

**COMM 403: Section 900**  
**Media, Children, and Adolescents**  
**Fall 2018**

**Class meetings**

Tuesdays and Thursdays 3:55-5:10 pm; Room 18 Bolton

**Instructor information**

Dr. Srividya “Srivi” Ramasubramanian, Ph.D.

Office hours: 2-3 pm on Tuesdays & Wednesdays

Office: 202D Bolton Hall

Email: srivi@tamu.edu

**Course description**

Critical analysis of popular culture and mass media issues related to children and adolescents. Deconstruction of media created by, for, and about children and youth. This course will explore issues related to children and adolescents in the context of popular culture and mass media. Drawing on literature from communication, media studies, developmental psychology, family studies, sociology, critical race theory and feminist theory we will learn about theories and case studies that help understand how media are sites for constant negotiation and construction of cultural identity for children and adolescents. Media’s pivotal role in the shaping of children and adolescents’ social, cognitive, emotional, and personal development will be explored. The course is designed for students who wish to learn to think critically about the role of media in the everyday lives of young people and provides a wide-ranging discussion on how media affects and benefits a young audience.

**Prerequisite**

U3, U4 or approval of instructor. This is a Writing Designated (W-Course) and, as such, it is not possible to pass the course without passing the written portion.

**Student learning outcomes**

- Explain theories about media’s role in shaping children’s attitudes about culture and society
- Appraise the role of media in children and adolescents’ development of sense of self and others (cultural identities relating to sexuality, race, and gender among youth will be explored)
- Design and share an original final paper that applies the theories and concepts from class to a specific topic relating to media and children/adolescents
- Evaluate, compare, and analyze media texts from a critical perspective
- Practice academic writing skills by paying attention to style, format, organization, and content in order to communicate effectively with audiences in your discipline

**Required course materials**

Strasburger, V. C., Wilson, B. & Jordan, A. (2013, third edition). *Children, adolescents, and the media*. Sage Publications.

All other materials will be made available via eCampus. Students are responsible to locate, retrieve, and reproduce all electronic materials in this course.

Educational videos will be assigned for viewing through <http://mediamatrix.tamu.edu>. However, some videos screened in class may not be available through mediamatrix but directly through the TAMU library site.

Please purchase blue books for the two in-class exams.

### **A note on “W” courses**

This is a writing-intensive 400-level W course with several opportunities to improve your writing skills throughout the semester. A substantial portion of your grade will be based on writing assignments. You will not be able to pass this course without having completed the writing assignments. Written feedback will be provided by your peers and by the instructor for the written assignments. You are also encouraged to make appointments for one-on-one consultations with experienced writing consultants at the University Writing Center (go to [writingcenter.tamu.edu](http://writingcenter.tamu.edu) for more details).

### **Assessment**

Exams 1, 2, and 3 (20% each)	- 60%
Research paper and related writing assignments	- 40%
Proposal/bibliography	- 5%
Context/theory	- 10%
Final Paper	- 20%
Class Presentation	- 5%

### Written Exams (60%)

There will be three closed-book, closed notes exams in this course: Exam 1, Exam 2, and Exam 3. The exams will contain short-answer questions drawn from the textbook, course packet, class presentation, class discussions, and screenings. There will be a review session before each exam. Review sheets will be handed out to help you prepare effectively. Please bring a big blue book to class for these exams.

### Research Paper and Related Writing Assignments (40%)

Your research paper is to be completed in incremental steps leading to the final presentation. The instructor will provide detailed feedback at every stage of the writing process. You will also get feedback on your drafts from peers in your class.

The research paper is divided into smaller writing assignments: assignment 1 (5%), assignment 2 (10%), final paper (20%), and class presentation (5%).

*Assignment 1 (5%):* Write a one-page proposal about what aspect of media, children and adolescents you plan to study and why it is important to study this topic. Excellent topics are those that are socially- relevant, topical, interesting, and relatively under-studied. Pick a topic that you are truly interested in because you have to stick with it through the semester. It is crucial that you incorporate concepts and theoretical perspectives discussed in the course into your final paper. Please consult with the instructor to make sure that you are in the right track.

Along with the one-page proposal, submit an annotated bibliography where you read, summarize, and critique 5 scholarly articles/book chapters relevant to your topic. Please meet with the instructor if you would like to learn to distinguish scholarly from non- scholarly sources. You are also encouraged to meet with the Communication librarian, Dr. Steve Bales. Clearly articulate how each scholarly source helps guide your central argument. Excellent bibliographies go beyond simply summarizing the paper. They show the instructor that the student has read, understood, reflected, and critiqued the scholarly work. Publications that are only tangentially relevant to your final project will lead to lowering of grades. You are welcome to refer to the textbook and other readings from this class but make sure that your bibliography includes **5** scholarly sources over and beyond class readings.

*Assignment 2 (10%):* Write a 4 page double-spaced paper about the context/ background relating to the issue that you have decided to focus on as it relates to media, children and adolescents. Discuss the contexts (such as historical, political, economic, and social) that shape how and why we think about these issues the way we do. Bring in the role of media within this context. Provide support for your claims by using citations of previously published works and for any statistics that you provide. It is very important to draw from theories and concepts discussed in this class that will inform your media analyses. You should cite your sources in a separate reference section for this assignment.

*Final paper (20%):* Write a 8-10 page paper that builds on the previous writing assignments. Immerse yourself for a two-week period with the media content relating to children or adolescents that you are interested in studying. Keep detailed notes about your descriptions of the content as well as your thoughts and feelings as you analyze these media texts. Through repeated and close readings of the media texts, engage in critical analyses that reflect on the meanings of the emerging patterns. Alternatively, conduct quantitative content analyses with predefined units of analyses and coding scheme along with a detailed coding booklet. In this case, provide graphs, tables, and figures to share your findings. Make sure you make connections between your analyses and theories/concepts covered in your assigned readings and class discussions. The paper should consider potential impacts of the media messages, theoretical/practical implications, and limitations of your project.

*Final poster presentations (5%):* Summarize the key points from your final project into a tri-fold poster or a laptop-based slide show to share with the class in a creative, attractive, informative format. Be prepared to answer questions from the audience and bring additional materials to support key arguments that you make in the poster.

All papers are due at the beginning of class on dates indicated in the course calendar. Use

double-spaced, 1 inch margin, 12 point Times New Roman font for all papers. Remember to put your ID number (assigned in the first week of class) on all the papers and staple them. Cite all sources in a separate reference section at the end of the paper. All papers should be submitted in class. Please do not send them via email or drop them off at my office. Incomplete assignments, missing, and late assignments will be awarded zero points. Only insightful papers that go beyond the class readings will get above average grades. Mediocre assignments will receive mediocre grades.

### **Attendance**

You are allowed to miss up to two class periods without penalty in this course. For unexcused absences in excess of these two, the final grade will be reduced by one letter grade per absence. Please see Student Rule 7. <http://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule07> Documentation is due as per the deadlines specified in Student Rule 7. I do not accept the “Explanatory Absence for Absence from Class Form” in this course.

### **Grading policies**

Grades have to be earned in this class for completing course requirements. To be fair on all students, extra credit opportunities, if made available, will apply to all students and cannot be given to individual students.

### **Class policies**

- All assigned readings should be completed before coming to class. Please be prepared to summarize and discuss the assigned readings during class. Take careful notes while reading the materials and jot down any questions and comments that you would like to discuss in class.
- Assigned readings, class discussions, handouts, guest lectures, video screenings, and your own final project are all fair game for exam questions.
- As a courtesy to other class members, please turn off all cell phones during class time. Texting or talking on the phone can be quite distracting to others in class. If you have a special situation that requires you to receive or send cell phone messages in class, kindly let the instructor know in advance.
- Laptops and other electronic word processing devices are not allowed in the class except for note-taking purposes. Violation of this policy would lead to a no-laptop rule for everyone in class for the rest of the semester. Please be mindful to not check email, browse the web, etc.
- Audio recording, photography, and video recording during class are prohibited.

### **Course Schedule**

This is a tentative schedule and is subject to modification by the instructor. All chapters refer to the assigned textbook for the course (Strasburger, Wilson, & Jordan, 2013).

Week	Dates	Topic of the week	Assigned readings	Activities
1	Aug 28/Aug 30	Introduction and key concepts; children as unique audiences	Read Chap. 1	
2	Sept 4/6	Gender roles, persuasion, and advertising	Read Chap. 2 <i>Video: Remote control</i>	
3	Sept 11/13	Aggression, cultivation, and television	Read Chap. 4 <i>Video: Tough Guise 2</i>	Topics due; Writing workshop 1
4	Sept 18/20	Sexuality, script theory, and music videos	Read Chap. 5 <i>Video: Miss Representation</i>	
5	Sept 25/27	Review and Exam 1	All materials from this unit	Bring blue book; Exam 1 on 9/27
6	Oct 2/5	Substance abuse, sensation-seeking, and popular films	Read Chap. 6 <i>Video: Spin the bottle</i>	Assignment 1 peer review draft due on 10/5
7	Oct 9/11	Body image, social identity theory, teen magazines	Read Chap. 7 <i>Video: Still killing us softly 4</i>	Assignment 1 due to instructor on 10/11
8	Oct 16/18	Peer socialization, cyberbullying and social media	Read Chap. 9 <i>Video: Sext up kids</i>	
9	Oct 23/25	Review and Exam 2	All materials from this unit	Bring blue book; Exam 2 on 10/25
10	Oct 30/Nov 1	Pro-social behaviors and educational children's media	Read Chap. 3 <i>Video: Consuming kids</i>	
11	Nov 6/8	Media literacy and positive storytelling	Read Chap. 12 <i>Video: Mickey Mouse monopoly</i>	National Media Literacy Week; No class on Nov 8
12	Nov 13/15	Family, media socialization, and parental mediation	Read Chap. 11	Assignment 2 peer review draft due
13	Nov 20/22	Work day		Assignment 2 due to instructor on 11/20; No class on 11/23 (Thanksgiving)
14	Nov 27/Nov 29	Review and Exam 3	All assigned readings, class discussions, screenings & exercises from this unit	Exam 3 on 11/29
15	Dec 4	Final poster presentations		Upload papers on Dec 9

## Students with Disabilities

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact Disability Services at White Creek or call 845-1637. For additional information visit <http://disability.tamu.edu>.

## Academic Integrity Statement

Academic integrity is extremely important. Always cite your sources when you are referring to ideas that you are not your own. **Aggie honor code: “An Aggie does not lie, cheat, or steal or tolerate those who do”.** As a student of Texas A&M University, you are committed to following the Aggie honor code. Plagiarism, falsification, cheating, fabrication, complicity, multiple submissions, abuse and unauthorized access to university resources will not be tolerated in this course. All students of this course should read up details about the Aggie code in the following website: <http://student-rules.tamu.edu/aggiecode>

## Title IX and Statement on Limits to Confidentiality

Texas A&M University and the College of Liberal Arts are committed to fostering a learning environment that is safe and productive for all. University policies and federal and state laws provide guidance for achieving such an environment. Although class materials are generally considered confidential pursuant to student record policies and laws, University employees — including instructors — cannot maintain confidentiality when it conflicts with their responsibility to report certain issues that jeopardize the health and safety of our community. As the instructor, I must report (per Texas A&M System Regulation 08.01.01) the following information to other University offices if you share it with me, even if you do not want the disclosed information to be shared: Allegations of sexual assault, sexual discrimination, or sexual harassment when they involve TAMU students, faculty, or staff, or third parties visiting campus. These reports may trigger contact from a campus official who will want to talk with you about the incident that you have shared. In many cases, it will be your decision whether or not you wish to speak with that individual. If you would like to talk about these events in a more confidential setting, you are encouraged to make an appointment with the Student Counseling Service (<https://scs.tamu.edu/>). Students and faculty can report non-emergency behavior that causes them to be concerned at <http://tellsomebody.tamu.edu>.