

# COMM 3413 Media Entertainment: Theory and Research

Spring 2015 Tu/Tr 11:10 - 12:30 PM, Derby 080

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## TEACHING ASSISTANT

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## 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 Americans' 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/crime fiction, thriller, sports, music, horror, and erotica. Genres that are less often associated with entertainment—news, political coverage, and sports—will also be discussed from an entertainment research perspective. Utilizing the entertainment research for applied goals will also be part of this class in the discussion of narrative and entertainment persuasion techniques.

## 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. The course is designed to advance the following skills: understanding and applying entertainment phenomena as a fundamental approach to appeal to diverse audiences and to involve them strongly with messages, which can be fictional or within news coverage, health or political campaigns, and even organizational and interpersonal strategic communication; analyzing complex messages and phenomena to identify overarching patterns.

Professional skills relating to the creation of compelling dramaturgy and appealing characters in order to appeal to emotions are most prominent in the entertainment context but, in our entertainment age, have become an important skill in almost every communication context.



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**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/>.

**RECOMMENDED READINGS**

Readings will consist of book chapters from edited volumes and reviews in journal articles, compiled in an online reader, accessible through the password-protected course website.

**EVALUATION**

**The maximum of regular points is 100.**

**Standard OSU grading scheme is for final grade:** 93--100 (A), 90--92.9 (A-), 87--89.9 (B+), 83--86.9 (B), 80--82.9 (B-), 77--79.9 (C+), 73--76.9 (C), 70--72.9 (C-), 67--69.9 (D+), 60--66.9 (D), Below 60 (E).

Final Grade Components

Assignment	Maximum Points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three exams, each of worth 20 points</li> </ul>	60
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two In-Class Case Studies (ICCS), each 5 points</li> </ul>	10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class Participation Assignments (CPA); each worth 1-2 points, 12 points maximum</li> <li>• Two homework assignments, each 12 points</li> </ul> <p><i>The lowest score of the three from the two homework papers and the total CPA points will be dropped!</i></p>	24
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Online postings of entertainment concept applications (OPECA); up to six points</li> </ul>	6
<b>Total</b>	100

Bonus points/extra credit as offered to everyone in the class—no individual arrangements!

**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: 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 emergency. Having more than one exam on a particular date does not qualify as an 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) or an explanatory statement for absence form (available at <http://www.shc.osu.edu/posts/documents/absence-excuse-form.pdf>).

Readings & Participation: Students are expected to participate fully and positively in class discussions and activities. The reading material might be more easily 'digested' after the associated class session but should be read before the exam/homework linked to it.

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 CARMEN.

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](http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/info_for_students/csc.asp)).

Attendance and Flu: Students should NOT attend class while ill with influenza. Students with flu symptoms will be asked to leave class. The illness and self-isolation period will usually be about a week. It is very important that individuals avoid spreading the flu to others. Most students should be able to complete a successful semester despite a flu-induced absence. In order to allow for compensation of missed work, the grading policy includes a 'drop lowest score' component. It is advisable to submit homework assignments at least a few days before the deadline and to fulfill the CPA assignments early in the semester. Completion of all assignments and exams assures the greatest chance for students to develop heightened understanding and content mastery. The opportunity to complete all assignments and exams supports the university's desire to enable students to make responsible situational decisions, including the decision to avoid spreading a contagious virus to other students, staff, and faculty, without endangering their academic work. Students with the flu do not need to provide a physician's certification of illness but can work with the explanatory statement for absence form (see link above). However, ill students should inform the course instructor through email as soon as possible that they are absent because of the flu.

**Syllabus COMM 3413 Spring 2015 - Media Entertainment: Theory and Research**

Readings are available as online resources through CARMEN/library links to online resources. See Carmen 'content' items structured by session topics below.

**Note:** items marked with an asterisk (\*) are taken from texts which are available through the OSU library as an eBook. Links to the resource are provided on Carmen under topic headings. Please be aware that the license for some items restricts the number of users who can access the title at any given time. We do our best to provide you with affordable online access to the readings while observing copyright restrictions. Technical difficulties with access may often occur as a result of individual computer settings, which we cannot address. We strongly recommend that you keep up with accessing the files at the pace of the class. You may ask Simon Lavis at [lavis.2@osu.edu](mailto:lavis.2@osu.edu) for help if you have difficulty accessing a reading.

Session		Date	Topic	Readings
1.	T	1/13/2015	<b>Introduction</b>	
2.	R	1/15	History of Entertainment	*Zillmann, 2000a: 'Coming of Media Entertainment'
3.	T	1/20	Introduction to Entertainment Research	*Klimmt & Vorderer, 2009: 'Media Entertainment' (specifically pp. 345-350)
4.	R	1/22	Parasocial Interactions/Relationships  <i>After this session, you can begin working on homework #1, due 2/16</i>	Horton & Wohl, 1956: 'Mass Comm & Parasocial' (specifically pp. 215-223)
5.	T	1/27	Wishful identification and Similarity; Simulation of social experience	Hoffner & Buchanan, 2005: 'Young Adults' Wishful Identification' (specifically, pp. 325-333) For in-depth discussion: Mar & Oatley, 2008: 'Function of Fiction'
6.	R	1/29	Drama	*Vorderer & Knobloch, 2000: 'Conflict & Suspense' (specifically, pp. 59-62)
7.	T	2/3	Affective Disposition Theory	Raney, 2004: 'Expanding Disposition Theory' (specifically, pp. 348-361)
8.	R	2/5	Mood Management Through Media Choices	Knobloch-Westerwick, 2006: 'Mood Management Theory'
9.	T	2/10	<b>Exam 1</b>	
10.	R	2/12	Suspense	Zillmann, 1996: 'Psychology of Suspense'
	<b>M</b>	<b>2/16</b>	<b>homework #1, due 2/16, upload to Carmen</b>	
11.	T	2/17	Humor and Comedy	Zillmann, 2000b: 'Humor and Comedy'

12.	R	2/19	Mystery/Crime Fiction	Knobloch-Westerwick & Keplinger, 2006: 'Mystery Appeal'
13.	T	2/24	Tragedy	Oliver & Woolley, 2010: 'Tragic & Poignant Entertainment'
14.	<b>R</b>	<b>2/26</b>	<b><i>In-class Case Study</i></b>	
15.	T	3/3	Horror	*Sparks & Sparks, 2000: 'Violence, Mayhem, and Horror'; Zillmann & Weaver, 2013: 'Gender-Socialization Theory' (specifically, pp. 92-98)
16.	R	3/5	News as Entertainment	Bennett, 2012: 'News Stories', Chapt. 2 (specifically, pp. 42-48; further elaboration offered on pp. 48-66)
17.	T	3/10	Reality-TV	Lundy et al., 2008: 'Simply Irresistible' (specifically, pp. 208-211)
18.	R	3/12	<b><i>Exam 2</i></b>	
	T	3/17	<i>Spring break</i>	
	R	3/19	<i>Spring break</i>	
19.	T	3/24	Erotica/Internet Porn	Manning, 2006: 'Impact of Internet Pornography'
20.	R	3/26	Sports	Raney, 2006: 'Why We Watch Sports'
21.	T	3/31	<b><i>In-class Case Study</i></b>	
22.	R	4/2	Video Games	Olson, 2010: 'Children's Motivations & Develop.'
23.	T	4/7	Music/Music Videos	Excerpts from Juslin & Sloboda, 2010
24.	R	4/9	Political Entertainment	Holbert, 2005: 'Entertainment Television and Politics'
25.	T	4/14	Health Education through Entertainment	Moyer-Gusé, 2008: 'Entertainment Persuasion'
26.	R	4/16	<b><i>Exam 3</i></b>	
27.	T	4/21	<b><i>Writing Workshop/Makeup ICCS</i></b>	
28.	R	4/23	<b><i>Deadline</i></b> for Final Paper (homework #2)	

**The following pages provide details on assignments the finale grade will be based on. We will talk about the assignments in class throughout the semester to reiterate/clarify.**

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. 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.

It is very important to be on time for the exams. As soon as the first student hands in his/her exam, your instructor may refuse additional students to begin taking the exam.

In-Class Case Studies (ICCS). For the class sessions during which we will work on case studies, a longer TV/movie segment will be shown. You will be asked to apply your knowledge to this example, based on a particular theoretical framework discussed in class. Details on the grading of this assignment will be specified on Carmen.

Class Participation Assignments (CPA). Occasionally, you will be asked to discuss class content in small groups (or individually) while in class. They will not be announced/scheduled in advance and instead are ‘pop-up’ opportunities for you to earn points. Guidance for these brief assignments will be provided through questions shown on slides.

CPAs can only be submitted at the end of the session where the opportunity was offered.

These group discussions serve several goals.

- encourage content elaboration
- encourage exchange and connections among students, interpersonal and online
- practice teamwork
- inform the instructor how the content is processed/approached/understood
- motivate class attendance and focused attention while in class

Individual assignments furthermore help

- Practice in writing about complex matters in brief ad-hoc format
- Structuring own thoughts coherently
- Exploring own understanding of content matter, ensure student grasps concepts better

There will be more opportunities to earn CPA points than you need to receive full points. Thus if you miss an CPA, you can still receive full points. This also means that **you need TWO excusable absences with documentation to compensate for a CPA.**

Homework Paper Guideline. The following guideline may help you to organize your paper and to prevent common mistakes (e.g., providing a mere description of a program without really linking it to theoretical considerations).

- First page (at most 1 page, possibly shorter)
  - Introductory sentence about issue/problem
  - Name example (pick relevant example)
  - Describe example – concisely, focus on relevant aspects
- Second page (approx.)
  - Connect to theoretical perspective (this weighs heavily in points)
    - Name & explain approach/concept (be sure to spell this out)
    - Then explain how it relates to TV example
  - Speculate about effects
  - Evaluate, suggest improvements
  - Concluding sentence

**Topic & Deadline Homework #1.** You can choose to apply either the parasocial relationship framework or the ‘drama’ framework for your paper. Watch – in its entirety – a TV show or movie. (Hint: When you choose an example, you might pick something that is NOT your all-time personal favorite in order to maintain an analytical perspective while you write.) Describe the program. Then, using one of the two frameworks, explain characteristics and appeal of the program. For example, explain the elements of the show/movie that are likely to attract viewers to a character or that contribute to the plot. Again, it is crucial to conduct an ‘objective’ analysis and apply theoretical terms concisely. 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 3 pages in length (double spaced). Upload your paper to CARMEN ‘dropbox’ before **Monday 2/16, 5 pm**

**Topic & Deadline Homework #2.** You can choose to apply either the political entertainment or health education framework for your paper. Watch – in its entirety – a TV show or movie. (Hint: When you choose an example, you might pick something that is NOT your all-time personal favorite in order to maintain an analytical perspective while you write.) Describe the program. Then, using one of the two frameworks, explain characteristics and likely effects of the program and why/to which extent it fits the genre. Again, it is crucial to conduct an ‘objective’ analysis and apply theoretical terms concisely. 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 3 pages in length (double spaced). Upload your paper to CARMEN ‘dropbox’ before **Thursday 4/23, 5 pm**

**Homework Grading.** The following explanations apply to both homework assignments. Grading of papers will follow this structure: Appropriate choice of example and clear description of it 3 points; argumentation/theory explanation and application 5 points; organization 2 points; clarity 2 points.

<b>Example</b>	0 points Doesn't fit the assignment or the focus stated in the paper	1 point Example not entirely suitable for the concepts to be explained. Characteristics that are relevant not all well described or not mapped well onto the theoretical concepts.	2 points Example suitable for the concepts to be explained and described in a fashion that allows the reader to make connections between example and concept. Some aspects not spelled out.	3 points Perfect example for the assignment and the concepts to be explained. Example well described with focus on relevant characteristics. Any deviation from the typical is discussed adequately.
<b>Theory/ Framework application</b>	0 points Theory/Framework not mentioned	1 point Theory/Framework mentioned but not explained correctly, confusion of terms	2 points Some explanation of Theory/Framework, little connection to example	3-5 points Number of correct explanations of Theory/Framework components, along with clear connections with example, determines points
<b>Organization</b> (intro/conclusion /transitions, cohesion, coherence)	0 points Structure of paper unclear	1 point Paper is somewhat structured	1.5 points Structure of paper overall clear, but conclusion may be missing, or flow of argument unclear	2 points Clear structure with intro, clear flow of argument, and conclusion. Paragraph structure makes sense.
<b>Clarity</b>	0 points Language is confusing/unspecific, several spelling/grammar errors	1 point Language is mostly clear, some confusing/incomplete sentences.	1.5 points Language is clear, sentences are complete.	2 points Language is concise and compelling.

Online postings of entertainment concept applications (OPECA). You will have two opportunities to post an example of how the concepts and theories discussed in class can be applied to (a) specific entertainment content or (b) specific instances of entertainment experiences (effects/responses).

On Carmen, you will find a discussion forum for each topic. Work with the topic you were assigned (see list posted on Carmen labeled ‘OPECA Assignments’).

**Once the topic was discussed in class, you have four days to complete your posting** (should you not be able to attend the related session, please refer to the related readings).

- Your posting should include at least **half a page of text** (word page, double spaced, 12 point Times New Roman).
- It needs to include the following elements:
  - Name the concept from that session topic that you want to elaborate on
  - Explain the topic in your own words (don’t copy from the class notes/readings or other postings)
  - Present an **example** that illustrates the concept—this could be a YouTube video, a link to a video game description or trailer, an online short story—you can get creative but keep in mind that your goal is to illustrate the concept (please avoid potentially offensive content).  
If you want to illustrate the concept by describing an entertainment use **experience** that you had or that you observed in others, your posting should include an additional half page of text to explain and describe that experience.
- Furthermore, post at least one comment regarding another student's posting on the same topic within 4 days after the related class session

<b>Scheduled Session Date</b>	<b>Session Topic For which OPECA are assigned (see list below for the topic and date you were assigned to)</b>
1/27	wishful identification/simulation
1/29	mood management
2/5	affective disposition theory
2/12	suspense
2/17	humor & comedy
2/19	mystery/crime fiction
2/24	tragedy
3/3	horror
3/5	news as E.
3/10	reality TV
3/26	sports
4/7	music/music videos

<b>First Name Initial</b>	<b>Last Name First Two Letters</b>	<b>Session Date</b>	<b>OPECA topic 1 (post 4 days after session)</b>	<b>Session date</b>	<b>OPECA topic 2 (post 4 days after session)</b>
E	Al	2/17	humor & comedy	2/24	tragedy
A	Ba	2/12	suspense	3/10	reality TV
J	Ba	2/19	mystery/crime fiction	3/10	reality TV
B	Be	2/19	mystery/crime fiction	3/10	reality TV
A	Br	2/17	humor & comedy	2/24	tragedy
J	Ce	2/3	affective disposition theory	2/24	tragedy
K	Ch	1/27	wishful identification/simulation	2/24	tragedy
K	Da	2/3	affective disposition theory	3/5	news as E.



<b>First Name Initial</b>	<b>Last Name First Two Letters</b>	<b>Session Date</b>	<b>OPECA topic 1 (post 4 days after session)</b>	<b>Session date</b>	<b>OPECA topic 2 (post 4 days after session)</b>
N	<b>De</b>	2/12	suspense	3/26	sports
M	<b>Dic</b>	1/29	mood management	3/5	news as E.
M	<b>Dix</b>	1/29	mood management	4/2	video games
F	<b>Du</b>	2/17	humor & comedy	4/7	music/music videos
C	<b>Du</b>	1/29	mood management	4/7	music/music videos
A	<b>En</b>	2/17	humor & comedy	3/3	horror
C	<b>Fa</b>	2/12	suspense	3/5	news as E.
N	<b>Gi</b>	1/27	wishful identification/simulation	3/5	news as E.
A	<b>Gr</b>	2/24	tragedy	3/3	horror
K	<b>Ha</b>	2/24	tragedy	3/26	sports
A	<b>Ho</b>	2/19	mystery/crime fiction	4/7	music/music videos
C	<b>Ho</b>	2/17	humor & comedy	3/5	news as E.
K	<b>Ho</b>	2/3	affective disposition theory	2/24	tragedy
M	<b>Hu</b>	2/19	mystery/crime fiction	3/26	sports
A	<b>In</b>	2/19	mystery/crime fiction	3/3	horror
H	<b>Ja</b>	2/3	affective disposition theory	3/5	news as E.
S	<b>Ku</b>	1/27	wishful identification/simulation	3/10	reality TV
A	<b>La</b>	1/29	mood management	3/10	reality TV
A	<b>Li</b>	2/12	suspense	4/2	video games
T	<b>Lu</b>	2/19	mystery/crime fiction	3/26	sports
H	<b>Me</b>	1/27	wishful identification/simulation	4/2	video games
K	<b>Mi</b>	2/12	suspense	4/7	music/music videos
G	<b>Mi</b>	1/29	mood management	3/10	reality TV
J	<b>Mo</b>	2/12	suspense	4/2	video games
D	<b>Pa</b>	2/17	humor & comedy	3/5	news as E.
T	<b>Ph</b>	2/3	affective disposition theory	4/2	video games
A	<b>Pi</b>	2/12	suspense	3/10	reality TV
M	<b>Po</b>	1/29	mood management	3/26	sports
R	<b>Ra</b>	1/29	mood management	3/3	horror
D	<b>Ro</b>	2/3	affective disposition theory	4/2	video games
Q	<b>Sa</b>	2/3	affective disposition theory	4/2	video games
M	<b>Sc</b>	1/27	wishful identification/simulation	3/3	horror
J	<b>Sc</b>	2/17	humor & comedy	3/5	news as E.
T	<b>Sm</b>	2/12	suspense	3/3	horror
M	<b>St</b>	2/3	affective disposition theory	3/3	horror
A	<b>Wa</b>	1/27	wishful identification/simulation	3/26	sports
Y	<b>Wa</b>	1/27	wishful identification/simulation	3/26	sports
L	<b>We</b>	1/29	mood management	4/2	video games
A	<b>We</b>	2/19	mystery/crime fiction	3/3	horror
K	<b>Ya</b>	1/27	wishful identification/simulation	3/26	sports
D	<b>Yo</b>	2/19	mystery/crime fiction	3/10	reality TV
A	<b>Ze</b>	2/17	humor & comedy	2/24	tragedy