

Mass Communication Theory
JOUR 7050/8050--001
Fall 2011
Tuesday 5:30 – 8:30pm
Meeman 106

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COURSE-SPECIFIC REQUIRMENTS

CATALOGUE/COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Key concepts and development of theories offered to explain operation and effects of mass communication media; multidiscipline overview of theories dealing with advertising, broadcasting, print, and public relations messages, media, and effects.

“There is nothing so practical as a good theory.”-- social psychologist Kurt Lewin
We live in an era in which the processes of news production and the patterns of media consumption are changing rapidly with the advent of new digital technologies. Even the most seasoned professionals are struggling to determine what the media landscape of the future will look like and what business models can be used to support it. It is in times like these when the theories of mass communication are particularly valuable. The broadly explanatory concepts of theory help us understand some of the underlying ways in which humans respond to and share different types of information, and as thus can help us to make some informed predictions about what the future may hold.

This class will provide you with an overview of the important theories in our field, and will encourage you to think about how these apply to the real world and how they will inform your future work as a media professional.

Thank you to Dr. Jane Singer, University of Iowa, for the inspiration for some aspects of this syllabus, as well as Dr. Margaret Duffy and Dr. Glenn Leshner of the University of Missouri.

PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES FOR MASS COMMUNICATION THEORY:

- Demonstrate an understanding of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society.
- Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;
- Think critically, creatively and independently.
- Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy, fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness.

PREREQUISITE: NONE.

TEXTBOOKS:

None required. Your readings will be distributed to you via email or available using the UM drive. The UM drive is accessible from MyMemphis under the eCampus Resources tab (on the top left). The readings are located in my public drive (cbrown14). Try also this direct link: <https://umdrive.memphis.edu/cbrown14/public/Mass%20Comm%20Theory/>

HOW PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES WILL BE MET:

Cognitive Objectives To Be Mastered (Ability To Explain, Analyze, Understand, Think Critically):

- Students will develop an understanding of what constitutes a “theory” and how the scientific method works in building and advancing theory.
- Students will attain familiarity with the broad range of theories in the field of journalism and mass communications, as well as an understanding of how this body of theory and research has developed over the history of the field.
- Students will learn how to meaningfully apply mass communication theory to the practical daily work of journalists, advertisers and public relations professionals.
- Students will learn how to develop sources for and write an academic literature review in association with a set of hypotheses or research questions.
- Students will develop skills in synthesizing substantial amounts complicated information and identifying important points in literature.
- Students will learn the important role gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and other forms of diversity play in the production and effects of mass communication.

Performance Standards To Be Met (Demonstrable Skills, Abilities, Techniques, Applied Competencies):

- Students will read and critically analyze journal articles and book chapters on major mass communications theories.
- Students will practice breaking down academic research articles to their most important points to facilitate their understanding of the first steps in synthesizing a broad array of information.
- Students will lead and participate in class discussions that deepen their understanding of theories and how they apply to the real world.
- Students will research and write a 15-page literature review that will require them to demonstrate in-depth understanding of an academic theory or theories and the ability to clearly synthesize the information.

HOW ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING WILL BE MET FOR MASS COMMUNICATIONS THEORY:

- Students will lead and participate in class discussions in which readings and their implications are explored.
- Students will complete a number of short writing assignments that require them to synthesize and critically analyze class readings.

- Students will develop their own research questions or hypothesis, find and obtain relevant academic literature, and synthesize this literature into a comprehensive literature review.

CLASSROOM FORMAT:

Lecture, discussion, lab

GRADING:

Discussion Leader: 30 percent

Final Paper: 30 percent

Short Assignments: 30 percent

Participation: 10 percent

WHAT I EXPECT FROM YOU:

1. Be sure you have **read the material** BEFORE class and come prepared to discuss it. Class participation will count toward your grade. ProTip: Check the syllabus BEFORE doing the assigned reading. In some cases I may have some recommended but not required readings on the U of M drive, and you will want to read the required ones first.
2. **Discussion leaders.** Each week, one person from the class will serve as the discussion leader. The discussion leader will develop a list of questions based on the readings for the class to discuss, paying special attention to the “real-world” implications of the research and theory we will be reading. They will also highlight a few of what they thought were the most important or interesting points from the readings. Please be creative and find ways to try to engage the class and help us remember the important concepts. For example, show us a video clip, a cartoon, a photo, or a Web site and ask the class to analyze it from the theoretical perspective(s) of the week. **You should turn in a brief, informal outline of what you plan to talk about and discussion questions no later than 10 a.m. on Monday morning before your turn to lead discussion. Earlier is better if you would like feedback from me.**
3. Complete a **literature review** of approximately 15 pages (double-spaced). You might think of it as a lit review for a study you plan to conduct yourself and submit to a conference or journal for publication. You must have at least 10-15 different citations, **the bulk of which must be from books or academic journals.** You are to read the original research (you can't cite somebody who is in turn citing somebody else, for example). Papers should synthesize major conclusions and themes in the literature. Chicago or APA style must be followed. **You will have several mini deadlines before you final paper is due. Your first deadline is paper is topic deadline. Your second deadline is annotated bibliography. Your third deadline is a draft of your paper and a BRIEF, INFORMAL presentation of your findings to the class. Your fourth deadline is the final paper. What you turn in for these mini deadlines will be counted as short assignments (see below).**
3. **Short Assignments.** You will have a few short assignments/short papers throughout the semester.
4. All assignments should be **turned in via email as a Microsoft Word attachment** unless otherwise specified.
5. Good, clear, concise writing and excellent grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc. This is a **graduate** course, and therefore I expect your skills in this area to be exemplary. I encourage you to edit your work carefully and enlist the support of a friend or our departmental writing coach. A substantial pattern of errors will result in a significant grade deduction.

Tentative Course Schedule

Week 1 (August 30): Introduction to the Course

Key ideas/concepts: What *is* theory, anyway? Intro to using library databases and other sources for mass communication research.

****Discussion leader sign-up****

Reading:

Shoemaker, Tankard, and Lasorsa. How to Build Social Science Theories (2004). Introduction.

Pencil, Murdock. Salt Passage Research: The State of the Art. *Journal of Communication*, Autumn 1976.

Week 2 (September 6): The Basics: Building Theory, Scientific Method and Models

Key ideas/concepts: Inductive and deductive reasoning; types of mass communication research; external/internal validity and other measures of research quality; how to build theory; models in mass communication research

Reading:

Shoemaker, Tankard and Lasorsa. How to Build Social Science Theories (2004). Chapter 2, 7 and 9.

Carlile & Christensen. (2005). Cycles of Theory Building in Management Research. (Note: While this piece talks about management research rather than communications research, the general points it makes about theory building are both applicable and particularly clearly stated and easily apprehended.)

Week 3 (September 13): Agenda Setting and Framing

****Short Assignment due Tuesday, class time, hard copy. First, give me a definition of agenda setting and framing. Then, for each of the academic articles below, give me a BRIEF, bullet-pointed list of the MAIN FINDINGS or conclusions of each one of the readings below. I'm not going to count precisely but you should probably have only around 5 bullet points.**

Key ideas/concepts: How the media influence public opinion. [A subset of a larger body of research that looks at media effects]

Reading:

Marchionni, D. (2009). Framing Sex and Sexuality: A Content Analysis of the Modern American Press. [Not yet published.]

Wanta, Wayne, Golan, Guy, and Clseolhan, Lee. (2004) AGENDA SETTING AND INTERNATIONAL NEWS: MEDIA INFLUENCE ON PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF FOREIGN NATIONS. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*; Vol. 81 Issue 2, p364-377, 14p

McCombs and Shaw, "The Agenda Setting Function of Mass Media." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 36 (2, summer 1972): 176-87. [Seminal paper that started it all, cited many, many times.]

Hallahan, K. (1999). Seven models of framing: Implications for public relations. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 11(3), 205-242.

Also: Read the following article in the New Yorker, "The Toppling" by Peter Maas (2011) and reflect on it in the context of what you've learned about the theories of the week. Instead of summarizing this article with bullet points as you'll do with the others, tell me in no more than 1-2 paragraphs what you thought.

http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2011/01/10/110110fa_fact_maass?mbid=social_release

Week 4 (September 20): Classic Media Effects

Key concepts/ideas: Bullet model vs. limited effects; cultivation theory; social learning (Bandura); McLuhan's "the medium is the message;" the debate over the effects of media (limited vs. powerful). In a nutshell, what kinds of effects do the media have or not have on readers/viewers, and why is it so hard to actually *know*?

Reading: Severin & Tankard, Mass Communication Theories Chapter 6, Chapter 13 pg. 262 – 272 (General Trends in Effects Theory), pg. 276 (Social Learning section); pg. 280-281 (McLuhan's Media Determinism); pg. 283-288 (Effects of Television Violence)

McGuire, W.J. (1986). "The myth of massive media impact: Savagings and salvagings." In *Public Communication Behavior* (pp. 173-257).

Gunter, B. (2008). *Media Violence: Is There a Case For Causality?* American Behavioral Scientist. [This is a very long article – just skim over it]

Emily E. Acosta. (2009). CHARACTER IDENTIFICATION OR CULTIVATION? EXPLORING MEDIA EFFECTS ON EMERGING ADULTS' APPEARANCE IMPORTANCE. Presented at the AEJMC conference in Boston.

Chapter from Postman, N. *Amusing Ourselves to Death*.

Fun related cartoon: <http://www.recombinantrecords.net/docs/2009-05-Amusing-Ourselves-to-Death.html>

Week 5 (September 27): Mass Comm Theory and Web

****Short Assignment. Please write a 1-3 page (double-spaced) paper reacting to these readings. What did you find interesting or important, and HOW MIGHT YOU APPLY**

THESE READINGS to the “real world” – the changing media landscape. Did they spark any ideas for your own research? While you should show me that you understood what you read, I’m not asking for regurgitation here but creativity. Papers may be written in an informal style.

Key ideas/concepts: A sampling of ways in which researchers are building or applying theory in digital age. There are many, many more, but here are just a few to get us started.

Reading:

Marchionni, D. (2008). “Journalism-as-a-Conversation: A concept explication.” Award winning paper presented at the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication conference, Chicago.

Norris, P. (2002). “The bridging and bonding role of online communities.” *Press/Politics* 7 (3): 3-13.

Humphreys, L. (2008). *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 13, 341–360 Mobile Social Networks and Social Practice: A Case Study of Dodgeball

The not so hidden politics of class online by danah boyd [Follow the link below for this article:] <http://www.danah.org/papers/talks/PDF2009.html>

From TV to Twitter: How Ambient News Became Ambient Journalism by Alfred Hermida

<http://journal.media-culture.org.au/index.php/mcjournal/article/viewArticle/220RT>

Week 6 (October 4): Theories of Persuasion

****Paper Topic Ideas Due.****

Key concepts/ideas: Attitude and behavior change; fear appeals; inoculation theory; introduction to health communication; what we know about getting people to do stuff.

Reading: Severin & Tankard Chapter 8

Rice, R.E., & Atkin, C. (2002). Communication campaigns: Theory, design, implementation, and evaluation. In J. Bryant & D. Zillmann (Eds.) *Media Effects* (pp. 427-452.)

Hornik, R. and Yanovitzky, I. (2003, May). Using theory to design evaluations of communication campaigns: The case of the National Youth Anti-drug Media Campaign. *Communication Theory* 13(2), 204-234.

Leshner, Glenn; Vultee, Frederick; Bolls, Paul. (2007). When a fear appeal isn’t a fear appeal: The effects of graphic anti-tobacco messages. Conference Paper: International Communication Association.

Week 7 (October 11): The Active Audience

Key concepts/ideas: Uses and gratifications, media choice model, participatory journalism

Reading:

Ruggiero, Thomas E. (2000) Uses and Gratifications Theory in the 21st Century. *Mass Communication & Society*; Vol. 3 Issue 1, p3-37, 35p.

Thorson, E., & Duffy, M. (2006). Citizenship and use of traditional and new media for information and entertainment. Presented at the annual meeting of the International Communication Association, Dresden, Germany.

Johnson & Yang. (2009) Uses and Gratifications of Twitter: An Examination of User Motives and Satisfaction of Twitter Use. Presented at the Association for Journalism in Education and Mass Communication in Boston.

Chapter TBD from *Participatory Journalism* by Singer, Hermida, et. al. (2011).

Recommended: Katz, E., Gurevitch and Hass, "On the use of mass media for important things." *American Sociological Review* 38 (April 1973): 164-81. [Seminal article that started it all.]

Fall Break! NO CLASS October 18 ☺

Week 8 (October 25) Journalism Studies: Making the News

Key concepts/ideas: News routines, news values, gatekeeping, influences on media content

Reading:

Shoemaker, P. (1996). "Media Gatekeeping," In Salwen, M. and Stacks, D. (Eds.) *An Integrated Approach to Communication Theory and Research*.

Shoemaker, P. J., & Reese, S. D. (1996). "Influence of Media Routines" in *Mediating the message: Theories of influences on mass media content* (Second ed.). White Plains, NY: Longman.

Groves, Jonathan and Brown, Carrie and. (2011). "Stopping the Presses: A Longitudinal Case Study the Christian Science Monitor's Transition From Print Daily to Web Always." Volume 1, Issue 2. *International Symposium on Online Journalism*.

Gans, H. J. (1979). "Values in the News" and "Objectivity, Values and Ideology" in *Deciding What's News* (25th Anniversary Edition ed.) Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press. [Yes, it's old, but it's a classic]

Reccomended: Breed, W. (1955). "Social control in the newsroom." *Social Forces* 33, 326-355 [One of the seminal articles]

Week 9 (November 1): Media and Democracy

Key concepts/ideas: Theories on mass communication and civic life. Public sphere, social capital, public journalism, knowledge gap. [psst: These readings are older for a reason. We will APPLY them in class ourselves]

Habermas, J. "Institutions of the public sphere." In Approaches to Media. Oliver Boyd-Barrett and Chris Newbold, St. Martin's Press: London 1997, pp. 235-244.

Putnam, R.D.(1995) "Bowling Alone, Revisited." In The Responsive Community, Vol. 5.2.

Carey, J. (1993). The mass media and democracy: Between the modern and the postmodern. Journal of International Affairs 47 (1).

Rosen, J. (1999) "As Democracy Goes, So Goes the Press: The Roots of Public Journalism." Chapter 1 of What are Journalists For?

Pew Internet & American Life Project (2009). The Internet and Civic Engagement: <http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2009/15--The-Internet-and-Civic-Engagement.aspx> Read overview and skim over full report.

Food for thought reading (theory concepts in the real world): David Brooks, "Riders on the Storm." New York Times, April 2010:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/20/opinion/20brooks.html>

And Ethan Zuckerman, "Overcoming Political Polarization, But Not Through Facts" (2011):

<http://www.ethanzuckerman.com/blog/2011/04/25/overcoming-political-polarization-but-not-through-facts/>

Week 10 (November 8):

Cultural and Critical Studies and Mass Media

Key concepts/ideas: Getting an idea for what cultural/critical studies is all about.

Mini-ethnography of Facebook assignment – details TBA

Carey, J. (1989). Mass communication and cultural studies. In Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society, Unwin-Hyman, London, pp. 40-68.

Berlant, L. and Warner, M. (1999) "Sex in Public." In The Cultural Studies Reader edited by Simon During.

TBA Selected article/chapter from Robert McChesney

Week 11 (November 15): Decoding the Message

****Annotated Bibliographies Due****

Key ideas/concepts: Decoding: Selective perception, schemas, priming, unconscious projection.

Reading:

Decoding:

Monahan, Jennifer L. Shtrulis, Irene, Givens, Sonja Brown. (2005). Priming Welfare Queens and Other Stereotypes: The Transference of Media Images into Interpersonal Contexts. Communication Research Reports; Summer2005, Vol. 22 Issue 3, p199-205, 7p, 2 charts

Young, Dannagal. (2007) Jon Stewart a Heretic? Surely you jest. The Daily Show's Impact on Cynicism, Political Engagement and Participation. Presented at the National Communication Association Association

Taylor, Franke, Hae-Kyong (2005) Use and Effectiveness of Billboards, Journal of Advertising. [Applies selective perception theory to the realm of advertising.]

Food for thought reading (theory in the real world):

Cunningham, M. (2010). Found in Translation

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/03/opinion/03cunningham.html?ref=general&src=me&pagewanted=1>

and

Budweiser, Balsamic Vinegar, and How Expectations Affect Our Views
By Catherine Granger, Sep 16, 2010
<http://lifehacker.com/5639710/>

Week 12 (November 22): Encoding

Ward, S. (2004). Chapter 7, "Pragmatic Objectivity" in The Invention of Journalism Ethics: The Path to Objectivity and Beyond.

Ettema, J.S. and Glasser, T.L. (1998). Chapter 1, "Introduction: The Reporter's Craft as Moral Discourse." in Custodians of Conscience: Investigative Journalism and Public Virtue.

Littau, Gardner, Thorson. (2009). The Impact of News "Voice" on Adolescent Political Efficacy. Presented at the AEJMC conference in Boston.

Week 13 (November 29):

Presentation of final papers

Review and recap

Week 14 (December 6):

Class party at Dr. Brown-Smith's house!

FINAL PAPERS DUE: Monday, December 12, 10:00 a.m.

DEPARTMENT POLICIES

EMAIL:

You must have your UM email account activated. If you are using another provider such as Google, you are required to have your UM email forwarded to that account. Go to the <http://iam.memphis.edu> website to implement forwarding of UM email. You are required to check your email daily. You are responsible for complying with any email sent to you by your professor or the University.

CELLPHONES:

You must turn them off during class.

ATTENDANCE:

Class attendance is mandatory in the Department of Journalism. You may be assigned a failing grade for the semester for nonattendance, or habitual late arrival. No late work will be accepted without prior arrangements, which are acceptable to your professor. Students may not be permitted to make up any missing work unless it is for an absence due to illness or other catastrophic emergency such as a death in the family that can be documented (e.g. with a doctor's note or a copy of the newspaper obituary). This is a professional program for journalists who are expected to understand and comply with deadlines. If you have some problem making it to class on time make arrangements to fix the problem or consider taking another class. You should consider this class your "job" in the educational process and be on time just as you would elsewhere.

CHEATING:

In addition to university-wide policies stated in the Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities, the Department of Journalism considers making up quotes from sources, turning in substantially the same assignment for credit in two different courses, or a student receiving any assistance from others for work assigned to be done on his/her own, as acts of cheating punishable to the degree determined appropriate by the course instructor and department chair. That may include grade reductions or seeking dismissal of the student from the university.

"Your written work may be submitted to Turnitin.com, or a similar electronic detection method, for an evaluation of the originality of your ideas and proper use and attribution of sources. As part of this process, you may be required to submit electronic as well as hard copies of your written work, or be given other instructions to follow. By taking this course, you agree that all assignments may undergo this review process and that the assignment may be included as a source document in Turnitin.com's restricted access database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism in such documents. Any assignment not submitted according to the procedures given by the instructor may be penalized or may not be accepted at all." (Office of Legal Counsel, October 17, 2005)

DISABILITY:

Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the Office for Disability Services at (901) 678-2880 in 110 Wilder Tower Hall to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

ONLINE SETEs:

You are urged to complete the SETEs evaluation of this course. Once your instructor has posted your grade, you can immediately see that grade, provided you completed a teacher evaluation for that class. How to access your evaluation forms: Log in using your UUID and email password; click on the gray "Student" tab; complete an evaluation for each course listed and hit the "Submit" button at the bottom of the form. It will only take a few minutes of your time. We take the evaluations very seriously and use them to improve courses and instructional quality. Your feedback is essential and will be appreciated.

PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES FOR JOURNALISM PROGRAM:

The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication requires that, irrespective of their particular specialization, all graduates should be aware of certain core values and competencies and be to

- understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press, for the country in which the institution that invites ACEJMC is located, as well as receive instruction in and understand the range of systems of freedom of expression around the world, including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power, and to assemble and petition for redress of grievances;
- demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;
- demonstrate an understanding of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications.
- demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society.
- understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;
- demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
- think critically, creatively and independently;
- conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;
- write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
- critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;
- apply basic numerical and statistical concepts;
- apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING FOR JOURNALISM PROGRAM:

The Council seeks to promote student learning and encourages experimentation and innovation. Assessment is a system of evaluation of student learning at the course or unit level (as opposed to grading at the individual level). Three criteria should guide assessment of student learning:

- Awareness: familiarity with specific information, including facts, concepts, theories, laws and regulations, processes and effects.
- Understanding: assimilation and comprehension of information, concepts, theories and ideas.
- Application: competence in relating and applying skills, information, concepts, theories and ideas to the accomplishment of tasks.