

# Mass Communication Theory

JRSM8050-001, JRSM8050-S01

Fall Semester, 2025

Class meeting: Tuesday, 5:30-8:30 p.m.

Location: MJ108, Microsoft Teams (Hybrid Class)

Professor: Jin Yang, PhD

Office: Meeman Journalism Building Room 310

Office Hours: Tuesday. 11:00 am to 12:00 pm; M. W. 1:00 to 2:00 p.m.

Email: [jinyang@memphis.edu](mailto:jinyang@memphis.edu)

Note: If you'd like to meet for the office hours listed, please reach out via email prior to dropping by so I can make sure I'm in my office. I'm also available via Teams outside of the listed office hours upon request.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### Catalog 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.

### Prerequisites

Graduate status.

### Textbooks, Software and Required Materials

- 1 Baran, Stanley J. and Dennis, K. Davis (2020). ***Mass Communication Theory: Foundations Ferment and Future (8<sup>th</sup> ed.)***. Oxford University Press (2020).
- 2 ***Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> ed.)***. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association. (available from McWherter Library)
- 3 Galvan, J. I. (2014). ***Writing Literature Reviews: A Guide for students of the social and behavioral sciences (6<sup>th</sup> edition or 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup>)***. Pyrczak Publishing.
- 4 ***Additional course readings*** will be available via Canvas. A tentative list of readings is included in the syllabus; course readings may be altered during the semester.

### Virtual Classroom Format

This is a graduate seminar with lectures and class discussion. Each week, we will discuss a new topic. Please note that failure to attend class or to actively take part – even if all your assignments are turned in on time and done acceptably - could significantly affect your final grade. Be sure you have **read the material BEFORE class** and come prepared to discuss it.

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### Accessing the course website

1. Go to the University of Memphis online learning home page: <http://memphis.instructure.com>
2. Log in using your University of Memphis username and password. In the Term Year course list available to you, click on the link for JRSM8050 – S01 or JRSM 8050-001 to enter your course and read the instructions on the welcoming page.

### Assignments & Grading

#### Grade Distribution:

Chapter Tests (14)	2%
Academic Article Synopsis (10)	10%
Lead Discussant Role (1)	18%
Theory Paper (1)	30%
Research Paper Lit. Review (1)	40%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### Grades to be assigned:

A=90-100; B=80-89; C=70-79; D=60-69; F=Below 60

#### Grading Philosophy:

A=Outstanding work and would serve as examples of highest qualities for others; B=Good to excellent work and exceeds requirement; C=Satisfactory work and adequately meets requirement; D=Barely satisfies minimum requirement and below average quality; F=Unsatisfactory work and does not meet minimum requirement.

#### Assignments Due

All projects and assignments are mandatory and must meet deadline specified. Late work is not accepted. All assignments are due Sunday midnight (11:59 p.m. Sunday).

#### Attendance

Attendance is mandatory. You will be the most successful in this class if you attend regularly, participate in class discussions, and stay engaged with lectures and activities. I understand that life happens, so I will give you **one “no questions asked” absence** that will not count against you. However, any student who misses 2 or more classes for whatever reason without documented excuses such as a doctor’s note, a car accident repair receipt, or any other written document that can be verified, will lose a letter grade. You are expected to arrive promptly for class, fully prepared to discuss the assigned readings. Anyone arriving more than 10 minutes late for class will be noted as absent, and his or her class participation grade will suffer as a result. In class activities done in your absence cannot be made up.

## Communication

All correspondence regarding the class needs to be addressed to [jinyang@memphis.edu](mailto:jinyang@memphis.edu). Please include in any email the class designation JRSM8050 so that I know which class you are writing about. During weekdays I will usually respond to emails as soon as possible within 24 hours at most. However, the weekend emails might not be answered within 24 hours. If you have not received an answer after two days, please resend the email with a note that you are resending it.

## Course Information

### *Repetition of Courses and Coursework*

Students may not use or submit work from a previous course, even if it is the same course being repeated, to fulfill requirements for assignments in another course. If students wish to substantially rework the original submission, or to work with the same general idea, that may be permissible upon discussion with and written approval from the professor of the current course. All written work will be checked for policy adherence via TurnItIn.com. All creative work will be checked for policy adherence by the professor, and judged against previous submissions. The only exception to this policy is the student's online portfolio and its attendant pieces (for example, the resume and logo).

### *Quality of Work*

All work in this course should follow APA format, including proper spelling, grammar, and language. A large part of effective communication is having a polished written concept of what you are communicating. Although the professor may or may not line edit your work, problems in these or other areas will result in the deduction of points.

I expect your work to be good and to be yours. What is not yours should be fully cited. In documenting sources you should use APA formatting. If you need help with writing and citing sources, please see me for resources.

Your papers will be graded on content, including writing quality, comprehensiveness of research, adherence to complete and proper citation style, grammar, punctuation and spelling. All of these will be analyzed to determine a final paper grade. Avoid using quotes.

You must obtain permission from the instructor before using ChatGPT or other AI tools to assist with assignments in this course. Once permission is granted, AI may only be used as directed. Assignment submissions may run through AI detection software. Unauthorized use may result in a failing grade or a request to resubmit an assignment. Be prepared to submit any prompts you used for assistance with your assignment as well as the original ChatGPT output and to be able to explain/show how you fact-checked and improved upon the AI's work.

*COURSE SCHEDULE (Please note this is an outline, depending on the class situation, the professor reserves the right to adapt and change the outline in regards to assignments, topics, and all related course materials.)*

Dates	Topic	Baran Reading	WLR
Week 1 Aug.26	Understanding and Evaluating Mass Communication		

	<b>Theory.</b> Defining and Redefining Mass Communication; Science and Human Behavior; Defining Theory; Evaluating Theory; Flexible Social Science; Mass Communication Theory; Four Trends in Media Theory; Revitalized Effects Research. <a href="#">Test 1</a> <a href="#">Theory Paper Assignment</a>	<b>Chapter 1</b>	<b>Ch.1-3</b>
Week 2 Sep.2	<b>Establishing the Terms of the Debate Over Media: The First Trend in Media theory – Mass Society and Mass Culture Theories.</b> Mass Society Critics and the Debate over Media; Early Examples of Mass Society Theory; The Origin of Propaganda; Modern Propaganda Theory; Libertarianism Reborn and Challenged. <b>Lead Teaching &amp; Discussant No. 1 on Mass Society and Mass Culture</b> <a href="#">Test 2</a> <a href="#">Article Synopsis 1</a> <a href="#">Theory Paper in Progress</a>	<b>Chapter 2</b>	<b>Ch. 4-6</b>
Week 3 Sept 9	<b>Normative Theories of Mass Communication.</b> The Origin of Normative Theories of Media; Government Regulation of Media; Social Responsibility Theory of the Press: A Postwar Compromise; Is There Still a Role for Social Responsibility Theory? The Public Interest in the Internet Era; Other Normative Theories. <b>Lead Teaching &amp; Discussant No. 2 on Normative Theory of Mass Comm</b> <a href="#">Test 3</a> <a href="#">Article Synopsis 2</a> <a href="#">Theory Paper in Progress</a>	<b>Chapter 3</b>	<b>Ch.7-9</b>
Week 4 Sept 16	<b>The Emergence of the Media-Effects Trend.</b> The Development of the Postpositivist Effects Trend; From Propaganda Research to Attitude-Change Theories; The Strengths and Limitations of the Effects Trend in Media Research; The Media-Effects Trend Becomes Dominant. <b>Lead Teaching &amp; Discussant No. 3 on Media Effects-Attitude Change</b> <a href="#">Test 4</a> <a href="#">Article Synopsis 3</a> <a href="#">Theory Paper in Progress</a>	<b>Chapter 4</b>	<b>Ch.10-12</b>
Week 5 Sept 23	<b>The Consolidation of the Media Effects Trend.</b>		

Theories of the Middle Range and the Functional Analysis Approach; Information-Flow Theory; Personal Influence: The Two-Step Flow Theory; Joseph Klapper's Phenomenistic Theory; Systems Theories of Communication Processes.

**Chapter 5**

**Ch.13-14**

[Lead Teaching & Discussant No. 4 on Media Effects-Two Step Flow](#)  
[Test 5](#)  
[Article Synopsis 4](#)  
[Theory Paper in Progress](#)

Week 6 Sept. 30

**The Emergence of the Critical Cultural Trend in North America.** Changing Times; The Critical Cultural Theory Trend; The Rise of Cultural Theories in Europe; Political Economy Theory; The Debate Between Cultural Studies and Political Economy Theorists; Cultural Studies: Transmissional versus Ritual Perspectives Marshall McLuhan: The Medium is the Message and the Message.

**Chapter 6**

[Test 6](#)  
[Article Synopsis 5](#)  
[Theory Paper Due](#)

Week 7 Oct. 7

**Theories of Media and Social Learning.** Focus on Children and Violence; Television Violence Theories; Catharsis; Social Learning Theory; Social Cognition from Mass Media; General Aggression Model.

**Chapter 7**

**Ch.1-3**

[Lead Teaching & Discussant No. 5 on Theories of Media and Social Learning](#)  
[Test 7](#)  
[Research Paper Lit. Review Assignment \(Identify Topic\)](#)

Week 8 Oct.14

**Fall Break Theories of Media and Human Development.**

Media & Children's Development; Gender Issues; Advertising to Children; Loss of Childhood; Growing Up Connected: New Personal Technologies and Development; Social Media and Well-Being.

**Chapter 8 Ch.4-6**

[Test 8](#)  
[Research Paper Lit. Review in Progress \(Analyze Others' Studies\)](#)

Week 9 Oct.21

**Audience Theories: Uses and Reception.** Audience Theories: From Source-Dominated to Active-Audience

	<p>Perspectives; Revival of the Uses-and-Gratifications Approach; Entertainment Theory; Uses and Gratifications and Social Networking; Development of Reception Studies: Decoding and Sensemaking; Feminist Reception Studies.</p> <p><b>Lead Teaching &amp; Discussant No. 6 on Uses &amp; Gratification</b></p> <p><a href="#">Test 9</a></p> <p><a href="#">Article Synopsis 6</a></p> <p><a href="#">Research Paper Lit. Review in Progress (Synthesis)</a></p>	<b>Chapter 9</b>	<b>Ch.7-9</b>
Week 10 Oct.28	<p><b>Theories of Media Cognition and Information Processing.</b> Information-Processing Theory; Schema Theory; Hostile Media Effect; Elaboration Likelihood Model; Narrative Persuasion Theory and the Extended Elaboration Likelihood Model; The Delay Hypothesis; Affective Intelligence, Motivated Reasoners, and the Backfire Effect; The Neuroscience Perspective.</p> <p><b>Lead Teaching &amp; Discussant No. 7 on Media Cognition &amp; Info Process</b></p> <p><a href="#">Test 10</a></p> <p><a href="#">Article Synopsis 7</a></p> <p><a href="#">Research Paper Lit. Review in Progress (Synthesis)</a></p>	<b>Chapter 10</b>	<b>Ch. 7-9</b>
Week 11 Nov.4	<p><b>Effect of Media on Knowledge, Information, and Perception of Social Issues.</b> Knowledge Gaps, Digital Divides, and Digital Inequalities; Information (Innovation) Diffusion Theory; Social Marketing Theory; Agenda-Setting, Priming, and Agenda-Building; The Spiral of Silence.</p> <p><b>Lead Teaching &amp; Discussant No. 8 on Agenda Setting /Digital Divide</b></p> <p><a href="#">Test 11</a></p> <p><a href="#">Article Synopsis 8</a></p> <p><a href="#">Research Paper Lit. Review in Progress (Synthesis)</a></p>	<b>Chapter 11</b>	<b>Ch.7-9</b>
Week 12 Nov. 11	<p><b>Effect of Media on Community and Everyday Culture.</b> Media and Social Capital/Community Research; Cultivation Analysis; The Products of Cultivation Analysis; Media Literacy; Media Literacy Interventions.</p> <p><b>Lead Teaching &amp; Discussant No. 9 on Cultivation Theory</b></p> <p><a href="#">Test 12</a></p> <p><a href="#">Article Synopsis 9</a></p> <p><a href="#">Research Paper Lit. Review in Progress (Writing)</a></p>	<b>Chapter 12</b>	<b>Ch.10-12</b>
Week 13 Nov.18	<p><b>Media and Culture Theories: Meaning Making in the Social</b></p>		

**World.** Symbolic Interactionism; Social Constructionism; Framing and Frame Analysis; The Development of Theories of Frames and Framing; Postpositivist vs Critical Cultural Approaches to Framing. **Chapter 13 Ch.10-12**

Lead Teaching & Discussant No. 10 on Framing

Test 13

Article Synopsis 10

Research Paper Lit. Review in Progress (Writing)

Week 14 Nov.25

**Media and Culture Theories: Commodification of Culture**

**and Mediatization.** Media as Culture Industries: The Commodification of Culture; Commodification of Culture in the Age of Social Media; Advertising: The Ultimate Cultural Commodity; Mediatization Theory.

**Chapter 14 Ch.13-14**

Test 14

Research Paper Lit. Review in Progress (Writing)

Research Paper Lit. Review DUE

Week 15 Dec. 2

**Students' Research Paper Literature Review Part Presentation.**