SYLLABUS
Psy 386: Media Psychology
Summer 2013

Instructors:

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Dr. Douglas Gentile
(video lectures feature Dr. Gentile)

Course Design:

What is this course about?  The media have profound effects on people on multiple levels, including on cognitive, emotional, social, academic, and health outcomes. Media psychology is a growing discipline that seeks to understand why and how the media have these effects. This course will cover media’s effects on brain development, developmental stages, cognitive biases, stereotypes, emotions, attitudes, and behaviors. These include advertising effects, media violence effects, effects of the portrayal of women and minorities, video game effects, multi-tasking effects, educational media, and effects on school performance. After taking this course, students will understand both general and domain-specific theories of media effects from a psychological perspective, including learning theories, aggression theories, cultivation theory, developmental tasks, etc. They will understand specific psychological mechanisms by which advertising has effects and be able to apply this knowledge to other media effects.

This course is different from many because it is primarily teaching critical thinking about the media. That is, I am not trying to get you to memorize lots of details or content – instead, I want you to leave this class able to see through the tricks the media try to use with us. Because of that, there are no big tests, but lots of short papers so that you can practice and demonstrate your critical thinking skills.

Required readings:  Most of the readings will come from the two required books, available for purchase at the bookstore (or on Amazon, etc.):


Additional readings will be assigned from other books/journals.
COURSE OBJECTIVES

✓ Gain an awareness of the prevalence and uses of media in the lives of children and adolescents
✓ Understand the major theories of how media influences children and adolescents
✓ Learn about existing research on the effects of media on child and adolescent attitudes, cognitive development, behaviors, and emotional and physical well-being
✓ Become familiar with different methodologies used to study media effects
✓ Acquire an appreciation of how individual differences (e.g., sex, age) can moderate the effects of media
✓ Be able to critically analyze research on media effects
✓ Explore the potential role of parents and policymakers in moderating the effects of media
✓ Demonstrate critical thinking with regard to the media and your responses to the media

COURSE POLICIES

Attendance: It’s an online course, dude. You don’t need to show up anywhere!

What is expected of students in this course? You are expected to complete all required course readings. You will be completing projects and reaction papers, based on the class reading materials and videos. More detail about these papers can be found in the section on grading and assignments.

All projects must be completed as scheduled; there will be no extensions given for the completion of any assignment except in cases of documented illness or family emergency. If an assignment is not turned in by the due date, you will receive a grade of “zero” for that assignment unless prior arrangements have been made with me.

Assignments are to be submitted via blackboard, not email.

If you have any questions or concerns about my expectations for your writing, please speak with me as soon as possible. The writing centers on campus are an excellent resource for honing your writing skills; please make use of them whenever necessary.
CLASS PROCEDURES

How to Succeed: Do what’s assigned, by the course deadlines. Duh!

Also, it’s probably best not to skip around, but to do everything in the order suggested…later lectures and assignments often build on earlier ones, and the due dates go in order. Once the due date for a unit has passed, you cannot complete the quizzes and projects for that unit.

***I strongly suggest you do not wait until the last day to begin work on a new unit. Units vary in terms of the amount of time you will need to complete them with some requiring more work-time than you might have in just one day.

WHAT YOU HAVE TO COMPLETE

The following are the assignments you will hand in or participate in to have graded:

1. Projects and Reaction Papers: There are many projects or reaction papers due. Almost all will be graded as acceptable or not acceptable. This grade is final, although in very rare cases, you may be told that a project was not acceptable but will be given a chance to revise it to be acceptable.

2. Quizzes: There will be 5-item quizzes on most of the readings. These are based on the readings, and are open-book. Therefore, you should be able to get all answers correct. The readings that have quizzes are listed below with [QUIZ]

What are the Projects and Reaction Papers? On the dates indicated on the course schedule, you will be expected to turn in a reaction paper that covers the assigned topic. Reaction papers are “thought papers,” based on the readings you have done, videos you have watched, and your own experiences. Each reaction paper will have questions assigned for you to consider.

You are not expected to consult outside sources for your reaction papers, but you are welcome to do so if you would like. If you use another source, please include a reference (book title and author, article citation, or web address).

Where noted, all reaction papers are expected to be between 3 and 5 pages long (using a 12 point standard font – Times, Calibri, Cambria, or Verdana (11pt max) – double-spaced with 1-inch margins). ***Projects where there is no indication of an acceptable length requirement may be as long or as short as you like…as long as you're satisfying the requirements (i.e., addressing everything in the directions/instructions thoroughly) of said project/paper/assignment. The point of having a length requirement on some papers and projects is that since we don't meet in a group, and we can't see how you are thinking, that's long enough for you to show us what your thoughts are. One or two pages usually doesn't show much independent thinking, but usually results only in repeating/paraphrasing whatever the reading/lecture material is, and more than 5 pages starts making it more than a reaction paper. As long as you show us your thinking, and you have something relevant to say about the specific topic, you will get full credit. If you were to write about something irrelevant or not really show us your thoughts and/or thought process, then no credit is given. If it looks like a student is using a big font (e.g.: Arial, Lucida Grande or any large/bold fonts) or margins just to stretch to 3 pages, we cannot give credit. We're interested in seeing what you're learning and how the material is changing the
way you look at media and the world. In grading the projects/papers, we don't tend to make many comments, because we're not looking for one "right" answer, but trying to understand your perspective.

**All of the reaction papers will be graded as acceptable (full points) or not acceptable (no points).** There is no partial credit. Although the reaction papers are not formal papers (in that you do not have to do additional research, provide references, etc.), your writing will be factored into your grade. You may write in the first person, but your grammar, spelling, punctuation, and tone should meet college-level writing standards. If you have any questions about this, please ask. If you want help with your writing, contact ISU’s Writing and Media Help Center at http://new.dso.iastate.edu/asc/wmhc, 300 Carver Hall, 515-294-5411, writectr@iastate.edu. If English is not your first language, we highly recommend that you make use of this free resource by getting all of your projects/papers evaluated before you turn them in.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

**Unit 1 – Child Development and Media – ALL COMPLETED BY FRIDAY 5/24 @5pm**
(40 points available)

*Read:* Strasburger, Wilson, & Jordan (hereafter shortened to SWJ) Chapter 1 [QUIZ]
*Watch:* Lecture 1 – Introduction (15m)

**Complete:** Project 1 (Reaction Paper - Chart time with media)
*Watch:* Lecture 2 – Brain Development and Media (17m)
*Watch:* Lecture 3 – Children’s Thinking (20m)

*Read:* Gentile Chapter 2 [QUIZ]
*Watch:* Lecture 4 – Children’s Developmental Tasks (20m)

*Read:* Dill Chapter 1: Fantasy and Reality – a Primer on Media and Social Construction

**Complete:** Project 2 (Reaction Paper - Watch sitcom)

**Complete:** Project 3 (Cultivation: Script Outlines)

**Unit 2 – Advertising – ALL COMPLETED BY FRIDAY 5/31 @5pm**
(50 points available)

*Read:* SWJ Chapter 2 - Advertising [QUIZ]
*Watch:* Lecture 5 – Psychology of Advertising 1 (46m)

**Complete:** Project 4 (Unconscious Shortcuts – see handout)
*Watch:* Lecture 6 – Psychology of Advertising 2 (Deconstructing Ads) (8m)
*Watch:* Consuming Kids

**Complete:** Project 5 (Reaction Paper – Consuming Kids)

*Read:* Dill Chapter 6: Advertising, Consumerism, and Health
*Watch:* Lecture 7 – Psychology of Advertising 3 (15m)

*Read:* Language of Persuasion Handout [QUIZ]

**Complete:** Project 6 (Ad Deconstruction)

*Read:* Comstock & Scharrer, Pages 189-202
*Watch:* The Story of Stuff
*Watch:* Lecture 8 – Dual Process Theory & Heuristics (34m)
*Watch:* Advertising and the End of the World

**Complete:** Project 7 (Reaction Paper – Advertising and the End of the World)
Unit 3 – Educational and Prosocial Media – ALL COMPLETED BY FRIDAY 6/7 @5pm
(30 points)
Read: SWJ Chapter 3 – Educational Media [QUIZ]
Watch: Lecture 9 – Learning Theories (32m)
Read: Maier & Gentile – Learning Aggression through the Media: Comparing Psychological and Communication Approaches, pages 267-288
Read: SWJ Chapter 4 – Prosocial Effects of Media [QUIZ]
Watch: Lecture 10 – Educational & Prosocial Media (15m)
Complete: Project 8 (Reaction Paper – Educational Media Evaluation)
Watch: Trekkies
Complete: Project 9 (Reaction Paper - Trekkies)

Unit 4 – Media Violence – ALL COMPLETED BY FRIDAY 6/14 @5pm
(50 points)
Read: Gentile Chapter 5 – The Role of Theory in the Study of Media Violence: The General Aggression Model [QUIZ]
Complete: Project 10 (Reaction Paper – Initial Thoughts)
Read: Gentile Chapter 3 – Media Effects on Societies and Communities
Complete: Project 11 (Reaction Paper – Your Memories)
Read: SWJ Chapter 5 – Media Violence [QUIZ]
Watch: Lecture 11 – Media Violence 1, Parts 1 and 2 (36 & 24 m)
Read: Gentile Chapter 10 – Media and Fear in Children and Adolescents
Watch: Lecture 12 – The Catharsis Hypothesis (12m)
Watch: Lecture 13 – Media Violence 2: Fear Reactions (8m)
Read: Gentile Chapter 11 – The Contribution of Meta-Analysis to the Controversy over Television Violence [QUIZ]
Read: Gentile Chapter 6 – The Case against the Case against Media Violence [QUIZ]
Watch: Lecture 14 – Media Violence 3: Risk and Resilience (26m)
Complete: Project 12 (Reaction Paper - Desensitization)

Unit 5 – Sex & Drugs – ALL COMPLETED BY FRIDAY 6/21 @5pm
(30 points)
Read: SWJ Chapter 6 – Sexuality and the Media [QUIZ]
Complete: Project 13 (Sexuality and the Media)
Read: SWJ Chapter 7 – Drugs and the Media [QUIZ]
Complete: Project 14 (Drugs and the Movies)

Unit 6 – Rock & Roll – ALL COMPLETED BY FRIDAY 6/21 @5pm
(40 points)
Read: Gentile Chapter 8 – The Effects of Violent Music on Children and Adolescents [QUIZ]
Watch: Lecture 15 – Communication Theories (19m)
Complete: Project 15 (Reaction Paper – Music Uses and Gratifications)
Read: SWJ Chapter 8 – Rock Music and Music Videos [QUIZ]
Watch: Lecture 16 – Music Effects (12m)

Warning! Units 5 & 6 (Sex & Drugs & Rock & Roll) are both due on 6/21 at 5 pm
Complete: Project 16/17 (Public Service Announcement)

Unit 7 – Video Games & the Internet – ALL COMPLETED BY FRIDAY 6/28 @5pm
(40 points)
Watch: Lecture 17 – Zero to Video Games in 100 seconds (2m)
Read: SWJ Chapter 10 – Video Games [QUIZ]
Complete: Project 18 (Reaction Paper – Video Game Evaluation)
Watch: Lecture 18 – Brain Development 2 & Violent Video Games 1 (15m)
Watch: Lecture 19 – Violent Video Games 2 – PART 1 (26m) & PART 2 (22m)
Watch: Lecture 20 – Violent Video Games 3 (35m)
Watch: Lecture 21 – Prosocial Video Games (13m)
Watch: Lecture 22 – Risk & Resilience 2 (11m)
Complete: Project 19 (Reaction Paper – Video Game Play) [Unit 7 contd. on next page…]
Watch: Lecture 23 – Video Game and Internet Addiction (44m)
Read: SWJ Chapter 11 – The Internet [QUIZ]
Watch: Lecture 24 – Media, Multitasking and ADHD (30m)
Read: Gentile (2011) The multiple dimensions of video game effects
Watch: Lecture 25 – Five Dimensions of Game Effects (28m)
Complete: Project 20 (Reaction Paper – Video Game/Internet Addiction)

Unit 8 – Media’s Portrayal of Women – ALL COMPLETED BY FRIDAY 7/5 @5pm
(30 points)
Read: SWJ Chapter 9 – Eating and Eating Disorders [QUIZ]
Watch: Lecture 26 – Media’s Portrayal of Women (42m)
Watch: Miss Representation Trailer (9m)
Complete: Project 21 (Media’s Portrayal of Women)
Read: Dill Chapter 4 – Seeing Through and Seeing Beyond Media Visions of Race and Gender [QUIZ]
Watch: Killing us Softly 4 Trailer (5m)
Watch: Dying to be Thin Part 1 (6m)
Optional: Watch Dying to be Thin Part 2 (10m)
Complete: Project 22 (Body Image)

Unit 9 – Public Policy – ALL COMPLETED BY FRIDAY 7/12 @5pm
(25 points)
Watch: Lecture 27 – The Power of Parents (16m)
Read: SWJ Chapter 12 – The Family and Media [QUIZ]
Watch: Lecture 28 – Public Policy & Ratings (47m)
Complete: Project 23 (Media and Public Policy Debates)
Read: SWJ Chapter 13 – Media Literacy/Media Education: Solution to Big Media?
Watch: Lecture 29 – Final thoughts on Fantasy and Reality (22m)
Complete: Project 24 (What Has Changed?)
GRADING

We will grade each project as acceptable or not acceptable. Each acceptable project is worth 10 points, and unacceptable ones are worth zero.

We will grade each quiz as acceptable or not acceptable. Because the quizzes are open book, there is no reason you shouldn’t get all five questions correct. If you get 4 or 5 items on a quiz correct, it will be marked as acceptable and you will receive all five points. If you get 3 or fewer, it will be marked as unacceptable and worth zero points.

Final grades will be assigned based on the following distribution (%age followed by points):

- **A**: 93-100%  
  310-335
- **A-**: 90-92%  
  300-309
- **B+**: 87-89%  
  290-299
- **B**: 83-86%  
  277-289
- **B-**: 80-82%  
  267-276
- **C+**: 77-79%  
  257-266
- **C**: 73-76%  
  243-256
- **C-**: 70-72%  
  233-242
- **D+**: 67-69%  
  223-232
- **D**: 63-66%  
  210-222
- **F**: 00-63%  
  000-209

Grades will be based primarily on project participation, and proof of reading the assigned chapters as measured by the quizzes. That means that everyone can get an A. You will just need to do the readings and turn in every project at an acceptable level. Therefore, the grade you earn is based almost entirely on how much you participate. There are 335 possible points if you complete all projects acceptably and score at least 4 out of 5 right on every quiz. Therefore, for example, you can miss two projects and one quiz and still get a solid A (based on the distribution above).

DEPARTMENT AND UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND REQUIREMENTS

**Incompletes:** In accordance with our department’s policy, a grade of “I” or “incomplete” will not be given in this course except under extremely unusual circumstances. Online courses are much more difficult than in-person classes, because you cannot get the same level of help or support from the instructor. If you’re doing poorly in the course, **do not wait until the end of the session to speak to me!** I will not give you an incomplete, but I will help you to focus your study of the material required for the course. If you are having problems with the material, see me right away.

**Academic Dishonesty:** As would be expected in any other course at the University, your conduct in this course should conform to the spirit as well as the letter of the code of student conduct and honesty. Scholastic dishonesty is defined as “any act that violates the rights of another student with respect to academic work or that involves misrepresentation of a student’s own work.” Scholastic dishonesty includes (but is not limited to):

- **Cheating** – Using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic work submitted for credit. This includes: (1) receiving answers or information from another student during an exam, (2) using notes during an exam, (3) tampering with an exam after it has been corrected, or (4) collaborating with other students on assignments, except in cases where this is encouraged.
Plagiarism – Submission of academic work for credit that includes material copied or paraphrased from published or unpublished works without documentation. This includes: (1) submitting a paper or assignment that you did not write, (2) submitting a paper that you wrote for another class, or (3) copying or paraphrasing material from a book or other source without acknowledging the source. If you copy the author’s words exactly, the text should be put in quotation marks and cited with a name, year, and page number. If you paraphrase the author’s words, a citation still needs to be given (name and year only). Please consult the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (2001) for guidelines for correct citations.

A good rule to follow is: if you use five or more words in a row from some source, you should put them in quotation marks and give the reference. If you paraphrase someone else’s words, you do not need quotation marks, but you still need to give the reference. There is no stigma for using someone else’s ideas—you cannot come up with every good idea on your own! It is dishonest, however, to have taken an idea from someone else and to then pass it off as your own. If you are in doubt, give the reference.

Fabrication – Deliberate falsification or invention of any information or citation in academic work. This includes: (1) making up facts for an assignment, or (2) making up a citation for a fact

Facilitating academic dishonesty – Knowingly helping or attempting to help another to violate the college’s policy on academic dishonesty. This includes assisting someone in any of the above activities.

Any case of scholastic dishonesty will result in a grade of zero for that assignment at a minimum, and may result in a failing grade for the course. All cases of scholastic dishonesty will be reported to the Dean of Academic Affairs. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated in this course.

Disabilities: It is University policy to provide, on a flexible and individualized basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have disabilities that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. Students with special needs are invited to contact me to discuss any arrangements that may be needed to facilitate successful completion of this course.
### ONLINE RESOURCES

**Additional Resources:** The following is a list of resources that may supplement your coursework and augment your assigned readings. Next time you find yourself “web-surfing” for a while, check out the following sites:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource Description</th>
<th>URL</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Center on Media and Child Health</td>
<td><a href="http://www.cmch.tv">www.cmch.tv</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Adbusters</td>
<td><a href="http://www.adbusters.org">www.adbusters.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mediascope</td>
<td><a href="http://www.mediascope.org">www.mediascope.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>FCC's children's educational television website</td>
<td>dettifoss.fcc.gov:8080/prod/kidvid/prod/kidvid.htm</td>
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<tr>
<td>HomeNet</td>
<td>homenet.andrew.cmu.edu/progress/</td>
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<tr>
<td>Media Channel</td>
<td><a href="http://www.mediachannel.org">www.mediachannel.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>The DMA's guide to online basics, behavior, and privacy</td>
<td><a href="http://www.cybersavvy.org">www.cybersavvy.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Television resources</td>
<td><a href="http://www.iaw.on.ca/~rohaly/tvschedule/tvmain.html">www.iaw.on.ca/~rohaly/tvschedule/tvmain.html</a></td>
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<td>Center for the analysis of commercialism in education</td>
<td><a href="http://www.uwm.edu:80/Dept/CACE">www.uwm.edu:80/Dept/CACE</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Project Looksharp</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ithaca.edu/looksharp">www.ithaca.edu/looksharp</a></td>
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<td>Society for Research in Child Development</td>
<td><a href="http://www.srcd.org">www.srcd.org</a></td>
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<td>Ad Critic</td>
<td><a href="http://www.adcritic.com">www.adcritic.com</a></td>
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<td>Mental Engineering</td>
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<td>Television Commercials.com</td>
<td><a href="http://www.televisioncommercials.com">www.televisioncommercials.com</a></td>
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<td>Ad Age</td>
<td><a href="http://www.adage.com/news_and_features/special_reports/commercials">www.adage.com/news_and_features/special_reports/commercials</a></td>
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<td>Commercial Archive</td>
<td><a href="http://www.commercial-archive.com">www.commercial-archive.com</a> - may be down</td>
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<tr>
<td>Child Trends:</td>
<td><a href="http://www.childtrends.org">www.childtrends.org</a></td>
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<td>Children Now:</td>
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<td>Children’s Defense Fund:</td>
<td><a href="http://www.childrensdefense.org">www.childrensdefense.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Kids Count:</td>
<td><a href="http://www.aecf.org">www.aecf.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Children, Youth, and Family Consortium:</td>
<td>cyfc.extension.umn.edu/index.html</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN Convention on the Rights of the Child:</td>
<td><a href="http://www.unicef.org/crc">www.unicef.org/crc</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Search Institute:</td>
<td><a href="http://www.search-institute.org">www.search-institute.org</a></td>
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1. We can (and will!) criticize ideas, but not the people who state them.
2. Our goal is to arrive at sound and carefully considered decisions. Our goal is not to “win.”
3. Everyone is encouraged to participate.
4. Everyone’s ideas are worth listening to, even if we do not agree.
5. If someone’s comments are not clear, we should either paraphrase or ask them to clarify.
6. We will try to understand and explore both sides of each issue.
7. We should acknowledge that racism, classism, sexism, and other forms of oppression exist.
8. We should recognize that the perpetuation of “-isms” has much to do with misinformation about both our own group and members of other groups.
9. We should not blame ourselves or other people for the misinformation we (or they) have learned.
10. We should not repeat misinformation once we have learned otherwise.
11. We will not “blame victims” for the condition of their own lives.
12. We will assume that people always do the best they can in the situation at hand.
13. We will actively pursue information about our own group and other groups.
14. We will combat myths and stereotypes about our own groups and those of other people.
15. We will create a safe atmosphere for open discussion.
16. We will protect confidences for our colleagues in class and will not repeat personal information about them outside of class.