

Mass Communication Theory J7050/8050

Spring 2012

5:30 – 8:30 p.m. CST Tuesdays via UMmeet at

<http://ummeet.adobeconnect.com/j7050/>

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COURSE REQUIREMENTS

CATALOGUE/COURSE DESCRIPTION: Key concepts and development of theories offered to explain operation and effects of mass communication media; multidisciplinary 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 news production processes and media content consumption patterns are changing rapidly with the advent of new digital technologies. Seasoned professionals are struggling to describe the media landscape of the future and associated business models.

Theories of mass communication are especially valuable under contemporary conditions. The broadly explanatory concepts of theory help us understand the ways in which humans respond to different types of information, and thus can help us to make informed predictions as to what the future may hold.

This course provides students with an overview of theories of mass communication and encourages them to ponder how the concepts involved may apply to the real world and influence professional practices.

PREREQUISITE:

None

TEXTBOOKS:

Severin, Warner J., and James E. Tankard, Jr. *Communication Theories: Origins, Methods and Uses in Mass Media*, 5th ed. New York: Addison Wesley Longman, 2001. ISBN 0-8013-3335-0.

CLASSROOM FORMAT:

Student presentations on assigned topics followed by in-class discussions.

The meeting room URL is provided above. You’ll need your university username and password to gain access. Additional information will be provided separately.

Students are urged to read UMMeet instructions, visit the site and make certain that their computers conform to UMMeet requirements before the first class meeting date.

GRADING:

Presentations will be based on mid-term and final student research papers. Paper topics will be selected by students from the timetable below (first come, first served) subject to instructor approval. Written summaries will be provided by students at least one week in advance of presentation dates for circulation among class members.

Final grades will be calculated as follows:

In-class presentations and participation, 30 percent; first research paper, 30 percent; second research paper 40 percent.

TENTATIVE TIMETABLE:

Date	Chapters *	Discussion Topic	Presenter
1/18	1, 2 and 3	Defining “theory” and “models”	Brody
1/25	4, 5 and 6	Perception and propaganda	
2/1	7	Cognitive consistency	
2/8	8	Theories of persuasion	Sherrod
2/15	9 and 10	Groups and communication	
2/22	11	Agenda-setting	
2/29	12	Knowledge gap hypothesis	
3/14	13	Mass communication effects	
3/21	14	Uses of mass media	
3/28	15	Mass media in society	Spurlock
4/4	16	Chains and conglomerates	
4/11	17	Cyber communication theories	
4/18	18	Impact of emerging technology	Leone
4/25		Summary	
* Read in advance of class meetings			

ASSESSMENT**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.

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 COMMUNICATION THEORY:

All written and verbal assignments will be evaluated as to

- student mastery of the basic skills itemized above
- their knowledge of the theories itemized in individual assignments

Knowledge and skill levels will be calculated in assigning grades to all individual assignments and, thereby, factored into all students’ final grades for the course.

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 able 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.

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)

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 the Office for Disability Services at (901) 678-2880 in 110 Wilder Tower Hall to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.