

## Applied Theories in Mass Communication

MMC6408 Section 6408

Time: **Thursday**, Periods 4-6 (10:40am – 1:40pm)

**Class location: Ustler Hall 0105**

Spring 2026

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### INSTRUCTOR

Dr. Juliana Fernandes

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### ABOUT THE INSTRUCTOR:

**Dr. Juliana Fernandes** (Ph.D. University of Florida, 2010) is an Associate 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 Marketing Communications*, *Journal of Public Relations Research*, *Journalism*, *Journalism Practice*, *Communication Studies*, *Environmental Communication*, *American Behavioral Scientist*, 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](http://www.julianafernandes.com). You can also connect with her on LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/fernandesjuliana/>

### 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
<b>WELCOME TO MMC6408!</b>					
<b>MASS COMMUNICATION THEORY FUNDAMENTALS</b>					
1	Th	Jan 15	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	
<b>THEORY DEVELOPMENT</b>					
2	Th	Jan 22	Theory development	1. Texier, 2019, eReserve	<i>DF Group Formation</i>

			Discussion facilitator instructions & group formation		
PERSUASION THEORIES/THEORIES OF ATTITUDE AND BEHAVIOR CHANGE					
3	Th	Jan 29	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	
4	Th	Feb 5	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	Discussion  Facilitators #1
SELECTIVE PROCESSES					
5	Th	Feb 12	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	Discussion  Facilitators #2  Project Part 1 Due  @11:59PM
6	Th	Feb 19	Study Day	Study Guide	Study!
7	Th	Feb 26	Exam 1 in class		
MEDIA EFFECTS THEORIES					
8	Th	Mar 5	Cultivation Theory  Spiral of Silence (DF#3)	1. Baran, Davis, & Striby, 2014 (Chapter 9, pp. 287- 293), eReserve  2. Rosenberry & Vicker,	Discussion  Facilitators #3

				2021 (Chapter 4, pp. 106-109) eReserve 3. Noelle-Nuemann, 2008, Canvas	
9	Th	Mar 12	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	
10	Th	Mar 19	SPRING BREAK – NO CLASSES		
ACTIVE AUDIENCE					
11	Th	Mar 26	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	Discussion Facilitators #4 Project Part 2 Due @11:59PM
MEDIATED COMMUNICATION THEORIES					
12	Th	Apr 2	Social Network Theory (DF #5) Diffusion of Innovations	1. Glanz, Rimer, Viswanath, 2015 (Chapter 11, pp. 205-222), eReserve 2. Stacks, Salwen, & Eichhorn 2019 (Chapter 31, pp.415-433), eReserve	Discussion Facilitators #5
13	Th	Apr 9	Study Day	Study Guide	Case Study due @11:59PM
14	Th	Apr 16	Exam 2 in class Project Part 3 due @11:59PM		

## 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 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>	160	40
Part 1: Topic & Media Context	45	11.25
Part 2: Theory Analysis	55	13.75
Part 3: Applied Solution	60	15
<i>Case Study</i>	30	7.5
Case Study (take-home)	30	7.5
<i>Discussion Facilitator</i>	60	15
<i>Attendance</i>	10	2.5
<i>Participation</i>	20	5
<b>Total</b>	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:

- 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.
- Applied Theory Project (160 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: Topic and Media Context (45 points), 2) Part 2: Theory Analysis (55 points), and 3) Part 3: Applied Solution (60 points).
- 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.
- 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.
- Attendance (10 points)*: Please refer to the Attendance Policy section of this syllabus.
- 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/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

## ACADEMIC POLICIES AND RESOURCES

Please access <https://syllabus.ufl.edu/syllabus-policy/uf-syllabus-policy-links/> for the following academic policies and resources:

- Students Requiring Accommodations
- Course Evaluation
- University Honesty Policy
- In-class recording Policy
- Campus Resources

## 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.

Please see full policy here: <https://policy.ufl.edu/regulation/4-052/>