

Seminar in Media Effects

MEJO 890.003



Spring 2021 Semester Information

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Class Hours: MW 9:30am-10:45am Online

Site URL: <https://sakai.unc.edu/portal/site/mfx.s21>

Course Summary

A number of research traditions exist within the interdisciplinary field of communication. This course introduces the media effects tradition, which has a strong foundation in psychology (birthing the area of media psychology) and has also drawn from education, sociology, musicology, political science, and public health. At the core of the media effects tradition is the attempt to understand how the media vehicles and content surrounding us, from entertainment to news to wearable technologies, impacts who we are and how we view our world and each other. This course takes you through a journey of how media effects/media psychology researchers think and develop the theoretical frameworks used to explain how television, online media, video games, music, etc. affect our thoughts and feelings in predictable ways.

Course Goals

The Hussman School of Journalism and Media follows the student learning outcomes derived by the professional values and competencies listed by the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications. [Click here to learn more.](#)

This course addresses the following values and competencies:

- Think critically, creatively, and independently.
- Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work.
- Contribute to knowledge appropriate to the communications professions in which they work.

These above values and competencies are addressed through the specific student learning objectives of this course as follows:

Students will demonstrate an understanding of concepts and operationalization of concepts by:

- (1) Identifying concepts with their intended roles, for example variables and constants, causes and effects, and mechanisms;
- (2) Mapping concepts from literature to operationalized variables (constructs) in study methods;
- (3) Critically evaluating the congruence, adequacy, and precision of an operationalized variable (construct) with respect to the concept that variable is intended to represent.

Students will demonstrate an understanding of how common theoretical frameworks in the field connect by:

- (1) Identifying underlying assumptions about human thought or responses;
- (2) Identifying commonalities in variables and relationships across frameworks.

Students will demonstrate the ability to model cause-and-effect relationships by:

- (1) Interpreting existing theories and models in the field's literature in terms of box-and-arrow models;
- (2) Developing models to represent one's own research area;
- (3) Identifying alternate explanations and causal orders for a given phenomenon.

Approaching the Course

This course is designed to be completed synchronously with a high degree of interaction and discussion. However, given the online medium of delivery, there may be technological challenges that cause unforeseen issues with connecting, hearing, sharing, and otherwise participating fully during scheduled course times.

To succeed in this course, it is important to keep up, as much as possible, with viewing course material, including readings, assignments, and slides as provided for each lesson module scheduled (see course schedule at the end of this syllabus).

In anticipation of technological issues, all course sessions will be recorded and provided to you for later viewing. Online discussion areas will also be provided, where you will be able to participate in the event that you are unable to fully participate in the day's course session.

As instructor, I also make a commitment to create an engaging, safe, and inclusive space to teach this course and provide ample feedback throughout the semester. To this end, I am available for one-on-one assistance, tutoring, or review and pledge to work with you to find the best ways of explaining each lesson in a way that resonates with you.

Attendance

Because this course is designed as an online course, attendance at particular sessions will be not be recorded, nor is attendance specifically factored into the final grade. Rather, attendance is inferred through participation in live and online discussions, activities, and assignments.

Viewing of course lesson modules and/or review of the slides and/or transcripts are on your honor.

Evaluating Course Performance

Final course grades in graduate-level courses are intended to offer feedback on your performance. Final grades in this course are informed by points (see below) earned on assignments, including a final paper, and points accumulated through participation activities.

The following description is intended to provide a general guide for what final grades represent:

F (fail) = Fail, similar to a 59% or below (an "F")

L (low pass) = Inadequate graduate work, similar to a 60-69% (a "D" grade)

P (pass) = Entirely satisfactory graduate work, similar to a 70-95% (an "A," "B" or "C")

H (high pass) = Inspiring as well as clear excellence, similar to a 96-100% (an "A+" grade)

Assignments and Activities

In all cases, assignments and activities are expected to be completed by 8:00am on the date it is due. Due dates are listed in the first column of the course schedule below.

Unless otherwise specified, all assignments and activities listed in the course schedule that follows are expected to be turned in by 8:00am on the due date.

Assignments and activities will only be able to receive half of the possible points if turned in within 24 hours after the due date/time. Items turned in more than 24 hours after the original due date/time may still receive feedback but will receive 0 points.

Graded Assignments (30%)

Graded assignments are shown under the "Readings and Assignments" column in the course schedule (below) and under "To Turn In" in Lesson Modules in the Sakai course site as "graded assignment."

There are 3 graded assignments. These graded assignments are graded based on thoroughness and quality.

Each graded assignment is worth 10% of the total grade.

To receive full points, assignments must be turned in by 8:00am on the date it is due.

Completion-Only Assignments (20%)

There are 4 assignments based solely on completion. These assignments are shown under the “Readings and Assignments” column in the course schedule (below) and under “To Turn In” in Lesson Modules in the Sakai course site as “Completion Only.” Assignments based on completion only are given a score of “1” for complete and turned in by 8:00am on the date it is due and a score of “0” for incomplete or not turned in by 8:00am on the date it is due.

Each completion-only assignment is worth 5% of the total grade.

Participation Activities (20%)

There are 20 participation activities designed to encourage interactions with fellow students and additional practice with the concepts taught in the course. These activities are listed under the “Participation Activities” column of the course schedule and under “Participation Activity” in Lesson Modules in the Sakai course site.

Evidence of interaction or participation in each of the activities as described in lesson modules will earn 1 participation point for a total of 20 possible participation points (or 20%) of the final course grade.

Final Paper (30%)

There is one final paper worth a total possible 30 points (30%) of the final course grade.

This final paper is a 15-to-20 page double-spaced theory paper arguing for a causal model explaining a particular phenomenon in which media play a role. More information about this final paper is provided in the relevant Lesson Module in the Sakai course site.

Honor Code

It is expected that each student in this class will conduct him/herself within the guidelines of the Honor System (<http://honor.unc.edu>). All academic work should be done with the high level of honesty and integrity that this University demands. If you have any questions about your responsibility or your instructor's responsibility as a faculty member under the Honor Code, please feel able to see the course instructor, speak with the senior associate dean of undergraduate studies in this school, and/or speak with a representative of the Student Attorney Office or the Office of the Dean of Students.

Course Support

Seeking Help

If you need individual assistance, it is 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. Please feel able to contact the course instructor as soon as you perceive any warning signs of things that might adversely affect your class performance or final grade.

Special Needs

The University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill facilitates the implementation of reasonable accommodations, including resources and services, for students with disabilities, chronic medical conditions, a temporary disability or pregnancy complications resulting in difficulties with accessing learning opportunities.

All accommodations are coordinated through the Accessibility Resources and Service (ARS) Office. In the first instance please visit their website at <http://accessibility.unc.edu>, call the office at 919-962-8300, or email accessibility@unc.edu. A student is welcome to initiate the registration process at any time. However, the process can take time. ARS is particularly busy in the run-up to Finals and during Finals. Students submitting Self-ID forms at that time are unlikely to have accommodations set until the following semester.

Please contact ARS as early in the semester as possible.

Course Etiquette and Expectations

Diversity

The University's policy on Prohibiting Harassment and Discrimination is outlined in the 2011-2012 Undergraduate Bulletin at <http://www.unc.edu/ugradbulletin/>. 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 on the basis of age, gender, race, color, national origin, religion, creed, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

In this course, you are encouraged to represent diverse populations, diverse viewpoints, and diversity of perspective in your own work. You are also asked to be sensitive to the various backgrounds, perspectives, origins, and situations represented by the students in the course, the students, faculty, and staff at this university, and the residents of this state.

Online Conduct

In efforts to encourage an engaging, safe, and inclusive online environment for this course, please observe the following guidelines for participating in our discussion spaces and other online areas:

1. Using ALL CAPS suggests yelling and possibly anger. Please use *asterisks* around words that you wish to emphasize. This convention suggests the word is in *bold* and tells others that you are emphasizing this word.
2. Sarcasm is difficult to detect with the written word and might not be appropriate for class discussion, especially because sarcastic comments might be misinterpreted by other readers. Please avoid using sarcasm in your online course participation.
3. Please also be mindful of politeness and strive to deliver feedback in a polite and professional manner. To this end, please remember that when providing critiques, criticisms and praises should be directed toward the work and not the person.
4. Discussion spaces in this class are intended for enhancing learning of the course material. Please use these spaces for relevant comments and contributions and avoid using these spaces for personal communications.

5. Please also be aware that, as with most online environments, messages and materials sent through our online channels are capable of being shared publicly. However, it is not appropriate to do so. Please be respectful of our privacy and intellectual property and refrain from posting or sharing course materials and communications publicly.
6. Finally, because online communications can exist forever, please be mindful of what you intend to communicate before you post any messages and review what you have typed for grammar and professionalism before you send the message. For anything you type and send, you should feel comfortable saying the same message aloud publicly in a classroom.

Together, we can create an effective learning environment that shows **respect** for each other, shows that we **value** each other's experiences, contributions, and strengths, and shows that we each conduct ourselves with **integrity** and expect the same conduct from one another.

Weekly Schedule

Lesson modules and activities corresponding with the respective lesson module are shown with the same background color to help identify which participation and assignment activities go with each lesson module.

Dates provided in the leftmost column are dates by which all activities in that row (e.g., completing the readings or participation activities, turning in assignments) should be completed.

For any assignments written on paper, you may take photos of the pages, save the photos as a .pdf files, and turn in the .pdf files. Or you may embed photos of the pages into a Word document and turn in the Word document.

DATE	LESSON MODULE	TOPICS COVERED	READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS	PARTICIPATION ACTIVITIES
20 Jan	Introduction (For all lesson modules, view by the date on the left)	Introducing the media effects paradigm	(these activities are expected to be completed by 8:00am on the date listed in that row)	
25 Jan	Concepts and Variables I	Identifying and explicating concepts	Read: <i>The Evolution of Media Effects Theory</i> by Neuman and Guggenheim (2011)	“Where Am I” research interest discussion forum (based on stages identified in reading)
27 Jan	Concepts and Variables II	Epistemic relationships between concept and operational definitions	Read: <i>Theoretical Concepts: The Building Blocks of Theory</i> (Ch. 2 from <i>How to Build Social Science Theories</i>) by Shoemaker et al. (2004)	“The Struggle” discussion forum sharing own epistemic relationship challenge
1 Feb	Theory and Causal Process I	Types of theory using causal process modeling	Read: <i>Explication</i> (from <i>Communication Concepts 1</i>) by Chaffee (1991)	(none)

			Graded assignment: 2-to-4 page brief concept explication	
3 Feb	Theory and Causal Process II	Hypothesis construction and prediction	Read: <i>Scientific Inquiry-Theory Construction: A Primer</i> by McDonald and Schneberger (2006)	(none)
8 Feb	Modeling Mediation and Moderation I	Constructing causal process models – introducing the box-and-arrow model	Read: <i>Theory Construction Methodology: A Practical Framework</i> by Borsboom et al. (2020) Completion Only: Your phenomenon and key principles	(none)
10 Feb	Modeling Mediation and Moderation II	Mediation and moderation in box-and-arrow models	Review Box-and-Arrow PowerPoint slides	(none)
15 Feb	Modeling Mediation and Moderation II	Confounding explanations and alternate causal orders	Review Mediation and Moderation PowerPoint slides	“Roll Call” discussion forum sharing key variables and their roles in your developing causal model
17 Feb	Wellness Day	No Class		
22 Feb	Modeling (and Messing with) Memory I	Modeling how internal biases and external frames influence media perception	Read: <i>Framing, Agenda Setting, and Priming</i> by Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007) Completion Only: Sketch of your box-and-arrow model	“Roll Call” discussion forum responding to others’ posts with possible alternate explanations or causal orders

24 Feb	Modeling (and Messing with) Memory II	Addressing concepts in modeling perceptions	Read: <i>Agenda Setting and Priming Effects: Revisiting Accessibility</i> by Dillman Carpentier (2014)	“Compare-Contrast: Modeling Perception” discussion forum reflecting on differences in defining concepts
1 Mar	Learning about Learning I	Models of learning from media	Read: <i>Transmission of Aggression Through Imitation</i> by Bandura et al. (1961)	“At the Core: Social Learning” discussion forum reflecting on core phenomena (and what they leave out)
3 Mar	Learning about Learning II	Social Cognitive Theory	Read: <i>Social Cognitive Theory of Mass Communication</i> by Bandura (2001)	“Compare-Contrast: Learning and Perception” discussion forum reflecting on differences in defining concepts
8 Mar	Cultivating Effects I	Cultivation theory	Read: <i>Toward Cultural Indicators</i> by Gerbner (1969)	“What Else: Cultivation” discussion forum reflecting on alternate explanations and confounds
10 Mar	Cultivating Effects II	Cognitive process model of cultivation	Read: <i>Psychological Processes Underlying Cultivation Effects</i> by Shrum (1996)	“The Limits: Cognitive Process Model” discussion forum reflecting on epistemic relations between concepts and operational variables
15 Mar	Considering the Self I	Self-representation	Read: <i>Mirror Mirror on My Facebook Wall</i> by Gonzales and Hancock (2010) Completion Only: Your refined process model and	“Reflecting on Selfies” discussion forum reflecting on self-representation thoughts when taking selfies

			outline of steps in the process	
17 Mar	Considering the Self II	Social Identity	Read: <i>A Social Identity Approach to Understanding Impact of Television</i> by Mastro (2003)	“At the Core: Social Identity” discussion forum reflecting on core phenomena (and what they leave out)
22 Mar	Considering the Self III	In the face of negative depictions of identity	Read: <i>What are You Laughing at?</i> by Banjo (2011)	“Compare-Contrast: Self” discussion forum reflecting on differences in defining concepts
24 Mar	Toward Your Own Model	Review of final paper and presentation expectations	Be prepared to share your progress (and/or challenges) with your model	(none)
29 Mar	Telling Stories I	Narrative persuasion	Read: <i>Role of Transportation in the Persuasiveness of Public Narratives</i> by Green and Brock (2000)	“The Limits: Narrative Persuasion” discussion forum reflecting on epistemic relations between concepts and operational variables
31 Mar	Telling Stories II	Narratives as construction	Read: <i>The Narrative Construction of Reality</i> by Bruner (1991) Graded assignment: 2-to-4 page in-depth critique of how ‘media’ have been conceptualized and operationalized in any of the reviewed literature	“Compare-Contrast: Narratives” discussion forum reflecting on differences in type of theory
5 Apr	Telling Stories II	Connecting with characters	Read: <i>Identification Matters...Video</i>	“What Else: Characters”

			<i>Game Violence on Aggression</i> by Lin (2013)	discussion forum reflecting on alternate explanations and confounds
7 Apr	Wellness Day	No Class		
12 Apr	Feelings I	Media and emotion	Read: <i>Media and Emotion</i> by Wirth and Schramm (2005)	“Compare-Contrast: Emotion and Narratives” discussion forum reflecting on differences in concept focus
14 Apr	Feelings II	Positive psychology	Read: <i>The Role of Positive Emotions in Positive Psychology</i> by Fredrickson (2001)	“Feeling the Flow” discussion forum reflecting on own emotional flow when viewing a YouTube video
19 Apr	New Technology I	Potential impact of new technology on perceptions of self, others	Read: <i>Mobile, Social, and Wearable Computing for Psychological Practice</i> by Morris and Aguilera (2012) Graded assignment: 2-to-4 page explanation of how three different frameworks reviewed thus far reflect the same underlying assumption(s) about human thought or response	“Harnessing Tech” discussion forum proposing a process for predicting user experience or learning from new technology
21 Apr	New Technology II	Technological affordance model	Read: <i>A Theoretical Extension of the Technology Acceptance Model</i> by Venkatesh and Davis (2000)	“The Limits: Technological Affordance” discussion forum reflecting on epistemic relations between concepts

				and operational variables
26 Apr	Different Perspectives I	Global and cultural cultural considerations	Read: <i>The Message of Transnational Media</i> by Karanfil (2008)	(none, but be prepared for discussion tying the reading to ideas proposed in Cultivation and other reviewed theories)
28 Apr	Different Perspectives II	Individual differences	Read: <i>Psychological Science in Cultural Context</i> by Gergen et al (1996)	(none, but be prepared to discuss own working model in light of reading)
3 May	(none)	Presentations of working models	Completion Only: Your presentation of your model (for in-class presentation)	(none)
5 May	(continued from previous day)	Presentations of working models	Completion Only: Your presentation of your model (for in-class presentation)	Complete presentation evaluations
By 6 May				Complete remaining presentation evaluations
By 12 May	Turn in final paper			