

The Ohio State University
School of Communication

**COMM 647
MEDIA PSYCHOLOGY**

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COURSE OVERVIEW

This course will focus on cognitive processing of mass communication. Central topics will include: how and when we change our attitudes, what the media teach us about the world, how we communicate non-verbally, how we pay attention to television and the Internet, how we respond emotionally, and how we decide what is real. We will explore why your experiences with television and the media – or the experiences of your friends and family – don't tell us much about the psychology of communication. The course will rely upon empirical research with an emphasis on the cognition of individuals, although discussion will include groups, organizations, and social norms.

ATTENDANCE

Students are responsible for all material presented in class. Although the course roughly follows the text, there will be significant material presented in lectures that is not covered in the text. In addition to research showing that you will learn better through active participation, it will make the class more *fun!* Students must be able to verify the legitimacy of an absence in order to be allowed to make up exams.

REQUIRED READINGS

Harris, R. J. (2004) *A cognitive psychology of mass communication* (4th ed.). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Additional chapters and readings will be posted online and/or the library's electronic reserve service. A partial reading list follows at the end of the syllabus.

SPECIAL NEEDS

This syllabus is available in alternative formats upon request. Students with disabilities are responsible for making their needs known to the instructor and seeking assistance in a timely manner. Any student who feels he/she may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss specific needs, or contact the Office of Disability Services at 292-3307 in Room 150 Pomerene Hall.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

It is imperative that all work you submit be your own. When you use someone else's ideas, you must give proper credit to the original author(s). Please adhere to the 5th edition of the American Psychological Association (APA) style manual.

According to the Committee on Academic Misconduct "Academic misconduct is defined as any activity which tends to compromise the academic integrity of the institution, or subvert the educational process," (<http://oaa.osu.edu/procedures/1.0.html>). Any evidence of academic misconduct will be reported to the Committee for an investigation.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Exams

We will have three examinations. The exams will *not* be cumulative. Each exam will cover the material we have learned up to that point. The second exam will cover everything after the first exam, and so on. The exams will be some combination of multiple-choice, true-false, and fill-in-the-blank questions based upon class lecture, class discussion, and assigned readings.

Applied Learning Assignments

Students will submit, for a grade, three applied learning assignments. Choices and rolling deadlines for these assignments will be offered throughout the quarter (e.g., keep a media diary and reflect on your media usage/exposure, conduct a content analysis of media programming, analyze advertising appeals, write an opinion piece on a relevant contemporary issue such as the marketing of violent media to children, etc.). Applied learning assignments are to be neat (i.e., double-spaced and stapled, no paper clips or plastic binders, no handwriting) and well written (i.e., proper spelling, punctuation, and grammar). Assignments at the beginning of class specified on each assignment. No late assignments will be accepted.

GRADING POLICY

Assignment	Percent of Grade
Exam 1	25%
Exam 2	25%
Exam 3	20%
Applied learning assignments (10% each)	30%
Total	100%

A final total percent is assigned a letter grade as follows; below 64% is E; 64-66% is D; 67-69% is D+; 70-73% is C-; 74-76% is C; 77-79% is C+; 80-83% is B-; 84-86% is B; 87-89% is B+; 90-93% is A-; and 94% and above is A.

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES

The university respects the right of all students to observe their religious holidays and will make reasonable accommodations, upon request, for such observances. If you need to miss class because of a religious observance and seek accommodation for the absence, please let me know, in writing, at least a week prior to the absence so that appropriate accommodations can be made.

PARTIAL READING LIST

- Bergen, L., Grimes, T., & Potter, D. (2005). How attention partitions itself during simultaneous message presentations. *Human Communication Research, 31*, 311-336.
- Bradley, M. M., Codispoti, M., Cuthbert, B. N., & Lang, P. J. (2001). Emotion and motivation I: Defensive and appetitive reactions in picture processing. *Emotion, 1*, 276-298.
- Cacioppo, J. T., & Gardner, W. L. (1999). Emotion. *Annual Review of Psychology, 50*, 191-214.
- Geiger, S., & Newhagen, J. (1993). Revealing the Black Box: Information processing and media effects. *Journal of Communication, 43*(4), 42-50.
- Grabe, M. E., Lang, A., Zhou, S. H., & Bolls, P. D. (2000). Cognitive access to negatively arousing news - An experimental investigation of the knowledge gap. *Communication Research, 27*(1), 3-26.
- Janssen, E., Carpenter, D., & Graham, C. A. (2003). Selecting films for sex research: Gender differences in erotic film preference. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 32*, 243-251.
- Kotler, J. A., Wright, J. C., & Huston, A. C. (2001). Television use in families with children. In J. Bryant & J. A. Bryant (Eds.), *Television and the American family* (pp. 33-48). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Lang, A. (1994). What can the heart tell us about thinking. In A. Lang (Ed.), *Measuring psychological responses to media* (pp. 99-111). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Lang, A., Bradley, S. D., Chung, Y., & Lee, S. (2003). Where the mind meets the message: Reflections on ten years of measuring psychological responses to media. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 47*, 650-655.
- Lang, A., Potter, D., & Grabe, M. E. (2003). Making news memorable: Applying theory to the production of local television news. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 47*, 113-123.
- Nabi, R. L., Biely, E. N., Morgan, S. J., & Stiitt, C. (2003). Reality-based television programming and the psychology of its appeal. *Media Psychology, 5*, 303-330.
- Schneider, E. F., Lang, A., Shin, M., & Bradley, S. D. (2004). Death with a story: How story impacts emotional, motivational, and physiological responses to first-person shooter video games. *Human Communication Research, 30*, 361-375.
- Shapiro, M. A., & Chock, T. M. (2003). Psychological processes in perceiving reality. *Media Psychology, 5*, 163-198.
- Shapiro, M. A., & Fox, J. R. (2002). The role of typical and atypical events in story memory. *Human Communication Research, 28*(1), 109-135.
- Zillmann, D. (1991). Television viewing and physiological arousal. In J. Bryant & D. Zillmann (Eds.), *Responding to the screen: Reception and reaction processes. Communication* (pp. 103-133). Hillsdale, NJ, England: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Day	Date	Tentative Subject	Reading
Class 1		Course Introduction	Ch. 1
Class 2		Theory, Research, Scientific Method We have been studying media effects for more than 50 years. What do we know? Why do we need theories? What would a mature science of the cognitive processing of media look like?	Ch. 2
Class 3		The Cognitive Approach We outline the difference between studying media effects and the cognitive processing of media. Briefly examine early perceptions of strong effects, the move to limited effects, and what we have learned by studying underlying processes rather than just resulting effects.	Geiger & Newhagen (1993); Lang, Bradley, et al. (2003)
Class 4		Attention Obviously, if we do not attend to a communication, we do not process it. A look at selective attention and capacity constraints. We also will look at automatic and controlled allocation as well as ways to measure attention. What are the ramifications of having communication usually involve multiple modalities (e.g., audio and visual)	Bergen et al. (2005)
Class 5		Memory Do media have effects if we cannot remember them? What is the difference between recognition and recall? Why do studies show, for example, that it is better not to remember an ad? What is mere-exposure affect?	Shapiro & Fox (2002)
Class 6		Affect and Cognition For years, emotion was thought to hijack higher-order rational thought. Yet people with damage to emotional circuitry in the brain make <i>worse</i> decisions. We will look at the body-minded brain and embodied cognition.	Cacioppo & Gardner (1999)
Class 7		Exam I	
Class 8		Motivation and Arousal You have one body, many emotions, but only two basic types of motivation: appetitive and aversion. What changes when we assume two separate systems? Everyone complains about too much sex and violence on TV. Why do we complain yet still watch?	Bradley et al. (2001)
Class 9		Telling Stories Research shows that processing of communication changes drastically when there is a story compared to when there is no narrative. Why is that?	Schneider et al. (2004)

Class 10	<p>Facial Expression & Non-verbal Cognition Faces appear to be processed differently than other stimuli? Why is that? What is the communicative function of gestures and facial expressions?</p>	TBA
Class 11	<p>Psychologically Designed News Here we look at applied theory. Sure, we have seen a lot of research to this point, but what does it matter in the real world? This is a clear application of theory ... and it works!</p>	Lang, Potter, et al. (2003)
Class 12	<p>Persuasion What are attitudes, opinions, and beliefs? Where do they live in the brain, and how do we change them? A brief look at theories of persuasion.</p>	Ch. 4
Class 13	<p>Applied Persuasion: Advertising and the End of the World An old adage in advertising says, "I know I am wasting half of my advertising dollars. I just don't know which half." What does it mean to build an emotional relationship with a brand? When I ask students to imagine personality traits for Coke and Pepsi, why is it so easy to do?</p>	TBA
Class 14	<p>Families, Communication, Television How did television change the family? What is known of the relationship between kids, media, family communication, and knowledge?</p>	Ch. 5, Kotler et al. (2001)
Class 15	<p>Exam 2</p>	
Class 16	<p>Perception of Reality Most people have never lived through an earthquake or a drug bust, yet they feel as if they can judge the reality of such a portrayal on TV. How do we do this?</p>	Shapiro & Chock (2003)
Class 17	<p>Violence: Why do We Watch? Hint: It's the arousal.</p>	Ch. 9, Zillman (1991)
Class 18	<p>American Porn We talk about family values in daylight and watch porn at night. Porn is a booming industry, and it is co-branding with major corporations.</p>	Ch. 10, Janssen et al. (2003)
Class 19	<p>Reality Television We complain, yet we still watch. Why?</p>	Nabi et al. (2003)
Class 20	<p>Education / Knowledge Gap Why do some people learn more easily from TV, and what does this have to do with socio-economic status?</p>	Grabe et al. (2000)
Final Exam	Exam 3	None