



COUGARS

Syllabus for MC 472 (Online)

Media and Health

Department of Mass Communications

2025-2026 Winter Session

December 15, 2025 - January 4, 2026

About the Instructor

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Virtual Office Hours: Mondays 10-11am and by appointment

Zoom Meeting Link on the Blackboard

Welcome

This is a **three-week online course**. Due to the accelerated nature of this course, there is much work to be completed in a short window of time. It is advisable to plan to work on the course material almost every day during the term. Staying active and engaged in an online course will help you succeed in this class. I am here to help you learn, so do not hesitate to reach out to me during the course of the semester. I also genuinely enjoy chatting with my students so feel free to contact me to chat about a topic that interests you or life in general.

Communicating with the instructor

- **Course Announcements:** I will post weekly announcements relating to the course on the Blackboard.
- **E-mail:** I also will use email to communicate with you. Email is the best way for you to contact me. You can expect to hear back from me within 24 hours unless on the weekend. Please use my e-mail smishra@siue.edu for all private communication. If I believe that your question is better answered on the discussion board, I may ask you to post it there before I answer it.

About emails: In many ways, writing to a professor is no different from writing a business letter. Keep in mind that you are not texting with a friend or writing a casual message to an acquaintance -- this is a professional interaction with someone who is an expert in their field and in an official position to evaluate you and grade your work. Your emails should contain the proper parts of letter, convey respect and courtesy, and reflect the fact you are a serious student.

- **Discussion Boards:** I will also use the discussion board to communicate with you.

About the Course

Course description

This course is designed to serve students in the communication, media and health fields who wish to develop a better understanding of the types of health messages people get through media and the impact it has on them. It aims to improve students understanding of media's role in health and help them be critical consumers to media messages.

Focuses on media literacy in the area of health, ethics related to media health content, the influence media have on health behavior and health policy.

Course goals and objectives

- To explain how news media, entertainment media, and social media contribute to public knowledge and attitudes regarding health and medical issues.
- To explain the constraints under which various media operate in reporting and explaining health issues.

- To explain how entertainment media shape perceptions about health and medical issues.
- To explain the theoretical explanations for how audiences use and process mediated health messages.
- To become active and aware consumers of media and health information.

Course textbooks

We will be using two textbooks and readings from other sources. The textbooks (e-textbooks) are available to SIUE students through Redshelf link on the Blackboard. Books are also available on Amazon.

1. Walsh-Childers, K. (2017). *Mass Media and Health: Examining Media Impact on Individuals and the Health Environment*. New York, NY: Routledge.
2. Oliver, M.B., Raney, A.A. & Bryant, J. (2019). *Media Effects: Advances in Theory and Research*.
3. Other supplemental materials will be on Blackboard.

General Format of the Class

The course is structured into **weekly modules**. Each module **starts at 8:00 a.m. on a Monday** morning and **ends at 11:59 p.m. on a Sunday** night U.S. Central Time, except on the last week when the class ends on a Friday at 11:59 CST.

You learn about the topic of the week through readings, audios and videos, and assignments. Thus, each week there is assigned readings, a short video lecture on the topic, documentary film or other videos, and activities/assignments that are due at the end of the week. From time to time, I may also provide some additional audio/videos on a topic that is important but may have not been discussed well in the readings. Please review the content before you do any of the assignments.

This is an **asynchronous class**, which means that you don't have to be online at a specific time. You can go through the class material at a time that is convenient to you as long as the weekly assignments are completed by the end of the week.

Course requirements

What I expect from you:

An online course requires you to be in control of your learning. In a face-to-face (F2F) course, I can play a much bigger role in actively directing your learning since I see you once or twice a week. In an online course, I have to do a lot more work in designing an appropriate learning material, so that you can learn at your own pace, at your convenience sitting in your pajamas 😊. Since you are in control, you need to be disciplined and motivated enough to stay up to date with the course.

The following tips will help you succeed in the course:

1. **Log in** to the Blackboard every day to view announcements, discussion posts, and replies to your posts.
2. **Manage your time:** This is a **winter session course** where you are expected to internalize a broad variety of concepts in **just three weeks**. This requires **good planning**. Good planning also allows you to be prepared for unexpected sickness, travel requirements, Internet outages, and so on.
3. **Keep track of due dates:** Print out the schedule but look for updates on the Blackboard. Please Do not wait till the last minute to submit your assignments. If you are submitting very close to the deadline, any technical problems with your computer or your internet connection may lead to missing the deadline. Please do not try to submit at 11:59pm, if you have reached this time, you have passed the deadline, the system will reject your assignment.
4. **Discipline and Self-Motivation:** Doing an online class adds complexity as home life can take over quite easily. You need to be disciplined and self-motivated to get the most out of an online class. If you are **not able to keep up** in the first two weeks of the class, an online class may not be for you or might not be right for you at this particular time. You may choose to drop the class.

What your peers expect from you:

Netiquette: In any social interaction, certain rules of etiquette are expected and contribute to more enjoyable and productive communication. The following tips for interacting online in e-mail and/or Discussion Board messages are adapted from guidelines originally compiled by Chuq Von Rospach and Gene Spafford.

- Remember that **the person receiving your message is someone like you**, someone who deserves and appreciates courtesy and respect.
- Be brief. Succinct, thoughtful messages have the greatest impact.
- Your messages reflect on YOU. Take time to make sure that you are proud of their form and content.
- Use descriptive subject headings in e-mail messages.
- Think about your audience and the relevance of your messages.
- Be careful with humor and sarcasm; without the voice inflections and body language of face-to-face communication, Internet messages can be easily misinterpreted.
- When making follow-up comments, summarize the parts of the message to which you are responding.
- Avoid repeating what has already been said. Needless repetition is ineffective communication.
- Cite appropriate references whenever using someone else's ideas, thoughts, or words.
- Even though we are all working from home, it is important to present a professional self in Zoom meetings as it creates an impression about you. Dress appropriately, use a room with minimum distractions, do not eat during meetings, etc. Generally, do not do things that you would not do in a face-to-face formal meeting.

Course activities/assessments

Your performance in the course will be evaluated through several course activities. Assignment details have been provided on the Blackboard. Here is the gist.

Online Discussions: Each week, there will be online discussions based on the week's learning materials. Please see detailed guideline for participation on the Discussion Board.

Assignments: These are short summary or application assignments.

Weekly Reflection or Case Study (~3-5 pages): A case study is a scenario in a particular health context which students are expected to analyze and respond to, guided by specific questions posed concerning the situation.

A reflection paper allows you a chance to reinforce what you have learned through coursework, lectures and personal experience.

Graduate Students: Graduate students will be expected to go over additional materials (readings, videos, etc.), participate in more discussions, and write a longer reflection papers or case studies each week.

Grading

Assignment	Points
Introductions	5 Points
Weekly Discussions	60 (3x 20) points
Theories Assignment	20 points
Case Scenario/Reflection	150 (3x 150) points
Total	235 points

Course Grading Scale

A	90- 100%
B	80- 89%
C	70- 79%
D	60 - 69%
F	59 and below

About grades: An **A** is reserved for work that is **exceptional** in its appearance and exceeds the instructor's expectations of performance for the task/course. "A" is not rewarded for simply doing things that are expected of every student—i.e., class participation, submitting quality work, and respectful behavior, etc.

Grading rubrics

Grading rubric for discussion/interaction are posted on the Blackboard.

Grading rubric for case study and reflection assignment is also on the Blackboard.

Feedback and grading timeline

My goal will always be to complete grading the assignments for the week within a week, even though there are several assignments from this class. I will begin grading after the due date not when you submit. You can see your grades by clicking the My Grades link on the left menu of the Blackboard course. You will be able to see my feedback by clicking on the assignment name in the My grades. You can discuss your grades for any issues within seven days of posting of the grades after that they will be considered final. The final grade in the course is FINAL.

Late or Missed Assignments

All assignments are due on the date/time stipulated on the syllabus. There are no exceptions. Please do not wait till the last minute to submit your work. If you are submitting very close to the deadline, any technical problems with your computer or your internet connection may lead to missing the deadline.

I know life can happen, please communicate with me early, so that I can make the necessary accommodations for you. If you communicate with me after the deadline, I am not in a position to make such accommodations.

Course Evaluation

Towards the end of this course, you will be asked to complete a departmental course evaluation questionnaire. Please complete this, I greatly value these student evaluations of the class. The course evaluation is administered in such a way as to insure your confidentiality. I will not have access to the information on the evaluation until after grades have been turned in at the end of the semester.

Technology requirements

1. **Internet Access:** Preferably a high-speed connection since some of the content will be video/audio.
2. **Hardware/Software:** The course content will be available on the web and documents would be in Microsoft office or pdf formats. Media would be in the form of mp3/mp4, which are easily accessible on most platforms. We might use some special tools for the course, but they are all web based and you will be provided access to them. The course does not require a particular hardware platform.
3. For **technical help**, please contact SIUE ITS at 618-650-5500, help@siue.edu.
4. Technical requirements for students can be found in this [ITS Knowledge Base article](#).

Technology capabilities

Students in an online course should be able to:

- Use a word processor, such as MS Word, to compose assignments and communicate with others in class
- Attach files to emails or course areas
- Navigate websites and course materials
- Reach out to tech support staff when issues arise and troubleshoot to resolve problems

Additional guidance for taking online courses can be found on the [Online at SIUE site](#).

Course and University policies

Academic integrity/plagiarism

Plagiarism is the use of another person's words or ideas without crediting that person. Plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated and may lead to failure on an assignment, in the class, or dismissal from the University, per the [SIUE academic dishonesty policy](#). Students are responsible for complying with University policies about academic honesty as stated in the [University's Student Academic Conduct Code](#).

Turnitin

This course will utilize the Turnitin plagiarism detection software. A Turnitin link will be available anywhere written work is to be submitted in the course. [Find out more about using Turnitin](#).

Please properly cite your sources both in-text and in the reference for all work. You can use any citation style you are familiar with but be consistent. **Any text- generating software (such as ChatGPT, iA Writer, Marmot or Botowski) for any assignment is not permitted, and it will be treated as plagiarism.**

Recordings of Class Content

Faculty recordings of lectures and/or other course materials are meant to facilitate student learning and to help facilitate a student catching up who has missed class due to illness or quarantine. As such, students are reminded that the recording, as well as replicating or sharing of any course content and/or course materials without the express permission of the instructor of record, is not permitted, and may be considered a violation of the University's Student Conduct Code (3C1), linked here: <https://www.siu.edu/policies/3c1.shtml>.

Potential for Changes in Course Schedule or Modality

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, there remains a possibility that planned classroom activities will need to be adjusted. These changes would be implemented to ensure the successful completion of the course while preserving health and safety. In these cases, students may be provided with an addendum to the class syllabus that will supersede the original version. If the course schedule or modifications significantly alter expectations, a new syllabus will be issued.

Services for Students Needing Accommodations

Students needing accommodations because of medical diagnosis or major life impairment will need to register with Accessible Campus Community & Equitable Student Support (ACCESS) and complete an intake process before accommodations will be given. Students who believe they have a diagnosis, but do not have documentation, should contact ACCESS for assistance and/or appropriate referral. The ACCESS office is located in the Student Success Center, Room 1203. You can also reach the office by emailing us at myaccess@siue.edu or by calling [618-650-3726](tel:618-650-3726).

Diversity and Inclusion

SIUE is committed to respecting everyone's dignity at all times. In order to learn, exchange ideas, and support one another, our virtual and physical classrooms must be places where students and teachers feel safe and supported. Systems of oppression permeate our institutions and our classrooms. All students and faculty have the responsibility to co-create a classroom that affirms inclusion, equity, and social justice, where racism, sexism, classism, ableism, heterosexism, xenophobia, and other social pathologies are not tolerated. Violations of this policy will be enforced in line with the SIUE Student Conduct Code.

The Hub <https://www.siu.edu/csdi> is an excellent resource for students for support and community. Any person who believes they have experienced or witnessed discrimination or harassment can contact Ms. Jamie Ball, Director in the Office of Equal Opportunity, Access and Title IX Coordination at (618) 650-2333 or jball@siue.edu. There is also an online form for reporting bias incidents at https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?SIUEdwardsville&layout_id=10.

Additional Support

Academic and Other Student Services

As an enrolled SIUE student, you have a variety of support available to you, including:

- [Lovejoy Library Resources](#)
- [Academic Success Sessions](#)
- [Tutoring Resource Center](#)
- [The Writing Center](#)
- [Academic Advising](#)
- [Financial Aid](#)
- [Campus Events](#)
- [Counseling Services](#)

If you find that you need additional support, please reach out to me and let me know.

Cougar Care

Dealing with the fast-paced life of a college student can be challenging, and I always support a student's decisions to prioritize mental health. Students have access to counseling services on campus (Student Success Center, 0222). Make an appointment by visiting cougarcare.siue.edu or by calling [618-650-2842](tel:618-650-2842).

Student Success Coaches

[Student success coaches](#) work across campus to serve the SIUE student population with the tools and resources to adjust to and meet the demands of the college experience. Success coaches provide direct services such as time management support and referrals to campus resources. If you find yourself in need of academic or personal support, or in a situation that is preventing you from being successful in the classroom, please utilize [Starfish](#) to connect with a coach as soon as possible. The sooner you engage, the sooner you can access the information or tools you need that may help you get back on track.

Technical Support

Since this is an online course, you are expected to have reliable Internet access on a regular basis. It is your responsibility to address any computer problems that might occur. Such problems are not an excuse for delays in meeting expectations or for missing course deadlines.

Contact ITS at [618-650-5500](tel:618-650-5500) or at help@siue.edu with any technical concerns. You can also check the functionality of University systems, including Blackboard, at the [ITS System Status page](#), or search the [ITS Knowledge Base](#) for various how-to and troubleshooting guides.

Tips for taking online assessments:

- Set up a wired (Ethernet) Internet connection on your computer
- Do not use a mobile device, such as a phone or tablet
- Read the instructions and directions carefully
- Be prepared to complete the assessment in the allotted time

Textbook Services

SIUE undergraduate and graduate students can rent textbooks from SIUE. Please visit the [Textbook Service website](#) for more information. For off-campus classes, the textbook may be shipped to you. Look for the option "Off-Campus Classes have special instructions, click here for these." Note: shipping time may take up to two weeks.

Subject to change notice

All material, assignments, and deadlines are subject to change with prior notice. It is your responsibility to stay in touch with your instructor, review the course site regularly, or communicate with other students, to adjust as needed if assignments or due dates change.

Media & Health Course Schedule:

Week	Learning Activities	Assignments & Due Dates All due at 11:59 pm CST
<p>Week 1 Introduction to Media & Health</p> <p>Mental Health in the Media</p>	<p>Monday: Unit 1.1 Read Chapter 1: The Media Environment... (Walsh-Childers) <i>Watch related videos</i></p> <p>Tuesday: Unit 1.2 Read Chapter 2: Media Effects Theories (Oliver et al, 2020) Read Chapter 2: Health Information Online – Building a Web to Improve Health Behavior (Walsh-Childers) <i>Watch related videos</i></p> <p>Wednesday: Unit 2.1 Read: On-Screen Portrayals of Mental Illness: Extent, Nature, and Impacts (suppl.) <i>Watch related videos</i></p> <p>Thursday: Unit 2.2 Read Chapter 12: Peer-to-peer health – The good and bad news about Facebook, Instagram, blogs and other social media (Walsh-Childers) <i>Grad Reading: Social Media and Youth Mental Health (suppl.)</i> <i>Watch related videos</i></p> <p>Friday: Unit 2.3 Read: Media Representation of Attention Deficit Disorder (suppl.) <i>Watch related videos</i></p> <p>Grad Unit: <i>Extra Materials for Grad Students</i></p>	<p>Mon, Dec 15 1. Do the introductions</p> <p>Sun, Dec 21 2. Participate in online discussion 3. Theories Assignment 4. Reflection paper or case study</p>

Week	Learning Activities	Assignments & Due Dates All due at 11:59 pm CST
<p>Week 2 Sexual Health in the Media</p> <p>Body and Weight in the Media</p>	<p>Monday: Unit 3.1 <i>Watch Video: Sex & Sexual Health in the Media</i> Read Chapter 9: Lust, love and romance with few consequences – Media Portrayals of Sex (Walsh-Childers)</p> <p>Tuesday: Unit 3.2 Read: From “Just the Facts to Downright Salacious”; Teen’s and Women’s Magazine Coverage of Sex and Sexual Health. (suppl.) Listen: How are media influencing teens and their sexual choices and behaviors? <i>Watch Documentary Film</i></p> <p>Wednesday: Unit 3.3 Read: Porn: How pornography Impacts your (real-life) sexual relationship. (Supplemental reading) <i>Watch Documentary Films</i></p> <p>Grad Unit: <i>Extra Materials for Grad Students</i></p> <p>Thursday: Unit 4.1 <i>Watch Videos: Body and weight in the media</i> Read Chapter 8: Showing us what we should (and cannot) be – The mass media mirror and body image (Walsh-Childers) <i>Watch Documentary Film</i></p> <p>Friday: Unit 4.2 Read Chapter 7: Do the media make us fat? Advertising and entertainment portrayals of food, nutrition and exercise (Walsh-Childers) Listen to: Skeptic guide to health news and fads (audio) <i>Watch video</i></p> <p>Grad Unit: <i>Extra Materials for Grad Students</i></p>	<p>Sun, Dec 28</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Participate in the online discussion. 2. Reflection paper or case study
<p>Week 3 Contagious and Infectious Disease in the Media</p>	<p>Monday: Unit 5.1 Read Chapter 11: Reporting on Health for Better or Worse (Walsh-Childers) <i>Watch video</i></p> <p>Tuesday: Unit 5.2 Misinformation and the US Ebola Communication Crisis (Suppl.) Social media and the spread of misinformation (Suppl.) <i>Listen to the audios</i></p> <p>Wednesday: Unit 5.3 Read: Infectious Disease in Cinema: Virus Hunters and Killer Microbes (Supplemental) Read: How the ‘Plandemic’ Movie and Its Falsehoods Spread Widely Online (Supplemental)</p> <p>Grad Unit: <i>Extra Materials for Grad Students</i></p>	<p>Deadline: Saturday, Jan 3</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Participate in the online discussion 2. Reflection paper or case study