

University of Maryland, College Park  
Department of Communication

# COMM 370 - Mediated Communication

Fall 2001

Section: 0101

Time: Monday 6:00-9:00

Place: PLS 1140

Instructor: Dr. Michael F. Meffert

Office: Skinner 2118

Office Hours: Monday 10:30-11:30, Wednesday 1:30-3:00, and by appointment

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## Course Description

The course offers an introduction to and overview of theories and research on mediated communication. The focus of the course will be both on the current structure and performance of the media system as well as the content and effects of mass communication. In other words, the course emphasizes both the sociological “big picture” – the media and their social context – and the psychological micro-level – how audience members process and are affected by mediated information. With this course, students will develop an understanding of the role and effects of mediated communication in society, both from a theoretical and scientific perspective and as critical consumers of media in their private lives.

## Required Readings

- Croteau, D., & Hoynes, W. (2000). Media/Society: Industries, Images, and Audiences. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge. [MS]
- Harris, R. J. (1999). A Cognitive Psychology of Mass Communication. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum. [CP]
- Gorham, J. (2001). Annual Editions: Mass Media 01/02. Guilford, CT: McGraw-Hill/Dushkin. [AE]

## Requirements

The final grade in the course will be based on the following (weighted) components:

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|-----------------|-----|
| • Midterm exam  | 25% |
| • Final exam    | 25% |
| • Short paper   | 10% |
| • Group project | 25% |
| • Assignments   | 15% |

**Exams:** The midterm and final exam use a multiple-choice and true/false question format. The exams cover material from readings, lecture, and presentations.

**Short Paper:** The short paper (approx. 3 pages) will examine media content in a comparative perspective. You select a current event or issue as well as **two** different, major, well-established print or (major and reputable) web-based media sources that cover it. You will critically analyze and contrast how the two media sources portray or represent the event or issue (What is similar? What is

different? What aspects are covered? What sources are mentioned? etc.). It is generally more useful to compare two sources from the same type of medium, e.g. two newspapers. If you choose web-based sources or are unsure about your print sources, consult with the instructor before the deadline. Please attach copies of the stories to the paper. The paper is due **October 22** (in class).

**Group Project:** Groups of about 4 students will choose/or be assigned a topic related to current developments affecting mediated communication. The groups will do research about their topic, write a paper, and give a class presentation. The details of the group project will be announced during the semester.

**Assignments:** Assignments (and possibly pop quizzes) will be given throughout the semester. These assignments will be completed most of the time in class.

### **Attendance/Late Policy**

Except for university excused absences (e.g. illness, religious observance, participation in university activities at the request of university authorities, and/or circumstances beyond the student's control; see *Schedule of Classes* for further details), any student expecting to miss a quiz, an exam, or any other course deadline must have **advance** approval by the instructor. Students missing a quiz or exam due to illness or other emergencies should notify the instructor as soon as possible but not later than five days after the due date/exam date.

- Failure to take an exam without the explicit exemption by the instructor will result in a grade of 0 ("F") for the exam.
- Failure to submit assignments or papers on the specified due date without the explicit exemption by the instructor will result in a grade of 0 ("F") for individual assignments or, if they are part of the group project, a deduction of 10% of the total points possible for the group project for **each day late**.

You can notify the instructor by phone, leave a message at the office, or by e-mail. Note that a voice mail or e-mail message does **NOT** guarantee approval by the instructor. You must receive **verbal or written permission** from the instructor to reschedule a paper due date or exam. In all cases, students have to document their excuse in appropriate written form (e.g. doctor's note) within one week of the absence.

### **Policy on Incompletes**

The grade of incomplete ("I") is given only to a student whose work in a course has been qualitatively satisfactory, when, because of illness or other circumstances beyond his/her control, he/she has been unable to complete some small portion of the course work. In no case will "I" be given to a student who has not completed major course assignments. If you miss the final exam and have a valid reason (see above), you must contact the instructor within 24 hours and sign an **incomplete contract**. Without it, your course grade will be calculated based on 0 credit ("F") for the missed assignment or exam. It is the student's responsibility to request arrangements for the completion of the course work.

### **Academic Integrity**

The University's approved *Code of Academic Integrity* is available on the web at: [http://www.inform.umd.edu/CampusInfo/Departments/JPO/code\\_acinteg.html](http://www.inform.umd.edu/CampusInfo/Departments/JPO/code_acinteg.html). Refer to the Code for a definition of academic dishonesty (including cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, and plagiarism). The *Code* prohibits students from cheating on exams, plagiarizing papers, submitting the same paper for credit in two courses without authorization, buying papers, submitting fraudulent documents, and forging signatures. **Academic dishonesty of any sort constitutes grounds for failure on the relevant assignment and potential failure of the entire course.** If you have any

questions about what practices are and are not acceptable, direct them to the instructor before the assignment is due. More specifically, use of scholarly material without proper acknowledgement in written work may be grounds for failure on the relevant assignment or in the course:

- Every direct quotation must be identified by quotation marks or by appropriate indentation and must be promptly cited as to author, source, and page.
- Prompt acknowledgement as to author and source is required when material from another source is paraphrased or summarized in whole or in part in your own words. Acknowledging only a directly quoted statement does not suffice to notify the reader of any preceding or succeeding paraphrased material.
- Information obtained in one's reading or research, which is not common knowledge among students in this course, must be acknowledged by citing author and source.

### **Tape Recording of Lectures**

Unauthorized reproduction of class lectures through tape recording or any other means is an infringement of common-law copyright. No person may reproduce the proceedings of this class without *prior written permission* from the instructor.

### **Format of Written Work**

Please adhere to the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (either 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Proofread your written work carefully. Errors in spelling, format, grammar, and clarity of thought will affect the grading of all written work. All written work has to be typed (double-spaced, 12pt font).

### **Extra Credit**

On occasion, faculty or graduate students may provide the opportunity for students to participate in research. ***In case*** such opportunities are offered this semester, students are encouraged to take advantage of any extra credit offered. Note, however, that students ***must be in class*** when these opportunities are provided. Extra credit cannot be made up.

### **Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

The University of Maryland is committed to making appropriate accommodations to individuals with disabilities that have been documented by the Disability Support Services (0126 Shoemaker Hall). If you wish to discuss academic accommodations for this class, please contact the instructor as soon as possible, and no later than the second week of the semester.

### **Learning Assistance Service**

If you are experiencing difficulties in keeping up with the academic demands of this course, contact the Learning Assistance Service, 2201 Shoemaker Building, 301-314-7693. Their educational counselors can help with time management, reading, note-taking, and exam preparation skills.

## Course Schedule

**Please note:** Minor adjustments might be made to dates, topics, and readings during the semester. Any change will be announced in class, and it is the students' responsibility to be aware of them.

Date	Topic	Readings
<b>MEDIA SYSTEM</b>		
9/10	Introduction; Media and Society	MS 1 CP 1
9/17	Economic, Political, and Legal Issues	MS 2,3 AE 6,9,10
9/24	Media as Organization & Research Methods	MS 4 CP 2 AE 11,13,17
<b>MEDIA CONTENT</b>		
10/1	Ideology, Values, and Representation	MS 5,6 CP 3,5
10/8	Journalism and News Values	AE 8,18,19,20,21,23,24,25,26,27
10/15	Advertising and Sports	CP 4,6 AE 22,28,29,30,31,33
10/22	Political News and Campaigns <b>Short Paper due</b>	CP 7,8 AE 7,12,14,15,16,32
10/29	<b>Midterm Exam</b>	
<b>MEDIA EFFECTS</b>		
11/5	Media Audiences	MS 7,8 CP 14 AE 1,4
11/12	Media Effects	AE 3
11/19	Fear, Sex, and Violence	CP 9,10,11 AE 2,5
<b>FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS</b>		
11/26	Future of the Media	MS 9,10 CP 12 AE 34,35,36,37,38,39
<b>PRESENTATIONS</b>		
12/3	<i>Group Presentations</i>	
12/10	<i>Group Presentations</i> Summary and Conclusion	
12/17	<b>Final Exam (6:00-8:00)</b>	