MMC 6400: Digital Communication Theory
WDOC Spring 2019
College of Journalism and Communications
University of Florida

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Office Hours (via Skype): By Appointment, hours flexible to include evenings and weekends
Course Website: http://elearning.ufl.edu

Course Communication:
Please use email, Canvas mail, or Facebook to communicate with the instructor.

Course Description and Goals:

Over the course of this term we will cover mass communication theory from its inception as field of study, to major trends, followed by current applications of previous paradigms, and finally into the development of new currents of thought. While the main focus of this course is the integration of current mass communication theory with an individual and organizational online presence, we will also focus on how digital platforms can inform the future of theoretical research and vice versa. From a practical perspective, students will be able to apply these theories to their integrative approaches in creative digital communication and design.

Course Objectives:

By the end of this course, students will:
1) Develop an appreciation for what constitutes 'good' theory
2) Gain a cognitive understanding of major mass communication theories
3) Demonstrate practical application of those theories to the digital world
4) Display knowledge of how communication theories inform our use of web-based communication platforms
5) Evaluate and incorporate the theories discussed, as well as new theories, into an individual case study demonstrating mastery of the theories at hand
6) Compare, contrast, and critique current theories and their potential applications in the digital world
7) Identify areas of future research/application of new communication theories
8) Integrate web design knowledge with digital communication competence
9) Transfer knowledge gained to the professional communication arena in individual areas of interest

10) Develop critical thinking, analytical, and writing skills

Required Texts:

There are **no required textbooks** for this course. All readings will be provided in Canvas as PDFs or as a link to online materials.

Engagement:

Online courses offer a unique opportunity for students to engage with the instructor and with one another on various platforms. We will utilize three major platforms over the course of this term to foster engagement and communication aside from Canvas and Email:

1. A secret course Facebook group
2. Periodic live meetings
3. A Twitter party

Students are highly encouraged to take advantage of these opportunities. The Instructor will provide more information on each one as the semester commences.

Teaching Philosophy:

As an education professional, my goal is to ensure that students are learning in a way that is not only useful for the duration of the course, but for the duration of a student's career in communications. To do so, I employ academic tools and concepts combined with practical applications to challenge students. In this way, students retain knowledge through repetition of course materials in various settings. Above all, I advocate active learning in my online classroom and will use any and all tools at my disposal to achieve that goal.

Instructional Methods:

As mentioned above, I use a variety of tools to enhance the learning experience of students in Digital Communication Theory. This term we will create discussion posts, complete mini-module theory application assignments, a case study and a self-reflection paper. We'll also have the opportunity to interact with one another through short, live meetings spread throughout the term.

Expectations:

MMC 6400 is a graduate level course and the work students submit in this course should be a reflection of higher-level cognition, critical thinking, writing, and overall academic abilities. In addition, I expect students to complete all assignments on time, to be respectful of one another

and the instructor, and to do their best work. These expectations apply not only to interactions within Canvas, but also to communication via email, on the Facebook page, during live meetings and the Twitter party, etc.

Attendance Policy:

This is an asynchronously delivered course so there is no attendance requirement. However, students are responsible for all material posted in Canvas and the Facebook page to include announcements, grades, assignment updates, changes, etc. The instructor reserves the right to update materials at any time.

Emergency and extenuating circumstances policy:

Students who face emergencies, such as a major personal medical issue, a death in the family, serious illness of a family member, or other situations beyond their control should notify their instructors immediately. Students are also advised to contact the Dean of Students Office if they would like more information on the medical withdrawal or drop process: https://www.dso.ufl.edu/care/medical-withdrawal-process/.

Coursework:

Most of the coursework for this term will be submitted through Canvas. There are two exceptions as noted below:

- Lecture Discussion Posts   In Canvas
- Reading Reaction Posts   In Canvas
- Mini-Module Assignments   In Canvas
- Live Meetings   In Adobe Connect, Skype, or Twitter
- Theory Takeaways   In Course Facebook Page
- Case Study Mock-Up   In Canvas
- Self-Reflection paper   In Canvas

Assignments

All assignment information is also posted in the 'Assignments' tab or the 'Discussions' tab in Canvas.

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Lecture Discussion Posts (LDP) (140 pts.)

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Students will create ONE (1) Lecture Discussion Post (LDP) in 14 of the modules in response to prompts and/or questions posed by the instructor during lectures. LDPs will be posted into each

individual module's discussion forum (choose 'Discussions' from the toolbar on the left in Canvas, then click on the desired module and begin). The questions posed each week will be different so be sure to **answer the question(s) within each individual discussion forum**. LDPs must be at least **350-500** words in length and should completely answer **each and every question** posed by the instructor. Do not exceed 500 words. Students who fail to answer all questions will lose points. Where applicable, LDPs should include thoughtful responses and discourse that connect what is discussed throughout the lecture to the student's work or experience with web design and/or digital communication. There will be fourteen (14) LDPs this semester and each one is worth TEN (10) points.

Lecture Discussion Posts (LDPs) Grading Rubric					
0	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10
No Post is written or posts includes plagiarized content (all outside content must be in quotations or student will receive a '0')	The post fails to meet the word count requirement. The post does not address all questions posed or offer a thoughtful, well-developed response for the questions that are answered. Post is not well organized. There are many spelling or grammar errors or outside	The post fails to meet the word count requirement but does respond to all questions posed (or vice versa). The responses however, are not well presented or well thought out. Ideas are not organized nor do they offer something new to the discussion. There may be several grammatical	The level of response is poor with disorganized ideas or the ideas are not well presented. There may be grammatical or spelling errors as well, or outside content is not appropriately cited or the post lacks content. Post may or may not meet word count requirements or answer all	Post is accurate, relevant and well written. The student addresses all questions in the prompt with thoughtful and reflective ideas that have substance and depth. If used, outside content is cited appropriately (Ex. "According to Servaes (2006)..."). Post either does not meet requirement for word count or has spelling/grammatical errors or lacks content.	Post is accurate, relevant and well written. The student addresses all questions in the prompt with thoughtful, reflective ideas that have substance and depth. Ideas are original and offer something new to the discussion. If used, outside content is cited appropriately (Ex. "According to Servaes (2006)...") and/or hyperlinked. Post meets requirements for word count and is without grammatical or spelling errors.

content is not appropriately cited.	or spelling errors or outside content is not appropriately cited.	questions posed.		

Each post is worth ten (10) points. Please see the rubric above for information regarding point distribution as well as the information on deadlines toward the end of this syllabus for the late policy. All Discussion Postings are due by **Saturday at 11:59 PM EST.** Create your post in Canvas, under the Discussion section (see left side toolbar) or access the discussion by clicking on the links in each module.

Mini-Module Assignments (MMA) (90 pts.)

These assignments are spread throughout the semester and will offer opportunities for students to apply what they've learned in a digital context. Each assignment is different and full details are offered in the Assignments tab in Canvas. Students are required to complete three (3) mini-module assignments, for a total of 30 points.

Again, the goal is the make connections between theory and use of theory in actual mass or mediated communication contexts. All Mini-Module assignments are due **Saturday at 11:59 PM EST** of the week assigned.

Live Meetings (30 pts.)

There will be three (3) live meeting opportunities this term. Each live meeting will have a different purpose/point value and will be scheduled as we move through the semester. The meetings will occur either in our Adobe Connect room, via Skype, or on Twitter and will last approximately 15-40 minutes each. Above all, the goal is for students to have an opportunity to interact with one another and with the instructor in a more informal setting. Students will earn points for each live meeting attended.

Case Study (150 pts.)

The Case Study consists of three (3) separate deliverables:

1) Written analysis (3-5 pages)
2) Website Redesign (Mock-ups)
3) Powerpoint (or similar) Slide Presentation (5-7 slides)

Written Analysis

Students will analyze and evaluate the digital communication strategies of **one (1) organization/company/entity as a case study.** This analysis can include any aspect of the student's chosen entity in terms of their digital presence but the main area of focus should be organizational websites. Students will use at least FIVE theoretical perspectives from the course as the basis for their analyses. ****The goal of this project is to APPLY the theoretical perspective in terms of how the company you chose might have used communication theory in the past, or how the company might use it in the future; all within the context of web design and online communication.****

Theory Choice: Students may choose any FIVE (5) theories from the course as their theoretical foundation for analysis, but may use no more than TWO (2) theories from any one module. This ensures variety in the analysis.

Additionally, the student should discuss how a critical analysis of the site based on theory informs the updates they have created in the website redesign mock-ups (part 2 of this assignment). Essentially, students should provide changes that are founded in their own analysis of the site and outline ways the site should be improved.

The Written Analysis should consist of 3-5 pages, double-spaced, 12 pt. Times New Roman text with APA-Style in-text citations and an APA-Style Reference List. Reference list NOT included in page count. Please be sure to avoid plagiarism because any instance of plagiarism will result in a minimum of a zero (0) on the assignment. See the full plagiarism policy based on the University Honor Code toward the end of this syllabus.

Website Redesign Mock-Ups

Students will take their analysis and consider the implications of the chosen theories in order to create a redesign of the current company/organization/entity website. The Mock-Ups must include the home page and at least 2 additional webpages associated with the website for a total of three (3) webpage mock-ups. **Actual text must be included**—this will be an excellent chance to practice copywriting skills.

Be creative, but carefully consider the theories you utilized for critically analyzing the current web presence of the entity you chose. The mock-ups should be significantly different and easily distinguishable from the original site. You are welcome to use templates if necessary, but feel free to use your web design skills in this assignment. Discuss the changes you make in your redesign within the Written Analysis (section 1 of this assignment).

PowerPoint Slide Presentation

Students will submit a separate Presentation with slides that cover both their Written Analysis and their Redesign Mock-ups (graphics from the Mock-Up highly encouraged). This presentation will be given during a live class meeting toward the end of the term, date and time TBD, but will occur during Module 14. Students should present their slides/Mock-up as if they were contracted by the organization to assist in a website redesign. Professional presentation skills will be very important here and this assignment offers students the opportunity to practice.

Presentation Specifications: Presentations should be five to seven (5-7) slides in length, excluding the cover slide and the references slide. Students should be sure to avoid plagiarizing other sources in their oral presentation as well as in the text of their slides. The presentation should include the five theories chosen for analysis as well as the changes made through the Redesign Mock-ups. The presentation should last approximately five to seven (5-7) minutes.

Slides should include a visually pleasing template design, graphics that highlight the redesign, and short bullet points. Slides with an overabundance of text will be penalized.

Students will be graded on their presentation abilities during the live meeting. Please see the rubric in the Canvas assignment for full details.

During the live meeting, students should take notes and create a paragraph (4-5 sentences) of feedback for each of THREE (3) presentations during the meeting. Those paragraphs will be submitted as the Presentation Feedback post for Module 14. This will be the only post for Module 14. I expect constructive criticism to be provided in this post, but also a healthy dose of encouragement to your peers as well.

DEADLINE: All components of the Case Study (Written Analysis, Redesign Mock-Up, and Presentation Slides) should be submitted by **Saturday, 4/13 at 11:59 PM EST**. Feedback posts will be due on 4/21 in the Discussion Board.

At any time: If you are having trouble with any component of this assignment, please feel free to contact the instructor for guidance or clarification.

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Self-Reflection Paper (90 pts.)

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Over the course of the semester, students will have ample occasion for relating the course materials to their own experiences. The self-reflection paper offers students the opportunity to share their thoughts on mass communication theory and web design and/or online communication applications from their own perspectives.

This two- to three- (2-3) page paper should include references to class lectures, readings, activities, and assignments (i.e. in Lecture 2 we learned about...) but need not refer to outside readings. **This is not a research paper**. This paper should be more like an intelligent (albeit one-

sided) conversation between mass communication colleagues that allows the writer to not only display their knowledge, but also make connections in their own lives and work.* Questions that students might consider include:

How is mass communication theory important to my field?
How are mass communication theories and paradigms important to me as an individual?
How have my communication approaches and tactics changed as a result of this course?
Why should other students take this course? How would they benefit?
What readings/activities/assignments were most meaningful to me in gaining application-based knowledge of mass communication theory?
Which theories were most relevant to web design and why?
How will mass communication theories apply to my job in the future?

Students may find it helpful to record their thoughts throughout the semester for inclusion in this final paper. The page total includes references.

*Do not plagiarize your discussion posts or any other written work when writing this paper. You can certainly refer to points made or ideas from your other assignments, but do not copy and paste material. This paper should be original.

Paper specifications: 2-3 pages, APA-style, double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12 pt. font, 1″ margins, no abstract, cover page or table of contents necessary.
See the OWL at Purdue for assistance with APA-style writing.
Due Wednesday, 4/24 by 11:59 PM EST

Point Values

Assignment	Point Value
Lecture Discussion Post (LDP) 10 pts. x 14	140
Mini-Module Assignments (MMA) 30 pts. x 3	90
Live Meetings (3)	30
Self-Reflection Paper	90
Case Study Presentation	150
Total Points	**500**

Feedback

One of the most important ways that professors can interact with their students is through feedback on assignments. You can expect to receive very specific, constructive feedback on your work to include discussion posts and major assignments. In some instances, I will provide track changes documents to assist students with writing skills to improve their posts. As a general rule, you should receive your scores and feedback on submitted posts within 7-10 days. More time is required to complete the grading process for major assignments and will be dependent upon the number of students enrolled in the course. Also, keep in mind that the RPs will not be graded until 1-2 weeks after submission to allow time for the discussion process plus the 7-10 day grading period. Major assignments may not be graded until the end of the term.

Modules

Module/Week	Readings/Lecture/Media	Assignments
Module 1, 1/7-1/12 Course Overview	Introduction to the Course and Syllabus, Defining the Digital World, Theory Basics and What makes good theory?	Introduction Post, Lecture Discussion Post (LDP), Reading Reaction Post (RRP)
Module 2, 1/13-1/19 Mass Communication Theory, An overview	Mass Communication Theory Overview: Early Trends, Pt. 1	LDP
Module 3, 1/20-1/26 Mass Communication Theory, An overview	Mass Communication Theory Overview: Early Trends, Pt. 2	LDP
Module 4, 1/27-2/2 **Individual Perspectives**	Uses and Gratifications Theory, Information Processing Theory, Media Systems Dependency	LDP, Mini-Module Assignment (MMA) #1, Due by 2/2 at 11:59 PM EST.
Module 5, 2/3-2/9 Individual Perspectives, Cont.	Elaboration Likelihood Model, Media Richness Theory, Social Presence Theory and Conversational Maxims	LDP
Module 6, 2/10-2/16 Relationships, the Self, and CMC	Social Presentation Theory, Impression Management, Social Information Processing Theory	LDP MMA #2 Due by 2/16 at 11:59 PM EST
Module 7, 2/17-2/23 Sociological Perspectives	Gatekeeping, Agenda Setting, Priming, Framing, Social	LDP

	Responsibility	
Module 8, 2/24-3/2 Mass Communication Theory and Society	Diffusion of Innovations, Knowledge Gap, Spiral of Silence, Cultivation Theory	LDP, <mark>MMA #3 Due by 3/2 at 11:59 PM EST</mark>
3/3-3/9 SPRING BEAK	No Module	No Assignments
Module 9, 3/10-3/16 Visual Communication	Visual Communication Theories	LDP
Module 10, 3/17-3/23 Organizational Theories	Corporate and Organizational Communication	LDP
Module 11, 3/24-3/30 Advertising Theories	Online Advertising and Communication Strategies	LDP
Module 12, 3/31-4/6 Public Relations Theories	Public Relations and Communicating with Stakeholders	LDP
Module 13, 4/7-4/13 Intercultural Theories	Hall, Hofstede, Development and Social Change	LDP, <mark>Case Study DUE 4/13</mark>
Module 14, 4/14-4/20	CASE STUDY PRESENTATIONS, Mass Communication Theory and the Digital World: Eyes on the Future and Changing Landscapes, TBD	LDP, Live Meeting for Presentations [TBD]
Module 15, 4/21/-4/24 The Future of Mass Communication Theory		<mark>Live Meeting #3 Twitter Party #UFMassComm [TBD], Self-Reflection Paper due</mark> **Wednesday, 4/24**

Grading Scale

A	92.5-100	463-500
A-	89.5-92.4	448-462
B+	86.5-89.4	433-447
B	82.5-86.4	413-432
B-	79.5-82.4	398-412
C+	76.5-79.4	383-397
C	72.5-76.4	363-382
C-	69.5-72.4	348-362

D+	66.5-69.4	333-347
D	62.5-66.4	313-332
D-	59.5-62.4	298-312
E	59.4 & Below	297 & Below

University Graduate Level Grading Policy: http://gradcatalog.ufl.edu/
Grades for this graduate course will be based on the total points earned over the term.

Course Policies

▪ Student Effort
As with any course, students will benefit from their own effort in learning the class materials and participating fully in activities, group work, readings, etc. Student grades are often a good reflection of their attitudes and motivations in coursework.

▪ Professionalism
Students are expected to maintain the appropriate level of professionalism, cooperation, and language in all aspects of this course including, but not limited to, weekly posts and responses to said posts, written assignments, presentations, and interactions with the instructor and colleagues. Students should also incorporate suitable standards for grammar, spelling, and word choice. Please see the Online Writing Lab (OWL) at Purdue for a refresher if necessary: https://owl.english.purdue.edu/.

▪ Deadlines
Follow all deadlines as printed in the course syllabus and weekly modules. Assignments turned in late will be assessed a 5-point deduction per day late. Discussion posts (and comments) turned in late will receive a 1-point deduction per day late.

Students should utilize time management skills when completing assignments, particularly when dealing with other concerns present in daily life (jobs, children, other commitments, etc.). Students are strongly encouraged to work ahead of schedule to avoid missed deadlines, particularly in the case of final assignments.

▪ Communication
If students have questions or concerns they are encouraged to communicate with the instructor via email or Skype. Please allow 48 hours for email responses or to schedule a Skype appointment unless otherwise indicated throughout the semester.

▪ University Policy on Accommodating Students with Disabilities:
Students requesting accommodation for disabilities must first register with the Dean of Students Office (http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/). The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation

to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation. You must submit this documentation prior to submitting assignments or taking the quizzes or exams. Accommodations are not retroactive, therefore, students should contact the office as soon as possible in the term for which they are seeking accommodations. Students with Disabilities who may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to notify the instructor and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) so that reasonable accommodations may be implemented. DRC is located in room 001 in Reid Hall or you can contact them by phone at 352-392-8565. University counseling services and mental health services:

▪ Netiquette: Communication Courtesy
All members of the class are expected to follow rules of common courtesy in all email messages, threaded discussions and chats. See the link below for more details on exercising proper netiquette in this course.

http://teach.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/NetiquetteGuideforOnlineCourses.pdf

▪ Getting Help:
For issues with technical difficulties for E-learning in Canvas, please contact the UF Help Desk at:

● Learning-support@ufl.edu
● (352) 392-HELP - select option 2
● https://lss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml

** Any requests for make-ups due to technical issues MUST be accompanied by the ticket number received from LSS when the problem was reported to them. The ticket number will document the time and date of the problem. You MUST e-mail your instructor within 24 hours of the technical difficulty if you wish to request a make-up.

Other resources are available at http://www.distance.ufl.edu/getting-help for:
- Counseling and Wellness resources
    o http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx
    o 352-392-1575
- Disability resources
- Resources for handling student concerns and complaints
- Library Help Desk support

Should you have any complaints with your experience in this course please visit http://www.distance.ufl.edu/student-complaints to submit a complaint.

▪ Course Evaluation

Students in this class are participating in a new course evaluation system called GatorEvals. The new evaluation system is designed to be more informative to instructors so that teaching effectiveness is enhanced and to be more seamlessly linked to UF's Canvas e-learning management system. Students can complete their evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, or in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals.

▪ University Policy on Academic Misconduct

Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Students should be sure that they understand the UF Student Honor Code at http://www.dso.ufl.edu/students.php.

Students are expected to adhere to the University of Florida Code of Conduct https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code

If you have additional questions, please refer to the Online Graduate Program Student Handbook you received when you were admitted into the Program.

The University of Florida Honor Code was voted on and passed by the Student Body in the Fall 1995 semester. The Honor Code reads as follows:

Preamble: In adopting this Honor Code, the students of the University of Florida recognize that academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Students who enroll at the University commit to holding themselves and their peers to the high standard of honor required by the Honor Code. Any individual who becomes aware of a violation of the Honor Code is bound by honor to take corrective action. A student-run Honor Court and faculty support are crucial to the success of the Honor Code. The quality of a University of Florida education is dependent upon the community acceptance and enforcement of the Honor Code.

The Honor Code: "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity."

On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied:

"On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment."

For more information about academic honesty, contact Student Judicial Affairs, P202 **Peabody Hall, 352-392-1261.**

- Plagiarism

Plagiarism occurs when an individual presents the ideas or expressions of another as his or her own. Students must always credit others' ideas with accurate citations and must use quotation marks and citations when presenting the words of others. A thorough understanding of plagiarism is a precondition for admittance to graduate studies in the college.

You are responsible for knowing the definition of plagiarism and various kinds of academic dishonesty. Ignorance, i.e. "I didn't realize that was plagiarism" is not an acceptable response, and will not excuse you from academic dishonesty violations, if discovered. While you are responsible for reading and understanding UF's policy in its entirety, examples of academic dishonesty include:

- o Using phrases or quotes from another source without proper attribution or quotation marks
  - For purposes of this class, five or more words (verbatim) from a source without proper attribution or quotation marks will be considered plagiarism.
- o Paraphrasing without proper attribution
- o "Forgetting" to source material you use (same as above, intentional or not)
- o Passing off others' ideas as your own
- o Turning in the same assignment or paper for two courses, i.e. "dual submission."
- o Stealing and/or copying other students' work, whether on a test or assignment
- o Bribery
- o Fabrication of material

If you have any questions about plagiarism, or how to properly cite or attribute sources, please ask. I am always happy to show you how to correctly do this in your scholarly work. **Please also make a note of University Honor Code Sanctions regarding plagiarism, which range from point deductions to expulsion from the University.**

Cheating: Cheating occurs when a student circumvents or ignores the rules that govern an academic assignment such as an exam or class paper. It can include using notes, in physical or electronic form, in an exam, submitting the work of another as one's own, or reusing a paper a student has composed for one class in another class. If a student is not sure about the rules that govern an assignment, it is the student's responsibility to ask for clarification from his instructor.

Misrepresenting Research Data: The integrity of data in mass communication research is a paramount issue for advancing knowledge and the credibility of our professions. For this reason any intentional misrepresentation of data, or misrepresentation of the conditions or circumstances of data collection, is considered a violation of academic integrity.

Any violation of the above stated conditions is grounds for immediate dismissal from the program and will result in revocation of the degree if the degree previously has been awarded.