

COMM375 Media Audiences Syllabus (Fall 2025)

Course Information

Course Number: COMM 375
Course Title: Media Audiences
Section: 500
Time: Tuesdays & Thursdays 3:55-5:10
Location: BLTN 003
Credit Hours: 3.0

Instructor Details

Instructor: Yiping Xia, Ph.D.
Office: BLTN 309C
Phone: N/A
E-Mail: xia@tamu.edu
Office Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays 2:00-3:30 in office or on Zoom; other times by request

Course Description

Media audiences research and theory; processes and effects of mass communication; audience members' uses and interpretations of media; topics including political media, news, and entertainment, health and information campaigns, children and other special audiences.

Course Prerequisites

Junior or senior classification or approval of instructor.

Course Learning Outcomes

The successful student will:

- Identify audiences for different types of media;
- Understand theory and research on how people use media;
- Understand theory and research on how media influence people and society;
- Apply theory and research to different media and social contexts.

Textbook and/or Resource Materials

Required

Sullivan, J. L. (2020). *Media Audiences: Effects, Users, Institutions, and Power (2nd ed.)*. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Additional reading materials will be posted on Canvas.

Grading Policy

Assignments	Class Weight
Exam 1	20%
Exam 2	20%
Exam 3	20%
Media Fandom Assignment*	15%
5 Canvas Assignments**	10% (2% for each assignment)
Attendance***	15%

**Detailed instructions for the Media Fandom Assignment will be distributed after Exam 1. The assignment will be due on Sunday, November 23, by 11:59 p.m.*

***Descriptions of the Canvas assignments will be posted online one week in advance. Due dates of these assignments are listed in the class schedule below. Note: these Canvas assignments are NOT graded. As long as you turn it in and it complies with the general guidelines of each assignment, you get the full 2%. Otherwise, you get a zero.*

****The instructor will take attendance at the beginning of each class session. Throughout the semester, each student will receive two “freebie” unexcused absences. In other words, at the end of this semester, I will take off up to 2 unexcused absences from each student’s attendance record.*

Exams: *There will be three closed-books exams throughout the semester. The exams will consist of true-false/multiple choice questions only. The tests will cover class readings, lecture notes, and class discussion topics. Exam 3 will take place during Finals Week and will be cumulative.*

Grading Scale

90.0% - 100% = A
 80.0% - 89.9% = B
 70.0% - 79.9% = C
 60.0% - 69.9% = D
 59.9% and below = F

Late Work Policy

- *Late Canvas assignments will not be accepted and will result in a zero for each late submission.*
- *Missed exams will receive a zero unless a student is absent from a test for a documented medical emergency or university-related excuse. In the case of a university-related excuse, let me know well ahead of time that you will be missing an exam so that we can schedule a make-up date.*
- *Late Media Fandom Assignment will receive a 20% deduction if turned in within 24 hours past the due date. Media Fandom Assignment turned in more than 24 hours after the due date will receive a zero.*

Work submitted by a student as makeup work for an excused absence is not considered late work and is exempted from the late work policy ([Student Rule 7](#)).

Policy on Tools Based on Large Language Models (LLMs) – ChatGPT, Gemini, etc.

Engaging in the various aspects of creative pursuits (e.g., writing, coding, drawing) is critical to education in a broad sense. While digital services based on LLMs (including but certainly not limited to: ChatGPT, Gemini, Grok, DeepSeek, Claude) will continue shaping how we approach these creative tasks, the critical work of learning relies on integrity, originality, and ethical conduct.

Using LLM-based tools to construct all or parts of your submitted work, including the Canvas assignments and the Media Fandom Assignment, will be considered plagiarism and handled according to Texas A&M University's academic honor code.

However, within limited circumstances, these programs may be used responsibly and ethically as a tool to aid your learning.

For this course, here are examples of permissible uses:

- Checking for grammatical errors in your existing draft.
- Brainstorming: conceiving and refining specific ideas related to assignments. Sample prompt: "I want to make a piece of fan art related to the Harry Potter franchise, but I am poor at drawing. What are some other art forms I can consider?"
- Studying for exams. Sample prompt: "How to differentiate the three subject positions proposed by Stuart Hall? Can you give me an example?"
 - While this use is permissible, I strongly advise you to verify the output of these programs to ensure accuracy.

Course Schedule

Week 1

Tue, Aug 26 & Thu, Aug 28: *Introduction to course and syllabus*

Last day to add/drop: Fri, Aug 29

Week 2

Tue, Sep 2 & Thu, Sep 4: *Sullivan: Chapter 1. What is an audience?*

Canvas Assignment 1 due Sun, Sep 7

Week 3

Tue, Sep 9 & Thu, Sep 11: *Sullivan: Chapter 2. Media Effects*

Week 4

Tue, Sep 16 & Thu, Sep 18: *Sullivan: Chapter 3. Public Opinion*

Canvas Assignment 2 due Sun, Sep 21

Week 5

Tue, Sep 23 & Thu, Sep 25: *Sullivan: Chapter 4. Media Ratings (Tue). Review for Exam 1 (Thu)*

Week 6

Tue, Sep 30 & Thu, Oct 2: *Exam 1 (Tue). Discussion of Exam 1 & Course Feedback (Thu)*

Week 7

Tue, Oct 7 & Thu, Oct 9: *News Audiences (Canvas readings)*

Canvas Assignment 3 due Sun, Oct 12

Week 8

Tue, Oct 14 & Thu, Oct 16: Fall break (Tue) & Prof. Xia conference travel (Thu). No class.

Week 9

Tue, Oct 21 & Thu, Oct 23: *Sullivan: Chapter 6. Critical/Cultural Paradigms*

Canvas Assignment 4 due Sun, Oct 26

Week 10

Tue, Oct 28 & Thu, Oct 30: *Sullivan: Chapter 7. Media in Context*

Week 11

Tue, Nov 4 & Thu, Nov 6: *Sullivan: Chapter 8. Media Fandom*

Week 12

Tue, Nov 11 & Thu, Nov 13: *Review for Exam 2 (Tue); Exam 2 (Thu)*

Week 13

Tue, Nov 18 & Thu, Nov 20: *Sullivan: Chapter 9. Online Audiences in a Digital World*

Last day to Q-drop: Wed, Nov 19

Media Fandom Assignment due Sun, Nov 23

Week 14

Tue, Nov 25: *Emerging Technologies & Media Audiences (Canvas readings)*

Thu, Nov 27: No Class (Thanksgiving Break)

Canvas Assignment 5 due Sun, Nov 30

Week 15

Tue, Dec 2 & Thu, Dec 4: *Review for Final Exam*

Week 16

No class (Reading Days)

Week 17

Mon, Dec 15: *Final Exam 1-3pm*

University Policies

This section outlines the university-level policies that must be included in each course syllabus. The TAMU Faculty Senate established the wording of these policies.

Attendance Policy

The university views class attendance and participation as an individual student responsibility. Students are expected to attend class and to complete all assignments.

Please refer to [Student Rule 7](#) in its entirety for information about excused absences, including definitions, and related documentation and timelines.

Makeup Work Policy

Students will be excused from attending class on the day of a graded activity or when attendance contributes to a student's grade, for the reasons stated in Student Rule 7, or other reason deemed appropriate by the instructor.

Please refer to [Student Rule 7](#) in its entirety for information about makeup work, including definitions, and related documentation and timelines.

Absences related to Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 may necessitate a period of more than 30 days for make-up work, and the timeframe for make-up work should be agreed upon by the student and instructor” ([Student Rule 7, Section 7.4.1](#)).

“The instructor is under no obligation to provide an opportunity for the student to make up work missed because of an unexcused absence” ([Student Rule 7, Section 7.4.2](#)).

Students who request an excused absence are expected to uphold the Aggie Honor Code and Student Conduct Code. (See [Student Rule 24](#).)

Academic Integrity Statement and Policy

“An Aggie does not lie, cheat or steal, or tolerate those who do.”

“Texas A&M University students are responsible for authenticating all work submitted to an instructor. If asked, students must be able to produce proof that the item submitted is indeed the work of that student. Students must keep appropriate records at all times. The inability to authenticate one’s work, should the instructor request it, may be sufficient grounds to initiate an academic misconduct case” ([Section 20.1.2.3, Student Rule 20](#)).

You can learn more about the Aggie Honor System Office Rules and Procedures, academic integrity, and your rights and responsibilities at aggiehonor.tamu.edu.

Notice of Nondiscrimination

Texas A&M University is committed to providing safe and non-discriminatory learning, living, and work environments for all members of the University community. The University provides equal opportunity to all employees, students, applicants for employment or admission, and the public regardless of race, color, sex (including pregnancy and related conditions), religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, or veteran status. Texas A&M University will promptly, thoroughly, and fairly investigate and resolve all complaints of discrimination, harassment (including sexual harassment), complicity and related retaliation based on a protected class in accordance with System Regulation 08.01.01, University Rule 08.01.01.M1, Standard Administrative Procedure (SAP) 08.01.01.M1.01, and applicable federal and state laws. In accordance with Title IX and its implementing regulations, Texas A&M does not discriminate on the basis of sex in any educational program or activity, including admissions and employment. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries and complaints regarding the non-discrimination policies: Jennifer M. Smith, TAMU Associate VP & Title IX Coordinator at YMCA Ste 108, College Station, TX 77843, 979-458-8407, or email civilrights@tamu.edu. For other reporting options, visit <https://ocrcas.ed.gov/contact-ocr> to locate the address and phone number of the office that serves your area, or call 1-800-421-3481.

Civil Rights, Free Speech, and Title IX Policies

Texas A&M University is committed to fostering a learning environment that is safe and productive for all. University policies and federal and state laws prohibit discrimination and harassment based on an

individual's race, color, sex, (including pregnancy and related conditions), religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, or any other legally protected characteristic. This includes forms of sex-based violence, such as sexual assault, sexual harassment, sexual exploitation, dating/domestic violence, and stalking.

Students can report discrimination/harassment, access supportive resources, or learn more about their options for resolving complaints on the [University's Civil Rights & Title IX webpage](#).

Students should be aware that all university employees (except medical or mental health providers) are mandatory reporters, which means that if they observe, experience or become aware of an incident that they reasonably believe to be discrimination/harassment alleged to have been committed by or against a person who was a student or employee at the time of the incident, the employee must report the incident to the university.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Policy

Texas A&M University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. If you experience barriers to your education due to a disability or think you may have a disability, please contact the Disability Resources office on your campus (resources listed below) Disabilities may include, but are not limited to attentional, learning, mental health, sensory, physical, or chronic health conditions. All students are encouraged to discuss their disability related needs with Disability Resources and their instructors as soon as possible.

To request academic accommodations, contact the designated ADA office based on your location:

- Texas A&M University, College of Nursing, College of Dentistry, Irma Lerma Rangel College of Pharmacy College Station, College of Medicine, School of Public Health, Institute of Biosciences and Technology, EnMed Program, Bush School in Washington DC, Mays Business School – CityCentre, TAMU Engineering Academies, Texas A&M University Higher Education Center at McAllen and Texas A&M University at Galveston should contact [Disability Resources](#) at (979) 845-1637 or disability@tamu.edu.
- Texas A&M University School of Law should contact the Office of Student Affairs at (817) 212-4111 or law-disability@law.tamu.edu to request accommodations.
- Irma Lerma Rangel College of Pharmacy in Kingsville should contact the Disability Resource Center at Texas A&M University - Kingsville at (361) 593-3024 or drc.center@tamuk.edu to request accommodations.
- Texas A&M University College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences in Canyon should contact the Office of Student Accessibility at West Texas A&M University – Canyon at (806) 651-2335 or osa@wtamu.edu.
- Texas A&M University at Qatar (TAMUQ) should contact the campus psychologist, Dr. Steve Wilson +974-4423-0047 or stephen.wilson@qatar.tamu.edu.

If you are experiencing difficulties with your approved accommodations, contact the office responsible for approving your accommodations or the Texas A&M ADA Coordinator Julie Kuder at ADA.Coordinator@tamu.edu or (979) 458-8407.

Pregnancy Accommodations

Texas A&M provides reasonable accommodations to students due to pregnancy and/or related conditions, such as childbirth, recovery and lactation. Students should contact the University's [Pregnancy Coordinator](#) as soon as they become aware of the need for accommodation. Depending on the circumstances, accommodations could include extended time to complete assignments or exams, changes in course sequence, or modifications to the physical classroom environment. Texas A&M will also allow a voluntary leave of absence, ensure the availability of lactation space, and maintain grievance procedures to provide for the prompt and equitable resolution of complaints of sex discrimination. For information regarding pregnancy accommodations, email TIX.Pregnancy@tamu.edu.

Statement on Mental Health and Wellness

Texas A&M University recognizes that mental health and wellness are critical factors influencing a student's academic success and overall wellbeing. Students are encouraged to engage in healthy self-care practices by utilizing the resources and services available through [University Health Services](#) on its [mental health webpage](#). The [TELUS Health Student Support app](#) provides access to professional counseling in multiple languages anytime, anywhere by phone or chat, and the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline offers 24-hour emergency support at 988 or 988lifeline.org.

Students needing a listening ear can contact University Health Services (979.458.4584) 24-hour emergency help is also available through the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (988) or at 988lifeline.org.

Statement on the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

FERPA is a federal law designed to protect the privacy of educational records by limiting access to these records, to establish the right of students to inspect and review their educational records and to provide guidelines for the correction of inaccurate and misleading data through informal and formal hearings. Currently enrolled students wishing to withhold any or all directory information items can do so within howdy.tamu.edu using the Directory Information Withholding Form. The complete [FERPA Notice to Students](#) and the student records policy is available on the Office of the Registrar webpage. Items that can never be identified as public information are a student's social security number, citizenship, gender, grades, GPR or class schedule. All efforts will be made in this class to protect your privacy and to ensure confidential treatment of information associated with or generated by your participation in the class.

Directory items include name, UIN, local address, permanent address, email address, local telephone number, permanent telephone number, dates of attendance, program of study (college, major, campus), classification, previous institutions attended, degrees honors and awards received, participation in officially recognized activities and sports, medical residence location and medical residence specialization.