

Psychology Applied to the Media (Fall 2019)
PSY 349
T-TH 2:30-3:45 (LH 142)

Prof. Eaaron Henderson-King

e-mail -- henderse@gvsu.edu

phone -- 331-2938

Office Location: ASH 2206

Office Hours -- T & TH (9:00-10:00 am) or by appointment

Text – Pratkanis & Aronson (2000) Age of Propaganda: The Everyday Use and Abuse of Persuasion.

Additional readings will be on Blackboard

Films:

The Corporation (2003) -- <https://www.filmsforaction.org/watch/the-corporation/> (due 9/17)

Bill Moyers Journal: Buying the War (2007) <https://vimeo.com/33033186> (due 11/14)

The War You Don't See (Pliger, 2010) <https://vimeo.com/67739294> (due 11/14)

Course Description:

In this course, we will examine the psychology behind the relationship between the individual and the media. We will explore whether and how the media influences people's perceptions of themselves, others, and the world in which they live. Yet, the relationship between the media and its audience is by no means unidirectional, the audience has a profound effect on the media. Consequently, we will also discuss how people influence what is presented in the media.

This semester, one focus of the course will be on how the media covered the Flint water crisis, and how the coverage served to shape people's interest in and knowledge of the crisis. One consequence of the crisis was that the community needed to use bottled water for the vast majority of their daily needs. While this was essential, very little information regarding the impact of this was communicated to the public.

Water Project:

This project will revolve around the use of bottled water as the primary means of addressing the Flint water crisis. Specifically, people's concerns about issues are often a function of their existing attitude, how often the issue is discussed and how much knowledge they have about the topic, while there was some discussion of the number of

plastic bottles used during the crisis in academic journals, little attention was given to this plastic on either the local, national, or international level in the popular press. Thus, an issue that people should consider went unnoticed. Your project should, using course concepts, readings, and theories, make this aspect of the Flint water crisis noticed to some segment of the population. Questions like who needed them and who didn't; what happened to the plastic bottles that were used in the crisis; what were some of the possible environmental effects of having to use such bottles; what do people know about the environmental costs of the crisis; and how was this covered in the media can be addressed.

The project should use social media to communicate the human and/or environmental costs associated with having to have used plastic water bottles as a stopgap measure. The project must be grounded in the theories and principles discussed in the course materials. That is, essential aspects of the project must be connected to what you have read and learned about in the class.

There will be two parts to the project. The first part is a five-page paper in which you discuss the concepts, theories and research that you used in developing, producing, and disseminating the documentary/investigative report.

The second part of the project is the actual product. This can be a short documentary or investigative report (in an audio, a video, or a text format) that you disseminate on-line and then gauge people's responses to.

If you choose, the project can be conducted in a small group.

Grading of paper and project:

The paper will be graded on your understanding of the concepts, theories and research you discuss, your discussion of how each of these informed your project, and how you use these to discuss how people reacted to your video/investigation.

The video/investigative report will be graded based on how well it covers the issue being explored and the extent to which it relates to the course material.

Course Objectives:

Upon successful completion of this course students will be able to:

1. Explain the psychology behind the relationship between the individual and the media.
2. Describe whether and how the media influences people's perceptions of themselves, others, and the world in which they live.
3. Describe how people influence what is presented in the media.
4. Describe some of the ways that the relationship between the media and its audience is bidirectional.

Important Notes on the Class:

1) ***YOU MUST TAKE NOTES DURING CLASS.***

2) There will be three exams in the course with the last of the three being **cumulative**.
PLEASE BE CLEAR ON THE FACT THAT I DO NOT GIVE OUT REVIEW SHEETS.

Exams will consist of multiple-choice, and take-home essay questions. The essay questions will require you to show that you understand a particular concept(s) or reading and discuss the concept(s) in relation to other course material.

3) **DO NOT BRING ANY FORM OF COMPUTER TO CLASS.**

4) **CELL PHONES MUST BE TURNED OFF DURING CLASS. EVERY THIRD TIME THE CLASS IS INTERRUPTED BY A CELL PHONE RINGING OR I AM DISTRACTED BY SOMEONE TEXTING OR SHOPPING ON THE INTERNET (FOR EXAMPLE), I HAVE THE OPTION OF GIVING THE CLASS A SNAP QUIZ.**

5) This course is subject to the GVSU policies listed at <http://www.gvsu.edu/coursepolicies>.

Grading

Exam 1 – 60 pts
Exam 2 – 60 pts
Final Exam – 100 pts
Project Description – 15 pts
Paper – 40 pts
Completed Project – 50 pts

Thus, the total number of points in the course is 325.

Grade Distribution:

A -- 100 -94%	A- -- 93.9-90%
B+ -- 89.9-87%	B -- 86.9-83%
B- -- 82.9-80%	C+ -- 79.9-77%
C -- 76.9-73%	C- -- 72.9-70%
D+ -- 69.9-67%	D -- 66.9-63%
D- -- 62.9-60%	F -- 59.9%-->

8/27 – 8/29 Introduction, Theoretical Approaches

1)

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0921344918303136?via%3Dihub#sec0010>

2) <https://shorensteincenter.org/environmental-justice-unjust-coverage-of-the-flint-water-crisis/>

3) <https://www.journalism.org/essay/searching-for-news/>

9/3 – 9/5 Theoretical Approaches/Models

Readings (Complete by 9/4)

1) Introduction and Ch. 1 in McChesney: Rich Media, Poor Democracy)

2) Marx, K. & Engels, F. *The Communist Manifesto* (e-book) pgs. 8-26

3) Dill, K. E. (2009). *How Fantasy Becomes Reality: Seeing Through Media Influence* (Ch. 1, pgs 5-30)

9/10 – 9/12 Theoretical Approaches

9/17 –9/19 Film Discussion and Discussion of Projects

9/21 Take-home essay posted on Blackboard by noon

9/24 – 9/26 Methodologies

9/24 **Project Description Due**

9/28 Take-home essay Due on Blackboard by noon

10/1 *** **EXAM 1** ***

10/3 Attitudes

10/8 – 10/10 Attitudes

Readings (Complete by 10/8)

1) Zaller, J. (1997) A Model of Communication Effects at the Outbreak of the Gulf War)

2) <https://earth.gizmodo.com/new-study-shows-how-flint-s-water-crisis-almost-trigger-1830907239>

10/15 – 10/17 Persuasion

Readings (Complete by 10/16)

1) Pratkanis & Aronson (pgs 1 - 67, 121 - 258, 285 - 294)

2) Levitin (pgs 129 – 151)

10/19 **Take-home essay posted on Blackboard by noon**

10/20-10/22 FALL BREAK

10/24 Persuasion

10/25 **LAST DAY TO DROP WITH A GRADE OF “W”**

10/26 Take-home essay Due on Blackboard by noon

10/29 **Exam 2**

10/31 Propaganda

Readings (Complete by 10/30)

- 1) Hoggan and Littlemore (2009) *Climate Cover-up: The Crusade to Deny Global Warming*. (Ch. 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7; pgs 23-87)
- 2) Ward, K. (2005) *History in the Making: An Absorbing Look at How American History Has Changed in the Telling Over the Last 200 Years* (pgs 3-18)
- 3) Pratkanis & Aronson (pgs 261-268)

11/5 – 11/7 Propaganda

11/12 – 11/14 News

Readings and videos (Complete by 11/14)

Films:

Bill Moyers Journal: Buying the War (2007) <https://vimeo.com/33033186>
The War You Don't See (Pliger, 2010) <https://vimeo.com/67739294>

- 1) Rapp, D. N. (2016). The consequences of reading inaccurate information. *Current Directions in Psychology*, 25, 281-285.
- 2) <https://www.npr.org/2018/04/11/601323233/6-facts-we-know-about-fake-news-in-the-2016-election>.
- 3) Rowse: Drive-By Journalism (Ch. 5)
- 4) <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/daily-videos/who-what-when-where-why-do-hyperpartisan-news-sites-exist/>

11/19 – 11/21 News and Discussion of Films

11/19 – **Paper and Completed Project Due**

11/26 News

11/30 Take-home portion of final exam posted on Blackboard by 12 NOON

12/3 – 12/5 News

12/7 Take-home portion of final exam DUE on Blackboard by 5pm
12/12 * Final Exam (Cumulative) (2:00-3:50)**