

## PSY 3713: Topics in Psychology: Media Psychology - CURE Study on Cell Phone Distraction - Dr. Kineta Morgan-Paisley

Media psychology is an interdisciplinary approach to studying how individuals are affected by mass media and media technologies. The first CURE assignment (due week 3 of the Fall 2018 semester) required each of the 20 students enrolled to come up with 2 ideas for research that our class could conduct. Students were instructed to consider their own skills/knowledge, as this was a heterogeneous population with diverse majors (e.g., computer science, engineering, graphic design, media communications, etc.). Students presented their ideas and voted for the best one. The chosen idea involved examining the effects of cell-phone use while walking on people's ability to pay attention to their surroundings. We divided the course into 7 teams of 2-3 people. Planning, CUREating and acquiring materials, coordinating schedules, and scouting locations occurred during weeks 4-13. A large industrial laser was placed in the path of subjects, alongside a 22 X 28-inch printed sign that read "DO NOT STEP OVER THE LASER!" (Figure 1). The laser was harmless and merely to assess whether subjects were aware enough of their surroundings to see the sign/laser and react to it.



Figure 1: Sign designed by student researchers and the stand used to display it during testing.

We identified 5 well-traveled locations across campus wherein students set up observation stations and collected data using interobserver agreement. Data collection occurred during week 14. Teams 1-5 collected data at their chosen location for 2 hours. Team 6 had the task of performance verification (i.e., ensuring students were where they should be). Team 7 then input, analyzed, and presented the data during week 15. The results, although interesting, were not of the level meriting publication. However, through the process other more promising ideas emerged resulting in ongoing student/teacher research collaborations.