COMM 119S – Social Psychology of Large-Scale Media Interventions

Instructor: James Scarborough
Room 300, McClatchy Hall
Email: jscarborough@stanford.edu

Office hours: T – Th 1 – 2pm or by appointment

Website/Forum: On Coursework once you register

Class Meets: T/Th 11-12:50pm

ENCINA 464

Summer Quarter 2013 Dates to Remember

June 23 (Mon) – first day of quarter
August 14 (Thu) – last day of classes
August 15-16 (Fri-Sat) End-Quarter examinations
August 19 (Tue, 11:59 p.m.) Grades due

Course Description

In this course you will learn how modern media, especially large-scale popular media, like video games, can be leveraged to address social issues. This course will cover several examples of successful media interventions in modern history. While discussing advocacy-driven games and other forms of new media interventions, we will also cover the potential pitfalls of these new media. Topics include: psychology of the senses, engagement with modern media through arousing content, the nature of psychological interventions, identity formation and self-perception effects of media use.

Grades and Evaluations

Attendance and participation: 30%
Individual projects: 30%
Group project: 40%
Class dates and readings (please read all assigned readings before class – optional readings are not mandatory)

6/24 – Course Overview and Introduction to Media Psychology


Duhigg (2008). Warning: Habits may be good for you.

6/26 – Large-scale interventions in media (guest lecture J. Flora)


Others TBD

7/1 – The psychology of intervention (Assignment 1 due)


Diamond & Lee (2011). Interventions shown to aid executive function development in children 4 to 12 years old.

7/3 – Prep for assignment 2

7/8 – Intervention outcomes and risks (Assignment 2 due)


7/10 – Social interventions


7/15 – Social media effects (Assignment 3 due)


7/17 – Interventions in education

Paluck & Shepherd (2012). The salience of social referents: A field experiment on collective norms and harassment behavior in a school social network.


7/22 – Video games and behavior change (Assignment 4 due)


7/24 – Identity formation and attribution


7/29 – Sexual identity and media use, guest lecture K. Shriram (Assignment 5 due)


7/31 – Psychology of the Senses


8/5 – Media interventions and the environment (Assignment 6 due)

Cialdini, R. B. Crafting normative messages to protect the environment. Current Directions in Psychological Science, 12, 2003, 105-109.


8/7 – Interventions in health


8/12 – Project group review (Assignment 7 due)
No additional readings

8/14 – Course Review and prep for final presentations
No additional readings

8/15 – Final Exam scheduled at 8:30am to 11:30 am in room TBD

Additional Readings of interest


Marigold, Holmes, & Ross (2010). More than words: Reframing compliments from romantic partners fosters security in low self-esteem individuals.