

MASS COMMUNICATION AND THE INDIVIDUAL

Journalism and Mass Communication 849 – Spring 2007

5013 Vilas Communication Hall

Tuesday 3:30 – 5:25 P.M. – Vilas 5013

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Office Hours: Tuesday 8:30 – 10:30 A.M.

Course Description:

This course examines theory and research on the psychological foundations of individuals' relationship with mass media. The course will cover the cognitive, attitudinal, affective, motivational, and behavioral processes that underlie individuals' uses of mass media and their reactions to media content. Topics include attention and encoding, schema use, attitudinal structure, heuristic processing, persuasion and attitude persistence, emotional and functional approaches, and the connection between attitudes and behaviors, including attribution and cultivation processes. For each of these topic areas, we will consider media research that embrace and often expands upon the psychological theory. Adopting this approach, we will consider media psychology research on race, news, politics, entertainment, information and health campaigns, media violence and pornography. In addition, we will often cover broader methodological issues involved in the construction and evaluation of communication theory. Students will gain an idea of the issues and sources in each area, along with tools for their own further research. Our emphasis will always be on the search for explanation, rather than just description. This course aims to convey a basic theory in social psychology on which students can build and test theoretical propositions growing out of the ideas we encounter. Hopefully, you will gain new insights about the relationship between individuals and the mass media.

Required Texts:

- Bryant, J & Zillmann, D. (2002) *Media Effects: Advances in Theory and Research*, 2nd Edition, Mahwah, NJ: LEA.
- Eagly, A. & Chaiken, S. (1993) *Psychology of Attitudes*. New York, HBJ
- Fiske, S. & Taylor, S. (1991) *Social Cognition*, 2nd Ed. New York: McGraw Hill

Course Requirements:

Grades in the class will be based on your performance on the following requirements: (a) final research paper — 50%, (b) two review reports as class discussant — 20%, (c) three comment papers — 15%, and (d) participation in seminar discussion — 15%.

Final Research Paper: The major requirement for this course is an original research paper written individually by each student and presented to other seminar participants. The paper should grow out of one of the topical areas covered in the course. The goal of the paper is to contribute, however modestly, to research in the area of media psychology. The paper should not simply be a literature review. It must propose and begin the process of testing theory. Doctoral students are expected to present actual research findings, or a coherent proposal for dissertation research. Masters' students may develop thesis proposals or opt to write a *New Yorker* or *Atlantic Monthly*-style argumentative research review and policy synthesis. For most of you, the goal for the final paper should be submission and acceptance to an academic conference. If you wish to extend work developed elsewhere, consult with me first.

The originality of your paper and its implications for theory in media psychology will be the key criteria for evaluation. As long as your research reflects some original departure from ideas we have encountered in class, and is not a simple recapitulation of past work, you can build directly on existing theory. A two-page prospectus for your seminar paper is due on **March 27th**. You will make a presentation of your paper on **April 24th**, **May 1st**, or **May 8th**. Based on comments you receive from other seminar participants you may revise your paper and submit a final draft for grading on **May 15th** by 4:00. This paper will be worth 50 percent of your final grade.

If you opt for an academic paper, it should contain the following sections: (1) brief introduction, (2) literature review, (3) statement of hypotheses, propositions, or research model, (4) actual or proposed methodology, (5) results of analysis or proposed analytic approach, (6) concluding discussion about what was or will be learned. Students may present findings based on existing data sets (e.g., National Election Study, General Social Survey, DDB Life Style Archive, The Pew Internet and American Life Project, MCRC Archive, etc.) or collect original data. Although all papers need to explicitly discuss methods, the orientation need not be quantitative.

Seminar Discussants: Each student will be required to serve as a discussant for two class sessions. In class, discussants will work with the professor to keep conversation moving forward, providing examples from the reading when appropriate and posing questions for all seminar participants to answer. Discussants will also be required to write an 8 to 10 page summary and

critique of the week's readings and provide a brief list of questions to facilitate discussion. This report should be posted to the class e-mail list by **midnight on the night before class** so that other seminar participants have a chance to review your comments and questions for the class session. Ideally, you will choose a week that coincides with your broader interests so that your review of the readings will serve as a foundation for your research paper. This work will be worth 20 percent of your final grade.

Comment Papers: The next 15 percent of your class grade will be based on the production of six brief comment papers on readings for weeks that you are not the discussant. These comment papers should be 1-2 pages. Papers should reflect your reactions to one or more of the readings from that week. Some of you may use these comment papers to summarize the key points of each of the readings into notes for future use. Others may organize their comments into critical essays or critiques on the general themes of the week. Yet others may focus on detailed reviews of a single reading, digging deeply into a topic of particular interest. You will bring these comment papers to class and submit them at the end of each session.

Seminar Participation: The final 15 percent of your class grade will be based on participation in seminar discussion. It is not enough that you just come to class. You must actively discuss the readings and engage in exchanges with other seminar participants. I will not formally lecture, because the function of a seminar is to encourage interaction among participants. Therefore, each student must contribute to the development of a classroom environment where ideas are debated.

Course Policies:

If a student cannot complete an assignment at the scheduled time, arrangements must be made in advance with the instructor. Failure to do so will result in the reduction of one grade level (at a minimum) from the earned score. Exemptions may be made for unusual circumstances.

Permission for a student to receive an incomplete grade (I) is at the discretion of the instructor and must be accompanied by a written contract for completion of course requirements. Failure to take exams, complete assignments, or attend class is not acceptable reasons for an incomplete.

This class will follow University and L&S guidelines concerning scholastic misconduct and grievance procedures. Be particularly clear on the rules concerning plagiarism.

Weekly Readings

(++ Required Reserve Reading ; ** Recommended Reserve Reading)

Week 1 (1/23): Introduction to the Course

Overview of the course and discussion leader assignments

Week 2 (1/30): Studying Mass Media from a Psychological Perspective:

Eagly & Chaiken, The nature of attitudes, Chap. 1; The measurement of attitudes, Chap 2

Fiske & Taylor, Introduction to social cognition, Chap. 1

++ McLeod, J., Kosicki, G., and Pan, Z. (1991) On understanding and misunderstanding media effects. In Curran and Gurevitch (eds.), *Mass media and society*. 235-266. London, Edward Arnold.

** Chaffee, S.H. and Berger, C.R. (1987) What communication scientists do. In Berger, C. & Chaffee, S, *Handbook of Communication Science*, 99-122, Thousand Oaks, Sage.

Week 3 (2/6): Schema Theory and Media Constructions of Race:

In **Bryant & Zillmann**, Greenberg, Mastro, and Brand, Minorities and the mass media: Television into the 21st century, Chap 13

Fiske & Taylor, Social categories and schema, Chap. 4; Conditions of schema use, Chap. 5

++ Valentino, N. A. (1999) Crime news and the priming of racial attitudes during evaluations of the president. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 63: 293-320.

** Gorham B. W. (2006) News media's relationship with stereotyping: The linguistic intergroup bias in response to crime news. *Journal Of Communications*, 56: 289–308

Week 4 (2/13): Mental Structure and News Influence on Political Cognitions:

In **Bryant & Zillmann**, McLeod, Kosicki, and McLeod, Resurveying the boundaries of political communication effects, Chap. 9

Eagly & Chaiken, The structure of attitudes and beliefs, Chap. 3.

Fiske & Taylor, Cognitive approaches to attitudes, Chap. 11

++ Shah, D. V., Kwak, N., Schmierbach, M. and Zubric, J. (2004), The interplay of news frames on cognitive complexity. *Human Communication Research*, 30: 102-120,

** Cho, J., Gil de Zuniga, H., Shah, D. V., and McLeod, D. M. (2006) Cue convergence: Associative effects on social intolerance. *Communication Research*, 33: 136-154.

Week 5 (2/20): Social Encoding, Heuristic Processing, and Impression Formation:

In **Bryant & Zillmann**, Roskos-Ewoldsen, Roskos-Ewoldsen, and Dillman Carpentier, Media priming: A synthesis, Chap. 5

Fiske & Taylor, Social encoding: Attention and consciousness, Chap. 7; Social Inference, Chap. 9

++ Lodge, M., Steenbergen, M. R., and Brau, S. (1995) The responsive voter: Campaign information and the dynamics of candidate evaluation. *The American Political Science Review*, 89: 309-326.

** Holbrook, T. M., (1999) Political learning from presidential debates. *Political Behavior*, 21: 67-89.

Week 6 (2/27): Media Effects on Attitude Formation and Change: The Case of Risk

In **Bryant & Zillmann**, Petty, Priester, and Briñol, Mass media attitude change: Implications of the elaboration likelihood model of persuasion, Chap. 6.

Eagly & Chaiken, Process theories of attitude formation and change: Reception and cognitive responding, Chap. 6, Process theories of attitude formation and change: The elaboration-likelihood and heuristic-systematic models, Chap. 7.

++ Fischhoff, B., Bostrom, A. and Quadrei, M. J. (1993). Risk perceptions and communication. *Annual Review of Public Health*. 14: 183-203.

** Kahlor L., Dunwoody S., Griffin R. J., Neuwirth K., and Giese J. (2003) Studying heuristic-systematic processing of risk communication, *Risk Analysis*, 23: 355-368.

Week 7 (3/6): Affective Processes and Emotional Reactions to Media

In **Bryant & Zillmann**, Cantor, Fright reactions to Mass Media Chap. 11

Fiske & Taylor, Affect and cognition Chap. 10

++ Dillard, J. P. and Peck, E. (2001). Persuasion and the structure of affect: Dual systems and discrete emotions as complementary systems. *Human Communication Research*. 14: 183-203.

** Nabi, R. L. (2003) "Feeling" Resistance: Exploring the Role of Emotionally Evocative Visuals in Inducing Inoculation. *Media Psychology*, 5: 199-224.

Week 8 (3/13): Motivational Approaches to Media Uses and Effects

In **Bryant & Zillmann**, Rubin, The uses-and-gratifications perspective of media effects, Chap. 20

Eagly & Chaiken, Motivational processes in attitude formation and change, Chap. 10

Fiske & Taylor, Social cognition and the self, Chap. 6

++ Smaglik P., Hawkins R. P., Pingree S., Gustafson D. H., Boberg E., and Bricker E. (1998) The quality of interactive computer use among HIV-infected individuals, *Journal of Health Communication*, 3: 53-68.

** LaRose, R., Mastro, D., and Eastin, M. S. (2001). Understanding Internet usage: A social-cognitive approach to uses and gratifications. *Social Science Computer Review*. 19: 395-413

Week 9 (3/20): Information Campaigns and the Attitude-Behavior Connection:

In **Bryant & Zillmann**, Rice and Atkin, Communication campaigns, Chap. 12.

Eagly & Chaiken, The impact of attitudes on behaviors, Chap. 4

Fiske & Taylor, Behavior and cognition, Chap. 12

++ Fishbein, M. and Cappella, J. N. (2006) The role of theory in developing effective health communications. *Journal of Communication*, 56: S1-S17.

** In **Bryant & Zillmann**, Brown and Walsh-Childers, The effects of media on personal and public health. Chap. 17.

Week 10 (3/27): Attributional Processes, Impersonal Impact, and Hostile Media

In **Bryant & Zillmann**, Perloff, The Third-Person Effect, Chap 18.

Eagly & Chaiken, Process theories of attitude formation and change: Attribution approaches and social judgment theory, Chap. 8

Fiske & Taylor, Attribution theory, Chap. 2; Attribution Theory: Theoretical refinements and empirical observations, Chap. 3.

++ Gunther, A. C., Christen, C. T., Liebhart, J. and Chia, S. (2001) Congenial public, contrary press and biased estimates of the climate of opinion, *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 65:295-320.

** McLeod, D. M., Eveland, W. P., Jr., and Nathanson, A. I (1997). Support for censorship of violent and misogynic rap lyrics: An analysis of the third-person effect. *Communication Research*, 24, 153-174.

Week 11 (4/3): Spring Break – No Class!

Week 12 (4/10): Media Cultivation: Portrayals of Sex and Violence and Their Effects

In **Bryant & Zillmann**, Gerbner et al., Growing up with television: Cultivation processes, Chap. 3.

In **Bryant & Zillmann**, Shrum, Media consumption and perceptions of social reality: Effects and underlying processes, Chap. 4.

++ Peter, J. and Valkenburg, P. M. (2006). Adolescents' Exposure to Sexually Explicit Online Material and Recreational Attitudes Toward Sex. *Journal of Communication*, 56: 639–660.

++ Riddle, K., Eyal, K., Mahood, C. and Potter, W. J. (2006). Judging the Degree of Violence in Media Portrayals: A Cross-Genre Comparison. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 50: 270–286.

** In **Bryant & Zillmann**, Sparks and Sparks, The effects of media violence, Chap. 10,

** In **Bryant & Zillmann**, Harris and Scott, The effects of sex in the media, Chap. 12.

Week 13 (4/17): Media Entertainment: Untangling Its Effects

In **Bryant & Zillmann**, Zillmann and Bryant, Entertainment as media effect, Chap. 15.

++ Putnam, R. D. (1995). Tuning in, tuning out: The strange disappearance of social capital in America. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 664-683.

++ Hooghe, M. (2002). Watching television and civic engagement: Disentangling the effects of time, programs, and stations. *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics* 2002; 7; 84-104.

++ Keum, H., Devanathan, N., Deshpande, S., Nelson, M. R. and Shah, D. V. (2004) The

citizen-consumer: Media effects at the intersection of consumer and civic culture, *Political Communication*, 21: 369-391.

** Holbert, R. L., Shah, D. V., and Kwak, N. (2003). Political implications of prime-time drama and sitcom use: genres of representation and opinions concerning women's rights. *Journal of Communication*, 53: 45-60.

Week 14 (4/24): Class Papers presentations

Four to five papers per day - 12 minute presentation (strict) and 12 minute Q&A

Week 15 (5/1): Class Paper presentations

Four to five papers per day - 12 minute presentation (strict) and 12 minute Q&A

Week 16 (5/8): Class Paper presentations

Four to five papers per day - 12 minute presentation (strict) and 12 minute Q&A