

Comm. 413W — Mass Media and the Public

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TTH 2:30-3:45

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Course overview: This class explores social-level and political theories of the relationships between media and public, media influences on public opinion, social pressure on the media and political communication.

Objectives: Students who successfully complete assigned coursework should develop the following skills:

- Familiarity with the basic theories linking media and public
- Ability to critique scholarly media research in this area
- Understanding of how media contribute to effective citizenship
- Increased skill with written argumentation

Policies: My guiding standard is that you are adults, with the rights and responsibilities that go along with that status. In particular, please note the following:

- All students should behave in a way that does not disrupt the ability of other students to learn. Activities such as talking, texting, reading or sleeping during class, arriving late or departing early are potentially disruptive. If you feel that another student is hindering your learning, please let me know.
- The use of electronic devices, including laptops, phones, and tablets, is not allowed during class time. Considerable research demonstrates that such devices, even when used for class-related purposes, pose too much of a distraction for both the user and those around the user. Students who persist in using such devices will be marked absent, and all aspects of the attendance policy will apply.
- Students are responsible for communicating any special circumstances or needs. This includes pre-arranged absences or potential absences.
- Note to students with disabilities: Penn State welcomes students with disabilities into the University's educational programs. If you have a disability-related need for reasonable academic adjustments in this course, contact the Office for Disability Services, ODS located in room 116 Boucke Building at 814-863-1807(V/TTY). For further information regarding ODS, please visit its website at www.equity.psu.edu/ods/. Instructors should be notified as early in the semester as possible regarding the need for reasonable academic adjustments.
- If you have any questions or concerns about grades or other course materials, please let me know. I'm happy to explain grades and consider rationales for grade changes provided the request is made in person or via University e-mail. *I will not discuss grades or any student-specific information with parents, due to federal privacy laws.*
- This syllabus and any other course materials, including grades, are subject to change if necessary. I will give you advance notice of any changes.

Academic integrity: Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly and creative activity in an open, honest and responsible manner, free from fraud and deception, and is an educational objective of the College of Communications and the university. Cheating, including plagiarism, falsification of research data, using the same assignment for more than one class, turning in someone else's work, or passively allowing others to copy your work, will result in academic penalties at the discretion of the instructor, and may result in the grade of "XF" (failed for academic dishonesty) being put on your permanent transcript. In serious cases it could also result in suspension or dismissal from the university. As students studying communication, you should understand and avoid plagiarism (presenting the work of others as your own). A discussion of plagiarism, with examples, can be found at: <http://tlt.its.psu.edu/plagiarism/tutorial/>. The rules and policies regarding academic integrity should be reviewed by every student, and can be found online at: www.psu.edu/ufs/policies/47-00.html#49-20, and in the College of Communications document, "Academic Integrity Policy and Procedures." Any student with a question about academic integrity or plagiarism is strongly encouraged to discuss it with his or her instructor.

Writing: This is a writing-intensive class. Most of your grade is based upon written work. You will have the chance to write both formal and informal materials, and you will be able to revise some writing based upon feedback. However, this is not a class on grammar and punctuation. Our emphasis will be on using writing to construct an effective, evidence-driven argument. That said, part of your writing grade will depend upon appropriate use of the English language. If you feel uncomfortable with grammar and style issues or want advice about effective wording, you should consider visiting the writing center: <http://www.ulc.psu.edu/uwc.php>.

Prerequisites: Students are required to have completed Comm. 304, 420 or an equivalent research methods class prior to starting Comm. 413W. If you have not met this requirement, you should expect to find the class significantly more challenging, and you should not expect special tutoring on basic principles of quantitative research. That said, even students with the prerequisite will find some of this material challenging, and we will work together to understand this material — please ask questions about anything you do not understand or want clarified. Ultimately, the responsibility is with individual students to determine if their background in methods and statistics is adequate to allow them to be successful in the course.

Grades: Course grades are based on a point system. All work, including quizzes, written assignments, and the final paper, are worth a set number of points. Your overall grade is based on the total number of points accrued out of 100. In most categories of assignments it is possible to earn more than the “required” number of points listed below, and those additional points can be applied to make up for “deficits” in other areas. However, aside from extra credit, your total points for all categories other than the final paper cannot total more than 80; any “bonus” points beyond that total will not affect your grade.

Quizzes.....	20
Assignments.....	60
Basic writing.....	20
Advanced topics.....	40
Final paper.....	20
Postings (extra credit).....	up to 5

Grading scale: Final grades are assigned based on point totals using this scale:

93-100+	A
90-92.9	A-
87-89.9	B+
83-86.9	B
80-82.9	B-
77-79.9	C+
70-76.9	C
60-69.9	D
0-59.9	F

Quizzes: We will have a quiz on the day's reading and previously covered course material nearly every day, for a total of 25 such quizzes. Each quiz is worth 1 point, meaning the maximum possible total quiz score is 25. (Typical quizzes will have 5 multiple choice questions worth one-fifth of a point each, but some quizzes may employ different scoring schemes.) "Extra" points from quizzes will be applied to the quiz/assignment total and can make up for lower scores in other areas, to a maximum of 80 points for the combined quiz and readings score.

You can replace low or missing quiz scores by summarizing the assigned article for the day of the quiz. More details about summary formatting and submission are posted in a separate document on ANGEL. Summaries will also receive up to 1 point and are graded, so simply submitting a summary is no guarantee of a high score. Summaries must be submitted within one week of the absence/quiz and no later than the start of class on that day.

Assignments: Throughout the semester you will have the opportunity to complete a number of written assignments. In general, these assignments will require 2-3 pages of thoughtful writing. Some assignments will be related to specific readings or in-class activities. Others will allow you to choose which reading or topic or focus on. Some will simply require responses to the reading itself, while others will challenge you to apply material from the reading to additional material you locate on your own.

Assignments are divided by topic area. In total, there are six topics we will address this semester. Each topic spans either four or five classes, with one reading assigned each day. For each topic, you will be able to choose from four possible assignments (a complete list of assignments, grading standards and other information for each topic is posted separately on ANGEL). Each assignment is graded on a five-point scale, and your *highest* 12 assignments will count (even if you submit more than 12), allowing you to earn 60 points in the assignments category. There is a way to earn extra credit in this category, which can offset low quiz scores (just as extra points in the quiz category can offset lower assignment scores).

Assignments must be submitted by the topic assignment deadline, and each assignment is graded on a specific set of criteria, some of which are shared across assignments and some of which are specific to a given assignment or type of assignment. Assignments scoring less than full credit (5) can be revised and resubmitted by the revision deadline, and the revised grade will count. Assignments scoring a 3 or below for the initial submission *must* be *meaningfully* revised and

resubmitted, or they will be recorded with a 1-point penalty (for example an assignment that earned a 3 on a draft would only count as 2 points in the book). Meaningful revision requires making substantive changes to the paper; small copy-editing changes are not sufficient.

Prior to the regular assignment deadline is an early submission deadline. Work submitted by this date will receive early feedback to give you extra time with revisions. In addition, any assignment submitted early and scoring full credit (5) will receive a one-point bonus, making the total assignment score a 6. Only assignments earning full credit on initial submission are eligible for this bonus.

Assignments are divided into two broad categories. The assignments for the first two topics focus on basic writing and argumentation, and serve as a foundation for moving on to the more advanced assignments linked to the remaining four topics, which add material related to the integration and application of the concepts in the readings. For basic writing assignments, you may select up to three of the four options, and there are no restrictions on which you select.

You *must* earn at least 20 points in the basic writing category before you can complete assignments in the advanced category. Depending on the points earned, this means you will need to complete between four and six assignments to earn these points within the first two topics. If you are making a good faith effort, we can consider options for additional revisions if your scores are low. However, if you simply do not complete the required work for the first two topics, *you will be unable to pass the class.*

Assignments from topics 3 through 6 will reflect either the *integration* or *application* categories — each option is labeled to reflect the category it represents. You may complete no more than *one* assignment in a given category for each topic, for a maximum of two assignments per topic. The reduced number of allowable topics reflects the increased complexity of these assignments and the additional work you will be doing crafting your final paper.

Final paper: While the individual assignments focus on specific, narrow topics, the final paper challenges you to develop a longer, more complex argument. In this paper, you will integrate several articles from the class and your own library work and apply this material to a context of your choosing. The actual final paper is worth 15 points, while the initial topic proposal is worth 1, a preliminary annotated bibliography 2, and a preliminary outline and updated bibliography 2 more. A full description of the assignment is posted separately to ANGEL.

Extra credit postings: Some of your individual assignments will be posted to our class blog, giving you a chance to see examples of strong work. (Only passing assignments will be posted, and not all assignments will automatically be posted, depending on the number of assignments submitted.) Sometimes additional links or examples will also be posted. By submitting comments about these postings, you can earn extra credit. Comments must be submitted within a week of a post going up, and you may submit only one comment per post and three per week. (Note: Not all weeks will necessarily have three posts to respond to. Plan accordingly.) Coherent, thoughtful comments earn extra credit worth one-fourth of a point. You may earn up to five points of extra credit in this fashion. This extra credit counts toward your overall grade, allowing you to offset low scores in either the quiz/assignments category or the final paper category.

Readings: Each day we will have one required reading, posted as a PDF to ANGEL and listed on the syllabus. Assigned readings should be completed by the start of that class; you will be quizzed on your understanding of the readings, so process them carefully. As noted above, readings are linked by shared topic areas, and generally represent empirical studies related to that topic. The readings will provide us with examples of work dealing with a range of important theories and demonstrating a variety of methodologies. As such, the most critical aspect of most readings is the study method and results; make sure you are able to explain the findings, and ask questions about any aspects of this material that you find confusing. Reading the literature review and discussion, and skimming the remaining elements, is not adequate and will lead to poor quiz and paper scores.

Participation and attendance: Students are expected to attend class and actively participate in discussion and group activities. Unexcused absences will adversely affect your grades. Specifically, you will lose 1 point from the broad quizzes/assignments category for each unexcused absence. You can offset these lost points by earning additional points in any of the relevant categories. For example, if your point total for all quizzes and assignments was an 82, but you had two unexcused absences, you would still earn the maximum of 80 points. Students who are extremely tardy or significantly disruptive or off task will be counted as being absent.

Absences are excused only if the following conditions are met: a) you must contact me regarding your absence, either prior to a planned absence or prior to returning to class in the case of a legitimate unexpected absence such as illness, and b) you must complete a summary of that day's reading and earn at least a .75 on the summary. Summaries must be submitted within one week of the absence — see the quizzes section for more detail. Non-passing summaries may be resubmitted to provide an excused absence, but the original score will be recorded for quiz-replacement purposes.

Students who miss a quiz due to tardiness or unexcused absences may still submit a summary, and this score will replace the 0 for the quiz, but submitting a summary by itself does not mean an absence is excused. The 1-point penalty will still apply to all non-excused absences, regardless of summary scores.

ANGEL days: A small number of class days are designated “ANGEL days,” listed as such on the schedule. For these classes, we will not meet face-to-face. Instead, students will complete the quiz online and post a designated assignment to a discussion board created for that purpose. This allows occasional practice with informal, written discussion to complement our in-class activities, which do not involve writing. Specific directions for each designated day are posted to ANGEL.

ANGEL-day quizzes will be available for 24 hours, on the designated day. They are open book, but consultation with other students is not permitted. Quizzes are timed, and in general you will not have time to look up answers, so while consultation with the text is permitted you should prepare for the quiz as if they are an in-class, closed-book exercise.

Exercises will generally be due no later than 11:59 p.m. on the designated ANGEL day. Most exercises also require a follow-up set of posts in response to other student responses. Generally these are due by the start of the next class following the Internet day.

Course schedule: The following grid lists course topics and reading assignments by date.

Aug. 23 Intro/course outline	Aug. 25 Economic trends <i>McChesney</i>
Aug. 30 Economic trends <i>Yanich</i>	Sept. 1 Economic trends <i>Dunaway</i>
Sept. 6 Economic trends <i>Beam, Weaver & Brownlee</i> Topic 1 early submission deadline	Sept. 8 Bias and selective exposure <i>D'Alessio & Allen</i> Topic 1 deadline Friday, Sept. 9
Sept. 13 Bias and selective exposure <i>Morris & Francia</i>	Sept. 15 No class Topic 1 revision deadline Friday, Sept. 16
Sept. 20 ANGEL day — no face-to-face meeting Bias and selective exposure <i>Goldman & Mutz</i> Topic 2 early submission deadline	Sept. 22 Bias and selective exposure <i>Garrett</i> Topic 2 deadline Friday, Sept. 23
Sept. 27 Gay rights & public opinion <i>Hester & Gibson</i>	Sept. 29 Gay rights & public opinion <i>Brewer</i> Topic 2 revision deadline Friday, Sept. 30
Oct. 4 Gay rights & public opinion <i>Mocsowitz</i> Topic 3 early submission deadline	Oct. 6 Gay rights & public opinion <i>Cazlo & Ward</i> Topic 3 deadline Friday, Oct. 7
Oct. 11 Internet <i>Xenos & Moy</i>	Oct. 13 Final paper topic proposal due by start of class (no reading) Topic 3 revision deadline Friday, Oct. 14
Oct. 18 ANGEL day — no face-to-face meeting Internet <i>Ellison, Steinfeld, & Lampe</i>	Oct. 20 Internet <i>Brundidge</i>
Oct. 25 Internet <i>Ho & McLeod</i> Topic 4 early submission deadline	Oct. 27 Internet <i>Wei & Blanks Hindman</i> Topic 4 deadline Friday, Oct. 28
Nov. 1 Colbert/Daily Show <i>Cao</i>	Nov. 3 Colbert/Daily Show <i>Hmielowski, Holbert & Lee</i> Topic 4 revision deadline Friday, Nov. 4
Nov. 8 ANGEL day — no face-to-face meeting Colbert/Daily Show <i>Baumgartner & Morris</i>	Nov. 10 Initial annotated bibliography due by start of class (no reading) Topic 5 early submission deadline Friday, Nov. 11

Nov. 15 Colbert/Daily Show <i>Lamarre, Landreville & Beam</i> Topic 5 deadline Wednesday, Nov. 16	Nov. 17 Campaign ads <i>Lau & Rovner</i>
Nov. 22 No class — Thanksgiving break	Nov. 24 No class — Thanksgiving break
Nov. 29 ANGEL day — no face-to-face meeting Campaign ads <i>Brader</i> Topic 5 revision deadline Wednesday, Nov. 30	Dec. 1 Campaign ads <i>Sides, Lipsitz & Grossman</i> Topic 6 early submission deadline Friday, Dec. 1
Dec. 6 Campaign ads <i>Lovejoy, Cheng & Riffe</i> Topic 6 deadline (note deadline is Tuesday)	Dec. 8 Final paper outline due by start of class (no reading)
Topic 6 revision deadline Tuesday, Dec. 13 / Final paper deadline Thursday, Dec. 15	

Unless noted, due dates are generally 11:59 p.m. on the listed day. Additional details about deadlines and submissions can be found on the relevant assignment sheets.