

COMM 3440
Mass Communication & Society

Spring 2024, 3 credits
Online Course

Faculty Instructor:

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Course Overview

News headlines about media effects tend toward the extreme. Are smartphones [destroying a generation](#)? Does screen time [ravage children's brains](#)? Are video games [digital heroin](#)? Does the devil [live in our phones](#)? To the untrained eye, it might seem difficult to separate fact from clickbait.

This class begins with an introduction to the basics of media psychology, including the scientific methods used to test claims about the effects of mass media on individuals. We then consider the psychological mechanisms through which media effects are thought to occur before examining the contexts in which these effects are stronger, weaker, or non-existent. Ongoing class assignments will push students to consider how the realities of media effects can be communicated to mass audiences in ways that are practical, accurate, and devoid of fearmongering.

At the conclusion of this course, students will be able to...

1. ...classify "media psychology" as a branch of social science.
2. ...evaluate the quality of published research on media effects.
3. ...evaluate how media effects research is communicated to the public.
4. ...develop evidence-based recommendations for media use in everyday life.

This course also fulfills the embedded literacy requirement for **technology** in the **General Education** program. Accordingly, students will also be able to...

1. ...describe the relationships between technology and society in historical contexts.
2. ...recognize how technologies emerge and change.
3. ...evaluate the social and ethical implications of technology.

Textbook

There is no textbook for this course.

Grade Distribution

This class has 100 possible points. Points are distributed as follows:

“5M” Activities (x5)	10 points
Checkpoints (x6)	10 points
Research Synthesis Assignments (x2)	30 points
Online Quizzes (x4)	10 points
Online Exams (x2)	40 points

Letter Grade Distribution

You must attempt each assignment in order to receive a grade. Your final grade will be determined based on the combined score of all assignments. The grading distribution is as follows:

≥ 92.5	A	$72.5 - 76.4$	C
$89.5 - 92.4$	A-	$69.5 - 72.4$	C-
$86.5 - 89.4$	B+	$66.5 - 69.4$	D+
$82.5 - 86.4$	B	$59.5 - 66.4$	D
$79.5 - 82.4$	B-	≤ 59.4	F
$76.5 - 79.4$	C+		

Asynchronous Lectures

Each weekly module features video lectures on Carmen. Lectures are posted in two formats: (1) PowerPoint files with audio recordings, and (2) online YouTube playlists. The content included in each version is identical, so you only need to access one version (whichever you prefer). The YouTube playlists allow for closed captioning. Please make certain you have a strong internet connection and relevant audio equipment (e.g., headphones). It is not feasible for me or your TAs to help you with technical problems. University Tech support can help you (614-688-HELP) with technical problems.

Overview of Assignments

Each weekly module contains readings, lectures, and assignments. All work is due by 11:59 pm on Sunday (i.e., the **END** of each week).

“5M” Activities: The main concepts introduced this semester are summarized as the **5M’s**: Moral panics, Research Methods, Mediation, Moderation, and Meta-analysis. When these concepts are introduced, you will complete a worksheet that asks you to examine how that concept manifests in published research papers and/or news articles. There are five activities in total, and they are graded out of one point for thoroughness and completion (2 = satisfactory, 1 = needs improvement, 0 = incomplete).

Checkpoints: Periodic “checkpoints” serve to assess your understanding of key course concepts. Each checkpoint consists of open-ended questions on Carmen. You will receive instructor feedback, which will help as you prepare your research synthesis (see below). Certain checkpoints also serve as opportunities to provide feedback about the course to your

instructors and to reflect on your learning. There are six checkpoints in total, and they range in value from 1 point to 3 points.

Research Synthesis Assignments: The main course project asks you to research a specific media effects topic of your choice. This project culminates in a 1-page paper (single-spaced) that summarizes existing research on your topic and provides evidence-based recommendations about how people should approach media use in everyday life. Prior to writing this short paper, you will complete preliminary assignments that ask you to gather, evaluate, and synthesize research on your chosen topic. The first synthesis assignment is graded out of 10 points, and the second synthesis assignment is graded out of 20 points. Both assignments are evaluated using a combination of completion, accuracy, and effort. Detailed rubrics are provided for each assignment.

Online Quizzes: Quizzes occur every 2-3 weeks. Each quiz is worth 2.5 points and consists of 10 multiple-choice questions. You have two opportunities to complete each quiz, and these attempts have no time limit. You should complete the first attempt without referencing your notes. After submitting the quiz, you can see which questions you answered incorrectly. You should then use your notes to figure out why you got those questions wrong. You can then correct your answers and resubmit. Only your highest score will be counted. Research shows that this process of testing yourself, re-learning the material, and correcting your responses is a more effective study technique than simply reviewing your notes because it forces you to recognize and address gaps in your knowledge. As such, these quizzes serve as periodic checks of your knowledge, as well as reviews for exams.

Online Exams: There are two online exams that consist of 20 multiple-choice questions and 10 true/false questions. Each exam is worth 20 points. A study guide is provided, and you can use your notes to complete the exams. However, you only have ONE attempt to complete each exam. This attempt is timed (60 minutes).

If you score less than 70% on an exam, you have the opportunity to complete an *Exam Reflection Assignment*. This assignment requires you to reflect on errors that you made and demonstrate mastery of the material that you misunderstood. Satisfactory completion of this reflection will increase your exam grade to 70%. You are only allowed to complete the exam reflection assignment **ONCE** per semester.

Late Work Policy

Late work is not accepted. Assignments turned in after the posted due date will receive a zero. However, if you know in advance of a deadline that you will need to turn in the assignment late, you can contact Professor Bonus by email and schedule a new deadline.

Extra Credit

Participate in a research study! Conducting scientific research is crucial to the mission and purpose of the School of Communication at The Ohio State University. You can earn 1 point of extra credit for each 1 hour of research participation (up to 2 hours, or 2 points total) that you complete in School of Communication research studies. Be sure to read the detailed instructions on the SONA site. Importantly, missing your research appointment or quickly clicking through surveys and giving researchers fake data will not earn participation credit. You must sign up for studies at:

<https://osucomm.sona-systems.com>

Mental Health: Please Take Care of Yourself!

As a student, you might experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to your learning (e.g., strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation). These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student's ability to participate in daily activities. The Ohio State University offers services to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. If you are or someone you know is suffering from any of the aforementioned conditions, you can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the Office of Student Life's Counseling and Consultation Service (CCS) by visiting ccs.osu.edu or calling 614-292-5766. CCS is located on the 4th Floor of the Younkin Success Center and 10th Floor of Lincoln Tower. You can reach an on-call counselor when CCS is closed at 614-292-5766. If you are thinking of harming yourself or need a safe, non-judgmental place to talk, or if you are worried about someone else and need advice about what to do, 24 hour emergency help is also available through the Suicide Prevention Hotline (Columbus: 614-221-5445 / National: 800-273-8255); or text (4hope to 741741); or at suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Title IX

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories (e.g., race). If you or someone you know has been sexually harassed or assaulted, you may find the appropriate resources at <http://titleix.osu.edu> or by contacting the Ohio State Title IX Coordinator, Kellie Brennan, at titleix@osu.edu

Diversity

The School of Communication at The Ohio State University embraces and maintains an environment that respects diverse traditions, heritages, experiences, and people. Our commitment to diversity moves beyond mere tolerance to recognizing, understanding, and welcoming the contributions of diverse groups and the value group members possess as individuals. In our School, the faculty, students, and staff are dedicated to building a tradition of diversity with principles of equal opportunity, personal respect, and the intellectual interests of those who comprise diverse cultures.

Requesting Accommodations

The University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions), please let me know via email immediately so that we can privately discuss options. You can also register with Student Life Disability Services to establish reasonable accommodations. After registration, you should make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion. SLDS contact information: slds@osu.edu; 614-292-3307; 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue.

Academic Integrity

All work must be the original work of the student and not turned in to any other course prior to this one. Cheating is unacceptable and will result in a formal report to the School of Communication and the Committee on 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://studentlife.osu.edu/csc/>

Student Academic Services

Arts and Sciences Advising and Academic Services’ website provides support for student academic success. Information on advising issues such as tutoring, transfer credits, academic standing, and contact information for Arts and Sciences advisors can be obtained through this website. The site is: <http://advising.osu.edu/welcome.shtml>

Student Services

The Student Service Center assists with financial aid matters, tuition and fee payments. Please see their site at: <http://ssc.osu.edu>

Copyright Disclaimer

The materials used in connection with this course may be subject to copyright protection and are only for the use of students officially enrolled in the course for the educational purposes associated with the course. Copyright law must be considered before copying, retaining, or disseminating materials outside of the course.

Additional Disclaimer

This syllabus represents a contract “in the works.” Events that transpire over the semester may require modifications to the course. In the event of a change, I will announce the change and update the syllabus on Carmen. Ultimately it is your responsibility to keep up with any such modifications and to be aware of current policies, deadlines, etc. I reserve the right to modify course policies throughout the semester.

Creating an Environment Free from Harassment and Discrimination

The Ohio State University is committed to building and maintaining a community to reflect diversity and to improve opportunities for all. All Buckeyes have the right to be free from harassment, discrimination, and sexual misconduct. Ohio State does not discriminate on the basis of age, ancestry, color, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity or expression, genetic information, HIV/AIDS status, military status, national origin, pregnancy (childbirth, false pregnancy, termination of pregnancy, or recovery therefrom), race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or protected veteran status, or any other bases under the law, in its activities, academic programs, admission, and employment. To report harassment, discrimination, sexual misconduct, or retaliation and/or seek confidential and non-confidential resources and supportive measures, contact the Office of Institutional Equity:

1. Online reporting form at equity.osu.edu,
2. Call 614-247-5838 or TTY 614-688-8605,
3. Or Email equity@osu.edu

DEFINING “MEDIA PSYCHOLOGY” (Week 1 & Week 2)

WEEK 1 (Jan 8 – Jan 14) Media Psychology as a Social Science	
LECTURES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Course Overview 2. A Brief History of Media Psychology 3. Personalized Media Effects 4. How to Read a Journal Article
ASSIGNMENTS Due 11:59 pm Sunday Jan 14	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Checkpoint #1: Course Introduction
READINGS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Valkenburg, P. M. & Piotrowski, J. T. (2017). Themes and theoretical perspectives. <i>Plugged In: How Media Attract and Affect Youth</i>. New Haven: Yale University Press. • Jordan, C. H. & Zanna, M. P. (1999). How to read a journal article in social psychology. <i>The Self in Social Psychology</i>. Philadelphia: Psychology Press.

WEEK 2 (Jan 15 – Jan 21) Moral Panic Theory and Fears about Media Effects	
LECTURES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Tenets of Moral Panic Theory 2. Identifying a Moral Panic 3. 5M1 Recap Video
ASSIGNMENTS Due 11:59 pm Sunday Jan 21	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 5M Activity #1: Understanding Moral Panic Theory 2. Checkpoint #2: Identifying a Media Effect
READINGS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Markey, P. M., & Ferguson, C. J. (2017). Teaching us to fear: The violent video game moral panic and the politics of game research. <i>American Journal of Play</i>, 10(1), 99-115. • Twenge, J. M. (2017). Have smartphones destroyed a generation? <i>The Atlantic</i>. Retrieved from: https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/09/has-the-smartphone-destroyed-a-generation/534198/ • Cassidy, M. (2015). “Concerning printed poison”: 19th century American adults’ ambivalence about children’s interactions with cheap fiction. <i>The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth</i>, 8(2), 211-228.

UNDERSTANDING MEDIA EFFECTS (Week 3 – Week 7)

WEEK 3 (Jan 22 – Jan 28) Survey Methods: Cultivation Theory and Social Perceptions of Reality	
LECTURES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Tenets of Cultivation Theory 2. The Basics of Surveys 3. Interpreting Survey Results 4. Understanding Statistical Significance 5. 5M2 Recap Video
ASSIGNMENTS Due 11:59 pm Sunday Jan 28	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 5M Activity #2: Understanding Survey Methods 2. Quiz 1
READINGS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Scientific Methods in Media Effects Research</i>, p. 25-35 only • Segrin, C. & Nabi, R. L. (2002). Does television viewing cultivate unrealistic expectations about marriage? <i>Journal of Communication</i>, 52(2), 247-263.

WEEK 4 (Jan 29 – Feb 4) Experimental Methods: Media Exposure and Social Behavior	
LECTURES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Basics of Causation 2. The Basics of Experimental Research 3. IV Manipulation 4. Randomization 5. Experimental Research Example 6. Internal and External Validity
ASSIGNMENTS Due 11:59 pm Sunday Feb 4	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Research Synthesis #1: Gathering Evidence of Media Effects
READINGS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Scientific Methods in Media Effects Research</i>, p. 35-41 • Saleem, M., Anderson, C. A., & Gentile, D. A. (2012). Effects of prosocial, neutral, and violent video games on children's helpful and hurtful behaviors. <i>Aggressive Behavior</i>, 38, 281-287.

WEEK 5 (Feb 5 – Feb 11) Emotional Mediators: Inspirational Television and Altruistic Behavior	
LECTURES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Tenets of Emotional Contagion Theory 2. The Basics of Mediator Variables 3. Responses to Inspirational Television
ASSIGNMENTS Due 11:59 pm Sunday Feb 11	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Quiz 2
READINGS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tsay- Vogel, M. & Krakowiak, K. M. (2016). Inspirational reality TV: The prosocial effects of lifestyle transforming reality programs on elevation and altruism. <i>Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media</i>, 60(4), 567-586.

WEEK 6 (Feb 12 – Feb 18) Cognitive Mediators: Stereotypical Depictions & Prejudice	
LECTURES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Tenets of Priming Theory 2. Review of Research Methods 3. 5M3 Recap Video
ASSIGNMENTS Due 11:59 pm Sunday Feb 18	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 5M Activity #3: Understanding Multiple Methods and Mediators
READINGS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saleem, M., Prot, S., Anderson, C. A., & Lemieux, A. F. (2015). Exposure to Muslims in media and support for policies harming Muslims. <i>Communication Research</i>, 44(6), 841-869.

WEEK 7 (Feb 19 – Feb 25) Exam 1	
LECTURES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. None!
ASSIGNMENTS Due 11:59 pm Sunday Feb 25	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Exam 1 2. Checkpoint #3: Mid-semester Evaluation
READINGS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Study Guide

CONTEXTUALIZING MEDIA EFFECTS (Week 8 – Week 11)

WEEK 8 (Feb 26 – March 3) The Dual Influence of Cognition and Emotion: Intergroup Contact in Online Video Games	
LECTURES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Tenets of Intergroup Contact Theory 2. Intergroup Contact in Online Video Games
ASSIGNMENTS Due 11:59 pm Sunday March 3	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Checkpoint #4: Identifying a Mediator Variable
READINGS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adachi, P. J. C., Hodson, G., Willoughby, T., Black, C., & Ha, A. (2016). From outgroups to allied forces: Effects of intergroup cooperation in violent and nonviolent video games on boosting favorable outgroup attitudes. <i>Journal of Experimental Psychology: General</i>, 145(3), 259-265.

WEEK 9 (March 4 – March 10) Meaning is in the Eye of the Beholder: The Importance of Moderator Variables	
LECTURES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Basics of Moderator Variables 2. Interpreting the Results of Moderation Analyses 3. 5M4 Recap Video
ASSIGNMENTS Due 11:59 pm Sunday March 10	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 5M Activity #4: Understanding Moderators 2. Quiz 3
READINGS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kleemans, M., Daalmans, S., Carbaat, I., & Anschutz, A. (2018). Picture perfect: The direct effect of manipulated Instagram photos on body image in adolescent girls. <i>Media Psychology</i>, 21(1), 93-110.

SPRING BREAK (March 11 – March 17)	
LECTURES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. None! Have a safe and relaxing break!
ASSIGNMENTS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. None! Have a safe and relaxing break!
READINGS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. None! Have a safe and relaxing break!

WEEK 10 (March 18 – March 24) When Scholars Disagree I: Meta-Analyses of Social Media Effects	
LECTURES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Basics of Meta-Analysis 2. Meta-Analyzing the Effects of Social Media Use
ASSIGNMENTS Due 11:59 pm Sunday March 24	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Checkpoint #5: Identifying a Moderator Variable
READINGS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Huang, C. (2017). Time spent on social network sites and psychological well-being: A meta-analysis. <i>Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking</i>, 20(6), 346-354.

WEEK 11 (March 25 – March 31) When Scholars Disagree II: Meta-Analyses of Violent Media Effects	
LECTURES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conclusions of Meta-Analyses in Media Psychology 2. 5M5 Recap Video
ASSIGNMENTS Due 11:59 pm Sunday March 31	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 5M Activity #5: Understanding Meta-Analyses
READINGS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greitemeyer, T. & Mügge, D. O. (2014). Video games do affect social outcomes: A meta-analytic review of the effects of violent and prosocial video game play. <i>Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin</i>, 40(5), 578-589.

COMMUNICATING ABOUT MEDIA EFFECTS (Week 12 - Week 14)

WEEK 12 (April 1 – April 7) Constructively Communicating Media Effects Research: Part I	
LECTURES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> How to Avoid a Moral Panic Constructively Communicating Media Effects Research
ASSIGNMENTS Due 11:59 pm Sunday April 7	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Quiz 4
READINGS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Guernsey, L. G. (2017). Don't take away your teen's phone: Smartphones are linked to problems, but they haven't "destroyed a generation." <i>Slate</i>. Retrieved from: http://www.slate.com/articles/technology/future_tense/2017/08/smartphones_haven_t_destroyed_a_generation.html Lillard, A. S., & Peterson, J. (2011). The immediate impact of different types of television on young children's executive function. <i>Pediatrics</i>, 128(4), 644-649. French, N. (2011). Will SpongeBob make you gay? No, but he might make you stupid. <i>National Review</i>. Retrieved from: https://www.nationalreview.com/the-home-front/will-spongebob-make-you-gay-no-he-might-make-you-stupid-nancy-french/ Jabr, F. (2011). SpongeBob drains attention, but doesn't harm brains. <i>New Scientist</i>. Retrieved from: https://www.newscientist.com/article/dn20914-spongebob-drains-attention-but-doesnt-harm-brains/ Reilly, G. (2011). It's official: SpongeBob SquarePants is making our children stupid. <i>Business Insider</i>. Retrieved from: https://www.businessinsider.com/its-official-spongebob-squarepants-is-making-our-children-stupid-2011-9

WEEK 13 (April 8 – Sunday April 14) Constructively Communicating Media Effects Research: Part II	
LECTURES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> None!
ASSIGNMENTS Due 11:59 pm Sunday April 14	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Research Synthesis #2: Advice for the General Public
READINGS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Study Guide

WEEK 14 (April 15 – April 21) Exam 2	
LECTURES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> None!
ASSIGNMENTS Due 11:59 pm Sunday April 21	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Exam 2 Checkpoint #6: Course Reflection
READINGS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> None!

