct" includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct (http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/info_for_students/csc.asp).

Disability Services: Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated, and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office for Disability Services is located in 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; telephone 292-3307, TDD 292-0901; <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/>.

Calendar
Media Entertainment: Theory and Research

Session	Date	Topic	Reading
1.		Introduction	Syllabus
2.		What is Entertainment?	Vorderer, 2001
3.		History of Entertainment	Zillmann, 2000
4.		Entertainment Use Motivations	(Vorderer, 1996)
5.		Perceiving and Responding to Media Characters I	Horton & Wohl, 1956
6.		Perceiving and Responding to Media Characters II	Zillmann, 1994
7.		Mood Management Through Media Choices	Zillmann, 1988
8.		Suspense Homework #1 due	Vorderer & Knobloch, 2000
9.		Suspense / Excitation Transfer Theory	Zillmann, 1996
10.		EXAM 1	
11.		Humor and Comedy	Zillmann, 2000b
12.		Mystery	Knobloch, 2003
13.		Horror	Sparks & Sparks, 2000
14.		Sports	Bryant & Raney, 2000
15.		Erotica	Brown, 2003
16.		Tragedy	Zillmann, 1998
17.		Music Enjoyment Homework #2 due	Knobloch & Mundorf, 2003/Hansen & Hansen, 2000
18.		News as Entertainment	Zillmann & Knobloch, 2001
19.		Computer Games	Jansz, 2005
20.		EXAM 2	

READINGS

Readings will consist of book chapters from edited volumes and original research reports, compiled in a reader or on the password-protected course website. Furthermore, one of the following books will be used

Books

- Bryant, J., & Vorderer, P. (ed). (2006). *Psychology of entertainment*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Sayre, S., & King, C. M. (2003). *Entertainment & Society: Audiences, Trends, and Impact*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Zillmann, D., & Vorderer, P., (ed.). (2000). *Media entertainment: The psychology of its appeal*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Specific Chapters / Articles

- Brown, D. (2003). Pornography and erotica. In J. Bryant, D. Roskos-Ewoldsen & J. Cantor (Eds.), *Communication and emotion* (pp. 221-253). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence-Erlbaum.
- Bryant, J., & Raney, A.(2000). Sports on the screen. In D. Zillmann, & P. Vorderer (Eds.), *Media entertainment: The psychology of its appeal* (pp. 153-174). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Hansen, C. H., & Hansen, R. D. (2000). Music and music videos. In D. Zillmann, & P. Vorderer (Eds.), *Media entertainment: The psychology of its appeal* (pp. 175-196). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Horton, D., & Wohl, R. R. (1956). Mass communication and para-social interaction: Observation on intimacy at a distance. In G. Gumpert, & R. Cathcat (Eds.), *Inter / Media. Interpersonal communication in a media world* (3rd ed., pp. 185-206). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Jansz, J. (2005). The emotional appeal of violent video games for adolescent males. *Communication Theory, 15*(3), 219–241.
- Knobloch, S. (2003). Suspense and mystery. In J. Bryant, D. Roskos-Ewoldsen & J. Cantor (Eds.), *Communication and emotion* (pp. 379-395). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence-Erlbaum.
- Knobloch, S., & Mundorf, N. (2003). Enjoyment of music and music television. In J. Bryant, D. Roskos-Ewoldsen & J. Cantor (Eds.), *Communication and emotion* (pp. 491-509). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence-Erlbaum.
- Sparks, G. G., & Sparks, C. W. (2000). Violence, mayhem, and horror. In D. Zillmann, & P. Vorderer (Eds.), *Media entertainment: The psychology of its appeal* (pp. 73-91). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Vorderer, P. & Knobloch, S. (2000). Conflict and suspense in drama. In D. Zillmann & P. Vorderer (Eds.), *Media entertainment: The psychology of its appeal* (pp. 59-72). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence-Erlbaum.
- Vorderer, P. (2001). It's all entertainment - sure. But what exactly is entertainment? Communication research, media psychology, and the explanation of entertainment experiences. *Poetics, 29*, 247-261.
- Zillmann, D., & Knobloch, S. (2001). Emotional reactions to narratives about the fortunes of personae in the news theater. *Poetics, 29*, 189-206.

- Zillmann, D. (1988). Mood Management through communication choices. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 31(327-340).
- Zillmann, D. (1996). The psychology of suspense in dramatic exposition. P. Vorderer, H. J. Wulff, & M. Friedrichsen (Eds.), *Suspense: Conceptualizations, theoretical analyses, and empirical explorations* (pp. 199-231). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Zillmann, D. (1994). Mechanisms of emotional involvement with drama. *Poetics*, 23, 33-51.
- Zillmann, D.(1998). Does tragic drama have redeeming value? *SPIEL*, 17, 4-14.
- Zillmann, D.(2000). Humor and comedy. In D. Zillmann, & P. Vorderer (Eds.), *Media entertainment: The psychology of its appeal* (pp. 37-57). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Zillmann, D.(2000). The coming of entertainment. In D. Zillmann, & P. Vorderer (Eds.), *Media entertainment: The psychology of its appeal* (pp. 1-20). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.