

Media Audiences (COMM 375: 500) Fall 2011

Class meetings

TR 3:55 to 5:10 p.m.
111, Richardson Petroleum Engg. Bldg.

Instructor information

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

Office: Bolton, 202D

Office hours: TR 11 a.m. to noon

Phone: 845-5178

Email: My email is srivi@tamu.edu but I prefer that you contact me via elearning’s mail tool. Be sure to check both elearning and your official tamu account once a day for course-related announcement, if any. I check email once a day or so and will respond to student email within 24-48 hours during the regular week. Be aware that any email correspondence using tamu accounts are subject to open records requests. I recommend that you do not include any personal information such as your grades on email.

Course description

This course focuses on media audiences, research and theory. Specifically, it examines the processes and effects of mass communication on audiences’ uses of, interpretations of, and responses to mediated messages using media effects and ethnographic perspectives. Topics that will be covered in this course include public opinion, political communication, news and entertainment, global audiences, children, and other special audiences.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this course, students in this class will be:

- Familiar with media effects theories that inform how audiences choose and respond to media messages;
- Knowledgeable about media ethnographic approaches that inform how audiences use and interpret media messages; and,
- Appreciate how cultural differences (such as gender, race, ethnicity, and nationality) shape reception of media messages
- Become more savvy consumers of media messages

Required course materials

There is no required textbook for this course. All required readings of book chapters and journal articles will be made available via elearning (<http://elearning.tamu.edu>).

Educational videos will be assigned for viewing through <http://mediamatrix.tamu.edu>. However, some videos screened in class may not be available through mediamatrix. Students are responsible to locate, retrieve, and reproduce all electronic materials in this course.

Please purchase six gray scantrons and pencils for your three exams.

Assessment

Individual exams (3 exams worth 20 points each)	- 60%
Group exams (3 exams worth 10 points each)	- 30%
Class participation and attendance	- 10%

Individual and group exams: There will be three exams conducted during class time. The exams will contain questions drawn from the course readings, guest lectures, class presentation, class discussions, screenings and case studies. Exams will include multiple choice type questions. You will take the exams twice during the class period – first individually and then as a group. After everyone in class turns in their individual exams, you will take the exam once again as a group. Both the individual and group exams will be ‘closed-book’ and ‘closed-notes’ exams. If you are a group leader, bring two scantrons for each exam – one for your individual exam and another for your group exam. If you have to take a make-up exam for a university-excused absence, then your individual exam score will be the same as your group exam score.

Attendance: Attendance will be taken every day at the beginning of the class period. If you are late, you will get half a point for the day. You are allowed a total of two “grace absences” through the course of the semester. From time to time, you will work on in-class assignments that will count towards your participation grade. Class assignments that are incomplete, submitted late, or show lack of sincere efforts will receive a failing grade. Only written, university-valid official excuses will be accepted. For absences relating to religious holidays and university-sponsored activities, such notes should be made available before the event. All assignments due during your absence should be submitted before you leave. For unanticipated events such as grave illness or death in the family, these excuses should be submitted to the instructor within 5 business days of returning back to school along with any assignments that were due during your absence. 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.

89.5 to 100 points.....	A
79.5 to 89.4 points.....	B
69.5 to 79.4 points.....	C
59.5 to 69.4 points.....	D
Below 59.4 points.....	F

Class policies

- You are strongly encouraged to attend all class sessions. Note that there is a strong correlation between class attendance and grades. Being in class will allow you to ask questions and participate in class discussions, which will greatly enhance your understanding of the materials.
- 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.
- We will often work on class exercises in small groups of 2-3. We will also read out sections from the chapters/cases of interest to the class. So please bring your assigned readings to class every time we meet.
- Videos relevant to the class readings may be screened during class or assigned for viewing outside of class time. Videos screened in class may not be available for check-out at your convenience. So please take careful notes of these materials in class. Videos assigned for viewing outside class will be viewable via mediamatrix.
- I encourage you to share and respond to relevant, interesting and thought-provoking articles on media audiences using the class discussion board available on the course website in elearning.
- Please let me know in advance if you will be missing a class period for a university-excused absence. Make-up exams will not be administered unless a valid, verifiable, university-excused absence is first approved by the instructor.
- 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 depending on the progress made by the class and the interests/abilities of the class. The instructor will inform you in class, via elearning, or through email if there are any changes to this schedule.

Wk	Date	Topic of the week	Assigned readings	Activities
1	Aug 30/ Sept 1	Intro to media audiences	Gillespie chapter (Media Audiences – intro)	
2	Sept 6/8	Active-passive audience	Livingstone chapter (Media Audiences – chapter 1)	<i>War of the Worlds</i>
3	Sept 13/15	Media ratings and public opinion	Wimmer and Dominick chapter	AC Nielsen website <i>Media audience and feedback video</i>
4	Sept 20/22	Media publics and democracy	Herbert chapter (Media Audiences chapter 3)	<i>Media literacy: audience video</i>
5	Sept 27/29	<i>Review and Exam 1</i>		Exam 1-Sept 29
6	Oct 4/6	Media audiences: Gender perspective	Currie chapter	<i>Codes of gender</i> video Guest lecture
7	Oct 11/13	Media audiences: Racial perspective	Tracy chapter	Comm. Days; Oct 13 Guest lecture
8	Oct 18/20	Media audiences: Global perspective	Corliss' article	<i>Slumdog Millionaire</i> movie
9	Oct 25/27	<i>Review and Exam 2</i>		Exam 2- Oct 27
10	Nov 1/3	Cultivation theory	Quick article	<i>Grey's Anatomy; Electronic Storyteller</i> video
11	Nov 8/10	Parasocial interaction	Eyal & Cohen article	<i>Friends</i> finale video
12	Nov 15/17	Uses & gratifications	Park et al article	
13	Nov 22/24	New media and interactivity	Turkle article	No class on 11/24
14	Nov 29/ Dec 1	<i>Review and Exam 3</i>		Exam 3- Dec 1
15	Dec 6	Wrap-up and final thoughts		

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Policy Statement: 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 the Department of Student Life, Services for Students with Disabilities, in Cain Hall or call 845-1637.

Academic Integrity Statement: 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: www.tamu.edu/aggiehonor/. In particular, you should read the links under ‘Student Rules’.

Safe Classroom Environment: I believe learning takes place best in a safe classroom environment. Towards this end, I seek your support in encouraging engaged, honest discussions. I hope everyone feels comfortable to share and explore ideas in this class. During the course of such free and open discussions, it is quite possible that disagreements will arise. It is okay to disagree as long as we do it in a civil and respectful manner. In this class, derogatory comments based on race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, physical ability, or nationality will not be tolerated.