

COM 260: Understanding Audiences

Spring 2018

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Course Description

Engaging with audiences is a bedrock practice for media organizations. This course explores the complex relationships between the producers of media messages and their audiences, users and participants. The course probes theories, past and present, to understand the communication process.

Goal

Examine the characteristics and behaviors of media audiences and their relationships with the producers of media messages.

Upon completion of this course students will be able to:

- identify key communication theories and concepts and recognize the value of freedom of expression to help shape and explain the behavior of media audiences.
- discuss the history and roles of media in society in the development of the complex relationship between creators of media messages and audiences.
- explain demographic and psychographic variables that are traditionally used to describe media audiences.
- explain strategies used by the creators of media messages to appeal to large and specialized audiences, including diverse domestic and global populations.
- apply numerical concepts for measuring and understanding media usage.

Required Text:

Audience Evolution: New Technologies and The Transformation of Media Audiences by Philip M. Napoli. Columbia University Press, 2011

*Available through the Elon University library as an e-book

Additional readings will be posted on Moodle throughout the term

Assignments will be weighted as follows:

Assignment/Exam	Grade Percentage	Due Date
Reading Quizzes/Activities	20%	Ongoing
Movie Response Paper	10%	Tuesday, February 13
Excel Assignment	15%	Thursday, March 8
Midterm	15%	Thursday, March 15
Book Review Assignment	15%	Tuesday, April 10
Final Exam	15%	Friday, May 11
Attendance/Participation	10%	Ongoing

Reading Quizzes/Activities: Reading quizzes and reading related activities will occur throughout the term.

Excel Assignment: Spreadsheet expertise is the foundation of many of the data analytics processes you will learn in future classes. In this assignment, you will learn the basics of Excel and have the opportunity to show off your skills in data manipulation.

Book Review Assignment: For this assignment, you will read and review one of the many popular press books published over the last decade on the topic of audiences, media engagement, and data.

Participation: Your participation grade is based on my qualitative assessment of your contribution to class discussion and a quantitative measure of attendance.

Extra Credit: Extra credit opportunities will be posted on Moodle if and when they become available. Extra credit is at the professor’s discretion and should not be depended upon or expected.

Course Schedule COM 260 – Understanding Audiences

(NOTE: This schedule is subject to modification in both due dates and content.)

You will be required to do additional reading and activities, not listed on the course schedule below, to complete the weekly module. These materials will be posted to Moodle.

Week 1	Topics	Readings/Assignments
Jan. 30	Introduction to Course	Syllabus
Feb. 1	Changing Media Landscape & Technological Determinism	Napoli – Chapter 1 pg. 25-30
Week 2	Topics	Readings/Assignments
Feb. 6	The Role of Audience in a Changing Media Landscape	Read “The Follower Factory” (Available on Moodle)
Feb. 8	Movie Day!	Watch <i>Facebook: Cracking the Code</i> (In Class)
Week 3	Topics	Readings/Assignments
Feb. 13	The Media Analytics Industry	Read “Why Everyone in Media Needs an Analytics Upgrade” (Available on Moodle) Movie Response Paper Due

Feb. 15	Methods of Audience Analytics - Rationalization	Napoli – Chapter 1 pg. 30-42 Read “TV Industry Struggles to Agree” (Available on Moodle)
Week 4	Topics	Readings/Assignments
Feb. 20	Methods of Audience Analytics – Resistance and Critiques	Napoli – Chapter 1 pg. 42-53 Read “Giving Viewers What They Want” (Available on Moodle)
Feb. 22	Audience Fragmentation	Napoli – Chapter 2 pg. 54-77 Read “The Long Tail” (Available on Moodle)
Week 5	Topics	Readings/Assignments
Feb. 27	Audience Autonomy	Napoli – Chapter 2 pg. 77-88
March 1	Spreadsheets ... Not as boring as you might think!	Foreman - Everything You Ever Needed to Know About Spreadsheets but Were Too Afraid to Ask (Posted on Moodle)
Week 6	Topics	Readings/Assignments
March 6	The Power of Excel	Complete Lynda Tutorial on Excel
March 8	Tools of Analysis	Reading TBD Excel Assignment Due
Week 7	Topics	Readings/Assignments
March 13	Midterm Review	No Reading Due
March 15	Midterm	Midterm
Spring Break!		
Week 8	Topics	Readings/Assignments
March 27	Audiences 2.0	Napoli – Chapter 3 pg 88 – 100 Deadline to choose book for review assignment
March 29	Metrics of Engagement	Napoli – Chapter 3 pg 100 – 109
Week 9	Topics	Readings/Assignments
April 3	Audience Behavior Measures	Napoli – Chapter 3 pg 109 – 116
April 5	Representations of Audiences	Napoli – Chapter 4 pg 117 - 122
Week 10	Topics	Readings/Assignments
April 10	Institutions and Audiences – A Shifting Relationship	Napoli – Chapter 4 pg 122 – 131 Book Review Due
April 12	The Ratings Game	Napoli – Chapter 4 pg 131 – 148 Panel Discussion w/ Senior Media Analytics Majors
Week 11	Topics	Readings/Assignments

April 17	Evolving Audiences	Napoli – Chapter 5 pg 149 – 154
April 19	New Roles, New Content	Napoli – Chapter 5 pg 154 – 160 Google Analytics Module 1
Week 12	Topics	Readings/Assignments
April 24	SURF Day	
April 26	Regulation and Measurement	Napoli – Chapter 5 pg 160 – 173 *In lab class day – Google Analytics Quiz
Week 13	Topics	Readings/Assignments
May 1	Visualization and Analysis	In lab class day – Introduction to Tableau
May 3	Visualization and Analysis	In lab class day – Tableau Dashboard Quiz
Week 14	Topics	Readings/Assignments
May 8	Final Exam Review	Final Exam Review