



MMC 6400 – Fall 2017

# Mass Communication Theory

**Class Meeting:** Tuesday 8:30-11:30 a.m. (Weimer G-030)

**Instructor:** Dr. Kim Walsh-Childers  
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**Office Hours:** Tuesday, Wednesday 1-3 p.m.  
and by appointment. In general, it's best to make an appointment to be sure that I'll be available to you when you come by.

## About the Course

I know what you're thinking (some of you, at least): "Mass Comm Theory? Ugh. The only thing that interests me less is Brussels sprouts. After all, I want to be a professional, not a researcher, so why would I need theory?"

This course is intended to help you understand the usefulness and practicality of mass communication theory, whether your goal is to be a successful researcher at a Research I university or to be a top-notch practitioner in any mass communication field. Doing great work means understanding not only how to produce mass media content but also WHY it matters what approaches you take to your work. That's the role of theory.

This course is designed to give you an overview of some important theories related to mass communication in the United States and world. The primary purpose is to help you to think about why media operate the way they do and what impacts exposure to media has on audience members and society as a whole. We will also discuss how these theories advance the scholarly study of communication. We will use a combination of lectures, student-generated presentations, and class discussion to explore these topics.

### What You Will Learn in this Class

- A survey of some core mass media and related theories.
- A sampling of the contributions of other disciplines to media theory.
- An introduction to the fundamentals of writing research papers.

## Required Readings

**Required:** *No text is required. However, you are expected to do ALL assigned readings, including any that are added later in the semester and those suggested by your fellow students. These will be made available through the Canvas site for the course or emailed to you, on occasion.*

**Recommended:** *A Pocket Style Manual 7<sup>th</sup> Edition* by Diana Hacker & Nancy Sommers. (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2014).

### Other Resources

You should routinely keep up with coverage of the media. One recommended resource is NPR's "On the Media," available as a podcast at <http://www.onthemedial.org/>. For an international perspective, another useful resource is *The Guardian's* Media section (<http://www.theguardian.com/us/media>) or (<http://www.theguardian.com/uk/media>).

Other useful sites: [www.mediachannel.org](http://www.mediachannel.org)  
[www.cjr.org](http://www.cjr.org)

## Class Policies

**Classroom Atmosphere:** Each of you plays an important role in shaping this course. I encourage you to be actively involved in class discussions and activities. Please also be appreciative of the contributions of others, including the guest speakers, and help create a class environment that is respectful and inclusive. This does not mean you should never disagree, but you should ***always*** do so courteously.

**Cell Phones and Computer Use in Class:** As a matter of courtesy to your fellow class members, please turn off all cell phones and pagers prior to the start of class. Likewise, ***all electronic devices should remain off***. I strongly recommend that you take handwritten notes for the class; [research](#) documents that hand-writing your notes increases your likelihood of remembering and understanding the material. DO NOT *instant or text message during class*. Multi-tasking is not [effective](#).

**Attendance:** I will not take roll for every class, but when there are student presentations (which will include most weeks) or guest lectures, you will be required to sign in. I reserve the right to lower grades due to excessive absences *or tardiness*. Class starts at 8:30, not 8:40, not 8:35. Your attendance and *participation* are important to making this class a success. I expect that you will attend every class unless an emergency prevents you from doing so. If you find that you do have to miss a class due to an emergency, let me know immediately.

**Missing Deadlines or Assignments:** In the communication field, meeting assignment deadlines is vital. The same holds true in this class. If you believe you have an exceptional reason for missing a deadline, please discuss it with me *immediately* and *in advance*. Fairness, both to me and to your classmates, requires that you meet all deadlines. Most often, I will count a missed deadline as a missed assignment, meaning that there will be a significant grade penalty, up to and including failure on the assignment. *All assignments are due promptly at the start of class. Failure to turn in your assignments at the start of class will result in a late penalty at a minimum.*

**Accommodations for Special Needs:** If you have a legitimate, documented special needs situation, I am more than happy to work with you to find accommodations. University policy requires students requesting classroom accommodation to register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide appropriate documentation to you, and you should provide this documentation to me at the beginning of the semester. Please do so, even if you do not believe you will need the accommodations. It is your responsibility to initiate this conversation early in the semester.

## Plagiarism and Academic Honesty

For the communications professional, there hardly exists a graver crime than plagiarizing another writer's work. In short, it is YOUR responsibility to make certain you understand what constitutes plagiarism and to ensure that you give proper credit any time you draw on someone else's writing.

- **Do not rely on what you think you've learned before.** I strongly recommend that everyone complete the free Poynter NewsU course called [Avoiding Plagiarism and Fabrication](#). It will be oriented toward journalists, not academic writing, but the principles are the same.
- Prof. Mindy McAdam has put together an excellent guide: <http://www.macloo.com/cheat/index.htm>. In addition, the plagiarism guide all graduate students are required to read and sign also should be helpful to you. (It WILL be relevant to what's expected in this class because I wrote the guide.)
- **If you have questions, ASK ME!** There's no penalty for asking questions, even up to the point at which you're turning in the paper, but the penalties for plagiarism are severe, including **dismissal from the master's or Ph.D. program.**
- **Treat Internet sources like any other book, journal article or other print source.** Make CERTAIN you copy down citation information when you copy material from a website, EVEN if you're paraphrasing.

- **Upload ALL papers to the e-learning site and know that I will submit them to Turnitin.com to check for plagiarism.** I'll also want hard copies of all your papers, and *I will check Turnitin reports.*
- **DO NOT turn in to me ANY work you previously have submitted to another instructor or that you plan to submit for any other class at UF or any other institution.** If you want to write on a topic you've worked on before, that may be acceptable IF you discuss it with me and get permission IN ADVANCE.

Please see the UF Office of Student Judicial Affairs website for definitions of academic dishonesty (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/honorcode.php>). The violations most likely to be potential problems for students in this class include plagiarism, misrepresentation and fabrication. It is YOUR responsibility to understand what kinds of actions are prohibited. If a situation ever arises in which you think something you're contemplating MIGHT constitute one of these types of academic dishonesty, ASK BEFORE YOU DO IT. Apologies after the fact will never resolve the problem for anyone.

**FAIR WARNING**

**IF YOU PLAGIARIZE ON ANY ASSIGNMENT FOR THIS CLASS, YOU WILL FAIL THE ENTIRE CLASS. YOU WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO DROP THE CLASS.**

**Plagiarism is not limited to turning in a paper you did not write or copying whole paragraphs verbatim. There is no acceptable reason for copying another person's ideas or phrasing without providing proper citations.**

**Course Grading and Assignments**

I use minus grades so that individuals who do superior work receive GPA points reflecting that accomplishment. Grades will not be curved. You can see how letter grades relate to grade points assigned at this [website](#). Final grades will be based on these break-points:

A- = 90-93.5%	A = 93.6%+		
B- = 80-83.5%	B = 83.6-87%	B+ = 87.1%-89.9%	
C- = 70-73.5%	C = 73.6-77%	B+ = 77.1%-79.9%	
D- = 60-63.5%	D = 63.6-67%	D+ = 67.1%-69.9%	
E = 59.9% or lower			

In general, I am reluctant to assign incomplete grades because they create an additional burden for both the student and the instructor for the following semester. In

exceptional circumstances, I may agree to assign an “I” grade, in compliance with the terms and completion of the “Incomplete Grade Contract.” **Note that College of Journalism & Communications policy limits Ph.D. students to three (3) “I” grades during the entire course of their studies; for master’s students, the maximum is two (2).**

Your final grade will be determined by your performance on the following assignments:

Team Presentation and Discussion	300 points
Class Participation	150 points
Annotated Bibliography	150 points
Research Paper Proposal	50 points
<u>Final Research Paper</u>	<u>350 points</u>
Total	1,000 points

**Team presentation:** The **team presentation** is your opportunity to inform the class about a specific theory or group of theories and to lead a discussion on how that theory applies to mass communication today. The total presentation should run 1 hour. Teams will include two or three people – no more. You’ll sign up for topics, based on your interests, and I’ll do my best to assign everyone to a team/topic of his or her choice.

An important component of your grade will be how well you work as a member of the team. As part of the assignment, you will be required to fill out the self and team assessment form. It should be turned in on the day of your presentation. Your classmates will also be asked to provide written feedback on the presentation. Additional information is provided in a separate handout.

**Class participation:** The **participation** grade stems from your involvement in the activities of the class, including your demonstration that you have completed all assigned readings PRIOR to class, your involvement in large and small group discussions and activities, and your class attendance. At least some of the time, I also may ask you to respond to assigned readings via comments on the class e-learning site.

**Annotated bibliography:** This bibliography should directly relate to the topic of your research project proposal and should provide a foundation on which you can build that and future papers. It should include a synopsis of the key literature related to your topic, with full citations and a short summary of the primary points from each article (or book or book chapter) as they relate to your study. These summaries should be in your own words – do NOT just copy the article abstract. Each student will submit his/her own annotated bibliography – this is NOT a group project. However, we will discuss everyone’s project in class early enough so that if you come across an article/document that you believe will be especially valuable to someone else, you can recommend it to others.

**Final research project paper:** This is the major assignment for the class. The initial paper proposal and final paper together account for 40% of your grade, so it's important to do well on these assignments. In the final paper, you will outline a study you wish to conduct, whether for your thesis, a non-thesis project, or another purpose. The paper should be approximately 15-20 double-spaced pages (not including the bibliography – so that's at least 15 pages of text) and include an introduction, statement of purpose, literature review, research questions or hypotheses, and a brief overview of the proposed method. A separate, more detailed handout on the assignment will be provided. You will not be allowed to collaborate with other students on this assignment. It should not have been submitted for any other course, nor should you be planning to submit any version of it for any other course you are taking this semester. **Re-use of a previously submitted paper will result in a failing grade on this assignment and, more than likely, for the entire course.**

As you are working on any aspect of this paper, please review the section above regarding plagiarism. You will be required to submit your paper to Turnitin.

**Plagiarism on any writing assignment in the class will result in a failing grade FOR THE CLASS.**

Deadlines for the readings and assignments are outlined below. **Disclaimer:** While it is my intention to follow this syllabus and schedule as closely as possible, I reserve the right to make adjustments as necessary.

## Schedule of Topics and Required Readings

Date	Topics, Required Readings, Assignments Due
	Note: All readings will be available in the Canvas course materials.
8/22	<b>Introduction to the Class</b> No readings required for today, obviously, but please read the syllabus CAREFULLY. Please also read Ratzman, " <a href="#">10 Commandments</a> "
8/29	<b>Defining Theory; Writing the Literature Review; Research Strategies</b> Ratzman: <a href="#">10 commandments of a professor for his students</a> Journalist's Resource: <a href="#">Guide to critical thinking, research, data and theory</a> Maney, K. (2005). <a href="#">Moore's Law began as guess that grew in power over time.</a> Bryant, J., & Miron, D. (2004). <a href="#">Theory and research in mass communication</a> ; Cornell University Library: <a href="#">How to prepare an annotated bibliography</a> ; retrieved from <a href="http://olinuris.library.cornell.edu/ref/research/skill28.htm">http://olinuris.library.cornell.edu/ref/research/skill28.htm</a> ; UNC Writing Center: <a href="#">Literature Reviews</a>

9/5	<p><b>Four Theories of the Press – How the Press Ought to Operate</b>          Siebert, F.S., T. B. Peterson, &amp; W. Schramm. (1956). <i>Four theories of the press</i>, pp. 73-103;          Nerone, J. (2004). Four theories of the press in hindsight: Reflections on a popular model, pp. 21-32;</p>
9/12	<p><b>International Media Theories</b>          Read Becker, L.B., &amp; Vlad, T. (2009). Freedom of the press around the world;          Shah, H. (1996). <a href="#">Modernization, marginalization, and emancipation: Toward a normative model of journalism and national development</a>;          Kuo &amp; Chew (2009). <a href="#">Beyond ethnocentrism in communication theory: Towards a culture-centric approach</a>.          Habermas, J. (1974). <a href="#">The public sphere: An encyclopedia article</a>; (may require you to copy and paste the link into your browser)          Beers, D. (2006). <a href="#">The public sphere and online, independent journalism</a>;          Emerson, T. (1963). The function of freedom of expression in a democratic society;</p> <p><i>Research paper proposal due – 3 pages maximum, excluding reference list. Do not waste space with vague statements about mass communication. Stick to the point, make certain you include a statement of purpose, and do include references supporting your arguments.</i></p>
9/19	<p><b>Organizational Theories – What Influences Media Content?</b>          Breed, W. (1955). <a href="#">Social control in the newsroom: A functional analysis</a>;          Tuchman, G. (1973). <a href="#">Making news by doing work: Routinizing the unexpected</a>;          White, D.M. (1950). The “gatekeeper”: A case study in the selection of news;          Reese, S. D., &amp; Ballinger, J. (2001). <a href="#">The roots of a sociology of news: Remembering Mr. Gates and social control in the newsroom</a>.          Kiousis, et al. (2015). <a href="#">Exploring new frontiers of agenda building during the 2012 US presidential election pre-convention period: Examining linkages across three levels</a>;          VanSlyke Turk (1985). <a href="#">Information subsidies and influence</a></p>
9/26	<p><b>Early Media Effects Theories</b>          Davis, D.K. &amp; Baron, S.J. (1981). A History of Our Understanding of Mass Communication;          Katz (1957). <a href="#">The Two-Step Flow of Communication: An Up-To-Date Report on an Hypothesis</a>;          Chang (2010). <a href="#">A new perspective on Twitter hashtag use: Diffusion of innovation theory</a>;          Watts &amp; Dodds (2007). <a href="#">Influentials, networks and public opinion formation</a>.</p>
10/3	<p><b>News/Information-Focused Effects Theories – Week 1</b>          Noelle-Neuymann, E. (1974). <a href="#">The spiral of silence: A theory of public opinion</a>;          Glynn, Hayes &amp; Shanahan (1997). <a href="#">Perceived Support for One's Opinions and Willingness to Speak Out: A Meta-Analysis of Survey Studies on the "Spiral of Silence</a>;          Tichenor, P.J., Donohue, G.A., &amp; Olien, C.N. (1970). <a href="#">Mass media flow and differential growth in knowledge</a>;          Wei &amp; Hindman (2011). <a href="#">Does the Digital Divide Matter More? Comparing the Effects of New Media and Old Media Use on the Education-Based Knowledge Gap</a></p> <p><i>Annotated bibliographies due 10/4. Do not submit your annotated bibliography without reading the instructions carefully, looking at the example and the grading rubric.</i></p>

10/10	<p><b>News/Information-Focused Effects Theories – Week 2</b></p> <p>McCombs &amp; Reynolds (2008). How the News Shapes Our Civic Agenda;          Borah (2011). <a href="#">Conceptual Issues in Framing Theory: A Systematic Examination of a Decade’s Literature</a>;          Tewksbury &amp; Scheufele (2008) News Framing: Theory and Research;          Scheufele, D. (2006). <a href="#">Framing as a theory of media effects</a>;          Entman (1993). <a href="#">Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm</a></p>
10/17	<p><b>Entertainment Media Effects Theories – Week 1</b></p> <p>Morgan, Shanahan &amp; Signorielli (2008). Growing Up With Television: Cultivation Processes;          Schrum &amp; Bischak (2001). <a href="#">Mainstreaming, resonance, and impersonal impact: Testing moderators of the cultivation effect for estimates of crime risk</a>;          Roskos-Ewoldsen, Roskos-Ewoldsen &amp; Carpentier (2008). Media Priming: An Updated Synthesis.</p>
10/24	<p><b>Entertainment Media Effects Theories – Week 2</b></p> <p>Bandura (2008). Social Cognitive Theory of Mass Communication;          Martin &amp; Kennedy (1993). <a href="#">Advertising and Social Comparison: Consequences for Female Preadolescents and Adolescents</a></p>
10/31	<p><b>Key Persuasion Theories</b></p> <p>Dainton (2004). <a href="#">Explaining Theories of Persuasion</a>;          Petty, Briñol, &amp; Priester (2008). Mass Media Attitude Change: Implications of the Elaboration Likelihood Model of Persuasion;          Ajzen (1991). <a href="#">The Theory of Planned Behavior</a></p>
11/7	<p><b>What Audiences Do With Media</b></p> <p>Rubin (2008). Uses-and-Gratifications Perspective on Media Effects;          Ruggiero (2000). <a href="#">Uses and Gratifications Theory in the 21st Century</a>;          Ball-Rokeach (1998). <a href="#">A Theory of Media Power and a Theory of Media Use: Different Stories, Questions, and Ways of Thinking</a>;          Garrett (2009). <a href="#">Echo chambers online? Politically motivated selective exposure among Internet news users</a></p>
11/14	<p><b>Digital Media Theory</b></p> <p>Guest lecture: Dr. Sriram Kalyanaraman          Kalyanaraman &amp; Wojdyski (2015) Affording Control: How Customization, Interactivity, and Navigability Affect Psychological Responses to Technology          Qvortrup (2006). <a href="#">Understanding New Digital Media: Medium Theory or Complexity Theory?</a></p>
11/21	<p><b>NO CLASS: Meet individually to discuss research paper progress</b></p>
11/28	<p><b>The Critical/Cultural School and Grounded Theory</b></p> <p>Guba, E. G., &amp; Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). <a href="#">Competing paradigms in qualitative research</a>.          Domingo, et al. (2008). <a href="#">Participatory journalism practices in the media and beyond: An international comparative study of initiatives in online newspapers</a>;          McLellan, M. (2010). <a href="#">Categorizing what works – so we can apply those lessons to future endeavors</a>.</p>

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**A Look to the Future and Class Wrap-up**

**FINAL RESEARCH PAPERS DUE**

**Team Self-Evaluation Form**  
***MMC 6400 – Mass Communication Theory***  
**Fall 2016**

*This form is due to Dr. Walsh-Childers on the day of your presentation.*

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Team Member 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Team Member 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Topic: \_\_\_\_\_

Please list/briefly describe your contributions to the presentation:

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Please list/briefly describe your teammate's/s' contributions to the presentation:

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Please indicate how you would numerically describe the effort of each member: (The total should be 100%.)

Your contribution \_\_\_\_\_

Teammate 1's contributions \_\_\_\_\_

Teammate 2's contributions \_\_\_\_\_

Please add anything else you think I should know before assigning a final grade:

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