Welcome to J801! This seminar provides a broad introduction to major theories and research related to the social psychological, biological, political and sociological foundations of individuals’ relationship with mass communication. We will spend a plurality of our time focusing on debates and breakthroughs that have emerged in mass communication, journalism and psychology within the past decade or so while studying some of the “classic” work on which contemporary research builds. While any seminar can but scratch the surface of this diverse and evolving field, I hope to whet your appetite for more!

If we do our jobs, you will leave this seminar with a strong understanding of major questions, findings, theories, and scholars in a wide variety of research areas examining mass communication and the individual. You will have the opportunity to apply what you have learned in our discussions, a seminar paper of your own and a mock prelim exam.

There are no required texts for J801, but I recommend purchasing:


Assignments
Participation (15%): We will be successful so long as we have regular, robust discussions about the strengths and weaknesses of the theoretical issues and methodological approaches present in each week’s batch of readings. You are expected to participate regularly each week. Indeed, you should be prepared to answer a direct question about any of the assigned readings’ primary research question, major hypotheses, data, methods, and major findings. Attendance is assumed.

State of the Subfield Memos (10%): On four occasions, you will write a memo using the week’s readings to offer a point of view on the state of research in that area of mass communication and offering up a research question and design of your own. This memo should be no longer than two single-spaced pages and should be animated by items including, but not limited to: what you think the major strengths/problems are with the week’s readings, how the readings fit together or compete, what the major findings leave unresolved, unexamined, etc. Please do not write a memo that only rehashes what is in the readings. Before coming to class, you should carefully read your classmates’ memos to facilitate discussion.

Memos are to be e-mailed to the class no later than 7pm on Tuesday evenings. There are no exceptions. If you miss the deadline, pick another week to write a memo.
Research Paper (40%): You are to write an original paper from page 1 to the end of the research design section. In some cases, depending upon the epistemological perspective from which you work, you may be granted permission to deviate from these instructions (i.e. pursuing a paper that would use qualitative methods and grounded theory, for example) The paper must be related to something we have studied this semester, but must be an original departure from existing theory, topic, method, etc. A 2-to-3-page proposal is due in class on February 23; the first draft of the paper is due in class April 27; the final draft is due by the end of May 12.

On May 1, I’ll host a dinner at Chez Waggle (my house, 2334 West Lawn Ave.) where you will give a 10-minute paper presentation. You will also be responsible for a one-to-two page single-spaced “journal review” of one classmate’s paper.

Hansel Presentation (10%)
You will be responsible for one Hansel Presentation this semester. According to Mugatu in the cinematic gift that is Zoolander, Hansel, “is so hot right now.” Thus, you are to give a presentation about a fairly new research article that uses cutting-edge theory/methods/data in an area we are studying.

Note: I will not award Incompletes for this seminar except in the case of extreme personal circumstances. If an Incomplete is awarded, it will be accompanied with a written agreement pertaining to the due dates of any outstanding work.

Professional Development
I also strongly recommend you do two other things this semester to begin to be part of the profession. First, I suggest that you join the International Communication Association at www.icahdq.org, the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (aejmc.org), and the National Communication Association (natcom.org). I also recommend considering the American Political Science Association (apsanet.org), the Midwest Political Science Association (mpsa.org), the Southern Political Science Association (spsa.net) and the International Society for Political Psychology (ispp.org). Membership will get you access to major journals, access to the services such as job listings, syllabi help, and so forth and will keep you up-to-date on goings on in the profession. Second, I recommend you attend several research talks in the SJMC and Departments of Political Science, Communication Arts, and Life Sciences Communication over the semester. These may include job talks, invited talks by prominent researchers, or talks by faculty and other graduate students in our department. These talks will give you a chance to see current research and to both observe and participate in professional presentations – a hallmark of our scholarly life.

Grades
Participation: 20%
Hansel Presentation: 15%
Research Design: 40%
Mock Prelim: 10%
State of the Subfield Memos: 15%

Grades are earned as follows:
A = Excellent work. Excellent work need not be perfect, but it must:
- be original
- show an integrated understanding of the literature
- engages with research methods’ strengths/weaknesses/benefits/drawbacks epistemologically and practically
- highlight your own critiques/contributions to the literature
- be ethically produced
- be clear
- is on time

AB = Good work. Good work
- is accurate
- shows an understanding of major theories
- understands strengths and weaknesses of different methods
- be ethically produced
- be clear
- is on time

B = Below average work. Below average work
- shows a surface-level understanding of literature or worse
- is atheoretical
- is muddled
- does not engage with strengths and weaknesses of method
- is unoriginal
- be ethically produced
- is late

Plagiarism and Fabrication
Integrity is very important. Please take note of the university’s policy on academic misconduct: http://students.wisc.edu/doso/acadintegrity.html. If you have questions, I will help you with gusto and vigor.

You should all know what plagiarism is — using someone else’s work in your own stories. This includes cutting and pasting material that was written by others, as well as patch writing, when you change a word or two but keep an original source’s general meaning.

If I determine there has been academic misconduct, punishment will include an “F” for the assignment. Depending upon my opinion of the severity of the infraction, punishment may also include an “F” for the course. I will report all instances of academic misconduct to the Dean of Students.
Course Schedule

Jan 19  Seminar Introduction

Introduce ourselves, discuss the course, sign up for Hansel Presentations.

Jan 26  Theory and the Practice of Mass Communication Effects Research


Feb 2  Using Social Psychology to Orient the Study Mass Communication


Feb 9

Schema Theory and Media Constructions


Feb 16

Mass Media Selection and Perception


Feb 23  

Mental Structures and Communication Influence on Social Cognition
Due: Proposal for Final Paper (via email)


Mar 2  

Cognition: Priming, Information Processing, & Mental Models


Mar 9  

Affective Processes and Emotional Responses to Media


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**Mar 16**

**Mass Communication and Attitude Formation and Change**


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**SPRING BREAK**

**SPRING BREAK**

**SPRING BREAK**

**SPRING BREAK**
Mar 30        Persuasion: Mass Communication Campaigns


______________________________________________________________________________

Apr 6        Persuasion: Overcoming Resistance


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Apr 13        Agenda-Setting, Framing, and Third Person Effects


Apr 20 Cultivation


Apr 27 Mass Communication Messages & the Individuals Who Create Them


**Due: Draft of Final Paper (via email)**

*May 1*  
**Paper Presentations & Dinner Chez Waggle, 6:00pm-9:30**  
2334 West Lawn Ave.

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**May 4**  
**Interaction, Expression & the Future of Mass Communication Effects**


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**May 12**  
**DUE: FINAL PAPER (via email)**