

TC 110

Understanding Media

Spring 2011

Class Time: Tuesday & Thursday, 10:20 – 11:40
Location: Wonders Hall, Room C100

Instructor: Andrew Smock
Office: 403 Communication Arts & Sciences
Office Phone: 355-7563 (do not leave voicemail)
E-mail: asmock@msu.edu (preferred and faster method)
Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday, 12:30 – 1:30
Immediately after class (in classroom)
Other hours by appointment

Teaching Assistant: Jessica Vitak (primary person for grading, iClicker and ANGEL questions)
Office: 249 Communication Arts & Sciences
Office Phone: TBA
Email: vitakjes@msu.edu (preferred and faster method)
Office Hours: Wednesday, 1:00 – 3:00
Immediately after class (in classroom)
Other hours by appointment

Course Description

This class gives students the knowledge and tools to become more thoughtful, successful, and informed consumers and producers of media messages. It focuses on media content and better understanding the processes by which messages are created and consumed. Students who successfully complete this course will be able to analyze, critique, and assess media messages and describe their impacts on individuals and society. We will learn how media effects research is conducted, and what these studies can and cannot tell us.

Course Objectives

When students complete the course, they will be able to:

- Be familiar with the tenets of media literacy and the skills associated with media literacy, such as the ability to assess the credibility of media messages.
- Describe the scientific basis for media effects research, important studies (past and current) in this arena, and important media effects theories such as Uses and Gratifications.
- Critically evaluate the appropriateness of study designs and data analysis techniques used in media research studies.
- Summarize research findings associated with important issues related to media effects scholarship (e.g., violence in movies and sex on TV).
- Assess the effects of advertising, considering issues such as stereotyping, body image and effects on vulnerable populations such as children.
- Describe the creative process by which media messages are produced and strategies for engaging in creative activity.
- Provide an overview of the foundational arguments around media ethics.
- Discuss cultural and critical approaches to media studies.

Required texts

Sparks, G. G. (2010). Media effects research: A basic overview. (3rd Edition). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

An iClicker (student response system) is also required for each student and will be used for graded activities. These are available from local bookstores and online.

Additional Materials

We will be relying heavily on online materials to supplement our textbook, so you will need regular access to a computer with Internet access in order to get the online readings. Students are responsible for checking ANGEL and their MSU email accounts regularly to stay abreast of announcements. (If you don't check your MSU email account, you should forward it to an account that you do check. You may also forward your ANGEL mail to a non-MSU account.)

Grading Scheme

The final grade of record will be based on students' achievements in the following areas and weighted according to the following:

In-Class and At-Home Activities (15 graded)	30 pts possible
Exam 1	50 points possible
Exam 2	60 points possible
Final Exam	60 points possible
TOTAL POSSIBLE	200 points

Students are responsible for viewing their grades in ANGEL and informing the instructors of any discrepancies within the specified time period. You are responsible for checking your grades in ANGEL. If you see any errors or have any questions, you should contact Jessica Vitak immediately via email at vitakjes@msu.edu. **For the first two exams, you have up to one week after the respective exam to submit your queries. After this period, we will not be able to make any adjustments to that portion of the grade.** For the third portion of the semester, your queries need to be submitted before the final exam. Also, students must keep copies of any work submitted until final grades are submitted.

If you are concerned about your grade please make an appointment to discuss the situation with the teaching assistant or professor as early in the semester as possible.

The total number of points each student earns will be calculated, and the final grade of record will be determined according to the following scale:

4.0 = 180 to 200 points
3.5 = 170 to 179.9 points
3.0 = 160 to 169.9 points
2.5 = 150 to 159.9 points
2.0 = 140 to 149.9 points
1.5 = 130 to 139.9 points
1.0 = 120 to 129.9 points
0 = 119 and under

Exams

There will be three exams which will consist of multiple choice and/or true/false questions. Exams are not cumulative. Only valid, documented medical excuses will be accepted for an examination missed, and students must contact the instructor or TA as soon as possible. **Unless the situation is one of dire illness (e.g., hospitalization) or tragedy (e.g., death in the family), this must happen BEFORE the exam.** Consideration to take a missed examination (or make-up exam) is entirely at the discretion of the instructor. Oversleeping is not a valid excuse for

missing (and retaking) an exam. Missed exams will result in a score of 0. Please make special note of the final examination date and arrange any end-of-term travel plans accordingly. Cheating will not be tolerated and will result in a score of zero for the course. Please bring your student ID with you to all exams. Exam questions are reused and tight exam security must be maintained. Efforts to copy exam questions or to remove them from the examination room will be considered a serious violation.

In-Class and At-Home Activities

While the course has no formal attendance policy, students are encouraged to attend class regularly and to come prepared (i.e., having done the assigned reading for that day). Randomly scheduled, graded in-class activities will reward students who do so. These graded in-class activities will not be announced in advance and the timing and nature of the activity will be decided by the instructor. These activities will be graded on a scale of 0 to 2 pts. There will be no “make up” opportunities for these in-class activity points. **Note: Many activities, such as reading quizzes, will take place in the first five minutes of class. If you are late, you will miss these points.** So please be on time – both for the sake of your grade and your fellow students and instructors.

Please note that participation in many of these activities will be tracked using the iClicker. **YOU MUST BRING THE ICLICKER TO CLASS EACH DAY.** Students are responsible for getting an iClicker, registering it during in-class registration, and bringing it to class each day starting on the first day of class.

Please note that these activities are worth 15 percent of your grade, and that most of them will be graded using information from the iClicker. At the discretion of the instructor, early in the semester students who forget their device may in some cases be allowed to indicate participation in other ways – you will need to see the instructor or TA **in person, immediately** after class if you have forgotten it. Any requests made after class (e.g. via email) will not be granted.

Additionally, some activities will be take-home. These will be announced in class and will be posted in ANGEL. Students are responsible for any information distributed in class and should communicate with other students to find out what they have missed after an absence.

Credited activities may consist of:

Reading/content quizzes: Students will be given a short quiz covering the reading and/or in-class lecture/discussion. Each quiz will be graded on a scale from 0 points to 2 points.

In class group activities: Students will be asked to form small groups and will be given a set of questions to answer and discuss as a group. Each group will elect a liaison who may be asked to report back to the entire class. Each group will provide the instructors with the names of the students participating in each group, each of whom will receive full credit.

Online forums/discussion groups: Students will be asked to participate in an online discussion. Posts should be thoughtful, free of typographical errors, and written in proper English.

Online activities: Students may be asked to complete a short questionnaire or other online activity.

For each portion of the semester, there will be one or two chances to make up missed activities. There are typically 6-7 activities per portion and only the best five scores will be taken as the grade for that portion. Please note that students may be asked to engage in other in-class activities on occasion which will not be graded (credited) at the instructor's discretion.

Out-of-class activities will also be assigned throughout the semester. These will be turned in via ANGEL. Please note that late assignments will not be accepted. These activities will be announced in class and as announcements in ANGEL. It is your responsibility to check ANGEL each day.

Extra Credit

Extra credit assignments may be assigned throughout the semester at the instructor's discretion. Students are responsible for checking that ANGEL has correctly registered their participation and will have one week to inform the teaching assistant about any problems. After this, scores will not be adjusted.

Course Email Policy

The instructor and TA will make every effort to respond promptly to student email. In most cases, student email sent during the week will be answered within 24 hours and email sent over the weekend will be answered by Monday morning. Email containing questions about assignments and exams must be sent 24 hours prior to the due date/exam time to ensure a response.

Academic Honesty

Academic Honesty: Article 2.3.3 of the Academic Freedom Report states: "The student shares with the faculty the responsibility for maintaining the integrity of scholarship, grades, and professional standards." In addition, TC 110 adheres to the policies on academic honesty specified in General Student Regulation 1.0, Protection of Scholarship and Grades; the all-University Policy on Integrity of Scholarship and Grades; and Ordinance 17.00, Examinations. (See Spartan Life: Student Handbook and Resource Guide and/or the MSU Web site www.msu.edu.)

Therefore, unless authorized by your instructor, you are expected to complete all course assignments, including homework, lab work, quizzes, tests and exams, without assistance from any source. Students who violate MSU rules may receive a penalty grade, including but not limited to a failing grade on the assignment or in the course. Signing another student's name on attendance sheets is considered lying to the instructor.

Courtesy to Fellow Students and Instructors

Please try to come on time so your arrival is not disruptive. If you do come in late, please enter from the back and choose a seat quietly. If you need to have a conversation with your neighbor, please step outside the classroom or pass a short note so that others in the classroom are not distracted. **When you are in the classroom, it is expected that you are actively engaged in the class and not another activity, such as texting or reading the newspaper. Bringing your laptop and engaging in non-class related activities is distracting to others and to the instructor. Additionally it defeats the purpose (learning) of coming to class. If you bring a laptop, limit its use to taking notes or supplementing the discussion with online research.**

Some Tips for Doing Well in this Course

1. Come to class regularly. The PowerPoint slides are NOT substitutes for coming to class and are not comprehensive.
2. Take notes! This will help you retain information and will help you with studying for the exam. You might want to get the notes from ANGEL and add to them with your own comments.
3. Do the reading BEFORE class and don't be afraid to ask questions during class.
4. Participate in class discussions/answer questions the instructor poses to the class.
5. Don't try to read everything right before the exam.
6. Study for the review session, so that you can ask questions.
7. Bring your iClicker to class every day! Otherwise you are losing out on valuable points.
8. Find a friend in class with whom you can study and share information.
9. See the TA or instructor as soon as possible if you are having trouble with course content.
10. Check ANGEL frequently and let the TA know immediately if there are any discrepancies regarding your scores. Note there are deadlines for this.
11. Come on time so you don't miss out on reading quizzes, which happen at the start of class.

Tentative Content and Reading Schedule

Note: Any aspect of this syllabus, including the content and reading schedule, may be adjusted throughout the semester. Any changes will be announced in class and via ANGEL. Students are responsible for checking ANGEL on a regular basis and coming to class.

Day	Date	Topic	Reading due
Tuesday	01/11/11	Introduction to Course	None
Thursday	01/13/11	Media Literacy (overview & skills)	Livingstone, S. (2004). Media Literacy and the Challenge of New Information and Communication Technologies, <i>The Communication Review</i> , 7, 3–14 (in ANGEL).
			Gillmor, D. (2008) Principles for a New Media Literacy. (PDF in ANGEL) - it's OK to skim the section on "Principles of Media Creation" starting on p. 7 of the PDF.
Tuesday	01/18/11	Media Literacy (credibility & advertising)	Harris, Evaluating Internet Research Sources (online at http://www.virtualsalt.com/evalu8it.htm)
			View the first 5 chapters of the Merchants of Cool (online at http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/cool/).
Thursday	01/20/11	Scientific Approach to Media Effects	Sparks, Ch. 1
Tuesday	01/25/11	Scientific Methods	Sparks, Ch. 2
Thursday	01/27/11	History of Media Effects Research	Sparks, Ch. 3
Tuesday	02/01/11	Ethics and Media Production	LaRose et al., Chapter 15 from Media Now (in ANGEL)
			Radio Television Digital News Association Ethics Guidelines (online at http://www.rtnda.org/pages/media_items/code-of-ethics-and-professional-conduct48.php & http://www.rtdna.org/pages/media_items/social-media-and-blogging-guidelines1915.php?g=37?id=1915)
Thursday	02/03/11	Ethics and Media Production continued	<i>No new reading</i>
Tuesday	02/08/11	Review	
Thursday	02/10/11	Exam One	
Tuesday	02/15/11	Time Spent with Mass Media	Sparks, Ch. 4
Thursday	02/17/11	Effects of Media Violence	Sparks, Ch. 5
Tuesday	02/22/11	Sexual Content in the Media	Sparks, Ch. 6

Thursday	02/24/11	Media that Stir Emotions	Sparks, Ch. 7
Tuesday	03/01/11	Focus on Media Effects Research	Gauntlett, "Ten things wrong with the 'effects model'" (online at http://www.theory.org.uk/effects.htm)
Thursday	03/03/11	Persuasive Effects of Media	Sparks, Ch. 8
Tuesday	03/08/11	No Class	Spring Break
Thursday	03/10/11	No Class	Spring Break
Tuesday	03/15/11	Media Stereotypes	Sparks, Ch. 10 Giroux, "Are Disney Movies Good for Your Kids?" (PDF in ANGEL)
Thursday	03/17/11	Psychological Effects of Media Messages	Dove Campaign for Real Beauty - Key Findings (http://content.dove.us/makeadiff/pdf/SelfEsteem_Report.pdf)
Tuesday	03/22/11	Review	
Thursday	03/24/11	Exam 2	
Tuesday	03/29/11	Cultural & Critical Approaches	Stahl, "A Moment Like This: American Idol and Narratives of Mediocrity" (PDF in ANGEL)
Thursday	03/31/11	McLuhan and Technological Determinism	Sparks, Ch. 12 Carr, "Is Google Making Us Stupid?" (online at http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2008/07/its-google-making-us-stupid/6868/)
Tuesday	04/05/11	News and Political Content	Sparks, Ch. 9
Thursday	04/07/11	News and Political Content continued	<i>No new reading</i>
Tuesday	04/12/11	Children & Media	Calvert, "Children as Consumers: Advertising and Marketing" (PDF in ANGEL)
Thursday	04/14/11	Children & Media continued	<i>No new reading</i>
Tuesday	04/19/11	Creativity	Review Lubart, "Models of the Creative Process: Past, Present and Future" (PDF in ANGEL)
Thursday	04/21/11	Recent Effects Research	TBA
Tuesday	04/26/11	New Media Technologies	Sparks, Ch. 11
Thursday	04/28/11	Review	
Thursday	05/05/11	Final Exam	NOTE: Exam takes place 7:45-9:45 am