

Applied Theories in Mass Communication

MMC6408 Section 3A18

Time: **Wednesdays**, Periods 3-5 (9:35am – 12:35pm)

Class location: **Weimer Hall 2050**

Fall 2025

INSTRUCTOR

Dr. Juliana Fernandes

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 1:00pm – 3:00pm and by appointment

ABOUT THE INSTRUCTOR:

Dr. Juliana Fernandes (Ph.D. University of Florida, 2010) is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Advertising in the College of Journalism and Communications at the University of Florida. Dr. Fernandes is an expert in the use and effects of negative information in persuasive communication messages and how social and traditional media are used as strategic tools during political campaigns. She has published academic articles in top advertising and mass communication journals (*Journal of Advertising*, *International Journal of Advertising*, *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, *Journal of Current Issues & Research in Advertising*, *Mass Communication & Society*, *Journal of Promotion Management*, *Journal of Public Relations Research*, *Journalism*, *Journalism Practice*, *Communication Studies*, *Environmental Communication*, *American Behavioral Scientist*, *American Journal of Media Psychology*, *Journal of Social Media in Society*, among others) and has several book chapters in edited collections. She has mentored several undergraduate and graduate students on a variety of research and professional projects. Her teaching philosophy centers on the link between conceptual foundation, research, and practice in advertising. She believes good advertising practice cannot be achieved without a strong conceptual foundation and research expertise. To learn more about Dr. Fernandes, please visit her website: www.julianafernandes.com. You can also follow her on Twitter: @researchpuzzle.

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE

Applied Theories in Mass Communication aims to bridge theory with practice in mass communication industries. The course objective is to help students understand mass communication theories, as well as media law and ethics, and use them to address contemporary issues. The course focuses on theories that can be utilized as the foundation for effective communication strategies using traditional and new media. In a final project, students will apply mass communication theories in their development of strategies to solve problems or capitalize on opportunities.

The purpose of this course is to provide students with a greater understanding of how communication theories can be employed to investigate, analyze, and propose well-founded recommendations for solving real-world problems, particularly those pertinent to mass communications contexts, practices, processes, and industries.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course, students will nurture a repertoire of tools that lay a foundation for the skills to:

- ✓ Identify, explain, and critique major paradigms, theories, and conceptual frameworks that have shaped the field of mass communications
- ✓ Demonstrate an appreciation for the ethical and social responsibility considerations for those engaged in the mass communications professions
- ✓ Interpret, critique, and evaluate the published research of others as a step to developing one's research hypotheses
- ✓ Articulate in-depth understanding of conceptual foundations presented in scholarly writing and oral communication
- ✓ Design and facilitate applied communication activities (i.e., presentations, group discussions, interpersonal exchange) in professional contexts utilizing the conceptual foundations relevant to mass communications research.

REQUIRED READINGS

Required readings and presentation materials will be made available through the Canvas course site and/or via UF ARes course reserves throughout the semester. IMPORTANT: Please make sure you are connected via de UF VPN to be able to access the readings when off-campus. More information here: <https://uflib.ufl.edu/using-the-libraries/off-campus-access/>

COURSE SCHEDULE (SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

Week	Day	Date	Topic	Readings	Assignments Due
WELCOME TO MMC6408!					
MASS COMMUNICATION THEORY FUNDAMENTALS					
1	W	Aug 27	Introduction to the course and Syllabus Introduction to communication theory	1. Baran, Davis, & Striby, 2014 (Chapter 1, pp. 3-28) eReserve 2. Rosenberry & Vicker, 2021 (Chapter 1, pp. 4-15) eReserve	
THEORY DEVELOPMENT					
2	W	Sept 3	Theory development <i>Discussion Facilitator Instructions & Group Formation</i>	1. Texier, 2019, eReserve	<i>DF Group Formation</i>
3	W	Sept 10	<i>Overview of Applied Theory Project</i>		
PERSUASION THEORIES/THEORIES OF ATTITUDE AND BEHAVIOR CHANGE					
4	W	Sept 17	Theory of Reasoned Action/Theory of Planned Behavior Inoculation Theory	1. Ajzen, 1991, eReserve 2. Croucher, 2016 (Chapter 11, pp. 239-244), eReserve 3. Compton, Jackson & Dimmock, 2016, Canvas	<i>Progress Report 1: Discussion of Applied Theory Project Topics due @11:59PM</i>

5	W	Sept 24	Elaboration Likelihood Model Social Judgment Theory (DF#1)	1. Croucher, 2016 (Chapter 11, pp. 229-232; 235-238), eReserve 2. Rosenberry & Vicker, 2021 (Chapter 3, pp. 73- 75) eReserve 3. O'Keefe, 2008, Canvas	<i>Discussion Facilitators #1</i> <i>Progress Report 2: Project #1</i> <i>Discussion due @11:59PM</i>
SELECTIVE PROCESSES					
6	W	Oct 1	Cognitive Dissonance Theory Social Cognitive Theory/Social Learning Theory Third-person Effect (DF #2)	1. Baran, Davis, & Striby, 2014 (Chapter 4, pp.105- 109), eReserve 2. Croucher, 2016 (Chapter 11, pp. 232- 235), eReserve 3. Bryant & Oliver, 2008 (Chapter 6, pp. 94-124), eReserve 4. Perloff, 1999, eReserve	<i>Discussion Facilitators #2</i> <i>Project Part 1 Due</i> <i>(Theory + Context) due</i> <i>@11:59PM</i>
7	W	Oct 8	Study Day	Study Guide	
8	W	Oct 15	Exam 1 in class		
MEDIA EFFECTS THEORIES					
9	W	Oct 22	Cultivation Theory Spiral of Silence (DF#3)	1. Baran, Davis, & Striby, 2014 (Chapter 9, pp. 287- 293), eReserve 2. Rosenberry & Vicker, 2021 (Chapter 4, pp. 106- 109) eReserve 3. Noelle-Nuemann, 2008, Canvas	<i>Discussion Facilitators #3</i> <i>Progress Report 3: Discussion of</i> <i>Project # 2 Methods due</i> <i>@11:59PM</i>
10	W	Oct 29	Agenda Setting Theory Framing Theory	1. Fortner & Fackler, 2014 (Chapter 14, pp. 251-268), eReserve 2. Baran, Davis, & Striby, 2014 (Chapter 10, pp. 316-328), eReserve	<i>Progress Report 4: Project #2</i> <i>Discussion due @11:59PM</i>

ACTIVE AUDIENCE					
11	W	Nov 5	Media Dependency Theory (DF #4) Uses and Gratifications Theory	1. Ball-Rockeach & DeFleur, 1976, eReserve 2. Bryant & Oliver, 2008 (Chapter 8, pp. 164-184), eReserve	<i>Discussion Facilitators #4</i> <i>Project Part 2 Due</i> <i>(Audience Insights) due</i> <i>@11:59PM</i>
MEDIATED COMMUNICATION THEORIES					
12	W	Nov 12	Social Network Theory (DF #5) Diffusion of Innovations	1. Glanz, Rimer, Viswanath, 2015 (Chapter 11, pp. 205-222), eReserve 3. Stacks, Salwen, & Eichhorn 2019 (Chapter 31, pp.415-433), eReserve	<i>Discussion Facilitators #5</i> <i>Project Progress 5: Project #3</i> <i>Discussion due @11:59PM</i>
13	W	Nov 19	Study Day	Study Guide	<i>Case Study due @11:59PM</i>
14	W	Nov 26	Thanksgiving Holiday – No Class		
15	W	Dec 3	Exam 2 in class <i>Project Part 3 (Applied Solution) due @11:59PM</i>		

ATTENDANCE AND MAKE-UP POLICY

Attendance Policy: Attendance will be taken in each class. If you miss a class, you are responsible for getting class materials and finding out about in-class announcements. You are responsible for contacting the instructor about what was discussed in class when you were absent. *You may have **one absence** with no penalty to your grade.* Beyond one absence you are responsible for contacting the instructor. Absences will be considered unexcused unless (a) you speak with the instructor BEFORE the absence and provide justification and/or documentation, or (b) you provide written (e.g. medical, legal, or academic) documentation AFTER the absence (you will have one week to provide the instructor with pertinent documentation).

Make-up Policy: If you miss an exam or activity without a written excuse provided in advance or documentation after an illness or other emergency, you will receive no credit (zero) for that exam/activity. Make-up exams/activities are subject to be in a different format from regular exams/activities and might be worth a different number of points. Acceptable reasons for absence from or failure to participate in class include illness, serious family emergencies, special curricular requirements (e.g., judging trips, field trips, professional conferences), military obligation, severe weather conditions, religious holidays, and participation in official university activities such as music performances, athletic competition, or debate. Absences from class for court-imposed legal obligations (e.g., jury duty or subpoena) must be excused. Other reasons also may be approved at the instructor's discretion.

CLASS DEMEANOR

Electronic Communication: This class relies on electronic communication. All course materials will be posted on Canvas and some readings will be available on eReserve (through UF's library). Students are required to check for emails

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and announcements at least twice weekly before class sessions. It is the student's responsibility to check for messages and postings on Canvas.

Late work policy: You need to turn in your assignments and projects on time. Each additional day late will result in a late penalty for that assignment.

Lateness: Please arrive on time for classes as lateness is disruptive to your classmates and the professor.

Discussing ideas: Part of the learning process is sharing different points of view and discussing interesting topics. Therefore, you are encouraged and expected to participate regularly. This means regular attendance is important. In this class, you always have the right to disagree with the instructor or your peers, as long as it is done in a civilized manner. However, respect for the views of the instructor and your classmates is mandatory. I will not accept behavior that makes others in the class feel inferior or uncomfortable.

Participation: Class participation is very important - it enhances your learning experience and makes it easier to understand concepts, study for exams, and complete assignments effectively. Make sure you read the assigned materials and be ready to engage in group discussion, share your ideas, and ask questions. I strongly encourage questions, comments, and the sharing of ideas as they relate to course material.

Office hours: If you have concerns about your performance in the class as the semester progresses, please do not hesitate to talk to me during my office hours. You can also email me to set up an appointment if the office hours do not fit into your schedule. Do not wait until the end of the semester to ask for help or to explain unusual circumstances that have affected your grade and performance. At that point, it will be too late.

EVALUATION OF GRADES

Assignment	Points	%
<i>Exams</i>	120	30
Exam 1	60	15
Exam 2	60	15
<i>Applied Theory Project</i>	135	33.75
Part 1: Theory & Context	40	10
Part 2: Audience Insights	45	11.25
Part 3: Applied Solution	50	12.5
<i>Case Study</i>	30	7.5
Case Study (take-home)	30	7.5
<i>Project Progress Reports</i>	25	6.25
Progress Report 1	5	1.25
Progress Report 2	5	1.25
Progress Report 3	5	1.25
Progress Report 4	5	1.25
Progress Report 5	5	1.25
<i>Discussion Facilitator</i>	60	15
<i>Attendance</i>	10	2.5
<i>Participation</i>	20	5
Total	400	100

Students are expected to prepare thoroughly for class by reading assigned materials **before** class, participating actively in class discussions, and completing the assigned tasks. These activities should be completed on time and in a professional manner. Except for exams, all other assignments will be submitted online via Canvas. The final grade is computed as follows:

- a) *Exams (120 points)*: The course will include two closed-book exams. Each exam is worth 60 points toward the student's final grade in the course. The exams will cover material from the textbook, class discussions and presentations, and any other additional material used in class. The format of the exams will consist of multiple-choice, true-false, and short essay questions. The exams are not cumulative. A study guide will be posted online. Make-up exams will not be given unless extenuating circumstances are present and documentation is provided. If that rare case should occur, the make-up exam will be administered at the instructor's discretion.
- b) *Applied Theory Project (135 points)*: Regular written assignments will be issued to help students crystallize their final applied theory project. The general nature of the written assignments and the weight apportioned to the final grade are as follows: 1) Part 1: Theory and Context (40 points), 2) Part 2: Audience Insights (45 points), and 3) Part 3: Applied Solutions (50 points).
- c) *Case Study (30 points)*: The case study will be completed individually and at home. You will apply the knowledge acquired from the theories studied in class.
- d) *Project Progress Reports (25 points)*: At several points during the semester, you will complete a progress report about your project. These reports will be submitted via Canvas and will be discussed in class. Students should come prepared to class to discuss their progress and ideas.
- e) *Discussion Facilitator (60 points)*: In a small group (pending number of students in class), you will choose a theory and will lead the class discussion (approximately 50 minutes), making sure the discussion applies that theory to current events and/or relating it to practical life and the field of mass communication. Facilitators will prepare a presentation as well as distribute handouts to the class.
- f) *Attendance (10 points)*: Please refer to the Attendance Policy section of this syllabus.
- g) *Participation (10 points)*: Please refer to the Class Demeanor section of this syllabus.

GRADING POLICY

Points		%		Grade	Grade points
400	376	100	94	A	4.00
375.99	360	93.995	90	A-	3.67
359.99	348	89.995	87	B+	3.33
347.99	336	86.995	84	B	3.00
335.99	320	83.995	80	B-	2.67
319.99	308	79.995	77	C+	2.33
307.99	296	76.995	74	C	2.00
295.99	282	73.995	70	C-	1.67
283.99	268	70.995	67	D+	1.33
267.99	256	66.995	64	D	1.00
255.99	244	63.995	61	D-	0.67
243.99	0	60.995	0	E	0.00

Note: There will be no rounding up of grades. For example, if you got a total of 359.50 points, you would receive a B+, not an A-. If you got a total of 319.80, you would receive a C+, not a B-, and so forth. Complaints or questions about grades should be done in writing within one week of receiving the grade. More information on grades and grading policies is here: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

STUDENTS REQUIRING ACCOMMODATIONS

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

COURSE EVALUATION

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations 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 HONESTY POLICY

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. 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." The Honor Code (<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/studentconduct-honor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

RELIGIOUS HOLY DAYS POLICY

At the University of Florida, students and faculty work together to allow students the opportunity to observe the holy days of their faith. A student should inform the faculty member of the religious observances of their faith that will conflict with class attendance, with tests or examinations, or with other class activities prior to the class or occurrence of that test or activity. The faculty member is then obligated to accommodate that particular student's religious observances. Because students represent a myriad of cultures and many faiths, the University of Florida is not able to assure that scheduled academic activities do not conflict with the holy days of all religious groups. Accordingly, individual students should make their need for an excused absence known in advance of the scheduled activities.

The Florida Board of Education and state law govern university policy regarding observance of religious holidays.

The following guidelines apply:

- Students, upon prior notification to their instructors, shall be excused from class or other scheduled academic activity to observe a religious holy day of their faith.
- Students shall be permitted a reasonable amount of time to make up the material or activities covered in their absence.

- Students shall not be penalized due to absence from class or other scheduled academic activity because of religious observances.

IN-CLASS RECORDING POLICY

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor. A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course.

A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third-party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

SOFTWARE USE

All faculty, staff, and students of the University are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are also against University policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate. We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to uphold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity.

STUDENT PRIVACY

There are federal laws protecting your privacy with regards to grades earned in courses and on individual assignments. For more information, please see: <http://registrar.ufl.edu/catalog0910/policies/regulationferpa.html>

CAMPUS RESOURCES

Health and Wellness

U Matter, We Care:

If you or a friend is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu or 352 392-1575 so that a team member can reach out to the student.

Counseling and Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc>, and 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS)

Student Health Care Center, 392-1161.

University Police Department at 392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies), or <http://www.police.ufl.edu/>.

Academic Resources

E-learning technical support, 352-392-4357 (select option 2) or e-mail to Learning-support@ufl.edu.
<https://lss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml>.

Career Resource Center, Reitz Union, 392-1601. Career assistance and counseling. <https://www.crc.ufl.edu/>.

Library Support, <http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask>. Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.

Teaching Center, Broward Hall, 392-2010 or 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.
<https://teachingcenter.ufl.edu/>.

Writing Studio, 302 Tigert Hall, 846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.
<https://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>.

Student Complaints Campus: https://www.dso.ufl.edu/documents/UF_Complaints_policy.pdf.

On-Line Students Complaints: <http://www.distance.ufl.edu/student-complaint-process>.