

**Media and Society**  
**RTV 3405**  
**Summer A 2023**

Instructor: Chelsea Moss, M.A.  
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Office location: Weimer G034

Class Meeting Time: T, R 9:30AM –  
12:15PM  
Classroom: LAR 0310  
Office Hours: By Appointment

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

In today's world, media is an integral part of everyday life for both individuals and society at large. We constantly consume and create media, often with little thought towards its influence on ourselves and others. This course will provide a broad introduction to key theoretical approaches to understanding media and society with an emphasis on those frameworks associated with mass communication and mediated communication. We will apply theory to understand media content, audiences, and organizations. As we look at examples from news media, social media, and emerging media, we will ponder the nature of evidence and theory and think about how we analyze these media phenomena.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

By the end of the semester, you should be able to:

1. Identify popular theoretical approaches used in the study of media, understanding their strengths and weaknesses in explanatory power.
2. Evaluate the uses and purposes of theory.
3. Apply theories to the analysis of media phenomena.
4. Evaluate and select appropriate research methods for answering media-related questions.
5. Recognize your role as a consumer and creator of media content.
6. Critique communication models and research and develop an ability to formulate your own applications of theory and research.
7. Present your mastery of knowledge related to current media events and trends.

### **REQUIRED READINGS**

Course Textbook:

Sparks, G. (2016). *Media effects research: A basic overview* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Cengage Learning.

Additional readings will be provided on Canvas.

### **ASSIGNMENTS**

To help you meet the goals of this course, you will be evaluated in a variety of ways, including class participation, quizzes, reaction papers, a group presentation, and an original research proposal.

*Class Participation (5% of grade):* The material of this course provides rich opportunity for debate and discussion. We will all learn so much more during our time together when everyone actively participates and shares their personal insight and perspectives. Please plan to regularly attend and speak up during class with questions and comments. Absences that are not emergencies or acceptable reasons for missing class (as outlined in [the university attendance policies](#)) will negatively affect your participation grade.

*Documentary Activity (5% of grade):* To encourage you to think critically about the media you're consuming and how media creators are discussing media phenomena, you will be required to watch one media-related documentary (documentary options will be discussed in class). Specific criteria for you to be mindful of while watching will be provided for you in class, and you should be able to report back to the class and discuss the film's content with others during an in-class activity after having watched the film outside of class.

*Quizzes (30% of grade):* To ensure a foundational understanding of course content, three quizzes will be given over the course of the semester. These quizzes will be taken on Canvas and are open note. However, you will have a limited amount of time for each quiz, so you will need to be very familiar with the material before starting the quiz. You will be able to see specific time limits for each quiz on Canvas prior to starting the quiz. Each quiz will be available on Canvas from immediately after the class period prior to the quiz due date until 9:29AM on the quiz due date.

*In-Class Assignments (20% of grade):* These assignments will be assigned and completed during class. More details will be provided in class. There are no make-up opportunities for these assignments if you miss class (unless the absence is an excused absence).

*Original Research Proposal Group Presentation (40% of grade):* This group presentation (approximately five students in each group) of a research proposal gives you the opportunity to apply media theory and research methodology to a question that intrigues you about media influence or use. This proposal should include your research question (e.g., how are news organizations using social media to report live news, what are the predominant messages being received by adolescents of a specific Netflix series, or how is a certain company being mindful of representation in their new ad campaign), one or two theories that would help explain your phenomena under question, and the social scientific method that you would use if you were to conduct research to answer your question. You should cite at least seven sources in this presentation (at least 4 of which must be peer-reviewed academic sources), and the presentation should be between 12-15 minutes (including Q&A time). Your grade for this project will come from the following: creative and specific research question and background explanation (20%), application of one or two media theories to your context (25%), proposed methodology to best answer your research question (25%), presentation quality (15%), references/citations (10%),

and group member evaluations (5%). Please consult the rubric and assignment details on Canvas for more specific information.

## GRADING

### *Point Distribution*

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Possible Points</b>
Class Participation	10
Documentary Activity	10
Quizzes (three at 20 points each)	60
In-Class Assignments (four at 10 points each)	40
Original Research Proposal Group Presentation	80

### *Points to Letter Grade Comparison*

<b>Total Earned Points for the Semester</b>	<b>Letter Grade Equivalent</b>
186-200	A
180-185	A-
174-179	B+
166-173	B
160-165	B-
154-159	C+
146-153	C
140-145	C-
134-139	D+
126-133	D
120-125	D-
0-119	F

## COURSE POLICIES

*Late/Missed Work* – Late work is not accepted for this course. If you have an emergency crisis that arises hindering you from submitting something on time, please send me an e-mail ([chelsea.moss@ufl.edu](mailto:chelsea.moss@ufl.edu)), and I will be happy to discuss other arrangements with you. The same guidelines apply for missed work. If an emergency prohibits you from being in class on the day of your presentation, please let me (and your fellow group members) know as soon as possible so arrangements can be made.

*Attendance and Tardiness* – Your intellectual growth from this course is highly dependent on your active participation, both in class and outside of class. If you are unable to attend class, please consult with another student to get notes from the day's lecture. If you have lingering

questions from the day’s content that were not answered by the other student’s notes, please feel free to send me an e-mail.

*Classroom Conduct* – While debate and discussion are anticipated in this course and are a healthy part of the educational experience, please remember to be respectful of other opinions, refrain from any hostile or discriminatory remarks, and do your part in fostering a safe space for differing ideas and learning in our classroom.

*Seek Out Help* – I am here to help you in any way I can! Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions or concerns. The sooner you notify me of your questions, the sooner we can work together to address them, so try not to wait until the last second to contact me. I will do my best to reply to emails within 24 hours during the regular work week (M-F). I am always happy to meet with you during office hours as well – no appointment necessary. However, if you want to make sure I am not already booked with other students during office hours before showing up, feel free to send me an email to schedule an appointment.

*Grade Appeals* – Should you have a concern about a grade on an assignment, please feel free to discuss it with me. I only ask that all grade appeals wait at least 24 hours following your receiving of the grade. Two weeks following the posting of the particular grade in question, no further grade appeals will be accepted, and the grade is final.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

*\*Readings and assignments are listed on the date they are due. Readings should be read by class time, and assignments are due before class time (by 9:29AM) on the day they are listed unless otherwise noted.*

<b>Date</b>	<b>Class Topic</b>	<b>Readings</b>	<b>Assignments</b>
May 16	Welcome and Introduction to Course; Mass Media and You		<b>In-Class Activity: Media Profiles</b>
May 18	What is media theory?	Sparks, Ch. 1 (A Scientific Approach to the Study of Media Effects) Reading on Canvas: Miller, Ch. 2 (Philosophical Foundations: What is Theory?)	
May 23	What is media research?	Sparks, Ch. 2 (Scientific Methods in Media Effects Research) Sparks, Ch. 3 (A Brief History of Media Effects Research) Reading: <a href="https://open.lib.umn.edu/mediaandculture/chapter/2-3-methods-of-researching-media-effects/">https://open.lib.umn.edu/mediaandculture/chapter/2-3-methods-of-researching-media-effects/</a>	<b>In-Class Activity: Group Work #1</b>

May 25	<b>*Online Lecture Today*</b> Interpersonal Communication and Media: Computer-Mediated Communication Theories	Sparks, Ch. 11 (The Impact of New Media Technologies) Reading on Canvas: Walther (2002)	<b>Watch lecture</b>
May 30	Learning through and from Media: Cultivation and Social Cognitive Theories	Sparks, Ch. 5 (Effects of Media Violence) Sparks, Ch. 6 (Sexual Content in the Media) Sparks, Ch. 8 (Persuasive Effects of the Media)	<b>In-Class Activity: Group Work #2</b>
June 1	Setting the Agenda: Agenda Setting and Framing Theories	Sparks, Ch. 9 (The Effects of News and Political Content) Reading on Canvas: McCombs & Shaw (1993)	<b>Quiz #1</b>
June 6	Power to the People: Uses and Gratifications and Selective Exposure	Sparks, Ch. 4 (Time Spent with Mass Media: Reasons and Consequences) Reading on Canvas: Stroud (2017)	<b>In-Class Activity: Group Work #3</b>
June 8	Thinking about Others' Media Consumption: Third Person Effect and IPI Model	Readings on Canvas: Davison (1983) Gunther & Storey (2003)	<b>Quiz #2</b>
June 13	Let's Go to the Movies!: In-Class Documentary Discussion Activity		<b>Come to class already having watched your assigned documentary. See assignment details on Canvas for viewing guide.</b>
June 15	Media Representations; Media and The Family	Sparks, Ch. 10 (The Effects of Media Stereotypes) Online Reading: <a href="https://www.pbs.org/newshour/arts/why-on-screen-representation-matters-according-to-these-teens">https://www.pbs.org/newshour/arts/why-on-screen-representation-matters-according-to-these-teens</a> Readings on Canvas: Tyus (2014) Albada (2000) Thompson-Hayes et al., (2009)	

June 20	The First Amendment, Social Media, and Free Speech (Guest Speaker)	Readings (TBA) on Canvas	<b>Quiz #3</b>
June 22	Group Presentations		<b>Group Presentations</b>

## UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA POLICIES AND RESOURCES

**Academic Integrity:** UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: ‘On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.’” The Honor Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. [Click here to read the Honor Code](#). Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor of this class. Failure to comply with the honor code in the form of cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated and will result in a score of zero on the assignment, as well as possible expulsion from the course.

**Accommodations** - Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the Disability Resource Center. [Click here to get started with the Disability Resource Center](#). It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs as early as possible in the semester.

**UF Grading Policy** - More information about the University of Florida’s grading policies may be found here: [Grades and Grading Policies < University of Florida \(ufl.edu\)](#)

**Course Evaluation** - Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. [Click here for guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner](#). Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens and can complete evaluations through the e-mail they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via [ufl.bluera.com/ufl/](http://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/). [Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students here](#).

### **Health and Wellness**

**U Matter, We Care:** If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact [umatter@ufl.edu](mailto:umatter@ufl.edu), 352-392-1575, or visit [U Matter, We Care website](#) to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.

**Counseling and Wellness Center:** [Visit the Counseling and Wellness Center website](#) or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.

*Student Health Care Center:* Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or [visit the Student Health Care Center website](#).

*University Police Department:* [Visit UF Police Department website](#) or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).

*UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center:* For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; [Visit the UF Health Emergency Room and Trauma Center website](#).

### ***Academic Resources***

*E-learning technical support:* Contact the [UF Computing Help Desk](#) at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at [helpdesk@ufl.edu](mailto:helpdesk@ufl.edu).

*Career Connections Center:* Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services.

*Library Support:* Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.

*Teaching Center:* Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352- 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.

*Writing Studio:* 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.

*Student Complaints On-Campus:* [Visit the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code webpage for more information](#).

*On-Line Student Complaints:* [View the Distance Learning Student Complaint Process](#).