HU4890 Media Effects

Room: 134 Walker
Time: 12:35-1:50 TTh
Semester: Spring 2014
Instructor: Associate Professor Craig Waddell
Office: Room 302 Walker
Office Hours: 2:00-3:00 TTh; other times by appointment
Phone: 487-3261 (office)
E-mail: cwaddell@mtu.edu

(HU4890 Topics in Communication is included on the HASS Distribution List.)

Policy on Multitasking

Extensive research has shown that multitasking simply doesn’t work and that the people who are most confident about their ability to multitask are, in general, the worst at multitasking successfully. The most dramatic evidence we have for this is with respect to using a cell phone (for either talking or texting) while driving. Hence, if you use an mp3 player, cell phone, laptop, tablet, or other electronic device in class, I will count you absent for that day. If you want to test your multitasking potential, visit http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ahg6qcgoay4 (This test is only valid if you haven’t seen this or a similar test previously.)

A. Required Texts


Additional texts as PDF files and/or Web-based documents.

B. Diverse Media Effects

In this course, we’ll examine a broad range of media effect, but we’ll focus especially on media effects on three, interrelated issues: consumption, body image, and violence.
C. Working Hypothesis on Media Effects on Violence: Recurring Narratives: “Everything is a Remix”

“[Carlos] Gozzi maintained that there can be but thirty-six tragic situations. Schiller took great pains to find more, but he was unable to find even so many as Gozzi.”
—attributed to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832)

Among a number of narratives that recur over and over again in our culture, one has the potential effect of preparing a population to be more willing to accept violence as the default problem solver and, more specifically, to accept war as a means of resolving international disputes.

In brief, this narrative unfolds as follows: (1) a simplistic dichotomy is established between good and evil; (2) evil does something that cries out for a response; and (3) the only satisfactory response is found to be violence. (There are many possible variations on these three, basic features.)

Examples of this narrative in blockbuster films include *Batman, Star Wars, Spiderman, Lord of the Rings, The Lion King, Iron Man, Harry Potter, Independence Day, Indiana Jones, The Bourne Identity, James Bond, Mission Impossible, Superman, 300, Die Hard, Alien, Terminator,* and *Gladiator.* Similar narratives are also found in news media.

“The easiest way to inject a propaganda idea into most people’s minds is to let it go through the medium of an entertainment picture when they do not realize that they are being propagandized.”
—Elmer Davis, Director, U.S. Bureau of Motion Pictures, 1942

D. Opposing Views

“Interrupt me if at any point you think I am wrong. And if you refute me, I shall not be vexed with you as you are with me, but you shall be enrolled as the greatest of my benefactors.”
—Socrates to Callicles in Plato’s *Gorgias*
Throughout the semester, I welcome opposing views on the above-described narrative and on its potential influence, and I encourage you to share opposing views with one another, both in and outside of class. All I ask is that you base your views—whatever they may be—on arguments and evidence and present them respectfully (see class handout on Benjamin Franklin on the rhetoric of humility).

With this in mind, we’ll begin the class with David Gauntlett’s “Ten Things Wrong with the Media ‘Effects’ Model” before moving on to Violent Video Game Effects on Children and Adolescents.

E. Reading and Class Discussion

“We don’t understand anything until we’ve discussed it.”

Russian Proverb

This course is based on common readings, on class discussion of those readings, and on the research projects described below. Hence, you must keep up with the reading and participate in class discussion on a regular basis. Twenty percent of your grade is based on class participation, and an additional 30 percent of your grade is based on written, reading-and-discussion questions.

Over the course of the semester, you will submit 12 lists of discussion questions with 3 questions on each list. (For specific due dates, please see the below Schedule of Assignments.) These lists must be typed/word processed (no last-minute, hand scrawled lists).

Since the purpose of these lists is not to quiz the class but to facilitate class discussion, please do not include more than one factual question on any given list. Instead, please focus on questions of interpretation. Ideally, these would be questions (a) that you yourself find intriguing and (b) to which you don’t yet have a clear answer and, hence, (c) you are genuinely interested in discussing/exploring with the class.

In class, we’ll begin discussing your questions in small groups (2-3 people) and will then move on to further discussion with the class as a whole.

Policy on Late Reading-and-Discussion Questions: Since a key purpose of these lists is to help ensure that you are well prepared for class discussion, each list must be submitted on the day it is due. I will not accept late lists.

F. Research Projects

“Tell me, and I forget. Show me, and I remember. Involve me, and I understand.”

In addition to our common readings, you’ll work on two individual or collaborative research project on media effects: a short project and a long project. We’ll brainstorm about possible projects in class.
The ability to work collaboratively is becoming increasingly important in academic, industrial, political, and other contexts. People in all of these contexts need to pool both their time and their diverse skills in order to solve complex problems and to complete complex tasks effectively. Hence, I encourage you to use this opportunity to work in a collaborative group (consisting of 2-4 people), and I strongly encourage you to form interdisciplinary groups in order to take maximum advantage of one another’s strengths. If you do join a collaborative group, remember that the others in your group will be depending on you, and your grade (as well as theirs) will in part be determined by your ability to work effectively with them.

Your short project will include at least the following components:

1. **Brainstorming:** Within your group, with me, with a friend, and/or on your own.

2. **Oral Presentation:** A 5-6-minute oral presentation (including Q&A) on your project.

4. **Your Final Project:** A hard copy of your analysis, including a list of works cited (500-750 words; 2-3 double-spaced pages).

Your long project will include at least the following components:

1. **Brainstorming:** Within your group, with me, with a friend, and/or on your own.

2. **Proposal:** Your proposal should be approximately 300-500 words (1.5-2 double-spaced pages) and should identify (1) the members of your group (if you’re working collaboratively), (2) what each of you will contribute to your study, (3) what you plan to study (topic), (4) how you plan to study it (methods), (5) why you’ve chosen this particular topic, (6) what you hope to learn from this study, (7) what problems you anticipate, and (8) how you plan to resolve those problems.

3. **Oral Presentation:** A 10-12-minute oral presentation (including Q&A) on your project.

4. **Your Final Project:** A hard copy of your analysis, including a list of works cited (750-1250 words; 3-5 double-spaced pages).

**Policy on Late Projects:** If you do not submit your project on time, you will lose 10 points for every day that it is late. I will not accept any project that is more than one week late.

**G. Format of Your Projects**

For each of your projects, document and cite your sources with Modern Language Association (MLA) documentation style. With the MLA system, documentation of sources is provided at the end of your essay by a list of works cited, arranged alphabetically by the authors’ last names. (If you don’t have a copy of the *MLA Handbook*, you can find detailed information on using MLA
Your projects must be word processed and printed on 8.5” x 11” white paper in an easily readable (e.g., Times) 12-point font with one-inch margins on all four sides. Include at the top of the first page the following information (single-spaced): your name, the course title, and the date.

**Double-space the body of your projects.** Single-space the entries in your list of works cited, but double space between entries.

### H. Evaluation

Your final grade will be determined *approximately* as follows:

- Up to 200 points for participation in class: 200 points
- Up to 50 points for each of 4 quizzes: 200 points
- Up to 25 points for each of 12 lists of discussion questions: 300 points
- Up to 100 points for short project presentation: 100 points
- Up to 50 points for longer project proposal: 50 points
- Up to 50 points for presentation on longer project: 50 points
- Up to 100 points for hard copy of final project: 100 points

**Total:** 1000 points

**Extra credit:** Bring to class and show me during the first three weeks of the semester the required textbooks with your name permanently marked on the inside front cover: 25 points

A: 930-1000 points  
AB: 880-929 points  
B: 830-879 points  
BC: 780-829 points  
C: 730-779 points  
CD: 680-729 points  
D: 600-679 points  
F: 599 or fewer points

### I. The Michigan Tech Multiliteracies Center (formerly The Writing Center)

Michigan Tech has an excellent Multiliteracies Center, which is located in Walker 107. I encourage you to schedule, regular weekly appointments with a writing coach. Establish a schedule early in the semester, because appointed times (as opposed to drop-in times) tend to get booked quickly. For more information, call 487-2007 or check the Center’s Web page at [http://www.mtu.edu/humanities/resources/mtmc/what-we-offer/](http://www.mtu.edu/humanities/resources/mtmc/what-we-offer/)

### J. Attendance Policy
“Eighty percent of success is just showing up.” Woody Allen

According to the Michigan Tech Attendance policy, an absence is excused under the following conditions:

- A student is participating in off-campus, University-sponsored activities, such as field trips, fine arts performances, intercollegiate athletics, judging teams, job fairs, etc. The faculty or staff members supervising the off-campus activity will send a notice to all academic departments and the Office of Student Affairs before the activity takes place. The notice will include the name and date of the activity, the name of the supervising person, a list of all participating students, and their classes.

- The instructor is assured that a student’s absence from class was due to circumstances beyond the student’s control. The student must provide verification of the special circumstance if the instructor requests it. Excuses are usually given in the following circumstances: illness, funeral of any relative or close friend, military duty, court appearance, and personal emergencies.

- The instructor deems it excusable. Some examples might include professional and graduate school interviews, plant trips, job interviews requiring travel, and professional society meetings.

A full description of the University’s attendance policy is available at http://www.mtu.edu/dean/conduct/policy/attendance/

I keep a record of attendance for two reasons:

1. Because if you’re doing poorly in class, these records can help me to determine if poor attendance is part of the problem.

2. Every professor at Michigan Tech is required to submit attendance-verification rosters. These rosters are used for two purposes:

a. To identify before it’s too late to make the appropriate corrections students who

   • think they are registered for a course, attend all semester and complete the work, but receive no grade at the end of the semester because they were never registered;

   • have never attended a class because they mistakenly think they have dropped the course and, hence, wind up receiving a failing grade at the end of the semester;

   • attend an incorrect section of a course and receive a failing grade at the end of the semester from the section for which they are registered but which they never attended.

b. To comply with federal law that stipulates that universities must verify that students who receive
Title IV financial aid are attending the classes in which they are enrolled. (Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 as amended in 1998 establishes general rules that apply to student financial assistance programs, including Pell Grants, Academic Competitive Grants, National SMART Grants, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants, Federal Direct Loans, Federal Perkins Loans, and Federal PLUS Loans. Approximately 85 percent of Michigan Tech students receive some form of financial aid.)

Policy on Accountability for Excused Absences

I can allow up to two excused absences without documentation. However, if you want credit for more than two such absences, you must provide the appropriate documentation from the Dean of Students Office, from a medical professional, or from some other appropriate source.

K. Policy on Religious Observance (also from attendance policy at http://www.mtu.edu/dean/conduct/policy/attendance/):

“Michigan Tech permits students to be excused from class on holidays observed by their religious faith. Students who wish to be absent for a religious holiday are responsible for making arrangements in advance with their instructors to make up class work and exams. Instructors may expect a reasonable limit to the number of absences requested.”

L. Michigan Tech’s Academic Integrity Policy

See http://www.sa.mtu.edu/dean/judicial/policies/academic_integrity_policy_2006.pdf

“Academic integrity and honesty are central components of a student’s education, and the ethical conduct maintained in an academic context will be taken eventually into a student’s professional career. Academic honesty is essential in a community of scholars searching and learning to search for truth. Anything less than total commitment to honesty undermines the efforts of the entire academic community. Both students and faculty are responsible for insuring the academic integrity of the university.

This policy applies to the academic conduct of all persons at Michigan Technological University who have ever matriculated at the University, whether or not the person is enrolled at the time an allegation of academic dishonesty is made.

This policy addresses academic dishonesty in course work. Allegations of dishonesty in research or publication are addressed under the Scientific Misconduct Policy.

Procedures to ensure fairness and due process for all parties involved in any apparent violation of the Academic Integrity Policy will be developed, and periodically reviewed, by the Dean of Students Office in consultation with the members of the Academic Integrity Committee appointed by the University Senate.”
Academic Integrity Policy—Definition of Academic Misconduct
http://www.mtu.edu/dean/conduct/policy/academic-integrity/definition.html

“Plagiarism
Knowingly copying another's work or ideas and calling them one's own or not giving proper credit or citation. This includes but is not limited to reading or hearing another's work or ideas and using them as one's own; quoting, paraphrasing, or condensing another's work without giving proper credit; purchasing or receiving another's work and using, handling, or submitting it as one's own work.

Cheating
Intentional, unauthorized use of any study aids, equipment, or another's work during an academic exercise. This includes but is not limited to unauthorized use of notes, study aids, electronic or other equipment during an examination; copying or looking at another individual's examination; taking or passing information to another individual during an examination; taking an examination for another individual; allowing another individual to take one's examination; stealing examinations. Cheating also includes unauthorized collaboration. All graded academic exercises are expected to be performed on an individual basis unless otherwise stated by the instructor. An academic exercise may not be submitted by a student for course credit in more than one course without the permission of all instructors. [Note: this is also known as self-plagiarism.]

Fabrication
Intentional and/or unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation during an academic exercise. This includes but is not limited to changing or adding an answer on an examination and resubmitting it to change the grade; inventing data for a laboratory exercise or report.

Facilitating Academic Misconduct
Knowingly or recklessly allowing or helping another individual to plagiarize, cheat, or fabricate information.”

Sanctions for academic dishonesty range from warnings to expulsion from Michigan Tech. For more information, visit http://www.mtu.edu/dean/conduct/policy/academic-integrity/sanctions.html

M. The Americans with Disabilities Act

MTU complies with all federal and state laws and regulations regarding discrimination, including the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). If you have a disability and need a reasonable accommodation for equal access to education or services at MTU, please call the Dean of Students (487-2212). For other concerns about discrimination, you may contact your advisor, your department head, or the Affirmative Action Office (487-3310).
N. DRAFT Schedule of Assignments and Class Activities

Dates indicate when reading and writing assignments are due, not when they are given. I’ve used the following abbreviations for our texts: PROP = *Propaganda*; TBM = *The Beauty Myth*; VVGE = *Violent Video Game Effects*.

| Week 1 |  
|---|---|
| **TU** 1/14 | Overview of course and syllabus |
| **TH** 1/16 | PROP Introduction; Reading & discussion questions #1 due |

**Week 2**

|  
|---|
| **TU** 1/21 | PROP Ch. 1-2 |
| **TH** 1/23 | PROP Ch. 3-4; Reading & discussion questions #2 due |

**Week 3**

|  
|---|
| **TU** 1/28 | PROP Ch. 5 |
| **TH** 1/30 | PROP Ch. 6; Reading & discussion questions #3 due; **Quiz 1** |

**Week 4**

|  
|---|
| **TU** 2/4 | PROP Ch. 8-11; Reading & discussion questions #4 due |
| **TH** 2/6 | **Winter Carnival: No Class** |

**Week 5**

|  
|---|
| **TU** 2/11 | TBM pp. 1-19 |
| **TH** 2/13 | TBM pp. 20-57; Reading & discussion questions #5 due |

**Week 6**

|  
|---|
| **TU** 2/18 | TBM pp. 58-85 |
| **TH** 2/20 | Reading & discussion questions #6 due; **Quiz 2** |

**Week 7**

|  
|---|
| **TU** 2/25 | TBM pp. 86-130 |
| **TH** 2/27 | Reading & discussion questions #7 due |

**Week 8**

|  
|---|
| **TU** 3/4 | TBM pp. 131-178 |
| **TH** 3/6 | Reading & discussion questions #8 due |

**Spring Recess: March 8-16**

**Week 9**

|  
|---|
| **TU** 3/18 | TBM pp. 179-217 |
| **TH** 3/20 | Reading & discussion questions #9 due; short-project presentations |

**Week 10**

|  
|---|
| **TU** 3/25 | TBM pp. 218-269; short-project presentations |
| **TH** 3/27 | TBM pp. 270-291; Reading & discussion questions #10 due; **Quiz 3** |

**Week 11**

|  
|---|
| **TU** 4/1 | VVGE Introduction through Ch. 2); short-project presentations |
| **TH** 4/3 | VVGE Ch. 3Reading & discussion questions #11 due; short-project presentations |

**Week 12**

<p>|<br />
|---|
| <strong>TU</strong> 4/8 | VVGE Ch. 4; short-project presentations |
| <strong>TH</strong> 4/10 | VVGE Ch. 5; Reading &amp; discussion questions due; short-project presentations |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 13</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TU</strong></td>
<td><strong>4/15</strong></td>
<td>VVGE Ch. 6; long-project reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TH</strong></td>
<td><strong>4/17</strong></td>
<td>VVGE Ch. 7; Reading &amp; discussion questions #12 due; long-project reports; <strong>Quiz 4</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 14</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TU</strong></td>
<td><strong>4/22</strong></td>
<td>Long-project reports; course evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TH</strong></td>
<td><strong>4/24</strong></td>
<td>Long-project reports; final projects due</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>