

9.11.22

# SYLLABUS

**FALL 2022**

# COM 520 Media Studies

## Theme: “Copaganda: Media, Crime, and Law Enforcement”

Department of Communication Studies

Harrington School of Communication and Media

University of Rhode Island

## Instructor

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Director, Media Education Lab

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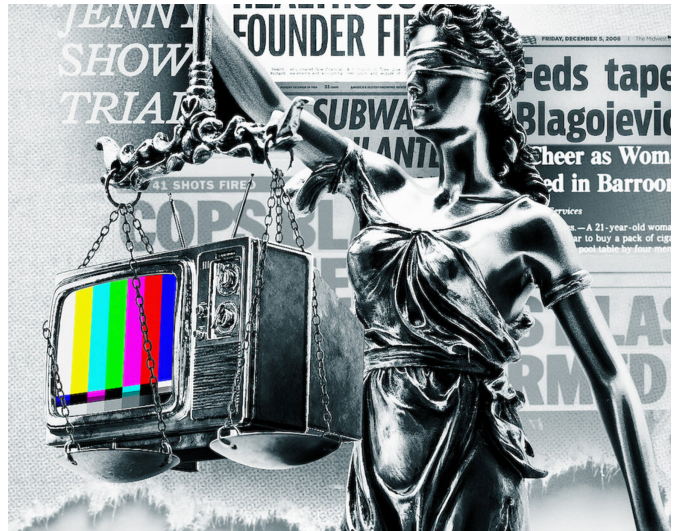
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## Focus of the Course

This course introduces students to research on digital media, mass media and popular culture by examining media texts, institutions, audiences, and effects. This semester, we focus on media, crime, and law enforcement to examine the complex ways that social practices and institutions are intertwined.



### Time/Location

This is a blended class that includes both face-to-face (F2F) and online learning components. Our regular weekly meeting will be held on Tuesdays, 6 – 8:45 p.m. Classroom location: Davis 107. Course hashtag: #COM520.

## Instructor Office Hours, Location

Tuesdays, 5 - 6 p.m. and by appointment. Online or On-Campus: Davis 107. Schedule a meeting:

<https://calendly.com/hobbs-2/com-520-individual-consultation>

## WHY TAKE THIS COURSE?

The study of media has moved from its early roots in the examination of arts, culture, and current events towards more disciplinary and professional study of media forms, including book and magazine publishing, journalism and news media, advertising and public relations, narrative and non-narrative film, popular music, videogames, the Internet and social media. More recently, interdisciplinary approaches to media studies have begun to dominate the field, as researchers create new knowledge by examining the intersections between media texts, technologies, platforms, and institutions, in diverse fields of study including education, business, political science, psychology, and even criminal justice. These interdisciplinary approaches to media

studies have examined how media help to maintain or challenge status quo power relationships in relation to social, economic, political, and cultural issues.

Media messages of all sorts shape people's understanding of social reality, and this phenomenon is particularly evident when examining crime and law enforcement. Most people have well-formed opinions about law enforcement long before they ever actually interact with a police officer in real life. A variety of different types of media texts, technologies, and platforms now affect the landscape of policing, affecting citizens and police alike. As social media becomes a routine part of most people's daily lives, many feel empowered to post content and disclose information that depicts law enforcement activities. Mass murderers routinely livestream their killing and share it online for others to view. On popular YouTube channels, audiences can readily scrutinize the actions of police and citizens, viewing footage from surveillance cameras, citizen recordings of police, surveillance cameras, and body-worn cameras. A growing number of Americans believe that it is important to document police encounters to limit abuses of power.

At the same time, most people are largely unaware of the many ways that media depictions of crime affect people's attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. The research literature on this topic is plentiful. For example, citizens who watch local TV news are more likely to believe that crime is rising both nationally and locally than other members of society. Watching television news and crime-based reality programs affect how citizens make sentencing decisions, even after controlling for sociodemographic characteristics and experiences with crime such as fear, past victimization, and prior arrests.

Entertainment media has long offered crime genres as a sensationalist thrill ride with moral messages or cultural commentary. Crime shows are among the most-watched series on TV. Some TV shows depict criminal justice professionals as committing wrongful actions in a way that normalizes them—making bad actors seem good and wrongful actions seem right. In many movies and TV shows, criminal justice professionals who are represented as “good guys” actually commit more wrongful actions than those constructed as “bad guys.”

In the summer and fall of 2020, after the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and other Black individuals who were killed by police, some scripted TV shows about law enforcement featured storylines that suggested that the training of police officers may be a factor in officer-involved homicides. For example, in one episode of *N.C.I.S.: New Orleans*, the team uncovers a gang of white supremacist officers who were all trained by an instructor who practiced Warrior Training, a type of training that encourages an us-versus-them approach to policing. Through entertainment media, viewers learn about police professionals who treat citizens—particularly Black citizens—as the enemy, presenting a “dehumanizing perspective that shapes how officers approach their job, use their discretion, and see themselves” (Bernabo, 2022, p. 488).

In many ways, media and technology are transforming the conversation about policing in America. With law enforcement under the magnifying glass, deficiencies in police education are also becoming more noticeable to the public. In this class, students get a hands-on chance to learn research skills through a research apprenticeship that examines an innovative train-the-trainers initiative in media literacy education designed to help police officers develop critical thinking and communication skills about media and technology in ways that improve the training of future police officers.

## Learning Outcomes

These learning outcomes are expected for every participant. You will:

1. Gain knowledge of key theoretical concepts within the disciplinary tradition of media studies;
2. Gain knowledge of how researchers create new knowledge through different methodologies and forms of inquiry.
3. Appreciate the complex relationship between media producers, texts, technologies, and industries in relation to crime and law enforcement, considering the relationship between authors and audiences, messages and meanings, and representations and reality;
4. Advance research competencies in the analysis of qualitative and quantitative data;
5. Strengthen collaboration, creativity and critical thinking skills;
6. Develop writing, performance, and self-expression competencies through creating media in written, oral, digital and multimedia forms;
7. Deepen reflective awareness of how media affects your own understanding of crime and law enforcement.

## COURSE OUTLINE

Week 0 9/13	<b>Introduction to the Course</b>	Pathwright: <a href="https://bit.ly/3RT5yur">https://bit.ly/3RT5yur</a>	<b>DUE</b>
<b>Why Now?</b>			
Week 1 9/20	<b>What makes the study of media, crime, and law enforcement timely and relevant?</b>	<p>Schneider, C. J. (2021). <a href="#">Police use of social media as bureaucratic propaganda: Comments on state violence and law enforcement use of social media in 2020</a>. <i>Criminology, Criminal Justice, Law &amp; Society</i>, 22(2), 1-8.</p> <p>Bernabo, L. (2022). <a href="#">Copaganda and post-Floyd TVPD: broadcast television's response to policing in 2020</a>. <i>Journal of Communication</i>, 72(4), 488–496.</p>	Class Participation
<b>Foundational Concepts</b>			
Week 2 9/27	<b>How have the intersections of media, crime, and law enforcement been addressed by 20<sup>th</sup> century scholars?</b>	<p>Jewkes, Y., &amp; Linnemann, T. (2018). Chapter 1. <i>Media and crime in the U.S.</i> Sage. (online at URI Library)</p> <p>Wiltburg, J. (2004). <a href="#">True crime: The origins of modern sensationalism</a>. <i>The American Historical Review</i>, 109(5), 1377-1404.</p> <p>Newell, B. C. (2019). <a href="#">Context, visibility, and control: Police work and the contested</a></p>	Class Participation

		<a href="#">objectivity of bystander video.</a> <i>New Media &amp; Society</i> , 21(1), 60-76.	
<b>Media Representations of Crime and Law Enforcement</b>			
Week 3 10/4	<b>Why do media representations of crime and law enforcement matter?</b>	<p>Color of Change. (2020). <a href="#">Normalizing injustice: The dangerous misrepresentations that define television's scripted crime genre.</a> The USC Annenberg Norman Lear Center.</p> <p>Bailey, R. L., Read, G. L., Yan, Y. H., Liu, J., Makin, D. A., &amp; Willits, D. (2021). <a href="#">Camera point-of-view exacerbates racial bias in viewers of police use of force videos.</a> <i>Journal of Communication</i>, 71(2), 246-275.</p>	Class Participation
<b>Methodological Approaches</b>			
Week 4 10/11	<b>How is new knowledge created to explore this topic?</b>	<p>Jacobs, L., &amp; van Spanje, J. (2022). <a href="#">Who's afraid of terror news? The interplay between news consumption patterns, personal experiences and fear of terrorism.</a> <i>Mass Communication and Society</i>, 1-23.</p> <p>Till B, Arendt F, Niederkrotenthaler T. (2021). <a href="#">The relationship between crime-related television viewing and perceptions of the death penalty: Results of a large cross-sectional survey study.</a> <i>Frontiers in Psychology</i> 12:715657.</p> <p>Zachary S. Mitnik, Joshua D. Freilich &amp; Steven M. Chermak (2020) <a href="#">Post-9/11 coverage of terrorism in the New York Times.</a> <i>Justice Quarterly</i>, 37:1, 161-185, DOI: 10.1080/07418825.2018.1488985</p> <p>Mateescu, A., Brunton, D., Rosenblat, A., Patton, D., Gold, Z., &amp; Boyd, D. (2015). <a href="#">Social media surveillance and law enforcement.</a> <i>Data and Civic Rights.</i> Data and Society Research Institute.</p> <p>Moule, R. K., Parry, M., &amp; Fox, B. (2019). <a href="#">Legal socialization and selective exposure to "cop-watching" websites.</a> <i>Policing: An International Journal</i>, 42(6), 1063-1080.</p>	Class Participation
<b>Blurred Boundaries</b>			

Week 5 10/18	<b>What are the social responsibilities of authors and audiences?</b>	<p>Cobb, J. (2022, June 4). <a href="#">Would showing graphic images of mass shootings spur action to stop them?</a> <i>The New Yorker</i>.</p> <p>Gourevitch, P. (2015, April 8). <a href="#">Should you watch the video?</a> <i>The New Yorker</i>.</p> <p>Mortensen, M. (2022). <a href="#">Perpetrator witnessing: Testing the norms and forms of witnessing through livestreaming terror attacks.</a> <i>Journalism</i>, 23(3), 690-707.</p>	Class Participation
<b>Narrative Persuasion</b>			
Week 6 10/25	<b>How do stories change minds?</b>	<p>Hamby, A., Brinberg, D., &amp; Jaccard, J. (2018). <a href="#">A conceptual framework of narrative persuasion.</a> <i>Journal of Media Psychology: Theories, Methods, and Applications</i>, 30(3), 113.</p> <p>Crow, D. and Jones, M. (2018) <a href="#">Narratives as tools for influencing policy change.</a> <i>Policy &amp; Politics</i>, 46(2), 217–34,</p> <p>Edwards A. (2020, August 27). <a href="#">Brooklyn Nine-Nine as copaganda: A critical analysis.</a> Medium.</p>	Improve a Wikipedia Entry
<b>Media Literacy Education in Law Enforcement</b>			
Week 7 11/1	<b>How do police officers develop media literacy competencies?</b>	<p>Hobbs, R. &amp; Steager, P. (2022). Media Education for Law Enforcement Officers. Providence: Media Education Lab. <a href="http://www.mediaeducationlab.com/police-academy">www.mediaeducationlab.com/police-academy</a></p> <p>Hobbs, R. &amp; Steager, P. (2022). Media Education for Law Enforcement Officers: Program Evaluation Top Line Results.</p>	Class Participation
<b>Research Apprenticeship</b>			
Week 8 11/8	<b>What evidence is available about how police officers learn about media literacy?</b>		Class Participation
Week 9 11/15	<b>What does the data suggest about how police officers learn media literacy?</b>		Class Participation

Week 10 11/22	How do we tell the story about the data?		Class Participation
Week 11 11/29	What new questions arise?		Research Apprenticeship Project
<b>Media and Law Enforcement Futures</b>			
Week 12 12/6	How are new forms of media shaping crime and law enforcement?	<p>Erbschloe, M. (2018). Chapter 5. Extremist propaganda in social media: A threat to Homeland Security. CRC Press. <a href="https://doi-org.uri.idm.oclc.org/10.4324/9781351027380">https://doi-org.uri.idm.oclc.org/10.4324/9781351027380</a></p> <p>Jackson, S. &amp; Welles, B. (2015). <a href="#">Hijacking #MYNYPD: Social media dissent and networked counterpublics</a>. <i>Journal of Communication</i>, 65(6), 932-952.</p> <p>Brewer, C. (2022). <a href="#">r/ProtectandServe: an exploration of the virtual canteen culture regarding police misconduct</a>. <i>Policing and Society</i>, 1 – 22.</p> <p>Wood, M. A., &amp; McGovern, A. (2021). <a href="#">Memetic copaganda: Understanding the humorous turn in police image work</a>. <i>Crime, Media, Culture</i> 17(3), 305-326.</p>	Class Participation
<b>Synthesis</b>			
Week 13 12/6	What are the main takeaways from this course?		Class Participation
12/13			Final Paper/Project

## ASSIGNMENTS

There are three major assignments beyond class participation. On the Pathwright LMS, the instructor will provide a specific description of the following assignments with expectations and criteria for evaluation. Assignments include:

### Wikipedia Project (250 points)

To demonstrate your understanding of the topics and issues explored in this class, each student will contribute original content to Wikipedia to improve public understanding of a particular topic under examination in this class. You may choose to create a new Wikipedia entry or substantially revise an existing entry. Details about this assignment are located on the class WikiEdu dashboard. Register here: <https://bit.ly/copagandawiki>. These are the key stages of the project: (1) Select a topic from the course to focus on for your work; (2) evaluate the quality of a Wikipedia entry; (3) compose a new Wikipedia entry or revise an existing one, using sources from the course syllabus and beyond. This assignment is designed to strengthen research skills, advance your digital citizenship, and help you become more aware of content gaps in Wikipedia and the

role of citizen researchers.

### **Research Apprenticeship (250 points)**

Working as a team, you collaborate to develop a complete scholarly article suitable for publication, including a review of the literature, analysis of qualitative or quantitative data analysis, major findings, and implications of the research. This semester, we explore a dataset about the media literacy competencies of police instructors in Austin, Texas, who participated in a specially designed training program offered by Renee Hobbs and Pam Steager under the auspices of the Media Education Lab. After reading and learning about the project and discussing the aims and goals of the research, you will examine a subset of the data collected and develop a strategy for analyzing and reporting findings. Working collaboratively, you will share work in progress with your peers and discuss the implications of your work, submitting deliverables you agreed to create. Finally, you reflect on the research apprenticeship as a hands-on form of project-based learning.

### **Final Paper/Project (250 points)**

At the end of the semester, you compose an original paper or project to synthesize your learning, building on your work in this course. You may choose to compose a book review, a literature review, an opinion-editorial, original essay, a short video commentary, or even a brief research proposal. Expected length: Print genres: 2,000 – 4,000 words. Multimedia genres: 5 – 7 minutes.

### **Class Participation (250 points)**

Evidence of active participation includes quality of class participation, where you demonstrate active evidence of comprehending and synthesizing the required readings and videos. Other measures include attendance, participation in threaded discussions, video and PDF annotation, and informal writing assignments.

NOTE: PhD students complete additional reading customized by the instructor to meet their professional needs.

### **Grading**

Each assignment is worth a number of points. The total possible points earned for this class is 1000 points. The points earned for each assignment divided by the total number of possible points will yield a percentage. Grades will be assigned to percentages as follows:

94-100% = A | 90-93% = A- | 87-89% = B+ | 84-86% = B | 80-83% = B- | 77-79% = C+

## **COURSE DESIGN**

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### **Educational Philosophy**

This course is based on the assumption that: (1) learners are engaged and self-directed, able to make strategic choices in order to maximize the available learning opportunities. Another key assumption of this class is that (2) people learn best by doing, working as apprentices under the supervision of an expert. A final assumption of this course is that (3) reflection is an essential component of learning that can be activated through social interaction in a challenging and supportive community where there are high levels of respect and trust. For the best learning environment possible, we will depend on every student to respect and engage with these fundamental design principles.

### **Format of the Course**

Each Tuesday, a Learning Path will open on Pathwright and academic work is expected to be



completed by the following Tuesday. There will be a mix of face-to-face and online learning. You can also choose to participate in the class online via Zoom.

### **Digital Platforms**

- *Learning Management System:* Pathwright is the home base for the course. Access the platform here: <https://bit.ly/COM520copaganda>. All course content and learning activities are hosted on the Pathwright LMS. You will receive an invitation to this LMS via email. We do not use Brightspace.
- *Public-facing website:* <https://medium.com/seminar-on-copaganda>. Students establish a Medium account to publish their academic work for this course, submitting work to the publication.
- *WikiEdu:* Join the [WikiEdu dashboard for Media Studies COM 520](#).
- *Signal App.* We'll use the secure Signal app for our project-based collaboration, informal social interaction, and information sharing. Join the group here: <https://bit.ly/COM520signal>

## **COURSE POLICIES**

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### **Remix and Fair Use**

A course in media studies is dependent upon a robust interpretation of copyright and fair use. Students are expected to make legal use of copyrighted materials for learning, which may include the use of written content, images, multimedia, and other materials appropriate to the learning context. To make a fair use determination about the use of copyrighted materials in your own creative work, consider the context and situation of the original work and your own purpose and goals for using it. Learn more here: <http://mediaeducationlab.com/copyright>

### **Plagiarism**

Students are expected to produce original writing and creative work for this course, and it is expected that you will be the author of all the work you submit. Students should use the American Psychological Association (APA 7<sup>th</sup>) citation format for identifying all materials used for reference and information gathering. Please consult the instructor(s) if you have questions on how to identify the information sources that you use in preparing your work. Penalties for plagiarism may range from a reduced grade on an assignment to failing the course.

### **Accommodation for Disabilities and Special Needs**

Any students who have a need for accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss the specific situation. Contact Disability Services to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities at 330 Memorial Union, 401-874-2098, <http://www.uri.edu/disability/dss/>

### **Coronavirus Precautions**

As members of the URI community, students are required to comply with standards of conduct and take precautions to keep themselves and others safe. Students who are experiencing symptoms of illness should not come to class. Please stay in your home/room and notify URI Health Services via phone at 401-874-2246. If you are already on campus and start to feel ill, go home/back to your room and self-isolate, and notify URI Health Services via phone immediately at 401-874-2246. If you are unable to attend class, please



notify me prior to the start of class at 978 201 9799.

### **RECOMMENDED READING**

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*These books are available for online reading at the URI Library*

Bissler, & Conners, J. L. (2012). *The harms of crime media: Essays on the perpetuation of racism, sexism and class stereotypes*. McFarland.

Rafter, & Brown, M. (2011). *Criminology goes to the movies: crime theory and popular culture*. NYU Press.

Bock, M. (2021). *Seeing justice: Witnessing, crime and punishment in visual media*. Oxford University Press.

Brayne, S. (2021). *Predict and surveil: Data, discretion, and the future of policing*. Oxford Press.

Jewkes, Y., & Linnemann, T. (2018). *Media and crime in the U.S*. Sage Publications, Inc,

Markovitz, J. (2011). *Racial spectacles: Explorations in media, race, and justice*. Taylor & Francis.

### **RECOMMENDED VIEWING**

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Vice Media (2021, December 26). [\*Is the Media Altering our Perceptions of Crime?\*](#)

Netflix (2020). Big Dan's. *Trial by Media*. Limited series.

DuVernay, A. (2019). *When They See Us*. Netflix limited series.

Davis, D. & Folayan, S. (2017). *Whose Streets?* Documentary available on Hulu.

Daniels, J. (2017). *Shot in the Dark*. Documentary available on Netflix.

Nicks, P. (2017). *The Force*. Documentary available on Netflix.

Cretton, D. (2019). *Just Mercy*. Drama available on Amazon.

Shelton, R. (2002). *Dark Blue*. Drama available on Apple TV.

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