

**MMC 6400: Mass Communication Theory**

Thursdays 12:50-3:50, Weimer 1090

**PROFESSOR**

Frank Waddell, Ph.D.  
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**OFFICE HOURS**

3067 Weimer Hall  
Tue 8am-915am; Tue 230pm-345pm  
Also available by appointment.

**REQUIRED READINGS**

No required textbook; All readings will be posted to Canvas

Access to hard copy of APA style book (6<sup>th</sup> ed.) is recommended

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Mass communication theory (MMC 6400) provides an overview of theoretical approaches to the study of communication, drawing primarily from the social science tradition. Topics to be covered include theory building, the historical background of communication as a field, and contemporary theoretical perspectives from communications, psychology, political science and consumer behavior, among other interdisciplinary approaches.

**GRADING**

Weekly Questions:	10%
Midterm Exam:	20%
Final Exam:	20%
Annotated Bibliography:	10%
Intellectual History:	40%

Grading scale: A, 100-93; A-, 92-90; B+, 89-87; B, 86-84; B-, 83-80; C+, 79-77; C, 76-74; C-, 73-70; D+, 69-67; D, 66-64; D-, 63-60; E, 59 and below

## ASSIGNMENTS AND DEADLINES

**Weekly Questions (10%):** Each week you will be asked to submit a minimum of one question for each of our assigned readings. Questions are expected to address one or more of the following prompts: (A) apply the tenets of theory from weekly readings to your everyday media habits; (B) discuss the limitations of theory with related commentary of how those limitations affect the theory's conclusions; (C) offer novel applications of theory to other domains or disciplines; (D) compare and contrast theory from readings with alternative theoretical frameworks. **Questions should be submitted via e-mail ([frank.waddell@ufl.edu](mailto:frank.waddell@ufl.edu)) at least 24 hours before our class meeting.**

**Exams (40%):** Two exams will be conducted, each of which will be worth 20% of your final grade. Exams will be essay based and closed note. The ability to summarize and apply the tenets of theory discussed in class will be essential for success on examinations.

**Annotated Bibliography (10%):** In preparation for your final paper, assemble an annotated bibliography of journal articles and book chapters that are relevant to your theory of interest. Each annotation should include a citation for the work (formatted in APA style) alongside a summary of the study's findings. A minimum of 10 citations is required, although a bibliography that goes "above and beyond" to offer a comprehensive review of the literature (20+ citations) is ideal for success on the final paper.

**Final Research Proposal (40%):** Provide a comprehensive review of the intellectual history of a communication theory of our choice). In this paper (25-30 pages), summarize the key assumptions and predictions of the theory. Identify the seminal manuscripts where the theory was first introduced, then track how the theory has changed over time. Comment on how the theory has evolved, and how you see the theory changing in the future. In sum, your theory summary paper should (1) describe the evolution of the paper since its inception, (2) summarize the contemporary assumptions of the theory, and (3) offer directions for the theory's evolution

## LATE WORK POLICY

One letter grade (-10 points) will be deducted per day for work submitted past the assignment's deadline. If students anticipate that they will be unable to meet a deadline due to university documented issues (e.g., health condition, death in family), please contact me as soon as possible to arrange an extension. In general, I am quite willing to work with students when issues arise that prevent you from submitting work on time. However, it is necessary for these discussions

regarding late work to occur either before or recently after (e.g., within a week) the original deadline for the assignment. Work that is more than 10 days late will be given a “0” unless you contact the professor to arrange an alternative due date within the week that the assignment was due.

## **HONOR CODE POLICY**

This class strictly adheres to the UF honor code. Any prohibited behavior such as plagiarism, data fabrication, or cheating will result in a failing grade for the assignment in question and referral to the honor court, who may administer additional penalties such as a failing grade for the course or dismissal from the college. More information about the university honor code is available online at the following link: <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>

## **CLASSROOM CONDUCT**

It is expected that all students will arrive to class on time and be respectful of fellow classmates during lecture and student presentations. Please turn all cell phones to silent. While laptops are allowed, it is expected that they will only be used for class-related work such as note-taking or group assignments. In the event that you need to answer an emergency phone call, please excuse yourself from class and answer the call in the hallway. The professor reserves the right to revoke the use of technology during class if the above policies are not followed.

## **Schedule**

January 11th: Course Overview; Basics of Theory

January 18th: Early Theoretical Approaches

January 19<sup>th</sup>: Cultivation Theory

January 25th: Agenda Setting

February 1st: Framing

February 8th: Third Person Effect; Spiral of Silence

- February 15th: Priming
- February 22rd: Social Cognitive Theory
- March 1st: Midterm Exam
- March 8th: Spring Break; No Class
- March 15th: Dual Process Models of Persuasion; Theory of Planned Behavior
- March 22nd: Narrative Persuasion; Uses and Gratifications
- March 29<sup>th</sup>: Diffusion of Innovations; Digital Divide
- April 5th: CMC & HCI Theories
- April 12th: The Critical/Cultural School and Grounded Theory
- April 19th: Final Paper Presentations
- April 26th: Reading day; no class
- May 3<sup>rd</sup>: Final Exam