Understanding Audiences
RTV 3440
Spring 2026

Instructor: Tassanee Van Hoover
E-Mail: tassanee@ufl.edu
Office location: Virtual (Zoom URL: https://ufl.zoom.us/j/8576090268)
Class Meeting Time: Asynchronous
Classroom: 100% Online
Office Hours: Fridays 2:30-4:30pm and/or by appointment (email or Canvas mail to arrange)

*This syllabus is subject to change as appropriate and necessary. Updates will be posted on Canvas.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Understanding Audiences provides an overview of the nature of media audiences and their behaviors, as well as industry and scholarly measurement practices and applications. While applicable to a variety of media majors, this course will expose you to the processes of acquiring, evaluating, and analyzing information for advertising decisions. Understanding Audiences emphasizes understanding the scientific method, developing explicit and measurable research objectives, selecting appropriate methodologies, and analyzing data.

COURSE PREREQUISITE: Junior standing or higher

COURSE OBJECTIVES

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

1. Explain the concept of audience from both practical and theoretical perspectives.
2. Understand motivations of audience behavior and how to identify audience preferences.
3. Compare and contrast the mass audience, niche audiences, and market segments and the various approaches to serving these audiences

4. Explain the role technology, including artificial intelligence, plays in audience development and research
5. Interpret secondary data (e.g. audience metrics) to identify patterns and trends in media usage, and apply this information effectively and strategically.
6. Demonstrate knowledge and competency with audience analysis tools and media industry-based resources.
7. Analyze audience-related challenges creatively and strategically in order to successfully approach and solve industry problems.
8. Understand best practices for serving diverse audiences.
9. Understand some of the ethical implications in audience research today and ethical best practices.

REQUIRED READINGS

Course Textbooks:
1. Sullivan, J.L. (2020). *Media audiences: Effects, users, institutions, and power (2nd Ed.)*. SAGE Publications, Inc.
2. Napoli, P. M. (2010). *Audience evolution: New technologies and the transformation of media audiences*. Columbia University Press. (Available online through UF Libraries) Access Link
3. Webster, J. G. (2014). *The marketplace of attention: How audiences take shape in a digital age*. MIT Press. (Available online through UF Libraries) Access Link

Additional readings and videos will be provided on Canvas.

Reading Expectations: The best predictor of success in this course is how much time you spend reading assigned materials. The course is designed so that (a) lectures elaborate on and supplement the readings, (b) assignments make use of concepts and processes articulated in the readings, and (c) quizzes ask about concepts from readings, lectures, assignments, and videos.

COURSE FORMAT

This course is 100% on Canvas. Canvas will be used to facilitate course communication, grading, and feedback and is where you will find all lecture videos, readings, videos, and assignment details. Since online assignments are the primary interaction tools of this class, it is very important for you to keep up with all the assignments due (which will be submitted via Canvas). Canvas can remind you of up-coming due dates. Please check the site daily for announcements and/or threads of comments from either classmates or the instructor.

ASSIGNMENTS

To help you meet the goals of this course, you will be evaluated in a variety of ways, including quizzes, reflection essays, discussion posts, and a Class Project.

Quizzes (20% of grade): To ensure a foundational understanding of course content, five quizzes will be given over the course of the semester. These quizzes will be taken on Canvas and are open book. 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 need to be completed by 11:59pm on the last day of the quiz module's week. For example, if you have a quiz during the Module 2 week, that quiz will need to be completed by 11:59pm on the last day of this module's week. **Please note that no collaboration with other students is allowed for these quizzes.**

Reflection Essays (20% of grade): These brief papers (five total) will give you the opportunity to grapple with course concepts and demonstrate what you have learned from the readings and lectures. More specific instructions will be provided on Canvas for each reflection essay.

Discussion Posts (20% of grade): These discussion posts (10 total) will allow you to interact with your classmates by first sharing your perspective, research proposal, conceptual definition, etc. with everyone and then sharing constructive feedback on your classmates' posts. When posting on the discussion board:
- Check to see if anyone already asked your question and received a reply before posting to the discussion board.
- Remember your manners and say please and thank you when asking something of your classmates or instructor.
- Be open-minded.
- If you ask a question and many people respond, summarize all posts for the benefit of the class.
- When posting:
  - Make posts that are on-topic and within the scope of the course material.
  - Be sure to read all messages in a thread before replying.
  - Be as brief as possible while still making a thorough comment.
  - Don't repeat someone else's post without adding something of your own to it.
  - Take your posts seriously. Review and edit your posts before sending.
  - Avoid short, generic replies such as, "I agree." You should include why you agree or add to the previous point.

- o If you refer to something that was said in an earlier post, quote a few key lines so readers do not have to go back and figure out which post you are referring to.
- o Always give proper credit when referencing or quoting another source.
- o If you reply to a classmate's question, make sure your answer is correct, don't guess.
- o Always be respectful of others' opinions even when they differ from your own.
- o When you disagree with someone, you should express your differing opinion in a respectful, non-critical way.
- o Do not make personal or insulting remarks.
- o Do not write anything sarcastic or angry, it always backfires.
- o Do not type in ALL CAPS, if you do IT WILL LOOK LIKE YOU ARE YELLING.

Class Project (40% of grade): You will develop a promotional pitch to a client. The project will help develop strong secondary research skills and familiarity with writing a professional proposal. At the end of the semester, you will provide a written proposal and presentation of your pitch. This project entails a number of deliverables over the course of the semester, so get started as soon as possible. More details can be found on Canvas regarding each specific deliverable.

1. Phase #1: Media Entity Selection
2. Phase #2: Media Entity Overview Draft
3. Phase #3: Audience Analysis Draft
4. Phase #4: Company Selection
5. Phase #5: Company Overview Draft
6. Phase #6: Full Written Proposal and Presentation

USING APA STYLE IN YOUR WRITING

All written assignments are expected to follow APA Style, the formatting and citation guidelines developed by the American Psychological Association. APA Style is widely used in academic writing to ensure clarity, consistency, and proper attribution of sources—helping writers avoid plagiarism.

Although a printed version of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association is available, the official APA Style website (https://apastyle.apa.org) offers free and up-to-date guidance. Please peruse the website, specifically paying attention to in-text citations and end-of-submission References listings.

See also a sample student paper provided by APA, which illustrates proper formatting and citation practices. It is a valuable reference that you may want to save for future use: https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/paper-format/student-annotated.pdf

GRADING

There are 250 points possible for this course.

Point Distribution

Assignment	Possible Points
Quizzes (10 points per quiz x 5)	50
Reflection Essays (10 points per essay x 5)	50
Discussion Posts (5 points per discussion x 10)	50
Class Project • Phase #1 (5 points) • Phase #2 (10 points) • Phase #3 (10 points) • Phase #4 (5 points) • Phase #5 (10 points) • Phase #6 (60 points)	100

Points to Letter Grade Comparison

Total Earned Points for the Semester	Letter Grade Equivalent
233-250	A
225-232	A-
218-224	B+
208-217	B
200-207	B-
193-199	C+
183-192	C
175-182	C-
168-174	D+
158-167	D
150-157	D-
0-149	F

UF Grading Policy - More information about the University of Florida's grading policies may be found here: Grades and Grading Policies

COURSE EVALUATION

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online. Students can complete evaluations in three ways:

1. The email they receive from GatorEvals
2. Their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals
3. The central portal at https://my-ufl.bluera.com

Guidance on how to provide constructive feedback is available at https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/.

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 an assignment on time, please follow the university's policies and guidelines listed below and communicate your situation to the instructor promptly.

- Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in the course are consistent with university policies. See UF Academic Regulations and Policies for more information regarding the University Attendance Policies.

- Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the Disability Resource Center. See the "Get Started With the DRC" webpage on the Disability Resource Center site. 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.

- Any requests for make-ups (assignments, exams, etc.) due to technical issues should be accompanied by the ticket number received from the UF Computing Help Desk when the problem was reported to them. The ticket number will document the time and date of the problem. You should email your instructor within 24 hours of the technical difficulty if you wish to request a make-up.

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 online classroom.

Netiquette and Communication Courtesy – It is important to recognize that the online classroom is in fact a classroom, and certain behaviors are expected when you communicate with both your peers and your instructors. These guidelines for online behavior and interaction are known as netiquette. Remember that your password is the only thing protecting you from pranks or more serious harm.

- Don't share your password with anyone.
- Change your password if you think someone else might know it.
- Always log out when you are finished using the system.

When communicating online:
- Treat the instructor with respect, even via email or in any other online communication.
- Always use your professors' proper title: Dr. or Prof., or if you are unsure use Mr. or Ms.
- Unless specifically invited, don't refer to a professor by their first name.
- Use clear and concise language.
- Remember that all college-level communication should have correct spelling and grammar.
- Avoid slang terms such as "wassup?" and texting abbreviations such as "u" instead of "you."
- Use standard fonts such as Times New Roman and use a size 12 or 14-point font.
- Avoid using the caps lock feature AS IT CAN BE INTERPRETED AS YELLING.
- Limit and possibly avoid the use of emoticons like :).
- Be cautious when using humor or sarcasm as tone is sometimes lost in an email or discussion post and your message might be taken seriously or be construed as being offensive.
- Be careful with personal information (both yours and others).
- Do not send confidential information via email.

When you send an email to your instructor, teaching assistant, or classmates:
- Use a descriptive subject line.
- Be brief.
- Avoid attachments unless you are sure your recipients can open them.
- Avoid HTML in favor of plain text.
- Sign your message with your name and return email address.
- Think before you send the email to more than one person. Does everyone really need to see your message?
- Be sure you REALLY want everyone to receive your response when you click, "Reply All."

- Be sure that the message author intended for the information to be passed along before you click the "Forward" button.

When attending a Zoom meeting:
- Do not share your Zoom classroom link or password with others.
- Even though you may be alone at home, your professor and classmates can see you! While attending class in your pajamas is tempting, remember that wearing clothing is not optional. Dress appropriately.
- Your professor and classmates can also see what is behind you, so be aware of your surroundings.
- Make sure the background is not distracting or something you would not want your classmates to see.
  - When in doubt use a virtual background. If you choose to use one, you should test the background out first to make sure your device can support it.
  - Your background can express your personality, but be sure to avoid using backgrounds that may contain offensive images and language.
- Mute is your friend, especially when you are in a location that can be noisy. Don't leave your microphone open if you don't have to.
- If you want to speak, you can raise your hand (click the "raise hand" button at the center bottom of your screen) and wait to be called upon.

Response Time – The instructor will aim to respond to all emails within 24 hours during the normal business week (Monday – Friday).

Tips for Success - Taking a course online can be a lot of fun! Here are some tips that will help you get the most of this course while taking full advantage of the online format:
- Schedule "class times" for yourself. It is important to do the coursework on time each week. You will receive a reduction in points for work that is turned in late!
- Read ALL of the material contained on this site. There is a lot of helpful information that can save you time and help you meet the objectives of the course.
- Print out the Course Summary located in the Course Syllabus and check things off as you go.
- Take full advantage of the online discussion boards. Ask for help or clarification of the material if you need it.
- Do not wait to ask questions! Waiting to ask a question might cause you to miss a due date.
- Do your work well before the due dates. Sometimes things happen. If your computer goes down when you are trying to submit an assignment, you'll need time to troubleshoot the problem.
- To be extra safe, back up your work to an external hard drive, thumb drive, or through a cloud service.

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA POLICIES AND RESOURCES

For the latest update, see: Academic Policies & 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 Conduct Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. See the UF Conduct Code website for more information. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor in this class.

Accommodations: Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the Disability Resource Center. See the "Get Started With the DRC" webpage on the Disability Resource Center site. 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.

Academic Resources:

- E-learning technical support: Contact the UF Computing Help Desk at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at 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. Call 866-281-6309 or email ask@ufl.libanswers.com for more information.
- Academic Resources: 1317 Turlington Hall, Call 352-392-2010, or to make a private appointment: 352- 392-6420. Email contact: teaching-center@ufl.edu. General study skills and tutoring.
- Writing Studio: Daytime (9:30am-3:30pm): 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138 | Evening (5:00pm-7:00pm): 1545 W University Avenue (Library West, Rm. 339). Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.
- Academic Complaints: Office of the Ombuds; Visit the Complaint Portal webpage for more information.
- Enrollment Management Complaints (Registrar, Financial Aid, Admissions): View the Student Complaint Procedure webpage for more information.
- UF Student Success Initiative: Visit https://studentsuccess.ufl.edu/ for resources that support your success as a UF student.
- Public Speaking Lab: (Dial Center, 501 Rolfs Hall). Offering online and in-person help developing, organizing, and practicing oral presentations. Contact email: publicspeakinglab@clas.ufl.edu.

Technical Difficulties:

For help with technical issues or difficulties with Canvas, please contact the UF Computing Help Desk at:

- https://it.ufl.edu/helpdesk/
- 352-392-HELP (4357)
- Walk-in: HUB 132

Health and Wellness Resources:

UF Whole Gator Resources: Visit https://one.uf.edu/whole-gator/discover for resources that are designed to help you thrive physically, mentally, and emotionally at UF.

Privacy and Accessibility Policies:

For information about the privacy policies of the tools used in this course, see the links below:

- Instructure (Canvas)
  - Instructure Privacy Policy
  - Instructure Accessibility
- Microsoft
  - Microsoft Privacy Policy
  - Microsoft Accessibility
- YouTube (Google)
  - YouTube (Google) Privacy Policy
  - YouTube (Google) Accessibility
- Zoom
  - Zoom Privacy Policy
  - Zoom Accessibility

CLASS SCHEDULE

Week	Dates (Mon-Sun)	Topic	Assignment
Week 1	Jan 12-18	Course Orientation	- Introduce Yourself - Course Orientation Quiz
Week 2	Jan 19-25	Module 1	Reflection Essay #1

		Audiences 101	• Discussion: What Is an Audience?
Week 3	Jan 26-Feb 1	Module 2 Theoretical Approaches to Understanding Audiences	• Quiz #1 (on Modules 1 & 2) • Discussion: Media Theory in Real Life
Week 4	Feb 2-8	Module 3 Reception Contexts and Media Rituals	• Reflection Essay #2 • Discussion: It's All in the Family: Familial Context of Media Use
Week 5	Feb 9-15	Module 4 Political Audiences and Voters: Public Opinion History and Measurement	• Class Project Phase #1: Media Entity Selection • Quiz #2 (on Modules 3 & 4) • Discussion: "And the Survey Says": Thinking through Strategic Survey Design
Week 6	Feb 16-22	Module 5 Audience Measurement	• Reflection Essay #3 • Discussion – Audience Measurement Proposal
Week 7	Feb 23-Mar 1	Module 6 Media Ratings, Market Segmentation, and Political Economy	• Class Project Phase #2: Media Entity Overview Draft • Quiz #3 (on Modules 5 & 6)
Week 8	Mar 2-8	Module 7 Online Audiences in a Digital World: Social Media Audiences, Datafication, and Social Television	• Class Project Phase #3: Audience Analysis Draft • Creating a Social TV Campaign Proposal
Week 9	Mar 9-15	Module 8 Audience Engagement	• Class Project Phase #4: Company Selection • Reflection Essay #4 • Quiz #4 (on Modules 7 & 8)
Week 10	Mar 16-22	Spring Break (No Class)	
Week 11	Mar 23-29	Module 9 Technology and the Audience: AI Considerations	• Class Project Phase #5: Company Overview Draft • Discussion – Smarter than AI?: Testing ChatGPT's Knowledge of Course Content
Week 12	Mar 30-Apr 5	Module 10 Media Fandom and Fan Culture	• Reflection Essay #5: Media Fandom Analysis

			· Discussion – I'm a Big Fan: Lived Experiences of Fandom
Week 13	Apr 6-12	Module 11 Positive Media Psychology	· Discussion – From Anecdote to Analysis: Propose a Positive Media Psychology Study Based on Your Media Use · QUIZ #5 (on Modules 9, 10 & 11)
Week 14	Apr 13-19	Module 12 Serving Diverse Audiences: Ethics and Global Media Audiences	· Class Project Phase #6: Full Written Proposal
Week 15	Apr 20-26	Class Project	· Class Project Phase #6: Presentation