COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course presents a rigorous study of psychological theories, research studies and applications focusing on the social and technological context of mass communication processes and effects. It examines the role of media in cultivating images, stereotypes, values and symbolic experiences regarding race, gender, sexuality and violence. Topics will include short term and long term psychological effects of mass media and information technologies in the socialization of children and adults, in persuasive and advertising campaigns, and in shaping social perceptions, agendas, attitudes, knowledge and behaviors in such areas as public health, environment, politics, consumer behavior and globalization in a variety of socio-cultural contexts.

TEXTBOOKS


SCHEDULE OF TOPICS

I. Mass Communication Process and Effects

Tu 01/18  1. General Introduction
Th 01/20  2. Models of Mass Communication Process: Harris, chap. 1
Tu 01/25  3. Social Psychological context of Mass Communication Process and Effects
   a. Self Selection
   b. Selective Perception
   c. Perceived Group Norms
   d. Mass Society and the Media: Bryant and Zillman, chaps. 8, 19
Th 01/27  4. Technological Context of Mass Communication Process
   a. Convergence Between the Mass Media, Communication Technologies and Microcomputers
   b. New Communication Codes
   c. New Communication Modes Involving Interactive Media using Microcomputers
      Bryant and Zillman, chap. 22

II. Nature of Mass Media Effects

Tu 02/01  1. Direct Effects and Indirect Effects of Mass Media: Harris, chap. 2, Bryant and Zillman, chap. 8
   2. Interface Between Mass Media and Interpersonal Communication
   3. Cognitive Effects, Affective Effects and Behavioral Effects
Th 02/03  4. Short Term Effects and Long Term Effects: Bryant and Zillman, chap. 20
   5. Intended Effects vs. Unintended Effects
   6. Content-specific Effects vs. General Effects; Bryant and Zillman, chap. 21
III. Decision Making Process In Mass Media

Tu 02/08 1. Social Psychological Factors in Decision-Making in Media Organizations
   a. Values, Attitudes, and Perceived Audience Profile
   b. Goal Orientation of Decision Makers; Harris, chap. 7

Th 02/10 2. Role of Gatekeepers in Media Organization: Harris, chap. 6
   3. Human Information Processing and Communication Flows in Media Organizations

IV. Social Psychological Aspects Of Media’s Symbolic Environment

Tu 02/15 1. Portrayal of Psychological Images, Values, Role Conceptions, Human Relationships,
   Gender Role Stereotypes and Aging: Harris, chap. 3

Th 02/17 2. Body Images and Sexual Stereotypes

CASE STUDY ASSIGNMENT – GROUP #1 DUE

Tu 02/22 2. Media treatment of Ethnic, Racial, Religious, Occupational and Minority Groups: Harris,
   chap. 3; Bryant and Zillman, chap. 13

Th 02/24 3. Psychological Context and Meaning of Media’s Portrayal of Violence, Crime and
   Pornography: Bryant and Zillman, chap. 3; Harris, chap. 10

Th 03/03 HOURLY EXAMINATION #1

V. Mass Communication and Socialization Effects

Tu 03/08 1. Mass Media Uses Among Children, Adolescents, Women, Blacks, Elderly and the Poor: Bryant and Zillman chap. 11

Th 03/10 2. Psychological Effects of Mass Media’s Portrayal of Violence and Crime: Stimulating and
   Cathartic Effects: Harris, chap. 9

Tu 03/15 3. Short Term and Long Term Effects of Media Violence: Bryant and Zillman, chap. 11

Th 03/17 4. Pro-Social and Anti-Social Effects of Mass Media: Harris, chap. 11, pp. 317-335; Chap 5

VI. Persuasive Effects of Mass Media

Tu 03/29 1. Persuasion Models and Media Campaigns: Bryant and Zillman, chaps. 7

Th 03/31 2. Persuasive Effects in Political Campaigns, and Agenda Setting: Bryant and Zillman, chap. 1
   a. Voter Perceptions, Orientations and Actions
   b. Reinforcement, Activation and Conversion Effects; Harris, chap. 8

Tu 04/05 3. TV Debates and Psychological Impacts

VII. Mass Media Effects In Advertising Campaigns

Th 04/07 1. Psychological Effects of Advertising; Harris, chap. 4

Tu 04/12 2. Mass Media Advertising Effects on Consumer and Health Behavior

Th 04/14 3. Consumer Role Modeling, Life Styles, and Attitudes towards Health, Nutrition
   Bryant and Zillman, chap. 17

Tu 04/19 4. Mass Media Effects on Innovation Diffusion in Public Campaigns: Bryant and
   Zillman, chap. 6, pp 135-149; Harris, chap. 11, pp. 335-351

Th 04/21 REVIEW OF ASSIGNED READINGS

Th 04/21 CASE STUDY PROJECT – GROUP #2 DUE/RESEARCH PROJECTS DUE
Tu 04/26       HOURLY EXAMINATION #2
Th 04/28       CASE STUDY AND RESEARCH PROJECTS PRESENTATIONS
Tu 05/03       CLASS ENDS

FINAL EXAMINATION – (DATE TO BE ANNOUNCED)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Lecturers and Readings: All readings corresponding to the list of topics indicated in the outline will be required of all class members. Appropriate materials will be placed on reserve at the Bailey-Howe Library.

Hourly Examinations: There will be two (2) hourly examinations, and a final examination based on assigned readings that are listed in your course outline. Each examination will incorporate multiple choices, and short-answer questions.

Individual Research Project: You will have the option to complete an original and independent research project based on field study, experimental or content analytical approach or from a review of 10 (ten) empirical studies designed to provide a rigorous examination of a specific problem pertaining to mass media’s content, audiences, and social psychological effects. Your project report should be typed and should incorporate a statement of the problem, research objectives, review of 10 (ten) empirical studies, research methodology, research findings and conclusions. Your research report should reflect proper citations of the origins of its contents that are obtained from the scholarly work of others.

I’ll be glad to discuss with you your ideas and interests regarding the research project. As an initial step for these discussions, a one-page statement outlining the goals and methodology of your proposed research project should be handed in to me by or before Tuesday, February, 15, 2005. The due date for the final research project report is Thursday, April 21, 2005. You will be invited to make a brief informal presentation of your research project.

Case Study Assignments: Each student will complete one (1) class assignment in the form of an independent case study pertaining to a selected aspect of the following topics and turn in a report of about 8 (eight) typewritten pages on the results of your analysis. Each assignment should incorporate a clearly defined statement of your thesis, hypothesis or specific research questions that you intend to investigate from within the topical areas listed below. As part of your case study report, you should include a substantive review of at least 8 (eight) appropriate empirical studies from scholarly journals as well as a clear documentation of your personal/independent case study summarizing the methodology you used and the results you obtained. Finally, your report should present a discussion of issues and implications raised by your case study together with a personal assessment of what you learned from doing the case study. It is important that your case study provides clear documentation of research materials and empirical studies from scholarly journals (i.e., who said it, when, where..). Please also note that you’ll be invited to make a brief and informal presentation of your case study. The due dates and general topics for these assignments are as follows:
Due Date       Assignment       Topics

Group #1
February 17th  Mass media’s portrayal of psychological images, values, sex and role stereotypes, aging, ethnic, racial, religious, occupations and minority groups.

OR
Psychological motives and patterns of mass media use among children, adolescents, women, elderly, and the poor; psychological impacts of media violence and patterns of social learning including prosocial learning.

Group #2
April 21st     Mass media effects on political orientations, consumer and health behavior; psychological effects of advertising in such areas as alcohol use, smoking, and body image.

OR
Social psychological effects of the agenda setting process pertaining to the coverage of public issues by the media focusing on women, minorities and environmental health problems, mental health and people with disabilities.

COURSE EVALUATION

**Option A:** If you choose to take advantage of the option of completing in individual research project as described earlier, your final grade in this course will be determined on the basis of your performance in your individual research project, three examinations, case study assignments and class presentations. Specifically, each of these components will be evaluated as follows:

- Individual Research Project = 25% of final grade
- Two Examinations and Final = 50% of final grade
- Case Study Assignments and Class Presentation/Participation = 25% of final grade

**Option B:** If you do not choose Option A, your final grade in this course will be determined on the basis of your performance in your examinations, the case study class assignments, class presentation and class participation. Specifically, each of these components will be evaluated as follows:

- Two Examinations and Final = 75% of the final grade
- Research Project OR Case Study Assignments and Class Presentation/Participation = 25% of the final grade

**Option C:** If you do not choose either Option A or Option B, your final grade in this course will be determined on the basis of your performance in the examinations as follows:

- Exam #1 = 33.3% of final grade
- Exam #2 = 33.3% of final grade
- Final Exam = 33.3% of final grade
IMPORTANT DEADLINES TO REMEMBER

Case Study – Group #1  
Thursday, February 17th

Case Study – Group #2  
Thursday, April 21st

First Hourly Exam  
Thursday, March 3rd

Second Hourly Exam  
Tuesday, April 26th

Final Exam  
TO BE DECIDED