

**Mass Communication Theories**

JOUR 7050-001, M50

Fall 2015

Tuesday 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Meeman 106 and online

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Office: Meeman 306

Office hours: MW 2:15 – 4:15 p.m., T 12:30 – 5 p.m., and by appointment

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**COURSE REQUIREMENTS****CATALOG/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.

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. 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.

**PREREQUISITE:**

None.

**TEXTBOOK:**

McQuail, D. (2010). *McQuail's mass communication theory* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Additional course readings will be available via eCourseware. A tentative list of readings is included in the syllabus; course readings may be altered during the semester.

**CLASSROOM FORMAT:**

This is a graduate seminar with lecture and class discussion. Each week, we will discuss a new topic and I and/or designated discussion leaders will be responsible for presenting the class with ideas for debate from the readings or examples from the field, and critically analyze the week's theoretical concepts. 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.

**COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:**

This is meant as a general guideline to the major assignments within the class. More detail will be provided in class and on eCourseware. Deadlines are also listed in the Class Schedule. All work should be turned in as a Word document via Dropbox in eCourseware. All work is due at the start of class, 5:30 p.m. CT on the assigned Tuesday, unless otherwise noted.

### 1. *Discussion Leader*

Each week, one person will serve as the discussion leader. Discussion leaders will be responsible for leading the majority of the class period, both through presenting a brief overview of the material read, and through leading discussion on that material. S/he 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. The discussion leader will also highlight a few of the most important or most 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.

Discussion leaders should address the following general questions:

- What contribution has this approach made to the field of mass communication?
- What are the theory's strengths and weaknesses? or What are the argument's strengths and weaknesses?
- What is the theoretical significance of the research?
- What are the practical applications of this approach to journalism and the field?
- What were the most important or interesting points from the readings?

In addition to the assigned readings, discussion leaders are responsible for choosing at least two additional articles from an academic journal related to the general topic/theme for the week. These articles should be announced in class the week prior to your discussion so that everyone has time to find and read them for class. Please choose an article that you find interesting, relevant, and written within the last ten years (no articles prior to 2005).

### 2. *Weekly Short Papers*

Each week, students will be asked to respond to the readings in the form of a 1-2 page paper (double-spaced). The idea is not to regurgitate the readings but to analyze them by providing insights and comments that demonstrate knowledge and deep thinking about theories, methods and concepts found in the week's readings. Students may make connections to readings from other weeks, connections to their final paper, connections to something they have read about or learned, either in popular media or another course, among others. The purpose is to interact with the material in such a way as to be prepared to discuss it in class, and to write out your thoughts on the ideas presented. Given the brevity of the papers, there is no need to define concepts or theories, but students should provide examples where appropriate.

Students will NOT be required to turn in short papers for the weeks in which they are the discussion leaders.

Papers should BOTH be uploaded to Dropbox (for grading) and be brought to class in some form (printed, on a laptop/tablet, etc.) in order to help the student remember their ideas and connections during the class discussion.

### 3. *Theory and Definition Paper*

Write a short paper (3-5 pages, double-spaced), applying a theory from this semester to the definition of news. This paper should give a serious, in-depth considering to the question of what constitutes news, and specifically, the extent to which nontraditional news outlets (social media, citizen journalists, Jon Stewart/Stephen Colbert) should be seen as providing news. What is your definition of news, and what, according to that definition, distinguishes news from other educational or informational phenomena such as stories, myths, satire, rap and go-go music, recipes, textbooks, and Wikipedia articles? Due Tuesday, November 10 at 8:30 p.m.

#### 4. *Final Paper*

Complete the front half of a research paper, including introduction, literature review, research questions, and basic methodology (approximately 12-15 pages double-spaced). This paper will help students to synthesize a variety of material on a particular topic. I will discuss the mechanics of completing a literature review in class, but generally, it should act as an argument for why your particular project helps the field move forward. Think of the literature review as a map, helping people understand what has already been discovered in this area, and what remains to be uncovered or studied. The research questions should follow clearly from the literature review, pointing to the specific aspects of the map you hope to reveal with this particular project. Many of the readings for this course include excellent reviews of relevant literature, which may be used as a model for this assignment. 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. Ideally, it will be useful to you in your thesis or project.

The paper must have at least 15 different citations, the bulk of which must be from books or academic journals. You are to read the original research (don't cite someone who is in turn citing somebody else). Papers should synthesize major conclusions and themes in the literature. APA style must be followed.

You will have several mini deadlines before the final paper is due. You will turn in research questions/general proposal, then an annotated bibliography of sources, then a methods section, and finally, the final paper and a presentation to the class.

*Research questions/general proposal:* All students must have their proposals approved by the instructor before they can proceed with the rest of the paper. The proposal in brief should include your research questions, significance of project, and introduction of theoretical/conceptual framework. Approximately 2-3 pages. Due Tuesday, September 15.

*Annotated bibliography:* The annotated bibliography must include a full and complete APA citation and two paragraphs of commentary for each source included. The first paragraph should summarize the work and the second paragraph should explain the usefulness of the source to the research topic. Approximately 8-10 pages. Due Tuesday, October 20.

*Method section:* Here is where you explain how you will go about answering your research questions. You WILL NOT be completing the research (at least, not as a requirement from the class, but I encourage you to consider working toward something you could submit for a conference or publication). Instead, discuss what method(s) you think would be most helpful for answering your research questions, and why. You will also need to cite sources here, to provide support for why you are choosing particular method(s). Due Tuesday, November 3.

*Presentation and final paper:* You will give a presentation of your findings to the class during our final meeting period, Tuesday, December 1. Your final paper will be due the following week, Tuesday, December 8 at 5:30 p.m.

**GRADING:**

There are 500 possible points in this class. At the end of the semester, your class average will be calculated and fractions will be rounded to the nearest whole number. Letter grades will be determined according to the scale below.

|                                    |                |            |
|------------------------------------|----------------|------------|
| <i>Discussion Leader (2)</i>       | 60 points each | 120 points |
| <i>Weekly Short Papers (10)</i>    | 10 points each | 100 points |
| <i>Theory and Definition Paper</i> |                | 120 points |
| <i>Final Paper</i>                 |                | 160 points |
| <i>Research Questions</i>          | 15 points      |            |
| <i>Annotated Bib</i>               | 30 points      |            |
| <i>Ideas for Method</i>            | 15 points      |            |
| <i>Final Paper</i>                 | 75 points      |            |
| <i>Presentation</i>                | 25 points      |            |
| <i>Total</i>                       |                | 500 points |

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|   |         |   |         |   |         |   |           |
|---|---------|---|---------|---|---------|---|-----------|
| A | 448-500 | B | 398-447 | C | 348-397 | D | 300-347   |
|   |         |   |         |   |         | F | Below 300 |

**QUALITY OF WORK:**

All work in this course should follow AP Style, including proper spelling, grammar, and language. A large part of mass communication is having a polished written concept of what you are communicating. This includes all class work and presentations. Although line editing is unlikely, 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. In addition, Purdue University’s Online Writing Lab is an excellent resource, and can be found at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu>.

**QUESTIONS ABOUT GRADES:**

If you would like to ask about a grade, please make an appointment to meet with me outside of class time, as I will not discuss grades via email or during class. If you have a question or problem with a grade, exam question, or in-class assignment, you have 48 hours after the assignment is returned to you to contact me, or the grade stands. Your question or appeal must be stated in writing, citing your position and why you feel the mark is incorrect. The appeal should be turned in to the professor or sent via email within the stated time frame.

Additionally, you are responsible for tracking your grade online and meeting with me early in the semester if you are concerned about your overall grade. Meeting with me early and often can help both parties involved find ways to improve student-professor understanding and quality of work.

**COURSE SCHEDULE:**

This is a basic schedule for topics and major assignments over the course of the semester. Although every effort will be made to stick with this schedule, please understand that some material may require more or less discussion and class time. Thus, changes to the schedule may occur. All changes will be announced in class.

Note: Readings should be completed prior to the session they will be discussed. Articles not in the McQuail book are available on eCourseware.

| <b>Class</b>    | <b>Content</b>  | <b>Due</b>                        | <b>Readings</b>   |
|-----------------|---|-----------------------------------|---|
| Week 1          |   |                                   |   |
| Tues., Aug. 25  | Course introduction. What is theory?                                  | <b>Discussion leader sign-up</b>  | McQuail Ch. 1   |
| Week 2          |   |                                   |   |
| Tues., Sept. 1  | History of mass comm, writing a lit review, building theory           |                                   | McQuail Ch. 2; Shoemaker, Tankard, & Lasorsa (2004)             |
| Week 3          |   |                                   |   |
| Tues., Sept. 8  | Agenda setting, framing   |                                   | McQual Chs. 3, 4, 19; McCombs & Shaw (1972)                     |
| Week 4          |   |                                   |   |
| Tues., Sept. 15 | Media effects   | <b>RQs/paper proposal due</b>     | McQuail Chs. 17, 18   |
|                 | <b>**PRD Ethics Twitter chat is Thursday, September 17 @ 7pm CT**</b> |                                   |   |
| Week 5          |   |                                   |   |
| Tues., Sept. 22 | News values, objectivity; Comedy Central as news                      |                                   | McQuail Ch. 12  |
| Week 6          |   |                                   |   |
| Tues., Sept. 29 | Perception and credibility  |                                   | McQuail Ch. 11; Kiousis (2001), Mendelson & Papacharissi (2007) |
| Week 7          |   |                                   |   |
| Tues., Oct. 6   | Uses & gratifications; media dependency; persuasion                   |                                   | McQuail Chs. 15, 16; Reich (2011)                               |
| Week 8          |   |                                   |   |
| Tues., Oct. 13  | <b>Fall Break (No class)</b>  |                                   |   |
| Week 9          |   |                                   |   |
| Tues., Oct. 20  | Media and society   | <b>Annotated Bibliography due</b> | McQuail Ch. 4   |
| Week 10         |   |                                   |   |
| Tues., Oct. 27  | New media, the internet, citizen journalism, memes                    |                                   | McQuail Chs. 6, 14; boyd (2009)                                 |
| Week 11         |   |                                   |   |
| Tues., Nov. 3   | Ethics and professionalism  | <b>Method section due</b>         | McQuail Chs. 7, 8   |

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| Week 12        |   |  |  |
| Tues., Nov. 10 | Ethics and the public sphere<br><b>(Class does not meet.)</b> | <b>Defining news paper due (8:30 p.m.)</b> | McQuail Ch. 7; Baker (2007), Gross & Aday (2003) |
| Week 13        |   |  |  |
| Tues., Nov. 17 | Globalization   |  | McQuail Ch. 10                                   |
| Week 14        |   |  |  |
| Tues., Nov. 24 | Critical/cultural, gender, semiotics                          |  | McQuail Chs. 5, 13                               |
| Week 15        |   |  |  |
| Tues., Dec. 1  | Last day of classes   | <b>Final Paper Presentations</b>           |  |
| Tues., Dec. 8  | <b>Final Paper Due by 8:30 p.m.</b>                           |  |  |

## DEPARTMENT POLICIES

### PORTFOLIO REQUIREMENT:

All Department of Journalism undergraduate students are required to develop and maintain an active portfolio of their work. Students are to begin the portfolio in JOUR 2121 and contribute to it during every skills course thereafter. The portfolio should contain samples of the student's work from courses and/or professional experience and should develop as the student builds skills. Portfolios will undergo a final review while students are enrolled in the capstone course for their concentrations.

### 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 <http://iam.memphis.edu> 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.

### MOBILE PHONES AND LAPTOPS:

Some classes require a tablet, laptop or a smartphone to be used during class or to complete class assignments. Others do not allow them. Your instructor will set the policy for her/her specific 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. Students are permitted three total unexcused absences without penalty. After three absences, the student's final grade will be deducted one letter grade for each absence. After seven unexcused absences, the student will fail the course. Absences for illness and other catastrophic emergencies, such as a death in the family, must be documented (e.g. doctor's note or obituary) to be excused from the total absence count. Students with excessive unexcused absences are encouraged to withdraw from the course prior to the drop deadline.

**DEADLINES:**

All deadlines are firm. This is journalism and mass communications. Assignments turned in late will NOT be graded. Late work is not accepted unless prior arrangements have been made with the instructor. Students are NOT permitted to make up assignments, quizzes, tests, etc. that occurred during an unexcused absence. Students who will miss class and/or a deadline because of an excused absence are expected to notify the instructor immediately upon knowing the absence will occur; exceptions will be made for reasonable circumstances. Students who are absent during the final exam are not permitted to make up the exam and will earn a grade of 0, which might result in failure of the course.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:**

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, a student receiving any assistance from others for work assigned to be done on his/her own, and violations of copyright law as acts of academic dishonesty punishable to the degree determined appropriate by the course instructor and department chair. Penalties might include grade reductions or 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)

**Intellectual property and copyright guidelines**

1. Ideas cannot be copyrighted, but the way they are described can.
2. Anything set down in a tangible form, i.e., written, is by law copyrighted.
3. If, in a paraphrase, your work is “substantially similar” to a copyrighted work, you are guilty of copyright infringement.
4. A citation indicates where you got material. However, that portion you do not show as a direct quote must be “substantially original” to you. In other words, you can’t just paste in something from another’s work, put a citation at the bottom and call it your own. You need a full rewrite in your own words and syntax so the unquoted material is “substantially original” to you.

**Plagiarism: From UM Student Handbook:** The term “plagiarism” includes, but is not limited to, the use, by paraphrase or direct quotation, of the published or unpublished work of another person without full or clear acknowledgement. It also includes the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials.

**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.

**DISABILITY:**

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

**DIVERSITY:**

Students are required to respect the differences of others and treat all persons with respect. Discriminatory, derogatory and threatening language or behavior will not be tolerated. Further, students are expected to consider their work through a diverse mind. Mass communications reach a mass audience, and students should be aware of how those messages are received by a diverse audience.

**WEATHER POLICY:**

Check with local media and the University of Memphis website regarding inclement weather. If the university is closed or classes are canceled, this course will not meet. However, students will still be responsible for that day’s work.

**AP STYLE AND GRAMMAR:**

All written work in this class should follow the AP Stylebook and accepted rules of grammar and punctuation. If you don’t know the style for a particular phrase, look it up or ask your classmates or the instructor.