

University of Maryland, College Park  
Department of Communication

## COMM 468 – Seminar in Mediated Communication

Fall 2003

Section: 0101 - Place: PLS 1130 - Time: Mo/We 2:00-3:15

Instructor: Dr. Michael F. Meffert

Office: Skinner 2118

Office Hours: Monday 11:00-12:00, Wednesday 10:00-11:00, and by appointment

Phone: 301-405-6533

E-mail: mmeffert@umd.edu

### Course Description

The seminar provides an in-depth introduction to social scientific research on media effects. The course starts with a macro-level overview of the media system and its organization as well as a review of approaches to media content analysis. The second part of the course focuses on audiences, mostly at the micro-level. Students will become familiar with psychological theories of information processing, attitudes, and persuasion. The final section looks at some specific issues and topics in media effects research, including advertising, violence, and political media effects.

### Required Readings

- McQuail, D. (2000). *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. London: Sage. **[MCT]**
- Perloff, R. M. (2003). *The Dynamics of Persuasion: Communication and Attitudes in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum. **[DP]**

### 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% |
| • Presentation & Paper    | 25% |
| • Assignments & Exercises | 25% |

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

**Presentation and Paper:** Students will sign up for a topic **and date** within the first two weeks of the semester. Topics are provided on a list, and sign-up is first come, first served. This assignment has three major parts:

- 1) 5-minute presentation;
- 2) 5-page paper (with reference list);
- 3) Annotated bibliography of at least 5 recent social scientific studies on the topic.

Note that the topics and due dates are distributed over the whole semester.

**Assignments & Exercises:** Assignments and exercises will take place throughout the semester, either unannounced or on short notice. They will take place either during class sessions or as homework. They will either be graded or count as participation credit.

### 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 an assignment 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 0.0 ("F") for the exam.
- Failure to give a presentation or submit written assignments as well as papers on the specified due date without the explicit exemption by the instructor will result in a grade of 0.0 ("F").

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 0.0 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.

### Honor Pledge

The University has a nationally recognized Honor Code, administered by the Student Honor Council. The Student Honor Council proposed and the University Senate approved an Honor Pledge. The University of Maryland Honor Pledge reads:

*"I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this assignment/examination."*

Unless you are specifically advised to the contrary, the Pledge statement should be **handwritten and signed** on the front cover of all major papers, projects, or other academic assignments submitted for evaluation in this course. Students who fail to write and sign the Pledge will be asked to confer with the instructor.

### 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.

<b>Course Schedule</b>
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**Please note:** Every effort will be made to follow the schedule below. Minor adjustments might be made to dates, topics, and readings if such a need arises during the semester. Any change will be announced in class, and it is the students' responsibility to be aware of them.

Date	Topic	Chapters
9/3	Course Introduction	MCT 1
<b>Part I Macro-Level: Media</b>		
<i><b>The Basics</b></i>		
9/8	Media System	MCT 2
9/10	Concepts & Models	MCT 3
9/15	Media & Society & Culture	MCT 4, 5
9/17	New Media	MCT 6
9/22	Media Structure	MCT 7, 8
9/24	Media Ownership	MCT 9, 10
9/29	Media Organization	MCT 11
10/1	Media Production	MCT 12
<i><b>Media Content</b></i>		
10/6	Concepts	MCT 13, 14
10/8	Methods	
<b>Part II Micro-Level: Audience</b>		
<i><b>Media Audiences</b></i>		
10/13	Concepts	MCT 15, 16
10/15	History & Theories	MCT 17
<b>10/20</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Midterm Exam</b>	
<i><b>Attitudes &amp; Persuasion</b></i>		
10/22	Definitions	DP 1, 2
10/27	Functions	DP 3
10/29	Research Methods	DP 4
11/3	Cognitive Information Processing: ELM	DP 5
11/5	Source Factors	DP 6
11/10	Message Factors	DP 7
11/12	Personality/Individual Differences	DP 8
11/17	Cognitive Dissonance Theory	DP 9
11/19	Interpersonal Persuasion	DP 10
<b>Part III Applications</b>		
11/24	Advertising	DP 11
11/26	Communication Campaigns	DP 12
12/1	Violence	MCT 18
<i><b>Political Effects</b></i>		
12/3	Knowledge & Agenda-Setting	MCT 19
12/8	Priming & Framing	MCT 19
12/10	Socialization & Cultivation & Summary	MCT 19, 20
12/18	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Final Exam (1:30-3:30)</b>	