The purpose of this course is to prepare students to critique and conduct research on media effects. We will examine classic and recent studies of media effects on audience members’ beliefs, opinions, and behaviors. We will consider a range of potential media effects (including cultivation effects, agenda-setting effects, framing effects, effects of narratives, effects on knowledge, effects on violence, effects on health, effects on prosocial behavior, and effects on civil/political engagement) and a variety of media that might produce such effects (including newspapers, television news, prime-time television, late-night comedy shows, daytime talk shows, advertising, the Internet, video games, and mobile phones). Along the way, we will look at research methods that may be useful in studying media effects, such as surveys (including cross-sectional surveys and panel surveys), experiments, and content analysis. The course will culminate in individual student research projects.

**Course requirements and grading**

Response papers (7-8 required; 5% each) 35-40% (5% each)
Research paper 35%
Research presentation 10%
Class participation and discussion leadership 15-20% (5% per section)

**Response papers**

You will be required to write six or seven one-page (typed, single-spaced) response papers. Each of these papers must respond to one or more of the readings for a particular class session (and will be due in that class session). Your response papers may critique the arguments and approaches presented in the readings, consider these arguments and approaches in new contexts, and/or propose alternative arguments and approaches. Above all, your papers should engage the readings rather than merely summarizing them. Given the length requirement, each response paper should have one main focus instead of multiple focuses.

**Research paper and presentation**

You will be required to write a research paper (approximately 15 to 20 typed, double-spaced pages, plus references and any tables, figures, and/or appendices), due at **5pm on May 10th**. An electronic version of the final paper should be submitted via dropbox by **5pm on May 10th**. No late paper will be accepted unless extension is acquired prior to the due date. In this paper, you should (1) introduce your research topic, (2) review the relevant literature on the topic, (3) present your research question(s)/hypotheses, (4) describe your research design, (5) present your results, (6) draw conclusions regarding your research question(s), (7) consider the limitations of your methods and conclusions, and (8) discuss the implications of your findings and the directions for future research. You are expected to make a 15-20 minute presentation on your research project on **May 3rd**.
Discussion leadership
Please read the assignments before class so that we can discuss them in class. Each student will be responsible for leading the discussion for part of one class session. The discussion leader’s primary task is to prepare questions about the readings that will facilitate critical discussion; it is not to summarize the readings.

Readings
All course readings are available on D2L

Academic honesty
You are expected to do your own work for this course; please do not attempt to commit plagiarism. See the Student Handbook for further details about what constitutes academic misconduct and what the penalties for it are. For more on university policies, see http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/SyllabusLinks.pdf

PART I: AN INTRODUCTION AND FOUR CLASSIC STUDIES

January 26 (Week 1): Introduction to Media Effects Research

February 2 (Week 2): The War of the Worlds Study


Background: Preface, Appendix B
Section I: Chapters II-IV
Section II: Chapters V-VII

February 9 (Week 3): The Columbia School Panel Study


Background: Chapters I-III
Section I: Chapters VIII-X
Section II: Chapters XIV-XVI
February 16 (Week 4): Cultivation Theory


February 23 (Week 5): Experimental Research on Agenda-Setting


Background: Chapter 1-2
Section I: Chapter 3-6
Section II: Chapter 7, 12

PART II: THEORIES AND TOPICS IN RECENT MEDIA EFFECTS RESEARCH

March 1 (Week 6): Framing Effect I


March 8 (Week 7): Framing Effect II


March 15 (Week 8): Spring Break ☀

March 22 (Week 9): Effects of Narratives


March 29 (Week 10): Effects on Knowledge


April 5 (Week 11): Effects on Violence


April 12 (Week 12): Effects on Health


April 19 (Week 13): Effects on Prosocial Behavior


April 26 (Week 14): Effects on Political/Civic Engagement


May 3 (Week 15): Final paper presentation

May 10 (Week 16): Final paper due at 5:00pm. An electronic version submitted via Dropbox.