



**COMM 3310:  
Media Communication  
Spring 2023  
M/W 2:30-3:45  
McAdams 230**

**Professor:** Dr. James N. Gilmore, Ph.D.  
Department of Communication  
**Office:** 401 Strode Tower  
**Office hours:** M/W 9-11 a.m. and by appointment  
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### **Catalog description**

Examines theories and methods used in analyzing mediated communication through a survey of media studies work. Explores how different technologies (cinema, television, Internet) impact the communication process, the industries that produce media texts, and how audiences choose, consume, and use different media in communication processes. Perspectives utilized may include mass communication, cultural studies, computer mediated communication, and others

### **Course Summary**

We hear plenty about “the media” as power, ubiquitous, and important. But what exactly are “the media”? How do they work? Who controls them? Whom do they benefit, and how? Moving beyond the common definition of “media” as synonymous with journalism and television, this course examines how media of all sorts (from television to digital platforms to smartphones) pervade the fabric of daily life, connect us to information and resources, and shape our social and cultural worlds. As fewer entities maintain ownership over the largest media companies and institutions, and as more companies face economic crises and serious questions about their future, these questions continue to grow in importance.

This course provides undergraduate students with a survey of research and analysis in media studies. It will introduce you to vocabularies used to analyze media and information texts, institutions, and audiences as they exist in and help to form culture and society. Our goal is to explore the relationships between and among the formal, institutional, and cultural analyses of different media. Particular attention will be paid to the ongoing role of computational protocols and platforms in transforming the practice of media production and use.

This is not a hard skills training course. We focus on surveying and understanding interlocking issues facing various media industries and platforms through the relevant theories, concepts, and research traditions of this field. This class does not formally train you in how to write for news organizations or produce social media content.

### **Student Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this course, students will:

1. Understand issues of production and reception in media studies research
2. Understand historical and current theorizations of media and technology
3. Explain the importance of media in culture and society
4. Analyze media texts through a variety of perspectives
5. Demonstrate proficiency in related oral and written communication

#### **Required Text:**

All readings are available as pdf files on Canvas. You can access these materials at the COMM3310 Canvas site at any time through the Files tab.

#### **Required technical skills:**

You should have working knowledge of a word processing software such as Microsoft Word and Google Docs. We will also use audio recording software to produce a podcast as the final project; you will be provided instructions on how to use various audio recording software.

Assessment of your work will assume you have advanced writing skills and a mastery of grammar consistent with an upper-level undergraduate course.

## **COURSE POLICIES AND EXPECTATIONS**

#### **Contacting Me**

The best ways to interact with me are in class, or in office hours. A visit to office hours gives us the opportunity to have a lengthier, more informal conversation about your questions on the material, to extend classroom conversations, or anything else for which you feel I may be helpful. Beyond office hours, you should direct your queries and concerns to my Clemson e-mail address. I will do everything in my power to reply to your e-mail within 36 hours. I typically do not respond to e-mail after business hours or on weekends. Please do not e-mail with questions about an assignment within 48 hours of its due date.

#### **Copyright**

All materials found in this course are strictly for the use of students enrolled in this course and for purposes associated with this course. These materials are disseminated under Fair Use laws.

#### **Privacy Policy**

As students, your privacy is legally protected under FERPA laws. If, however, you feel an assignment or technology tool undermines your right to privacy, please contact me immediately, and we will discuss how to appropriately resolve this issue.

#### **Grading Criteria**

A grade of "A" is not simply given for effort, or for completing the basic requirements of any given assignment, but is rather earned through thoughtful engagement. You are welcome to meet with me at any time during the semester to discuss your grade in the class.

**Grading Scale**

A (90-100) – Excellent and Exemplary. Work or performance that goes beyond meritorious to the extent of providing an example or model of excellence for others.

B (80-89) – Good/Meritorious. Work or performance that not only meets all requirements but exceeds them, demonstrating depth, originality, and other marks of quality that give the work distinction.

C (70-79) – Satisfactory. Work or performance that fully meets all requirements competently and shows the ability to function as a college student.

D (60-69) – Marginal. Work or performance that either 1) fails to meet all requirements, though what is done may be considered competent; 2) meets all requirements but not at a basic level of competence; or 3) both of the above but not poor enough to be considered failing.

F (0-59) – Failing. Work or performance that falls significantly short of requirements, basic competence, or both. This also includes, of course, work not done.

**Late Work**

If you foresee a problem meeting a deadline, it is your responsibility to contact me well in advance to discuss the possibility of an extension. Extensions will only be granted in extreme circumstances. Consult the syllabus for all due dates. I am happy to work with you in the event of an emergency, but it is incumbent on you to be as upfront as you can be when things happen. I can't work with you if I don't know what's going on.

**Exams**

Any exam scheduled at the time of a class cancellation due to inclement weather will be given at the next class meeting unless contacted by the instructor.

**Mid-term grades**

No later than 10 days before the last day students can drop courses without receiving final grades, instructors of every undergraduate course shall make available for each student (a) the student's numerical course grade or (b) the student's letter ranking to date (A-F or P/NP). This feedback reflects the student's performance up to that time; the final grade may change based upon subsequent coursework.

**ASSIGNMENTS****Attendance and participation (10%):**

Per University regulations, students are expected to attend all class meetings and to let the instructor know if they need to miss class for any reason. Absences can be excused for many reasons, including but not limited to illness, religious observances, and family death. I am glad to accommodate excusable absences and to provide reasonable opportunities to make up missed work.

Participation is assessed from your ongoing contribution to the classroom space. One cannot participate if one is not in class. Failure to regularly attend class will negatively impact this grade.

**Media industry reporting (10%):** As part of this class, we will learn about some of the major trends which have been impacting industries such as film, television, journalism, and social media, among others. For this assignment, find a news story from the last twelve months about one of these industries. Read 2-3 articles from multiple sources about this story, and write a 500-word report which includes 1) a summary of the issue, 2) what the news stories you read are saying about

this issue (including direct quotations), and 3) your explanation of why this story is important for us to pay attention to. **Due Friday, February 10, by 11:59 p.m.**

**Platform walkthrough analysis (10%):** As we will discuss throughout this class, the emergence of various digital platforms has completely changed how media are produced, distributed, accessed, and consumed. For this assignment, you will select one major platform (including, but not limited to, Netflix, HBO Max, Hulu, Twitter, Twitch, TikTok, Instagram) and spend time exploring how this platform is designed through your own personal use. Spend roughly an hour exploring your platform—how is content structured, how is the user interface designed, what forms of media are privileged? Synthesize your notes into a 500-word report that answers the following prompt: What are one or two of the most important ways this platform mediates content to users, and why are these important? **Due Friday, March 17, by 11:59 p.m.**

**Final exam (25%):** A cumulative examination will assess your comprehension of course material from lectures and readings. Our exam is scheduled for: **Thursday, May 4, 3:00-5:30 p.m.**

**Media journals (15%):** Each week has a media journal attached to it. There are 13 total. These are designed to help you extend and reflect on the work we do in the course. Sometimes they ask you to watch something on Netflix, or examine a trending topic, or reflect on recent events. They ask you to apply ideas from readings and lectures to different forms of media. You can find each media journal prompt listed below. Each is graded pass/fail. To pass a journal, complete the prompt(s) of each media journal in approximately 300-500 words by the due date. You will earn points based on how many you complete, and you have the freedom to choose which journals you would like to complete. You cannot complete a media journal retroactively. Once its deadline has passed, there is no opportunity to complete it.

Pass 2 different media journals: Earn a C (11/15)

Pass 4 different media journals: Earn a B (13/15)

Pass 6 different media journals: Earn an A (15/15)

*Media journal 1: Media research*

We learned about the Princeton Radio Project as an example of early media research and its various social goals. Based on your own experiences with different forms of media, what do you think are two of the most important goals for media research right now? What are the biggest problems or issues related to media (broadcast, digital, social, etc.) that you see today? Due Friday, February 3

*Media journal 2: The bias of media*

On Monday, we learned about Harold Innis's theory of durable and ephemeral media. Building from our class discussions this week, do you think our current forms of mediated communication are fundamentally more durable or more ephemeral? Why? Due Friday, February 10

*Media journal 3: Formal analysis*

Watch a movie or TV show you love *after* our in-class analysis of *The Social Network*. What are two or three formal choices the producers of this media text made that you think are shaping its meaning on an aesthetic level? Due Friday, February 17

*Media journal 4: Framing analysis*

Look for a news story from the last two weeks or so. Find three news articles about this story from different outlets, and compare how each outlet frames the story. What are the major similarities and differences, and why might they matter? Due Friday, February 24.

*Media journal 5: Merchandising*

Go to Target, Walmart, or Amazon (you can go to websites and not physical stores if that's easier). Browse the toys, games, clothes, or other merchandise for a recently released major film (for example, *Avatar: The Way of Water*). How does this merchandise *shape a particular idea* about the film you selected? Due Friday, March 3

*Media journal 6: Fandom and participation*

Reflect on a fandom you either belong to or notice online (this could include things like Bachelor Nation, Marvel, Star Wars, Swifties, Directioners, etc. It can also include sports fandoms, from Clemson football to any major league sport). What are some common forms of participation you see within this fan community *online* or in other *mediated spaces*? How do these practices build a sense of identity and belonging amongst fans, and why might those be important? Due Friday, March 10

*Media journal 7: Audience engagement*

Find an account which produces videos on YouTube, Twitch, or TikTok. Watch their videos for at least an hour. Reflect on how they try to create a community and engage their audience, noting particular strategies you saw in the sample you viewed. Due Friday, March 17

*Media journal 8: Recommendation reflection*

Examine your Netflix home page, the titles you are offered, and the thumbnail images for those titles. What about your viewing habits do you think Netflix's algorithm is drawing from to craft your personal taste community? Due March 31

*Media journal 9: Content moderation reflection*

Twitter's newest owner, Elon Musk, has advocated a vision of radical free speech on the platform, while at the same time introducing various new forms of moderation. Building off our classroom conversations around content moderation, reflect on what you consider to be the biggest challenge of balancing "free speech" and "moderated content" on a platform like Twitter. In other words, try to answer the following question: Based on our class conversations this week, how important is moderation to the operations of any given social media platform? Due April 7

*Media journal 10: Disinformation*

Reflect on the last year or to. What is one form of misinformation or disinformation you have noticed online? How can we use a deeper understanding of media communication to address these problems and improve our media ecosystem? Due April 14

*Media journal 11: Environment*

Spend a day considering how much energy your phone, computer, television, and other devices may be expending. Think about how much time you spend streaming video and music, how much time you spend using cloud-based applications, etc. Based on our class discussions from this week, consider one way you could alter your media consumption habits to be more environmentally friendly. Due April 21

*Media journal 12: Location tracking*

Spend a day noting all the times your phone asks for your location, or how your location seems to be important for the apps you are using. Building off class discussions from this week, how do you feel about the normalization of location tracking in so much of the communication sent from our smartphones? Due April 28

*Media journal 13: AI production*

Spend time with an AI art generator, such as DALL-E, or an AI word generator such as ChatGPT. What do you see as some of the benefits or dangers of these systems, and how do they unsettle our traditional ways of thinking about mediated/digital communication or artistic production? Due April 28

**Podcast (30%):** Your final project will be a podcast episode which discusses an issue of your choosing in media communication, demonstrating thorough research and organization. You will submit two components:

1. The script: A good podcast isn't just recorded spontaneously. It is researched and prepared with rigor. You should produce a script that is at least 2,000 words in length (not including references) that should be an approximate transcript of your episode. In your script, you should include references to your research material and a reference list using APA style. You should include reference to **at least (5) academic sources (at least two of which must be from our course)** and **at least (3) popular sources like news articles**. Your script will be graded on inclusion of all these elements as well as proper grammar, clarity, and organization.
2. The podcast record: Using Adobe Audition, Voice Memos, or any other means of audio recording of your choice, you will record, edit, and share a podcast episode between **10-20 minutes in length**. You can structure it however you like, but you should use clear oral communication, reference your research materials, and provide strong delivery. You will be graded on the quality of your oral communication.

The podcast and script are due to Canvas by **Friday, April 28, at 11:59 p.m.**

## COURSE CALENDAR

### Week 1

#### Introductions

Wednesday, January 11  
Introductions to the course

### Week 2:

#### Historical emergences

Monday, January 16  
*No class, MLK Holiday*

Wednesday, January 18  
Early media research

1. Reading: Lee Grieveson, “Cinema Studies and the Conduct of Conduct”

Week 3:

The medium is the message

Monday, January 23

The Toronto School and Media Theory

1. Reading: Harold Innis, “The Bias of Communication”
2. Reading: Marshall McLuhan, “The Medium is the Message”

Wednesday, January 25

Media are Elemental

1. Reading: John Durham Peters, “Understanding Media”

Week 4:

The Media Text

Monday, January 30

Formal analysis and the craft of interpretation

1. Reading: Thomas Elsaesser and Warren Buckland, “Film theory, methods, and analysis”

Wednesday, February 1

Application: *The Social Network*

1. Reading: Zara Dinnen, “‘Breaking out that Perl script’: The imaging and imagining of code in *The Social Network* and *Catfish*”

Week 5:

From form to frame

Monday, February 6

Journalism, framing, and polarization

1. Reading: Dietram A Scheufele, “Framing as a theory of media effects”

Wednesday, February 8

The collapse of local news: Cultural and political consequences

1. Reading: Victor Pickard, “Restructuring democratic infrastructures: A policy approach to the journalism crisis”

Week 6:  
Consolidation and telecommunication

Monday, February 13

The Walt Disney Company and the Convergent Media Industry

1. Reading: Derek Johnson, “Cinematic destiny: Marvel studios and the trade stories of industrial convergence”

Wednesday, February 1

Intellectual property law (and its discontents)

1. Reading: Ted Striphas, “Harry Potter and the Simulacrum: Contested Copies in an Age of Intellectual Property”

Week 7:  
Audience engagement

Monday, February 20

Social TV and online brand engagement

1. Reading: Cory Barker, “It’s what connects us?: HBO and platform authenticity on Twitter”

Wednesday, February 22:

Fandoms and fan communities

1. Reading: Ashley Hedrick McKenzie, “One Direction real person fiction on Wattpad.com: A textual analysis of sexual consent”

Week 8:  
Relations and platforms

Monday, February 27

Connecting across digital platforms

1. Nancy Baym, “Platforms” and “Relational boundaries” in *Playing to the Crowd: Musicians, audiences, and the intimate work of connection*

Wednesday, March 1

Visibility and evaluation

1. Blake Hallinan and Jed R Brubaker, “Living with everyday evaluations on social media platforms”



Week 9:  
Recommendation systems

Monday, March 6  
Netflix and the experimentation platform

1. Reading: Daniel Meyerend, “The algorithm knows I’m Black: from users to subjects”

Wednesday, March 8  
Music recommendation

1. Nick Seaver, “Seeing like an infrastructure: avidity and difference in algorithmic recommendation”

Week 10:  
Twitter at the Tipping Point

Monday, March 13  
Twitter and cultural practice

1. Reading: André Brock, “From the Blackhand side: Twitter as a cultural conversation”

Wednesday, March 15  
Content moderation

1. Sarah T. Roberts, “Understanding commercial content moderation”

***Spring Break March 20-24***

Week 11:  
Information warfare

Monday, March 27  
Disinformation cycles

1. Reading: Justin Grandinetti and Jeffrey Bruinsma, “The affective algorithms of Conspiracy TikTok”

Wednesday, March 29  
World War 3

1. Reading: Darren L. Linvill and Patrick L. Warren, “Troll factories: Manufacturing specialized disinformation on Twitter”

Week 12:  
Mobile media

Monday, April 3:  
Cameras and recordings

1. Reading: CJ Reynolds, “Mischievous infrastructure: tactical secrecy through infrastructural friction in police video systems”

Wednesday, April 5:  
Locative media

1. Reading: Amy Adele Hasinoff, “Where are you? Location tracking and the promise of child safety”

Week 13  
Media ecologies

Monday, April 10  
Environment and data

1. Reading: Hunter Vaughan, Introduction to *Hollywood’s dirtiest secret: The hidden environmental costs of the movies*

Wednesday, April 12  
*No class, Dr. Gilmore presenting research at Society for Cinema and Media Studies conference*

Week 14  
Artificial intelligence

Monday, April 17  
Automated production

1. Reading: Simone Natale, introduction to *Deceitful Media*

Wednesday, April 19  
Automated decision making

1. Reading: Virginia Eubanks, “Automating eligibility in the heartland”

Week 15  
Course conclusions

Monday, April 24  
Course wrap-up

1. No reading. Review for final and work on podcasts.

Wednesday, April 26  
Podcast workshop day

1. No formal class meeting. Dedicated time to record and edit your podcasts. Dr. Gilmore will be available for one-on-one meetings to address any remaining concerns or questions about the course

## Student Support Services

### The Americans with Disabilities Act

Clemson University seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities. Students with disabilities who need accommodations should make an appointment with Arlene Stewart, Director of Student Disability Services, to discuss specific needs within the first month of classes. Students should present a Faculty Accommodation Letter from Student Disabilities Services when they meet with instructors. Please be aware that accommodations are not retroactive and new Faculty Accommodation Letters must be presented each semester. In order to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), faculty must follow instructions contained in letters issued by the office of Student Disability Services.

G-20 Redfern Health Center

<http://www.clemson.edu/campus-life/campus-services/sds/>

864-656-6848 sds-l@clemson.edu

### Clemson Academic Integrity Policy

Students who violate the Clemson Academic Integrity Policy in any way will receive a failing grade (i.e., an “F”) for this course. The policy:

As members of the Clemson University community, we have inherited Thomas Green Clemson’s vision of this institution as a “high seminary of learning.” Fundamental to this vision is a mutual commitment to truthfulness, honor, and responsibility, without which we cannot earn the trust and respect of others. Furthermore, we recognize that academic dishonesty detracts from the value of a Clemson degree. Therefore, we shall not tolerate lying, cheating, or stealing in any form.

1. Any breach of the principles outlined in the Academic Integrity Statement is considered an act of academic dishonesty.
2. Academic dishonesty is further defined as:
  1. Giving, receiving, or using unauthorized aid on any academic work;
  2. Plagiarism, which includes the intentional or unintentional copying of language, structure, or ideas of another and attributing the work to one’s own efforts;
  3. Attempts to copy, edit, or delete computer files that belong to another person or use of Computer Center account numbers that belong to another person without the permission of the file owner, account owner, or file number owner.
3. All academic work submitted for grading contains an implicit pledge and may contain, at the request of an instructor, an explicit pledge by the student that no unauthorized aid has been received.
4. It is the responsibility of every member of the Clemson University community to enforce the Academic Integrity Policy.

### **Title IX (Sexual Harassment) Statement**

Clemson University is committed to a policy of equal opportunity for all persons and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender, pregnancy, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, genetic information or protected activity in employment, educational programs and activities, admissions and financial aid. This includes a prohibition against sexual harassment and sexual violence as mandated by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. View policy at <http://www.clemson.edu/campus-life/campus-services/access/title-ix>.

### **Academic Success Center**

The Academic Success Center provides free services, including tutoring, academic coaching, and academic skills workshops, for all Clemson students. Visit <https://www.clemson.edu/asc> for more information.

### **Writing Center**

Clemson University's Writing Center offers free one-on-one tutoring for all Clemson students. Visit <https://clemson.mywconline.com> for more information.

### **Cooper Library**

Reference librarians are available in person and via text, phone, email, and chat to answer your research questions. Visit Ask a Librarian for more information at <https://libraries.clemson.edu/ask>

### **Technical Support**

If you are having hardware or software problems, CCIT's Service Desk may be able to help you. Contact them at [ITHELP@clemson.edu](mailto:ITHELP@clemson.edu) with a detailed description of your problem.

### **Academic Advising**

Academic advising (<https://www.clemson.edu/academics/advising/index.html>) is an ongoing educational process that connects the student to the University. Academic advising supports the University's mission of preparing students for learning beyond the confines of the academy. Academic advisors represent and interpret University policies and procedures to students and help students navigate the academic and organizational paths of the institution.

### **Registrar**

The Registrar's office provides information about important deadlines, degree and program requirements, and other key information, including use of iROAR to add, drop, or withdraw.

### **Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)**

Stress, anxiety, depression, and sleep disorders are increasingly common among undergraduate students across the United States. The university provides students with counseling and psychological support services. If you are struggling with your mental health and well-being in any way, I encourage you to reach out to these services. You can find more information at <http://www.clemson.edu/campus-life/campus-services/redfern/mental-health>