

# COMM 7840

## MASS COMMUNICATION & THE INDIVIDUAL

School of Communication  
Autumn 2024  
Mondays & Wednesdays: 9:35-10:55am  
Derby Hall 3116

**Instructor: Dr. Joyce Wang, Professor**  
**Email address: [wang.1243@osu.edu](mailto:wang.1243@osu.edu)**  
**Office hours: Wednesdays 1-3pm; or by appointment**

### Course Description

- Why do certain things capture our attention more effectively than others?
- Is it possible to retain information without “remembering” it?
- What types of memories do we possess? Are they truly distinct, and which are most crucial when designing a campaign message?
- How do we make decisions, and how can we influence the choices of others?
- What fundamental roles do emotion and motivation play in both our lives and mediated lives?

In the design of communication campaigns and content as well as in our everyday media use, we frequently encounter questions about the mental processes at play during communication. This seminar will explore the "black box" that lies between mass communication stimuli and individual behavioral responses. We will review classic literature and contemporary trends from psychology, neuroscience, psychophysiology, and cognitive science on key cognitive topics, followed (or sometimes preceded) by related communication theories and practical applications.

### Course Objectives

- (1) To develop a clear understanding of some key cognitive concepts and theories closely related to communication research and applications.
- (2) To expand working knowledge of tools that can help reveal the “black box” of cognition, particularly the dynamics between affective and cognitive processes (e.g., physiological measures, choice probability, response times, and signal detection analysis).
- (3) To inspire research ideas that apply and test theories or methodology learned in this course to the student’s areas of interest.

### Mode of Delivery

Lectures will be conducted in the classroom. Carmen will be used to organize course lectures, assignments, readings, research projects, and other materials. To navigate the course on Carmen, always start with the "Home" page to view the organization of modules and items.

## Required Readings

- Balota, D.A., & Marsh, E.J. (2004). *Cognitive psychology: Key readings*. New York: Psychology Press.
- Reisberg, D. (2013). *The Oxford handbook of cognitive psychology*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Research articles will be accessible from the class Carmen site.

## Assignments & Grading

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|--|-----|
| • Reading Commentaries & Participation | 36% |
| • Discussion Leader                    | 14% |
| • Research paper                       | 50% |

### (1) Reading Commentaries & Participation (36%)

- This is to promote intellectually stimulating discussion, the most critical component of this graduate seminar.
- You are expected to complete the assigned readings and to submit comments about the readings **on Carmen Discussion Forum by 5pm** before the day the readings are assigned. You must read others' comments, attend class, and take part in discussion in order to receive credit for the commentaries. You are encouraged to bring a copy of your commentary to facilitate your class participation.
- Each commentary is worth two points. **Up to 36% pts (i.e., 18 commentaries)** can be earned.
- The commentary should be between **300-600 words** and include the following:
  - Key or interesting points you learned from the readings.
  - Connections between the readings and previous ones or other materials you have encountered.
  - Theoretical and empirical implications for your own research, including applications to your current projects or new ideas inspired by the readings.
  - At least three questions for class discussion, which could involve unclear issues, disagreements, critiques, etc.
- You are also encouraged to respond to your classmates' comments on the forum.

### (2) Discussion Leader(14%)

- You will lead the class discussion for one class of your choice.
- I will be happy to meet with you to discuss how to organize the discussion and to answer any questions related to the readings or your classmates' commentaries.

### (3) Research paper (50%)

- The paper should be inspired by the course content. It can be a theoretical review and synthesis, a research project proposal, an empirical study applying "new" theoretical ideas or empirical tools on a secondary data set, or a complete research report based on new data collected (if you have such data).
- With my approval, you may work individually or in groups of 2-3 researchers. Regardless of whether the project is independent or group-based, all students are expected to contribute an equal amount of effort to both the project and the writing.
- Group work is approved when the project requires collaboration to be completed within one semester. Expectations are higher for group projects in terms of data analysis and writing—the paper should be ready for conference submission or journal submission with some revision.
- Grades will be based on:

- Research paper topic discussion (2%) Sept. 10
- Research paper midway discussion (5%) Oct. 9
- Final presentation—oral and slides (10%) Dec. 2, 4
- Final Paper (33%) Dec. 6

### **Final Grades**

This course uses a percentage-based grading system, where > 90% = A, 81-90% = B, 71-80% = C, 61-70% = D, < 61% = E, and +/- determinations are based on proximity of your % to the cutoffs.

### **Late Assignments**

Unless otherwise notified, assignments are due *by the beginning of the class on the due day*. An assignment will not be accepted more than 24 hours after the due date. The only exceptions to these rules are extraordinary and unforeseen personal circumstances that are convincingly documented no later than 24 hours after the due date.

### **Attendance**

Although attendance will not be formally taken, you are expected to attend every class, arrive on time, and participate in class activities. Not attending class normally is a poor decision, as some of the examined material will be presented only during lectures, and many of the SPSS techniques to be discussed are not documented anywhere except in class. Each class will have class activities and participation, including understanding data structure, practicing analytic and computational techniques on your own computer, and making sense of the analysis results. Students' hands-on participation in the activities is not graded, but it is an essential part of the learning.

### **Academic Integrity**

It is extremely important for every individual to preserve academic integrity. All students at Ohio State University are bound by the Code of Student Conduct. Violations of this code in this class, especially pertaining to 3335-23-04 Section A on Academic Misconduct, will be prosecuted through the procedures the university has set up to deal with violations of the Code. Any violations of the Student Code will be referred to the Committee on Academic Misconduct. *Not following the rules of the course as outlined in this syllabus is considered a violation of the code of student conduct.* Make sure that you are familiar with the Code of Student Conduct, and familiarize yourself with "Ten Suggestions for Preserving Academic Integrity" available online at <https://oaa.osu.edu/academic-integrity-and-misconduct/student-misconduct>

### **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.

### **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.

### ***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 Interim Ohio State Title IX Coordinator, Molly Peirano, at [titleix@osu.edu](mailto:titleix@osu.edu)

### ***Creating an Environment Free from Harassment, Discrimination, and Sexual Misconduct***

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. Members of the university community also have the right to be free from all forms of sexual misconduct: sexual harassment, sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking, and sexual exploitation.

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:

Online reporting form at [equity.osu.edu](http://equity.osu.edu),  
Call 614-247-5838 or TTY 614-688-8605,  
Or Email [equity@osu.edu](mailto:equity@osu.edu)

The university is committed to stopping sexual misconduct, preventing its recurrence, eliminating any hostile environment, and remedying its discriminatory effects. All university employees have reporting responsibilities to the Office of Institutional Equity to ensure the university can take appropriate action:

All university employees, except those exempted by legal privilege of confidentiality or expressly identified as a confidential reporter, have an obligation to report incidents of sexual assault immediately.

The following employees have an obligation to report all other forms of sexual misconduct as soon as practicable but at most within five workdays of becoming aware of such information: 1. Any human resource professional (HRP); 2. Anyone who supervises faculty, staff, students, or volunteers; 3. Chair/director; and 4. Faculty member.

### ***Students with Special Needs***

The university strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. Students seeking to request COVID-related accommodations may do so through the university's [request process](#), managed by Student Life Disability Services. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic, or temporary medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can privately

discuss options. To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Student Life Disability Services. After registration, 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](mailto:slds@osu.edu); 614-292-3307; [slds.osu.edu](http://slds.osu.edu); 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

### **COVID and Illness Policies**

#### **Student illness or absence**

If *you* are too ill to participate in this course due to COVID or another illness, please contact the instructor as soon as you are able. All materials will be made available, and I will be happy to meet with you when you are able to go over the materials. Alternate assignments or extensions may be arranged.

#### **Instructor illness or absence**

If the *instructor* is too ill to teach the course for a period of time, the designated backup for this course will step in. You will be notified via email from the School of Communication.

### **Please Take Care of Yourself (Mental Health Statement)**

As a student (with multiple other social roles), you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as 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](http://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](http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

## Schedule (Tentative)

- Please note changes may be made due to class progress or other circumstances.
- On each topic, we will review classic literature and contemporary trends from psychology, neuroscience, psychophysiology, and cognitive science on key cognitive topics, followed (or sometimes preceded) by related communication theories and practical applications.
- **NOTE: Research publications of communication applications will be selected and finalized based on the current enrolled students' research interests and potential research project ideas. I may also slightly adjust the topics based on students' interests and emerging questions.**

### Week 1 Overview

Aug. 21 overview of the course

### Week 2 Cognitive Approaches to Mass Communication: Why & How

Aug. 26 Why?

- Balota & Marsh (2004), pp.1-27
- Geiger, S., & Newhagen, J. (1993). Revealing the Black Box: Information processing and media effects. *Journal of Communication, 43*, 42-50.
- Lang, A., Bradley, S. D., Chung, Y. K., & Lee, S. (2003). Where the mind meets the message: Reflections on ten years of measuring psychological responses to media. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 47*, 650-655.
- Select your tentative discussion leader day

Aug. 28 How?

- Balota & Marsh (2004), pp.28-47;
- Reisberg, D. (2013), introduction to the handbook (pp.1-5)
- Hamilton, M. A., & Nowak, K. L. (2005). Information systems concepts across two decades: An empirical analysis of trends in theory, methods, process, and research domains. *Journal of Communication, 55*, 529-553.
- Huskey et al. (2020). Marr's tri-level framework integrates biological explanation across communication subfields. *Journal of Communication, 70*, 356-378.
- Finalize your discussion leader day

### Weeks 3-4 Emotion and Motivation

Sept. 2 Labor Day (no class)

Sept. 4 Cognitive-Emotional Interactions

- Reisberg, D. (2013), Chapter 36
- Lane, R. D., Nadel L., Allen, J. J. B., & P. J. (2000). The study of emotion from the perspective of cognitive neuroscience. In R. Lane &

L. Nadel (Eds.), *Cognitive neuroscience of emotion* (pp.3-11). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

- Communication applications based on students' research interests

Sept. 9 *The Dimensional Approach and the Discrete Approach; Underlying Motivational Systems*

- Bradley, M. M. & Lang, P. J. (2007). Emotion and motivation. In J. T. Cacioppo, L. G. Tassinary & G. G. Berntson (Eds.), *Handbook of psychophysiology* (3rd. ed., pp. 581-607). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Berntson, G. G. & Cacioppo J. T. (2008). The neuroevolution of motivation. In J. Y. Shah & W. L. Gardner (Eds.), *Handbook of motivational science* (pp.188-200). New York: Guilford.
- Communication applications based on students' research interests

Sept. 10 *Measurements and Applications*

- Bradley, M. M., & Lang, P. J. (2000). Measuring emotion: Behavior, feeling and physiology. In R. Lane & L. Nadel (Eds.), *Cognitive neuroscience of emotion*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Communication applications based on students' research interests
- [<Research paper topic discussion \(30-min\): Submit \(1\) two potential topics, with 200-300 words description for each, or \(2\) a 500-words proposal if you have decided your topic. We will brainstorm in class.>](#)

## **Weeks 5-6 Attention**

Sept. 16 *Definitions and Mechanisms*

- Balota & Marsh (2004), pp.179-185
- Reisberg, D. (2013), Chapter 11
- Lang, A. (2006). Using the Limited Capacity Model of Motivated Mediated Message Processing to design effective cancer communication messages. *Journal of Communication*, 56(s1), S57–S80.

Sept. 18 *Measures and Applications*

- Guest speakers and applications (physiological measures, response time measures, etc.)

Sept. 23-25 *In the Mind's Eyes*

- Duchowski, A. T. (2007). Eye tracking methodology: Theory and practice (pp.261-274). London: Springer.
- Communication applications based on students' research interests
- [<Lab Demo & Practicum>](#)

## **Weeks 7-9 Memory (and Learning)**

- Sept. 30 *Memory Concepts and Systems*
- Balota & Marsh (2004), pp.289-295.
  - Tulving, E. (2004). How many memory systems are there? In D. A. Balota & E. J. Marsh, (Eds.). *Cognitive psychology: Key readings* (pp.362-378). New York: Psychology Press.
- Oct. 2 *Working Memory and Long-term memory*
- Baddeley, A. (2004). Working memory. In D. A. Balota & E. J. Marsh, (Eds.). *Cognitive psychology: Key readings* (pp.355-361). New York: Psychology Press.
  - Uncapher, M. R., Thieu, M. K., & Wagner, A. D. (2016). Media multitasking and memory: Differences in working memory and long-term memory. *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review*, 23, 483-490.
- Oct. 7 *Implicit Memory*
- Jacoby, L. L. Woloshyn, V., & Kelley, C. (2004). Becoming famous without being recognized: Unconscious influences of memory produced by dividing attention. In D. A. Balota & E. J. Marsh, (Eds.). *Cognitive Psychology: Key Readings* (pp.322-337). New York: Psychology Press.
  - Roediger, H. L. (1990). Implicit memory: Retention without remembering. *American Psychologist*, 45, 1043-1056.
  - Edwards, K. & Shin, M. (2017). Media multitasking and implicit learning. *Attention, Perception, and Psychophysics*, 79, 1535-1549.
- Oct. 9 *Work on research paper*
- [<Research paper midway discussion: You will give a 5-min presentation, and we will brainstorm and offer feedback.>](#)
- Oct. 14 *Sources of Memory Errors*
- Reisberg, D. (2013), Chapter 16
  - **Communication applications based on students' research interests**
- Oct. 16 *False Memory in Media Research*
- Guest speaker: false memory and media research
- Weeks 10-11 Signal Detection Theory and Measures: from Static to Dynamic**
- Oct. 21 *The Classic Signal Detection Theory*
- Shapiro, M. (1994). Signal detection measures of recognition memory. In A. Lang (Ed.), *Measuring psychological responses to media messages* (pp. 133-148). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Oct. 23 *Two applications*
- Shapiro, M. A., & Fox, J. R. (2002). The role of typical and atypical events in story memory. *Human Communication Research*, 28, 109-135.



- Batailler, C., et al. (2022). A signal detection approach to understanding the identification of fake news. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 17, 78-98.

Oct. 28 *Develop a Dynamic Signal Detection Theory*

- Bertenthal, B. I. (2007). Dynamic systems: It's about time. In S. M. Boker & M. J. Wenger (Eds.), *Data analytic techniques for dynamical systems* (pp.1-24).
- I will present a Dynamic extension of the Signal Detection Theory

Oct. 30 *Work on your research projects; individual/group meetings*

### **Weeks 12-13 Judgement, Reasoning , and Decision Making**

Nov. 4 *Judgement and Decision Making*

- Reisberg, D. (2013), Chapters 38, 43
- Communication applications based on students' research interests

Nov. 6 *Dynamic Media Choices*

- I will explain the model in class.
- Wang, Z. (2014). Bridging media processing and selective exposure: A dynamic motivational model of media choices and choice response time. *Communication Research*, 41(8), 1064-1087.

Nov. 11 *Veterans Day (no class)*

Nov. 13 *Causal Reasoning and Moral Thinking*

- Reisberg, D. (2013), Chapters 46, 47
- Communication applications based on students' research interests

### **Week 14. Emerging Challenges and Innovative methods**

Nov. 18-20 *guest speakers*

- Biological methods and modeling
- Big observed data and computational models
- Connecting analysis cross different levels (from individuals to the mass)
- AI
- Communication applications based on students' research interests

### **Weeks 15-16 Research Applications**

Nov. 25 *individual and group meetings on your final projects*

Nov. 27 *Thanksgiving, no class*

Dec. 2, 4 *Presentation of Research Papers*

- [Final Research Presentation](#): You will give a 20-min presentation, and we will brainstorm and offer feedback.
- [Final paper & slides](#) are due by Dec. 6 via Carmen Dropbox.