

*MME 6417 -- Seminar in*  
**Mass Media and Health**  
*Spring 2018*

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Office Hours:  
Tuesdays 12:50-3, Wednesdays, 1:30-3  
& by appointment

### **Course Objectives**

This course introduces students to current research on the positive and negative influences of mass media on individual behavior and the public health environment. We address the uses and effects of social media and other online information, entertainment content, advertising and news, examining impacts on individual health and health policy. In addition, the course content is intended to enhance your understanding of selected mass communication/health communication theories. Other courses available in the college and elsewhere on campus are devoted to traditional mass media health promotion campaigns designed to encourage individuals to adopt or maintain healthy behavior. To minimize overlap with these courses, this seminar instead focuses on other mechanisms through which the mass media may affect the health environment. Because class enrollment generally is fairly small, the course content can be tailored to emphasize students' interests.

In addition to developing an understanding of a broad range of this literature, I expect each member of the class to become an expert in one sub-domain of the media/health interaction. Each student will select a topic, undertake a systematic review of the related literature, collect data when appropriate, present the results of this research to the class, and produce a paper suitable for submission to an academic conference or scholarly journal.

### **Texts**

*Mass Media and Health: Examining Media Impact on Individuals and the Health Environment*, 2017, Routledge.

This is the book I wrote specifically for this class. Just so you know, UF policies prohibits me from earning royalties from the book when I assign it for my classes.

Any other readings I ask you to do will be available via the course e-learning site or through email. Please make sure that you complete all assigned readings **BEFORE** the class during which they will be discussed. We have a lot of ground to cover in this course, so we move quickly.

### **Grading**

*Class participation: 25%*

Come to class each day ready to be a full participant in the discussion of the week's readings. Read the chapters/articles carefully and integrate readings within and across topics. Ask intelligent and thoughtful questions and attempt to provide equally intelligent and thoughtful

answers to the questions raised by your colleagues. **Submit discussion questions through the e-learning site discussion function by Tuesday afternoon at 1 p.m. each week.** This will enable me to incorporate some of the most interesting questions into the Wednesday class discussion.

*Class presentation: 15%*

You will lead the discussion for one topic during the semester. Your presentation most likely will be on the topic of your research paper, though that is not required, and your paper need not be completed when you present. You will be responsible for selecting and assigning one additional reading to provide background on your topic for the rest of the class. Distribute this reading, along with one or two discussion questions, by the class meeting time the week before your presentation. Exactly how long you'll have for the presentation and class discussion will depend on how many students are enrolled, but most likely, I'll ask you to lead discussion for one hour. Help the class understand the readings and other appropriate information related to your topic. Prepare an annotated bibliography of readings in this area and distribute it to your classmates.

*Health research news coverage analysis: 15%*

You will locate a relatively recent (within the past five years) biomedical or public health study that, in addition to being published in a medical or public health journal, also received news coverage through traditional mainstream media outlets (e.g. newspapers, consumer magazines, network TV news programs). You will write a 6- to 8-page analysis comparing the original study with the coverage it received in two or more mainstream news channels. (You'll receive more information about this assignment later.) We will discuss class members' findings during the section on news coverage of health.

*Research paper -- Draft: 10%, Final: 35%*

The paper can be a systematic literature review, culminating in an agenda for further research, or if you begin right away, you could collect data for a simple study. If you choose to complete a literature review paper, the paper must reflect a thorough exploration of the important theories and research related to your chosen topic and should make a specific argument. *Note that an "agenda for research" does NOT mean a proposal for a specific study.* Rather, a research agenda paper systematically examines an area of literature, draws conclusions about what we already know, and then describes important questions in this area that researchers have yet to answer. It includes a methods section describing how you selected the papers for review. You also may choose to complete a framing or content analysis, a focus group study or possibly even an experiment or survey, particularly if your topic is related to work you've done for a previous class. (See note later, however, about not "recycling" your work for this class.) **The text of the paper will run 20-25 pages, excluding tables and references, and should be of high enough quality to submit to an appropriate academic conference or scholarly journal.**

Note: If you choose to collect data for your paper, other class members may be able to assist each other with coding, data collection, etc., to increase your chances of getting a paper ready to submit.

**I assign minus grades so that students whose work is superior are recognized for their higher performance.**

Final grades will be based on these standard break-points:

A- = 90-93.5%	A = 93.6%+	
B- = 80-83.5%	B = 83.6-87%	B+ = 87.1%-89.9%
C- = 70-73.5%	C = 73.6-77%	C+ = 77.1%-79.9%
D- = 60-63.5%	D = 63.6-67%	D+ = 67.1%-69.9%
E = 59.9% or lower.		

It is unlikely that the grades will be curved.

The following website provides a chart showing UF's policy regarding the grade points earned for each letter grade designation: <https://gradschool.ufl.edu/catalog/current-catalog/catalog-general-regulations.html#grades>

## **Academic Honesty**

In accordance with UF policy, I'm including in this syllabus the definitions of the types of academic dishonesty that seem most likely to be potential problems for students in this class. If a situation ever arises in which you think something you're contemplating MIGHT constitute one of these types of academic dishonesty, ASK BEFORE YOU DO IT. Apologies after the fact will not resolve the problem for anyone.

### **Definitions**

**Misrepresentation:** This means any act that is intended to deceive a teacher for academic advantage, including lying about the circumstances under which you collected data, turning in a paper you've previously submitted for another class, and failing to provide honest information when confronted with an allegation of academic dishonesty.

**Fabrication:** For this class, the primary concern would be making up data or falsifying your findings (e.g. claiming a hypothesis was supported when it was not, etc.)

**Plagiarism:** Any use of someone else's ideas or words in a way that presents those ideas or words as your own constitutes plagiarism, even if the ideas or words have not been published. This includes using word-for-word or only slightly altered segments of wording from someone else, regardless of who that individual is, without providing a citation that gives the original author credit. Obviously, submitting anyone else's work as your own constitutes plagiarism, but I also encourage you to look at the plagiarism guide provided by UF's Marston Science Library: <http://web.uflib.ufl.edu/msl/07b/studentplagiarism.html>

Plagiarism is one of the most serious crimes in academia AND in communication. It is YOUR responsibility to make certain you correctly cite other people's research and writing in your papers. Be especially careful about keeping track of the source of information you glean from Internet-based materials. It is all too easy to copy and paste sections of material from a website, and later you may not remember exactly which information represents your notes or paraphrases of what you read and what is a verbatim copy. Unintended plagiarism is still plagiarism, and all plagiarism will be treated as intentional because I cannot know what you meant to do. It is acceptable, of course, to include verbatim materials from other people's works, but when you do,

you must either include such material in quotation marks or set it off from the rest of the paper by indenting and single spacing.

The plagiarism avoidance guide our graduate faculty has approved will be provided on the e-learning site. If you read through that guide and still aren't certain what's acceptable, ASK ME! Do not assume that any other student or professor can tell you what will be acceptable in my class. Asking questions ahead of time is encouraged and comes with no penalties – but there ARE serious penalties for failing to credit someone else's work properly because you didn't ask questions.

**ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY:** You are free at ANY point to ask me for guidance about how to credit others' work properly – even if you need to ask about something as you're handing the paper to me. Submitting your papers through the Canvas site a bit ahead of the paper deadline also will allow you to check the papers through Turnitin.com. Therefore, if you include improperly credited material in any of your work, **you will fail the class**. Not just the assignment – **the whole class**. If I find you have plagiarized, I will submit an academic dishonesty report to the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies and the Student Judicial Affairs office.

Another no-no is recycling your own work for this class. Let's make the policy clear and simple: **You will NOT turn in for this class ANY work you previously have submitted to another instructor or that you plan to submit for any other class at UF or any other institution.** Writing your paper for this class on a topic you've worked on before may be acceptable, but discuss it with me **in advance**. It's perfectly reasonable for you to draw on work you've already done for other classes. It's not reasonable for you to turn in the same paper or one that is substantially the same as work you've already used. If you're currently taking another course for which you must write a paper, and you want to write both papers – for this seminar and for the other class – on the same general topic, we'll need to work out an agreement acceptable to me **and** the other instructor before you proceed.

**A Note about Office Hours:** As much as humanly possible, I will be available during my office hours. However, my office hours tend to fill up quickly. If you come by during office hours and I'm not in, look for a note -- I'm very likely to be back in five minutes or less. Your BEST chance of finding time to meet with me is to make an appointment, even if it's for a time during my office hours. **Unless you have made an appointment in advance, please respect the fact that I need to attend to other tasks -- research, writing, advising, committee work, planning for class and grading papers -- during my non-office hours.** So please do not be offended if you drop by unexpectedly and I ask you to make an appointment or come back during office hours. If you make an appointment and then can't keep it, please call or email me as soon as possible to let me know. I have voice mail on my office phone, and I've given you my cell phone number, so you can text or leave voicemail there, too. **After 8 p.m.,** please call my office number or, better yet, email. Please speak clearly when leaving your telephone number!

## **Topic, Reading and Assignment Schedule**

**IMPORTANT note about the readings:** It's not necessary that you read EVERY word of every article or even every chapter. Your purpose is to make sure you understand what the preponderance of research has shown, rather than to learn the details of any particular study. If the article is about a single study, focus your attention on how theory is (or is not) examined through the methods and, again, understand the key findings. All readings are available through the Canvas e-learning site for the course.

If, in your own work, you've come across additional articles that you believe are especially valuable and relevant to one of these topics, please feel free to suggest adding them.

### Dates:

- Jan. 10            Introduction – No readings
- Jan. 17            **Overview**  
Walsh-Childers – Chapter 1: The Media Health Effects Matrix
- Jan. 24            **Alcohol, drugs & cigarettes – advertising and other mixed messages**  
Chapter 3: Tobacco advertising: The paradox of advertising to shorten customers' lives  
Chapter 4: Predictable negative effects: Marketing alcohol misuse and abuse  
Chapter 6: Fun and glamor through smoking, drinking & drugs: Entertainment media portrayals of substance use  
*Recommended:* Hoffman, Pinkleton, Austin & Reyes-Velázquez. (2014). Exploring college students' use of general and alcohol-related social media and their associations with alcohol-related behaviors
- Jan. 31            **Drug advertising – an area of special concern**  
Chapter 5: Take a pill for “better health”: DTC prescription drug advertising  
*Recommended:* Betts, Boudewyns, Aikin, Squire, Dolina, Hayes, Southwell (2017). Serious and actionable risks, plus disclosure: Investigating an alternative approach for presenting risk information in prescription drug television advertisements
- Feb. 7             **The cultivation of violence**  
Chapter 10: The mean and scary media world: The impact of media violence  
Morgan, Shanahan & Signorielli (2009). Growing up with television: Cultivation processes  
Bandura (2009). Social cognitive theory

**Feb. 7 or sooner: Turn in brief (1- to 2-page) prospectus describing paper/presentation topics. Electronic submission only – no print copy required.**

- Feb. 14      **More entertainment effects: Eating, exercise & body image**  
Chapter 7: Do the media make us fat? Advertising and entertainment portrayals of food, nutrition and exercise  
Chapter 8: Showing us what we should (and cannot) be: The mass media mirror and body image  
Morrison, Kalin & Morrison (2004). Body-image evaluation and body-image investment among adolescents: A test of sociocultural and social comparison theories

**Feb. 14 or sooner: Submit citation and abstract of biomedical/public health research article for news coverage analysis, with citations for at least two mainstream media stories about the study**

- Feb. 21      **Media as sex educator**  
Chapter 9: Lust, love and romance with few consequences: Media portrayals of sex  
Stanley, Barter, Wood, Aghtaie, Larkins, Lanau, & Overlien. (2016). Pornography, sexual coercion and abuse and sexting in young people's intimate relationships: A European study

- Feb. 28      **News coverage and effects on individuals**  
Chapter 11: Reporting on health for better or worse: News media effects on knowledge, beliefs and behaviors  
Tewksbury & Scheufele: News framing theory and research

**Feb. 28 or sooner: Submit health research news coverage analysis paper & be prepared to discuss in class**

- March 3-11    **Spring Break – Enjoy!**

- March 14      **Health information online**  
Chapter 2: Health information online: Building a web to improve health behavior  
Allam, Schulz, & Nakamoto (2014). The impact of search engine selection and sorting criteria on vaccination beliefs and attitudes: Two experiments  
manipulating Google output

- March 21      **Social media effects on health**  
Chapter 12: Peer-to-peer health: The good and bad news about Facebook, Instagram, blogs and other social media  
Cohen, Newton-John, & Slater (2017). The relationship between Facebook and Instagram appearance-focused activities and body image concerns in young women

**March 21 or sooner: *Submit first draft of research paper, with complete bibliography. Submit through Canvas to get a first look at any potential plagiarism issues.***

- March 28      **News effects on the health environment**  
Chapter 13: How health news can affect non-news consumers: News media and health policy  
*Recommended:* Coleman, Thorson & Wilkins: Testing the effects of framing and sourcing in health news stories
- April 4        **Media advocacy & health promotion**  
Chapter 14: Focusing the spotlight on problems upstream: Media advocacy to influence policy  
Stead: The challenge of evaluating complex interventions: A framework for evaluating media advocacy
- April 11      No class – meet individually on final papers
- April 18      **Political advertising & health policy**  
Chapter 15: Big spenders in the marketplace of ideas: Political issue advertising effects on health policy
- April 25      Additional student presentations, course wrap-up

**April 25: *Submit final paper. Please bring a printed copy, but also make certain you submit it electronically through Canvas.***