

MMC 6417 -- Seminar in  
**New Media, Health Behavior & the Health  
Environment**  
Fall 2023

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**Office Hours:** By appointment but encouraged.

### **Course Objectives**

This course introduces students to current research on the positive and negative influences of mass media – especially new media such as social media, mobile media, and streamed content -- 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 media may affect the health environment. Because class enrollment generally is small, the course content can be tailored somewhat 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 comprehensive 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.

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

*Your written assignments will be graded on how well you show that you comprehend the subject matter, and of course formatting, spelling and grammar. Your presentation assignments will be graded on how well you are able to translate the knowledge you're presenting to the class, and your participation grade will be determined by how engaged you are each week and how much overall substantive information you add during class discussions.*

### ***Class participation: 20%***

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 Monday at noon each week.** This will enable me to incorporate some of the most interesting questions into the Wednesday class discussion.

### ***Class presentations: 20% (10% for each)***

You will lead the discussion for two topics during the semester. One presentation most likely will be related to the topic of your research paper, though that is not required, and your paper need not be completed when you present. The other will be a topic of your choice related to Mass Media and Health. You may, if you want, select and assign 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 the discussion for 60-75 minutes. Help the class understand the readings and other appropriate information related to your topic.

### ***Health research news coverage analysis: 15%***

You will locate a relatively recent (within the past five years) biomedical or non-COVID 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., digital news sites, podcasts, traditional newspapers, consumer magazines, network TV news programs, etc.). 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. The focus here is on determining how well the news coverage conveyed accurate and useful information about the original research to lay audiences. (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 comprehensive literature review, culminating in an agenda for further research, or a systematic literature review. If you begin right away – and especially if you focus on a topic on which you already have expertise – you could collect data for a simple study. If you choose to complete a comprehensive (but not systematic) 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 should be limited to 17-20 pages, excluding tables and references, and should be of high enough quality to submit to an appropriate academic conference or scholarly journal.** Writing quality is important, so please make sure you have carefully copy-edited your paper before submitting it.

**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 breakpoints:

A- = 90-92.9%	A = 93%+	
B- = 80-82.9%	B = 83-86.9%	B+ = 87%-89.9%
*C- = 70-72.9%	C = 73-76.9%	C+ = 77%-79.9%

*\*For graduate students, grades below C are considered failing grades. It is unlikely that the grades will be curved. CJC policy discourages the assignment of Incomplete grades unless there are exceptional circumstances.*

**Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

The University of Florida's College of Journalism and Communications embraces a commitment to an intellectual community enriched and enhanced by diversity along a number of dimensions, including race, ethnicity and national origins, gender and gender identity, sexuality, class and religion. We expect each of our courses to help foster an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communication in a global society.

People of all backgrounds have important contributions to make to this class, and I expect all of you to respect that. If, at any point, you believe someone in the class – including me – has expressed ideas in inappropriate ways, please let me know. My goal is to make certain everyone feels comfortable participating in and listening to class discussions, and I want these discussions to support a diversity of perspectives and experiences and honor your identities (including race, gender, class, sexuality, religion, abilities, etc.).

If you prefer a name and/or pronouns that differ from those in the official records, please tell me so that I can refer to you as you prefer. If experiences outside this class interfere with your performance in the class, please let me know; I'd like to help connect you with appropriate resources for dealing with any such issues. And if you prefer to speak with someone outside the course, Joanna Hernandez, CJC's director of inclusion and diversity, is an excellent resource. You can reach her via email at [jhernandez@jou.ufl.edu](mailto:jhernandez@jou.ufl.edu).

## Academic Honesty

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 Conduct Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Click here to read the Conduct Code. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor of this class.

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 take that action!*** 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 or online journal article, 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.

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: **Do 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 (indeed, it's advisable) 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 submitted. If you're currently taking another course for which you must write a paper, and you want to write 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:** If you're at all like me, you're totally "Zoomed out." Still, I want to encourage you to schedule appointments for office hours whenever you need or want to talk about class-related issues (or other questions/issues I might be able to help with). So please do email or call or text if you need to talk, and we'll set up some way to meet – most likely virtually or, in some cases, face-to-face if possible before or after class. I'm very open to walk-and-talk meetings, if that idea appeals to you. **Please do give me a little advance warning if you want to meet in person as I'll be coming up from Ocala before class.** 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've given you my cell phone number, so you can text or leave voicemail there, too.

## **Evaluations**

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional/respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

## **In-Class Recording**

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited.

Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or guest lecturer during a class session.

Publication without the permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third-party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

## **Students Requiring Accommodations**

Students with disabilities requesting accommodation should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, [www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/)) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

## **Campus Resources**

### **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](#).

**GatorWell Health Promotion Services:** For prevention services focused on optimal wellbeing, including Wellness Coaching for Academic Success, [visit the GatorWell website](#) or call 352-273-4450.

### **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 Students Complaints:** [View the Distance Learning Student Complaint Process](#)

## *Topic, Reading & Assignment Schedule*

***IMPORTANT note about the readings:*** *It's not necessary that you read EVERY word of every article or every chapter. Your focus should be on understanding what the preponderance of research has shown, rather than learning the details of any particular study. All readings are available through the Canvas e-learning site for the course, and most are hyperlinked in the syllabus.*

*If 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.*

### **Date**

### **Weekly Topic/Readings**

**Aug. 29**

**Weekly Topic  
Introductions – no readings**

**Sep. 5**

**Weekly Topic  
Course Overview**

### **Book Chapters**

Walsh-Childers – *Chapter 1: The Media Health Effects Matrix*

Sep. 12

Weekly Topic

**Alcohol, drugs, & cigarettes – advertising and other mixed messages**

Book Chapters

*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*

Additional Readings

Nesi, Rothenberg, Hussong, & Jackson. (2019). [Friends' alcohol-related social networking site activity predicts escalations in adolescent drinking: mediation by peer norms](#)

Hoffman, Pinkleton, Austin & Reyes-Velázquez. (2014). [Exploring college students' use of general and alcohol-related social media and their associations with alcohol-related behaviors](#)

**Sep 12 or sooner: Turn in brief (1- to 2-page) prospectus describing paper/presentation topics.**

Sep. 19

Weekly Topic

**Drug advertising – an area of special concern**

Book Chapters

*Chapter 5: Take a pill for “better health”: DTC prescription drug advertising*

Additional Readings

Tyrawski & DeAndrea (2015). [Pharmaceutical Companies and Their Drugs on Social Media: A Content Analysis of Drug Information on Popular Social Media Sites](#)

DeAndrea & Vendemia (2016). [How affiliation disclosure and control over user-generated comments affects consumer health knowledge and behavior: A randomized controlled experiment of pharmaceutical direct-to-consumer advertising on social media](#)

**Sep. 19 or sooner: Submit citation and abstract of biomedical/public health research article for news coverage analysis, with citations for at least two lay-audience media stories about the study**

Sep. 26

Weekly Topic

**The cultivation of violence**

Book Chapters

*Chapter 10: The mean and scary media world: The impact of media violence*



**Additional Readings**

Greitemeyer & Mügge (2014). [Video games do affect social outcomes: A meta-analytic review of the effects of violent and prosocial video game play](#)

Patton et al. (2014). [Social media as a vector for youth violence: A review of the literature](#)

**Oct. 3**

**Weekly Topic**

**More entertainment effects: Eating, exercise & body image**

**Book Chapters**

*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*

**Additional Readings**

Fung, Blankenship, Ahweyevu, Cooper, Duke, Carswell, ... & Fu, (2019). [Public Health Implications of Image-Based Social Media: A Systematic Review of Instagram, Pinterest, Tumblr, and Flickr.](#)

Chen, Ishii, & Bater (2019). [Association between the use of social media and photograph editing applications, self-esteem, and cosmetic surgery acceptance.](#)

**Oct. 10**

**Weekly Topic**

**Media as sex educator**

**Book Chapters**

*Chapter 9: Lust, love and romance with few consequences: Media portrayals of sex*

**Additional Readings**

Stanley, Barter, Wood, Aghtaie, Larkins, Lanau, & Overlien. (2016). [Pornography, sexual coercion and abuse and sexting in young people's intimate relationships: A European study](#)

Titchen, Maslyanskaya, Silver & Coupey (2019). [Sexting and young adolescents: Associations with sexual abuse and intimate partner violence.](#)

**Oct. 10 or sooner: Submit health research news coverage analysis paper & be prepared to discuss in class.**

**Oct. 17**

**Weekly Topic**

**News coverage and effects on individuals**

**Book Chapters**

*Chapter 11: Reporting on health for better or worse: News media effects on knowledge, beliefs and behaviors*

### Additional Readings

Ophir (2019). [The effects of news coverage of epidemics on public support for and compliance with the CDC: An experimental study.](#)

Jamieson & Albarracin (2020). [The Relation between Media Consumption and Misinformation at the Outset of the SARS-CoV-2 Pandemic in the US](#)

Oct 24

### Weekly Topic

#### **Health (mis)information online**

### Book Chapters

*Chapter 2: Health information online: Building a web to improve health behavior*

### Additional Readings

Allam, Schulz, & Nakamoto (2014). [The impact of search engine selection and sorting criteria on vaccination beliefs and attitudes: Two experiments manipulating Google output](#)

Sun, Zhang, Gwizdka, & Trace (2019). [Consumer evaluation of the quality of online health information: Systematic literature review of relevant criteria and indicators](#)

Lee, et al. (2020). [Associations Between COVID-19 Misinformation Exposure and Belief With COVID-19 Knowledge and Preventive Behaviors: Cross-Sectional Online Study](#)

**Oct 24 or sooner: Submit first draft of research paper, with complete bibliography. Submit through Canvas to get a first look at any potential plagiarism issues.**

Oct. 31

### Weekly Topic

#### **Social media effects on health**

### Book Chapters

*Chapter 12: Peer-to-peer health: The good and bad news about Facebook, Instagram, blogs and other social media*

### Additional Readings

Zhao & Zhang (2017). [Consumer health information seeking in social media: A literature review](#)

Bekalu, McCloud & Viswanath (2019). [Association of social media use with social well-being, positive mental health and self-rated health: Disentangling routine use from emotional connection to use](#)

Pennycook et al. (2020). [Fighting COVID-19 Misinformation on Social Media: Experimental Evidence for a Scalable Accuracy-Nudge Intervention](#)

Nov. 7

**Weekly Topic**

**News effects on the health environment**

**Book Chapters**

*Chapter 13: How health news can affect non-news consumers: News media and health policy*

**Additional Readings**

McGinty, Stone, Kennedy-Hendricks, Sanders, Beacham & Barry (2019). [U.S. news media coverage of solutions to the opioid crisis, 2013–2017](#)

Slater & Hayes (2015). [Injury news coverage, relative concern and support for alcohol-control policies: An impersonal impact explanation](#)

Gollust, Fowler & Niederdeppe (2019). [Television news coverage of public health issues and implications for public health policy and practice.](#)

Nov. 14

**Weekly Topic**

**Media advocacy – changing the health environment**

**Book Chapters**

*Chapter 14: Focusing the spotlight on problems upstream: Media advocacy to influence policy*

**Additional Readings**

Dorfman & Krasnow (2014). [Public health and media advocacy](#)

Bou-Karroum, El-Jardali, Hemadi, et al. (2017). [Using media to impact health policymaking: An integrative systematic review.](#)

Nov. 21

**Work individually on final paper**

Nov. 28

**Weekly Topic**

**Political advertising & health policy**

**Book Chapters**

*Chapter 15: Big spenders in the marketplace of ideas: Political issue advertising effects on health policy*

**Additional Readings**

Fowler, Baum, Haddad, Reves, Gollust & Niederdeppe (2019). [Issues relevant to population health in political advertising in the United States, 2011-2012 and 2015-2016.](#)

Gollust, Fowler, Niederdeppe (2020). [Ten Years of Messaging about the Affordable Care Act in Advertising and News Media: Lessons for Policy and Politics](#)

Dec. 5

**Submit final paper through Canvas, but also bring a printed copy to class; additional student presentations; course wrap-up.**