

## **MMC 6400/6936: Applied Digital Communication Theory**

### **Fall 2018**

College of Journalism and Communications  
University of Florida

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Office Hours (via Zoom): 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 a 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 communication efforts
- 4) Display knowledge of how communication theories inform our use of web-based communication platforms
- 5) Evaluate and incorporate the theories discussed into a communications plan demonstrating mastery of the theories at hand

- 6) Compare, contrast, and critique current theories and their potential applications
- 7) Identify areas of future research/application of new communication theories
- 8) Transfer knowledge gained to the professional communication arena in individual areas of interest
- 9) Further 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. An Individual Meeting
3. A Live group meeting

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 Applied Digital Communication Theory. This term we will create discussion posts, complete theory application assignments, a communication plan and a self-reflection paper. We'll also have the opportunity to interact with one another through several live meetings.

## Expectations

MMC 6400/6936 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, etc.

## Attendance Policy

This is an asynchronously delivered course so there is no attendance requirement aside from the live meetings. However, students are responsible for all material posted in Canvas and the Facebook page to include announcements, grades, assignment updates, changes, etc. Due to the ever-changing nature of digital communication, the instructor reserves the right to update materials at any time to maintain the relevance of course work.

## 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 is one exception as noted below:

- Lecture Discussion Posts      In Canvas
- Applied Theory Assignments    In Canvas

- Communication Plan In Canvas
- Self-Reflection paper In Canvas
- Live Meetings Platforms TBD

## Assignments

### **Lecture Discussion Posts (LDP) Post (15 pts. each, 12 posts)**

The class discussion post is a written 400-500 word submission to the discussion board that includes a student's responses to questions posed during lecture. These questions will reference materials assigned in the 'Read' section of the module as well as information from the lecture itself. The question will be different each week and will only be located in the lecture. In addition to responding to questions from lecture, students will also pose questions of their own and engage in discussion with their peers. **ALL READINGS/MATERIALS MUST BE EXPLICITLY REFERENCED TO RECEIVE FULL CREDIT.** Hyperlinks are acceptable in meeting this requirement.

In addition, students will include at the end of their post at least **TWO (2) discussion questions** to encourage engagement with their colleagues. **These questions are NOT included in the 400-500 word count.** These questions should spur additional, thoughtful discussion among the students (not just 'yes' or 'no' questions). Then, comment with 100-300 word responses on at least TWO of their peer's posts. **One of those two responses MUST be the person who posted directly above you on the discussion board.** You may choose the second question set you'd like to respond to. This ensures each person will receive a response to his or her questions.

Lecture Discussion posts (LDP) are due no later than **Saturday at 11:59 PM EST** each week. Students will comment on two other students' LDPs with responses to both of their questions no later than **Wednesday at 11:59 PM.** (This allows approximately four days between submitting a LDP (Saturday) and responding on other students' LDP questions.) You will have until the following Saturday at 11:59 PM EST to respond back to any comments made on your original post. Here's an example of how it works:

1. Saturday night: Gabby posts her Lecture Discussion of 400-500 words and adds two questions at the end.
2. Gabby then goes to two other students' (Ally, who posted directly above her on the board, and Michael) posts and answers both of their

question sets (a total of 4 questions) in 100-300 word (total) responses no later than Wednesday night.

3. Gabby continues to monitor her own discussion post and sees if other students have answered her questions. If they have, she responds by the following Saturday evening, perhaps even checking her thread as she's working on the next week's post, due that same evening.
4. Gabby congratulates herself for meeting all deadlines and encouraging discussion, and celebrates by eating a cookie.

In order to receive full credit students must respond to everyone who comments on their post. If no one comments on your post, you do not have to respond. The goal is to have a system of thoughts, questions, and responses among the class so that we have engagement and discussion similar to an in-class experience.

There will be 12 assigned LDPs and all will be worth 15 points each. Create your post in Canvas, under the Discussion section (see text on left side toolbar).

Lecture Discussion Post (LDP) Grading Rubric					
0	1-3	4-6	7-9	10-12	13-15
No Post is written or post includes plagiarized content (all content must be appropriately cited or student will receive a '0')	The post fails to meet the word count requirement. The post does not synthesize the material. The post is not well organized and fails to draw connections between the content of the readings and current applications and/or does not contain discussion question/responses for colleagues. There are many	The post fails to meet the word count requirement but does synthesize the material (or vice versa). The synthesis however, is not well presented or well thought out. Ideas are not organized nor do they offer something new to the	The post meets the word count requirement and synthesizes the readings. The level of response is average with disorganized ideas or the ideas are not well presented.	Post is accurate, relevant and well written. The student addresses all questions in from lecture with thoughtful and reflective ideas that have substance and depth. Ideas are original and offer something new to the discussion. Content is cited appropriately (Ex. "According to Servaes (2006)...") and/or hyperlinked and ALL assigned materials are referenced. Post meets requirements for word count and is without	Post is accurate, relevant and well written. The student addresses all assigned readings/videos with reflective ideas that have substance and depth. Ideas are original and offer something new to the discussion. Content is cited appropriately (Ex. "According to Servaes (2006)...") and/or hyperlinked and ALL assigned materials are referenced. Post meets requirements for word count and is without

	spelling or grammar errors or content is not appropriately cited.	discussion. There may be several grammatical or spelling errors or content is not appropriately cited. Or student fails to post/respond to 2 questions or follow-up with discourse where applicable.	content is not appropriately cited and/or student fails to post/respond to 2 questions or follow-up with discourse where applicable. Post could lack content.	word count or has spelling/grammatical errors. Post includes questions and student responds to two other questions and continues the discourse where applicable. Post could lack content.	grammatical or spelling errors. Students pose and thoughtfully respond to at least 2 questions from other students and continue the discourse.
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### **Applied Theory Assignments (4, 100 pts. total)**

Applied Theory Assignments will be your opportunity to see theory in action. Each assignment will be different, please see the assignments in Canvas for full details. Each ATA is worth 25 points and there will be four (4) total.

### **Live Meetings (2, 20 pts. total)**

Students will take part in two live meetings this term, each of which will be scheduled based on student needs. Please see the Canvas description for each to schedule and plan for these meetings. The first Live Meeting will be an Individual, one-on-one with the instructor and will be worth 10 pts. The second Live Meeting will be a group meeting. Students will present their Theory in Action Plans during this group meeting and must attend the entire meeting to receive credit. It will be worth 10 pts.

### **Theory in Action Plan and Presentation (100 pts. + 15 pts. for Outline)**

There are many different ways to construct a Plan, but for the purposes of this course, we are going to complete a Plan based on the following requirements and components. Please note that we are also focused on

theory in this course, so theory will should be the main focus of our plan construction. See the additional resources linked in the Canvas assignment for ideas regarding your approach to this assignment.

## **Canvas Submission/Deliverables**

Students will submit a **6-8 page paper** outlining a “Theory in Action” communication plan for a **fictional non-profit organization**. Students should use their own unique interests in the mass communication field to inform their project materials. Students will then condense the plan into a **6-8 slide PowerPoint (or similar) presentation** to be presented during a live class meeting toward the end of the term.

Paper Format: 6-8 pages, double-spaced, 1" margins, 12 pt. Times New Roman font, APA-Style in-text citations with corresponding Reference List.

### **Organization**

Students should describe their **fictional non-profit organization** including organizational goals, mission statements, organizational values, size, and location.

### **Theory**

Identify no less than **FIVE (5) theories** and apply them to your communication plan. You may use NO MORE than **TWO (2) theories** from any given module. You can place the names of the theories you choose to apply in bold within the text of this assignment and must mention all five during your presentation. Students may choose to address each theory at once, or embed them throughout the materials.

### **Theory in Action Plan Paper/Presentation Headings**

#### **I. Organization, Defined**

Detail the company/organization/entity you've chosen to use as the focus of this communication plan. You are welcome to create an original logo, but that is not required.

#### **II. Audiences, Defined**

Students should identify and describe all relevant stakeholders related to the company they've chosen with clear definitions and statistics where possible. Audience definitions should include (where applicable) demographics, relationship to the company, unique needs, and communication avenues, to include internal and external stakeholders.

### **III. Message Development with Samples**

With the background/research in hand from the previous sections, the student should develop messages for a variety of audiences. Within the samples outlined below, students should consider the importance of theory in external communication, internal communication, the correct platform to utilize, and the power of cross platform synergies. This section on message development is your opportunity to explain how theory informed the messages created in your samples.

### **IV. Samples**

Students must include one sample from **each set of options** below, for a total of **THREE (3)** sample messages. The paper should include some theoretical basis for the way each sample is constructed. Samples should be attached as Appendices to the 6-8 page paper and can be referred to as Appendix A, B, etc. in the body of the paper. Appendices are NOT included in the page count but will be graded and should be included in the presentation:

- 1) Press Release OR Newsletter
- 2) Social Media Campaign (sample messages across at least 3 platforms)
- 3) Program Biography OR Agency Head Biography (ex. Employee Biography) for website

### **V. Evaluation**

Identify specific methods for evaluating your communication plan at a variety of stages throughout the process.

### **VI. Crisis Management**

Identify the procedures for handling a crisis (i.e. breaking negative news story about your organization).

See the Canvas Assignment for more resources on how to create an effective Theory in Action Plan. **Each of the aforementioned topics is discussed during the course, so be sure to take notes as we go along so you can reference those topics in your materials.**

Students will present their Theory in Action Plan in PowerPoint form during a live class meeting (date and time TBD) toward the end of the term.

**\*\*An OUTLINE of the Theory in Action Plan is due via email prior to your Individual Meeting so we can discuss your progress one-on-one. The outline is worth 15 pts.**

The final submission of the Theory in Action Plan and PowerPoint Presentation are due 11/3/18 by 11:59 PM EST.

### **Self-Reflection Paper (85 pts.)**

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 does not include 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 Saturday, 11/10 by 11:59 PM EST**

## Point Values

Assignment	Point Value
Lecture Discussion Post (15 pts. each)	180
Applied Theory Assignments (4)	100
Live Meetings (2)	20
Self-Reflection Paper	85
Theory in Action Plan Outline (submit prior to individual meeting)	15
Theory in Action Plan and Presentation	100
<b>Total Points</b>	<b>500</b>

## Course schedule

Module/Week	Readings/Lecture/Media	Assignments
<b>Module 1, 8/22-8/25</b> Course Overview	Introduction to the Course and Syllabus, Theory basics and What makes good theory?	Introduction Post Lecture Discussion Post (LDP)
<b>Module 2, 8/26-9/1</b> Mass Communication Theory, An overview	Mass Communication Theory Overview: Early Trends, Pt. 1, Pt. 2	LDP
<b>Module 3, 9/2-9/8</b> Theory and Application: Individual Perspectives	Uses and Gratifications Theory, Information Processing Theory, Media Systems Dependency	LDP
<b>Module 4, 9/9-9/15</b> Theory and Application: Individual Perspectives (Cont.)	Elaboration Likelihood Model, Media Richness Theory, Social Presence Theory and Conversational Maxims, Social Presentation Theory, Impression Management, Social Information Processing Theory	LDP Applied Theory Assignment (ATA) #1

<b>Module 5, 9/16-9/22</b>	Gatekeeping, Agenda Setting, Priming, Framing, Social Responsibility	LDP
Theory and Application: Sociological Perspectives		
<b>Module 6, 9/23-9/29</b>	Diffusion of Innovations, Knowledge Gap, Spiral of Silence, Cultivation Theory	LDP, ATA #2
Mass Communication Theory and Society		
<b>Module 7, 9/30-10/6</b>	Hall, Hofstede, Development and Social Change	LDP
Intercultural Theories		
<b>Module 8, 10/7-10/13</b>	Visual Communication	LDP, ATA #3
Visual Theories		<b>Individual Meeting</b>
<b>Module 9, 10/14-10/20</b>	Advertising and Strategic Communication	LDP, Theory in Action Plan Outline Due
Advertising Theories		
<b>Module 10, 10/21- 10/27</b>	Public Relations and Communicating with Stakeholders	LDP, ATA #4
Public Relations <b>Theories</b>		
<b>Module 11, 10/28-11/3</b>	Organizational, Leadership, and Crisis Communication	LDP, <b>Theory in Action Plan DUE</b>
Organizational Communication		
<b>Module 12, 11/4-11/10</b>	Mass Communication Theory and the Digital World: Eyes on the Future and Changing Landscapes, TBD (covering topics not chosen from Case Study)	LDP, Self-Reflection Paper Due, Live Meeting: Class Presentations
The Future of Mass Communication Theory		

## 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 &	297 &
	Below	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.

**LATE WORK will not be accepted past the final day of classes.**

- Communication

If students have questions or concerns they are encouraged to communicate with the instructor via email or Zoom. Please allow 48 hours for email responses or to schedule a Zoom 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. [Describe what is expected and what will occur as a result of improper behavior]

<http://teach.ufl.edu/docs/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](mailto: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  
<http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>  
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 are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>

Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results>

▪ 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>.

**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

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:

- 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.
- Paraphrasing without proper attribution
- "Forgetting" to source material you use (same as above, intentional or not)
- Passing off others' ideas as your own
- Turning in the same assignment or paper for two courses, i.e. "dual submission."
- Stealing and/or copying other students' work, whether on a test or assignment
- Bribery
- 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.