MEJO 445.001—Process and Effects of Mass Communication Fall 202020

**Instructor:** Ashley Hedrick  
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**Meeting Times:** Monday & Wednesday, 8am-9:15am

**Zoom link for Wednesday class sessions:**

https://unccn.zoom.us/j/96387377336?pwd=TFhDOTNTUW0wZGRjVWxYT0xMQjNSZz09

Meeting ID: 963 8737 7336

Password: 445\_class

**Office Hours:** Monday 9:30 am-11 am and by appointment.

Zoom info: https://unccn.zoom.us/j/98069187110?pwd=WXI5TW9BZmdsVlo2Q1BmNzdCVUsyQT09

Meeting ID: 980 6918 7110

Password: 445\_Office

**Course Overview:** This course is an introduction to various aspects of the processes and effects that characterize the world of mass communication. This course will adopt an empirical approach to understanding various media phenomena. Through a combination of readings, lecture, and discussion, we will examine the psychological effects of media and the theoretical frameworks that have led to the development of the media effects paradigm as one of the most fascinating and important areas in mass communication. You will also learn to critically analyze and evaluate published research, and design and conduct a project that will demonstrate your understanding of media effects. At the end of the course, you should become more discerning consumers, and perhaps practitioners, of media, with a deeper understanding and appreciation of media effects and the processes governing them in modern society.

**Course Books:**

Ariely, Dan. (2008). *Predictably Irrational: The Hidden Forces That Shape Our Decisions.* New York: HarperCollins.

In addition, you will be required to find and I will post selected readings during the course of the semester.

**Contacting me and turning in assignments**

If you have questions, please try to reach me during virtual office hours. If you can’t make it to my virtual office hours, or if your question needs an urgent answer, email me at the address listed above. If I don’t respond to you within 48 hours during weekdays, please assume that I didn’t receive your email, and email me again. I would also be happy to set up an appointment to speak with you via zoom or by phone.

**A typical week in this class:**

* Step 1: Complete assigned reading for the week
* Step 2: Watch asynchronous (pre-recorded) lecture and complete guided survey through Qualtrics by **Tuesday at noon.**
* Step 3: Attend synchronous (live) Zoom session **Wednesday at 8:00 am**.

\**If attending a live session presents a significant challenge for you (i.e. internet access, family obligations, etc.), let me know and we’ll try to find an alternate solution. However, I need to know this as soon as possible.*

* Step 4: Submit your weekly Discussion Post by **Friday at noon.** (See guidelines for these below)
* Step 5: Complete any additional assignments due this week.

**Course Work & Grading**:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Assignment | Weight |
| Discussion posts | 20% |
| Quizzes | 20% |
| Media reflection midterm | 15% |
| Team Research Proposal | 15% |
| Final Team Research Project | 15% |
| “Attendance” & participation | 10% |
| Research participation | 5% |

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A = 93-100, A- = 90-92, B+ = 87-89, B = 83-86, B- = 80-82, C+ = 77-79, C = 73-76, C- 70-72, D = 60-69, F = 59 or below

**Schedule:** The schedule includes the main topics for each week and the reading required for the meeting. The lectures will not repeat material in the readings; rather, they will add different perspectives to the existing material. Students are expected to have completed the assigned readings BEFORE coming to class.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Week & Topic | Day | | Assignments (does not include readings, see Sakai for these) |
| 1 Class overview | 8/10 | Submit short bio (See Sakai for instructions) | | |
| Intro to Media Effects | 8/12 |  | | |
| 2 The Media Effects Tradition | 8/17 |  | | |
|  | 8/19 |  | | |
| 3 Research methods, part 1 | 8/24 |  | | |
|  | 8/26 | Complete QUIZ #1 by Friday at 5 pm | | |
| 4 Research methods, part 2 | 8/31 |  | | |
|  | 9/2 |  | | |
| 5 | 9/7 | Labor day—no class!  See Sakai for detail on this week’s schedule. | | |
| Network Model of Memory | 9/9 |  | | |
| 6 Priming and framing | 9/14 |  | | |
|  | 9/16 | Complete QUIZ #2 by Friday at 5 pm | | |
| 7 Agenda setting and cultivation | 9/21 |  | | |
|  | 9/23 |  | | |
| 8 Elaboration Likelihood Model | 9/28 |  | | |
|  | 9/30 |  | | |
| 9 Persuasion, part 1 | 10/5 | Meredith Collins is our guest speaker! | | |
|  | 10/7 |  | | |
| 10 Interactions with media personae | 10/12 |  | | |
|  | 10/14 | Complete QUIZ #3 by Friday at 5 pm  PROJECT PROPOSAL due by Friday at 5 pm | | |
| 11 Persuasion, part 2 | 10/19 |  | | |
|  | 10/21 | MEDIA REFLECTION MIDTERM due by Friday at 5 pm | | |
| 12 Violent media | 10/26 |  | | |
|  | 10/28 |  | | |
| 13 Active audience theories | 11/2 |  | | |
|  | 11/4 |  | | |
| 14 Effects of new media | 11/9 |  | | |
|  | 11/11 | Complete QUIZ #4 by Friday at 5 p.m. | | |
| 15 Wild card day! | 11/16 |  | | |
|  |  |  | | |
|  |  | **EXAM PERIOD: 8 a.m. Wednesday, November 18** | | |

*\*\*Note: Based on your input and our progress, I reserve the right to amend and change the syllabus, reading schedules, and grading events during the semester.*

**Discussion posts:** You will submit a discussion post via Sakai once a week that expands on an idea from the course content for that week. All discussion posts must be submitted by Friday at noon. Submitting extra discussion posts in one week will not make up for missed discussion posts in other weeks. The purpose of these discussion posts is to give you the opportunity to think, and more importantly write, about connections between the 1) readings, 2) lecture content, and 3) group activities you participated in throughout the week (If applicable. This may not apply during weeks where groups work on final projects). A good discussion post will touch on all three topics. You may critique the reading or lecture, write about questions you have, connect the content with personal experiences, or write about any other angle you would like. This is not a summary, though. You should highlight connections between readings, course content, and group activities, but do not merely summarize any of the readings or course content.

Discussion post rubric:

4-5 points - The comments meet the expectations. Excellent writing and expression. Posts are substantive; arguments or points are completely expressed and defended. There’s clear evidence that material from the readings, course content, and activities are connected. Post is at least 300 words in length.

3 points - Comments discuss the readings or course content, but do not make a connection between the two. The expression of some ideas and opinions are unclear. Most of the points are supported with personal examples and evidence or application of reading and course materials.

1-2 point– Posts are not substantive; they are incomplete. They don’t reflect an understanding of the material or course content, they don’t apply that material to the comments, the quality of the writing and expression of ideas needs improvement.

0 points – Given to a student who does not post at all on any given day (this will include posting outside of the scheduled time for the Forums).

**Media reflection midterm:** The purpose of the assignment is to give you the chance to reflect on your own media consumption, in light of the theoretical concepts we will learn about in class. Please turn in your paper by Friday 10/23 at 5 pm. Please see Sakai for a more detailed assignment sheet.

**Team research project:** The primary purpose of the team research project is to provide teams the opportunity to fully develop a research design, collect data, and report their results. In this project, students are expected to apply their knowledge of theory and research methods for the process and effects of mass communication to arrive at a well-structured, sound media effects research project that addresses an approved objective. Student teams will complete mini-assignments throughout the semester that build up to the final project Teams will submit a project proposal and a final report, as well as present the proposals and final reports to the class. Please see Sakai for more detailed assignment sheets.

**Attendance & Participation:** You are a vital part of the success of this course, so your engagement is desired, welcomed, and expected. Half of your “attendance” grade will be counted through the completion of the guided survey accompanying each lecture. Right or wrong answers don’t matter here; surveys will only be graded for completion and genuine effort (no skipping write-in questions, or answering with “idk,” etc). You will receive three points toward your participation grade for each completed survey. You will also receive three points for each Wednesday (live, synchronous) sessions you attend. *\*If attending synchronous sessions presents a significant challenge for you, let me know and we will try to find an alternative solution.*

During a normal semester, you’d have 3 unexcused absences to use at your discretion. To try to emulate this policy, I’ll give you 3 “passes” when it comes to participation. It is up to you when to use them, and whether you use them on the guided lecture surveys or the live sessions on Wednesdays. When you use a “pass,” I’ll still award the three points for that day. I will calculate these automatically if you do not attend a session or fail to complete a survey—no need to let me know when you are using a pass.

Of course, if the pandemic creates difficult circumstances for you (i.e. death of family member, you become sick, etc.) and you think you’ll need to use more than 3 passes, let me know. I will address these circumstances individually—but know that I understand that it is a difficult time, and I will do my best to be flexible. Also note that these points only count for 10 percent of your final grade.

There will be 16 lectures and 12 synchronous class meetings. This adds up to 84 points. The remaining 16 points will come from peer evaluations for the final project.

**Handing in assignments:** Submit assignments on Sakai. If it’s a group project, only one person needs to hand it in, but make sure everyone’s name is on it. Please hand it in as a Word document so I can easily make comments. Papers should be Times New Roman, 12-point font, double spaced, with 1-inch margins. There is no need to add a title page. Late papers (5:01 p.m. and later) will have 10 points deducted, plus an additional 10 points deducted per day late.

**Research participation requirement:** Students in MEJO 445 are required to complete two hours of research participation over the course of the semester. There are two ways you can fulfill this requirement. First, you can participate in two hours of academic research studies in the School of Media and Journalism. Participating in studies is a valuable way for you to receive firsthand experience with research. If you are enrolled in another MEJO class that has a research participation requirement, it may also satisfy the research requirement for this course. Second, you can write 2 one-page summaries and critiques of academic research articles. Each review counts for one hour of research participation, so you can combine participation in the studies with article reviews to fulfill the research requirement. You may summarize any research article published in the past two years in the following journals: Media Psychology, Journal of Advertising, Journal of Public Relations Research, Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly, Public Relations Review, or Mass Communication and Society. You must identify the author, date, article title, and journal title on each of your summaries.

**Honor Code:** I expect that each student will conduct himself or herself within the guidelines of the University honor system (http://honor.unc.edu). All academic work should be done with the high levels of honesty and integrity that this University demands. You are expected to produce your own work in this class. If you have any questions about your responsibility or your instructor’s responsibility as a faculty member under the Honor Code, please see the course instructor or Senior Associate Dean Charlie Tuggle, or you may speak with a representative of the Student Attorney Office or the Office of the Dean of Students.

**Seeking Help:** If you need individual assistance, it’s your responsibility to meet with the instructor. If you are serious about wanting to improve your performance in the course, the time to seek help is as soon as you are aware of the problem – whether the problem is difficulty with course material, a disability, or an illness.

**Diversity:** The School of Media and Journalism adopted Diversity and Inclusion Mission and Vision statements in spring 2016 with accompanying goals - http://www.mj.unc.edu/diversity-and-inclusion. UNC is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community and does not discriminate in offering access to its educational programs and activities based on age, gender, race, color, national origin, religion, creed, disability, veteran’s status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

**Special Accommodations:** If you require special accommodations to attend or participate in this course, please let the instructor know as soon as possible. If you need information about disabilities visit the Accessibility Services website at https://accessibility.unc.edu/

**Title IX/SAFE at UNC**

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender is a Civil Rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, etc. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find the appropriate resources here <http://campusconversation.web.unc.edu/resources/>

**Accreditation:** The School of Journalism and Mass Communication’s accrediting body outlines a number of values you should be aware of and competencies you should be able to demonstrate by the time you graduate from our program. Learn more about them here: http://www2.ku.edu/~acejmc/PROGRAM/PRINCIPLES.SHTML#vals&comps

No single course could possibly give you all of these values and competencies; but collectively, our classes are designed to build your abilities in each of these areas. In this class, we will address a number of the values and competencies, with special emphasis on these six bullet dots under "Professional values and competencies" in the link above:

* demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;
* understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;
* think critically, creatively and independently;
* conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;
* write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
* apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.