

MMC 6936

Applied Theories in Mass Communication

Fall 2023. Tuesdays from 4:05pm to 7:05pm in Turlington 2350.

Instructor: Dr. Ben Lynn

Phone: 217 202 3603

Email: b.lynn@ufl.edu (this is my preferred method of communication)

Office hours: Immediately following class or online by appointment.

Course description

Applied Theories in Mass Communication aims to bridge theory with practice in mass communication. The purpose of the course is to equip students with the ability to use mass communication theories to solve specific real-world problems. The course focuses on mass communication theories that can be utilized as a foundation for effective problem solving in traditional and new media. Through a white paper and a research proposal, students will apply mass communication theories and develop strategies for solving problems and/or capitalizing on opportunities in mass communications.

Learning objectives

After completing this course, students will be able to:

1. Employ a systematic approach to investigating, analyzing, and solving real-world mass communication problems.
2. Clearly articulate the difference between academic theory development and applied theory.
3. Select appropriate mass communication theories for solving specific real-world problems.
4. Communicate their findings in academic journals and industry white papers.
5. Communicate their findings to a general audience through presentations, discussions, and direct interactions.

Course Requirements

Textbook:

Baran, S. J., & Davis, D. K. (2021). *Mass communication theory: Foundations, ferment, and future* (8th ed.). Oxford University Press.

Administrative Policies

Attendance

This skills-based, professional training course is founded on student engagement and hands-on work. Although emergencies, illness (self or dependent others), and unforeseen circumstances cannot be anticipated in advance, you are encouraged to commit to reliable, on-time attendance every week. Recognize that your attendance has a direct impact on your understanding of the course content and excessive unexcused absences will affect your final grade.

Each student is allowed one non-illness related missed class on non-report days without penalty to the final attendance point total. However, students must still turn in assignments on their due dates.

Absences related to activities sponsored by the College or endorsed CJC organizations that require student participation in official University business are excused but assignments are still due on their due dates.

Academic Honesty

Academic dishonesty is an important issue of concern at the University of Florida. Students who violate University rules on scholastic integrity are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and dismissal from the University. Since dishonesty harms the individual, other students, and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is implied:

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

Unauthorized aid includes the use of artificial intelligence (AI) to formulate content for your assignments.

Class Values Around Diversity and Inclusion

The University of Florida's College of Journalism and Communications embraces a commitment toward an intellectual community enriched and enhanced by diversity along several dimensions, including gender identity, race, ethnicity, nationality, sexuality, class, and religion.

My goal is to create a learning environment in which everyone feels comfortable enough to share their ideas and respects the ideas of others. Respecting other's perspectives does not mean we have to agree with them. Rather, we acknowledge our unique positions, and we can discuss similarities and differences. Our diversity, and our ability to be inclusive of other's ideas, fosters growth in us that leads to better performance in our work.

Support for Students with Disabilities

Students requesting classroom accommodations must first register with the Disability Resource Center (<https://disability.ufl.edu>) in the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting an accommodation. Each of us is likely to face challenges that may adversely affect our class performance. I am willing to help. However, I can only help if you notify me before your performance is affected.

Your well-being is important to the University of Florida. The U Matter, We Care initiative is committed to creating a culture of care on our campus by encouraging members of our community to look out for one another and to reach out for help if a member of our community is in need. If you or a friend is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu so that the U Matter, We Care Team can reach out to the student in distress. A nighttime and weekend crisis counselor is available by phone at 352-392-1575. The U Matter, We Care Team can help connect students to the many other helping resources available including, but not limited to, Victim Advocates, Housing staff, and the Counseling and Wellness Center. Please remember that asking for help is a sign of strength. In case of emergency, call 9-1-1.

Grading

Assignment	Points
Attendance	15
Examples of 5 industry white papers	10
Identify problem #1	15
Student presentations #1 - Problem #1	10
Theory review of literature #1 - 3 sources	15
Student presentations #2 - Theory #1	15
Student presentations #3 - White papers	25
White paper	100
Identify problem #2	15
Student presentations #4 - Problem #2	15
Theory review of literature #2 - 5 sources	25
Student presentations #5 - Theory #2	15
Student presentations #6 - Research proposals	25
Research proposal due	100
Total	400

Assignments

Applied theory is intended to be a practical course where students bring their own unique communication problems into the course and collaboratively work to solve them. As such, the course focuses on practicing and facilitating the problem-solving process. Because problem solving is an iterative process, one that benefits from group feedback, and because applied theory requires effective oral communication outside the academy, students will make six presentations throughout the semester and respond to audience feedback about their ideas. The two main written assignments in this course will be the white paper and the research proposal.

White paper examples (10 pts) – White papers are a form of communication that organizations use, both internally and externally, to present research findings. You will familiarize yourself with this format by collecting and submitting five white papers from industries associated with your area of interest.

Identify two problems in mass communication (15 pts each) – Applied theory is about using theory to solve specific real-world problems. To do that, you must first identify and articulate a mass communication problem. Twice during the semester, you will identify and articulate mass communication problems.

Presentation #1: Mass communication problem (10 pts) – In your first presentation, you will present your mass communication problem to the class. You will detail why this is a problem generally and, specifically, why it is a communication problem.

Theory review of literature #1 (15 pts) – With your first problem and theory identified, you will conduct a review of the literature about the theory you'll use to solve the problem. The goal is to identify at least three sources that clearly explain the theory you've selected and what the theory's underlying assumptions are.

Presentation #2: Theory #1 (15 pts) – In your second presentation, you will guide the class through the theory you'll be using to solve the problem you introduced in your first presentation.

Presentation #3: White paper (25 pts) – You will present your white paper to the class.

White paper (100 pts) – You will create a white paper detailing a mass communication problem and describing how a theory can solve it.

Presentation #4: Problem #2 (15 pts) – Having solved one problem, you must present another mass communication problem.

Theory review of literature #2 (25 pts) – Similar to your first review of the literature, you will expand your search of articles and sources to learn about a theory you believe can explain and solve the second problem you identified.

Presentation #5: Theory #2 (15 pts) – You will give a presentation about the theory you've chosen to solve your second problem.

Presentation #6: Research proposal (25 pts) – You will present your research proposal to the class.

Research proposal (100 pts) – Your research proposal will be the culmination of your work in this class. In the proposal, you will articulate a mass communication problem and guide readers through a theory you believe can be used to solve, test, and/or describe the problem. The proposal will include an introduction, review of the academic literature associated with both the problem and the theory, and, if needed, a methods section describing how you would collect data to test your hypothesis or research

question. Your proposal should meet academic standards for submission to a major communication conference.

Weekly outline

	Readings	Class Content	Homework and assignments
Week 1 Aug. 29	Ch. 1 - Understanding and evaluating mass communication theory	Introductions	
	Lynn et al. (2021). X's and O's	Difference between academic theory development and applied theory	
		Problem example #1 – Lynn et al. (2021). X's and O's, Angles and Games	
		Chapter 1 content discussion	
Week 2 Sept. 5	Ch. 14 - Commodification of culture and mediazation	What are white papers and how do we craft them?	Due Sept. 8th (Fri) - Five examples of industry white papers
		Problem example #2 – Lynn (2019). White paper: Drones on sports broadcasts	
		Chapter 14 content discussion	
Week 3 Sept. 12	Ch. 13 - Meaning making in the social world	Problem example #3 – How are aerial cameras used on live sports broadcasts?	Due Sept. 15 th (Fri) - Identify problem #1
	Zoonen et al. 2020 (available on Canvas)	Problem example #4 – van Zoonen et al. (2020). Boundary communication in organizations	
		Chapter 13 content discussion	
Week 4 Sept. 19	TBD by students	Student presentations - Problem #1	
	Ch. 12 - Effect of media on community and everyday culture	Chapter 12 content discussion	
Week 5 Sept. 26	Ch. 11 - Effect of media on knowledge, information, and perception of social issues	Problem example #4 – Gigliotti (2020). The perception of crisis.	Due Sept. 29 th (Fri) - Theory review of literature - 3 sources

	Gigliotti (2020). The perception of crisis	Chapter 11 content discussion	
Week 6 Oct. 3	TBD by students	Student presentations - Theory #1	
	Ch. 6 - Critical cultural trend in North America	Chapter 6 content discussion	
Week 7 Oct. 10	Ch. 7 - Theories of media and social learning	Problem example #5 – Townsend (2021) – Eligible to be heard	
	Townsend (2021) – Eligible to be heard in transportation planning	Chapter 7 content discussion	
Week 8 Oct. 17	TBD by students	Student presentations - White papers	Due Oct. 17 - White papers
	Ch. 8 - Theories of media and human development	Chapter 8 content discussion	
Week 9 Oct. 24	Ch. 9 - Audience theories: Uses and reception	Problem example #6 – Warner et al. (2020).	Due Oct.27 th (Fri) – Problem #2
	Warner et al. (2020). Reducing political polarization through narrative writing	Chapter 9 content discussion	
Week 10 Oct. 31	TBD by students	Student presentations - Problem #2	
	Ch. 10 - Theories of media cognition and information processing	Chapter 10 content discussion	
Week 11 Nov. 7	Ch. 2 - Establishing the terms of the debate over media	Problem example #7 - TBD	Due Nov. 10 th (Fri) - Theory review of literature - 5 sources
	TBD based on problem example	Chapter 11 content discussion	
Week 12 Nov. 14	TBD by students	Student presentations - Theory #2	
	Ch. 3 - Normative theories of mass communication	Chapter 3 content discussion	

Week 13 Nov. 21	Ch. 4 - Media effects trends in mass communication theory	Problem example #8 – TBD	
	TBD based on problem example	Chapter 4 content discussion	
Week 14 Nov. 28	Ch. 5 - Consolidation of the media-effects trend	Chapter 5 content discussion	
Week 15 Dec. 5	Review of textbook content	Summary of applied theory content	
	TBD - Something to encourage the students to use what they've learned		
Week 16 TBD	No readings	Student presentations - Research proposals	Research proposal is due on Final Exam day

References

- Gigliotti, R. A. (2020). The perception of crisis, the existence of crisis: navigating the social construction of crisis. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 48(5), 558-576. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00909882.2020.1820553>
- Lynn, B. J. (2019, October 30). White paper: Rethinking drone usage on live broadcasts. *Sports Video Group*.
<https://www.sportsvideo.org/2019/10/30/rethinking-drone-usage-on-live-broadcasts/>
- Lynn, B. J., Coche, R., & Messick, A. (2021). X's and O's, angles and games: NFL yardage estimations based on camera angle. *Sports Innovation Journal*, 2, 1-18.
<https://doi.org/10.18060/24247>
- Townsend, R. M. (2021). 'Eligible to be heard' in transportation planning. *Journal of Applied Communication*, 49(1), 3-23.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00909882.2020.1849768>
- van Zoonen, W., Sivunen, A., & Rice, R. E. (2020). Boundary communication: How smartphone use after hours is associated with work-life conflict and organizational identification. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 48(3), 372-392. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00909882.2020.1755050>
- Warner, B. R., Horstman, H. K., & Kearney, C. C. (2020). Reducing political polarization through narrative writing. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 48(4), 459-477. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00909882.2020.1789195>