

# COMM 3413 Media Entertainment (Hybrid): Theory and Research

Fall 2018 Wednesdays 10:20-12:20, 360 Journalism Bldg

Dr. Silvia Knobloch-Westerwick  
Office: 3020 Derby Hall Phone: 247-6801  
Email: [knobloch-westerwick.1@osu.edu](mailto:knobloch-westerwick.1@osu.edu)  
Office Hours: by appt.

## TEACHING ASSISTANT

Austin Hubner  
Office: 3032 Derby Hall  
Email: [hubner.9@osu.edu](mailto:hubner.9@osu.edu)  
Office Hours: 1-3 Fridays

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

Entertainment is a huge business in the U.S. and abroad. It has also become an important 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 works 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 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; and 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 usually most prominent in the entertainment context, but in our entertainment age, have become an important skill in almost every communication context.



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 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12<sup>th</sup> Ave. tel. 292-3307, TDD 292-0901; <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/>

#### **WHAT DO I NEED TO DO FOR CLASS?**

Be there, take your notes, ask questions if you are not sure about a topic, and feel free to comment on things based on your own experiences and ideas. The more you are willing to contribute to class discussions, the better the chance to make it a really good learning experience for all of us.

**Substantial parts of this hybrid class will be conducted online.**

**It is your responsibility to ensure you have reliable access to a computer/the internet to meet exam/assignment deadlines.**

#### **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.

#### **STUDY GUIDANCE**

Study questions/guidance will be posted on the Carmen Website. These guides will reflect the course material and should be a great help for you to work on the content, either individually or with classmates. You can answer these questions, discuss them in a group, and provide carefully written responses to your instructor or TA in case you are uncertain or desire feedback. Your instructor can provide individual feedback or use responses to clarify questions for the class.

#### **POLICIES**

##### Attendance and Timely Completion of Assignments

- Exams are to be taken on the designated exam dates; online activities must be completed by the assigned deadlines.
- It is your responsibility to note the day/time of exams and assignment deadline NOW and make sure you will be able to attend all the exams and complete the assignments. It is recommended that you **schedule a regular time window in your calendar for the online activities and allow some ‘buffer’ time**. 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.
- Attendance at all lectures is required and will be recorded at instructor discretion. As it may be disruptive to arrive late, please make an effort to be on time.

- In order to allow for compensation of missed sessions and activities due to illness etc., the grading policy includes a ‘drop lowest score’ component to make up for absences.
- You must provide documentation for illnesses or other legitimate reason for absence, so we can potentially work with you **if extended or several absences** occur. Please upload the absence documentation to the Carmen dropbox folder “Absence Documentation” as soon as possible, ideally before or on the day of the absence. You can take a photo of a document and upload. Only you and the instructor can see these files on Carmen. This helps the student and the instructor to keep track of the documentation and absences.
- For a missed **in-class assignment, as soon as a SECOND** opportunity is missed due to a legitimate and documented reason, you should inform your instructor via email.
- Given that you can drop the four lowest scores from the online activities and have more than 5 days to complete these activities, you would need extensive documentation to become eligible for a make-up online activity. This situation has never occurred so far.
- If you miss an exam, email your instructor as soon as possible and upload the documentation to the Carmen dropbox folder “Absence Documentation,” or we may not be able to allow a make-up exam. Make-up exams will only be allowed if the exam was missed due to illness or other legitimate reason

No make-up exams or deadline extensions are allowed except in the case of an emergency. Having more than one exam on a particular date does NOT qualify as an emergency.

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. It is possible that some in-class activities will be performed through OSU Tophat or simply submitted on paper. If you wish to provide **anonymous feedback**, you can use the link posted under each week section under CONTENT in CARMEN—this will trigger an email to your instructor. And of course, we are happy to chat in person any time!

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. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487).

The University's **Code of Student Conduct** defines academic misconduct as "any activity that tends to compromise the academic integrity of the University, or subvert the educational process."

While many people associate academic misconduct with "cheating," the term encompasses a wider scope of student behaviors which include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Violation of course rules;
- Violation of program regulations;

- Knowingly providing or receiving information during a course exam or program assignment;
- Possession and/or use of unauthorized materials during a course exam or program assignment;
- Knowingly providing or using assistance in the laboratory, on field work, or on a course assignment, unless such assistance has been authorized specifically by the course instructor or, where appropriate, a project/research supervisor;
- **Submitting work under a student's name when the student has not contributed to the assignment, was not present during the lecture**
- Submission of work not performed in a course: This includes (but is not limited to) instances where a student fabricates and/or falsifies data or information for a laboratory experiment (i.e., a "dry lab") or other academic assignment. It also includes instances where a student submits data or information (such as a lab report or term paper) from one course to satisfy the requirements of another course, unless submission of such work is permitted by the instructor of the course or supervisor of the research for which the work is being submitted;
- Submitting plagiarized work for a course/program assignment;
- Falsification, fabrication, or dishonesty in conducting or reporting laboratory (research) results;
- Serving as or asking another student to serve as a substitute (a "ringer") while taking an exam;
- Alteration of grades in an effort to change earned credit or a grade;
- Alteration and/or unauthorized use of university forms or records.

For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct (<https://trustees.osu.edu/index.php?q=rules/code-of-student-conduct/>).

## Evaluation

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

Grading Scheme. The OSU “standard scheme” of grading as implemented by Carmen is used and we will try to keep the grades on Carmen’s grade book. Here is the **OSU “standard scheme” IN PERCENTAGE RANGES:** 93 - 100 (A), 90 - 92.99 (A-), 87 - 89.99 (B+), 83 - 86.99 (B), 80 - 82.99 (B-), 77 - 79.99 (C+), 73 - 76.99 (C), 70 - 72.99 (C-), 67 - 69.99 (D+), 60 - 66.99 (D), Below 60 (E). Note that there is ***no rounding*** in the points system.

## Final Grade Components

Assignment	Maximum Points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three exams, approx. 30 questions each, worth 15-16 pts each</li> </ul>	47 points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eight in-class participation points, 1 pt. each MORE OPPORTUNITIES THAN NEEDED FOR MAXIMUM POINTS WILL BE OFFERED</li> </ul>	8 points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three exam preparation activities, 1 pt. each</li> </ul>	3 points

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ten online activities, 6 pts max each, three lowest scores will be dropped</li> </ul>	42 points
<b>Total</b>	100 points

Bonus points/extra credit as offered to everyone in the class—no individual arrangements!  
 There will be no opportunities to re-take exams, re-complete assignments, or complete additional work in order to raise your grade.

## GRADING COMPONENTS

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.

Please see the attached schedule for the exact date and time each exam will take place. Any changes of the class schedule will be announced in class and/or via Carmen. You must plan your schedule to take the exams on the scheduled days in the designated time windows.

Any behaviors suspected as academic misconducts before, during, or after the exams will be reported to the Committee on Academic Misconduct. Please see the *Academic Misconducts* section for more details.

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. Scores will be posted on Carmen. Each exam goes towards your final grade, so please mark it in your calendar now. To reiterate, the exams are NOT subject to the “drop lowest score” policy. Each exam counts towards your final grade.

In-class participation points. In-class questions and activities will be presented during lecture sessions to allow students to earn points for participation. These points can only be earned during the related class session—no late submissions. See section above “Attendance and Timely Completion of Assignments” for make-up policy.

Online exam prep activities. Before each exam, an online announcement will provide you with access to google spreadsheet. On that spreadsheet, find your name and work on the term that was assigned to you. You are asked to do 3 things (which apply well for most listed terms), with correct spelling and grammar: 1) Provide a carefully worded definition or explanation for the term/concept/theory. 2) Give an example in your own words—again, carefully worded and with correct spelling and grammar. 3) Provide personal comment or question to encourage further thinking about the term/concept/theory.

There will be more than one student working on each term, but DON'T just copy from another entry! If your entry does not meet the requirements above or after the deadline stated in the announcement, you may not receive point(s) or only partial points.

## Online activities.

- The online activities are designed as discussion forums on Carmen. Occasionally, these activities will be performed in small teams of students. To keep things interesting and to address a variety of learning goals, the online activities will be diverse.
- There will be 10 opportunities for online activities, the three lowest scores will be dropped. The online activity assignments will be posted on a weekly basis after the class meeting.
- You can find brief descriptions of the online activities on the schedule; detailed instructions will be posted each week right after the class meeting. Additionally, grading rubrics will be provided to clarify how the activities are graded.
- Typically, students are asked to write 700-800 words in response for each online activity. The instructions for an activity will specify length requirements.
- **Please submit your response by pasting text into the discussion post.** Please do **NOT** submit as a Word or PDF file.
- It is recommended that you **schedule a regular time window in your calendar for the online activities and allow some ‘buffer’ time.**
- **Again, in order to allow for compensation of assignments due to illness etc., the grading policy includes a ‘drop lowest score’ component. See section above “Attendance and Timely Completion of Assignments” for make-up policy.**

### ***HOW TO POST ACTIVITY SUBMISSIONS ON CARMEN DISCUSSIONS:***

1. You can find the discussion thread for each week’s activity on Carmen under “Discussions” or under the week’s “Modules”
2. Click the title (e.g., “Activity 1”, probably displayed in green), read the instructions, and complete the activity
3. When you are ready to post your activity submission, click “Reply” underneath the discussion thread
4. Just enter a title like “John Doe, Assignment 1 Comm3413” or some catchy title in your post.
5. You will paste your response into the text field here.
6. **Triple-check that your post was really uploaded.** We cannot give points if we don’t find only an empty post. (In the exception that Carmen is ‘down’ and you worry about the deadline, you can email your post to the TA.)

The activities will always include an online commenting component—so you will read other students’ submissions and provide input on them, and you will also receive feedback from other students. The commenting component helps greatly with learning from each other and understanding issues on media and society from other people’s perspective. To post a comment, click “Reply” underneath the post you would like to comment on, and type directly in the text box.

You must post your own activity submission first before you can see other students’ submissions and post your comment. Online comments, as a general rule, must be **at least 50 words long, with substantive reference to the post and to the theory/issue.** Thus, to receive points, the comment should be at least 50 words long, consist of full sentences that have substance, and demonstrate that you have read the short paper of the other student and seriously reflected on it.

- Harsh critique or unqualified/inappropriate posts are not appreciated and may lead to a point reduction of your online assignment grade.
- Comments on comments are not allowed. Your post must relate only to the original post of a fellow student's short paper.
- Only five comments are allowed per original post. That means that you need to read and comment on a paper that wasn't already commented by five other students.
- You can only earn points for your comment if you have also posted your own submission. Other students' submissions will only be visible to you after you have posted your own submission.

**All online activity submissions are due 8:00 PM Monday the following week. Late submissions within four hours after the deadline will be penalized with a 1 pt subtraction; submissions after 11:59 pm on that Monday will not earn points. The discussion board closes at 11:59 PM each Monday. The related online comments on other students' postings are due 11:59 PM Monday of the same week.**

Readings. 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 a teaching assistant for help if you have difficulty accessing a reading.

Scheduling may be subject to change.

Date / Topic / Key Theory		Activities (due Mondays)	Readings
8/22 Introduction – What is Entertainment		<u>Activity 1: Entertainment Use and Experience Log</u> Keep track of your thoughts and feelings during an hour of entertainment viewing and reflect on these responses	* <i>Klimmt &amp; Vorderer</i> , 2009: 'Media Entertainment' (specifically pp. 345-350)
8/29 Relationships with Characters	<u>Parasocial interactions/relationships</u>	<b>SUBMIT EARLY, DUE LABOR DAY GROUP WORK – PLAN AHEAD!</b> <u>Activity 2: Building Knowledge on Relationships with Characters</u> Examine definitions of related concepts & prepare a presentation explaining that concept	<i>Horton &amp; Wohl</i> , 1956: 'Mass Comm & Para-social' (specifically pp.215-223) <i>Hoffner &amp; Buchanan</i> , 2005: 'Young Adults' Wishful Identification' (specifically pp. 325-333)
9/5 History of Entertainment	<u>History of Entertainment</u>	<u>Activity 3: Entertainment throughout History</u> Select a time period & find out what people did for entertainment during that period	* <i>Zillmann</i> , 2000a: 'Coming of Media Entertainment'
9/12 Mood management	<u>Mood management</u>	<u>Activity 4: Explore the Research on Mood Management</u> Review & summarize mood management theory, find examples & counter-examples, then read & discuss empirical research on the theory	<i>Knobloch-Westerwick</i> , 2006: 'Mood Management Theory'; * <i>Vorderer &amp; Knobloch</i> , 2000: 'Conflict & Suspense' (specifically pp. 59-62)
9/19 <b>EXAM</b>			<i>Raney</i> , 2004: 'Expanding Disposition Theory' (specifically pp. 348-361)
9/26 Suspense	<u>Excitation transfer/affective disposition theory</u>	<u>Activity 5: What Creates Suspense?</u> Utilize the concepts and theories about suspense to write an original suspense story and explain its appeal	<i>Zillmann</i> , 1996: 'Psychology of Suspense'
10/03 Mystery Tragedy	<u>Structural affect theory</u> <u>Meta-emotions</u>	<u>Activity 6: Ponder the Meaning of Life through Tragedy</u> Select a meaning-of-life concept (family, friendship, love, etc.) & find a tragedy that depicts/resonates that concept	<i>Oliver &amp; Woolley</i> , 2010: 'Tragic & Poignant Entertainment' <i>Knobloch-Westerwick &amp; Keplinger</i> , 2006: 'Mystery Appeal'
10/10 Music	Social identity theory	Fall break (Oct 11-12)	<i>Harwood</i> , 2017: 'Music and intergroup relations'



Date / Topic / Key Theory		Activities (due Mondays)	Readings
10/17 Humor & Comedy	Relief, incongruity & disparagement theory	<u>Activity 7: Stereotypes &amp; Humor in Entertainment</u> Select a group that the media tend to present in a stereotypical way for humor & discuss how these portrayals contrast with real world	<i>Zillmann</i> , 2000b: 'Humor and Comedy'
10/24 <b>EXAM</b>			
10/31 Horror Erotica/Pornography	<u>Sensory delight / desensitization</u>	<u>Activity 8: Interview about Responses to &amp; Enjoyment of Horror</u> Design and conduct an interview addressing your interviewee's fear responses to & enjoyment of horror	* <i>Sparks &amp; Sparks</i> , 2000: 'Violence, Mayhem, and Horror'; <i>Manning</i> , 2006: 'Impact of Internet Pornography'
11/07 News  Political Entertainment  Sports	<u>Cognitive dissonance in entertainment</u>	<u>Activity 9: Political Entertainment</u> A 'jigsaw' activity where you will work with other students to piece a multi-fold reflection together when considering all discussion postings from the class	<i>Bennett</i> , 2012: 'News Stories', Chapt. 2 (specifically pp. 42-48; further elaboration offered on pp. 48-66) <i>Holbert</i> , 2005: 'Entertainment Television and Politics' <i>Raney</i> , 2006: 'Why We Watch Sports'
11/14 Narrative Persuasion & Education-Entertainment	<u>Social cognitive theory</u> <u>Extended ELM</u>	<u>Activity 10: Design an Intervention for a Social Issue</u> Select a social issue of your interest (eating healthy, texting & driving, political participation, etc.) & design a message for a target audience using narrative persuasion	<i>Moyer-Gusé</i> , 2008: 'Entertainment Persuasion'
11/21 Catch-up / Review		<b>Thanksgiving Break (Nov 21-25)</b>	
11/28 <b>FINAL EXAM</b>			