Theory of Mass Communication
MMC 6400

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Office hours: Tuesdays 8:30-10:30 a.m., Wednesdays 1-2, and by appointment

COURSE OBJECTIVES
The course will introduce students to the study of mass media theories. The course is designed to help students: 1. gain an understanding of the theoretical perspectives that direct mass media research; 2. develop the ability to apply these perspectives in critically analyzing mass communication research; 3. expand their appreciation for the history and traditions of mass communication research; 4. gain a foundation that will aid students in the development of a thesis or dissertation and the preparation for comprehensive examinations.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:
Readings:
No texts are required. However, there will be several readings each week. Details of how to access the readings will be distributed in class.

While no text is required, students may find the following books useful:
Severin and Tankard, Communication Theories
Shoemaker and Reese, Mediating the Message
DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach, Theories of Mass Communication
Tan, Mass Communication Theories and Research
McQuail, Mass Communication Theory
Bryant and Zillmann, Media Effects
Lowery and DeFleur, Milestones in Mass Communication Research
Dennis and Wartella, American Communication Research
McCombs and Becker, Using Mass Communication Theory

A number of academic journals are also excellent sources of theory-based research. Among the more useful ones are:
Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly
Journal of Communication
Communication Research
Public Opinion Quarterly
Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media
Newspaper Research Journal
Mass Communication & Society
Journal of Advertising Research
Public Relations Review
Critical Studies in Mass Communication
Journal of Communication Inquiry
Grading:
Grades will be determined in the following way:
Final papers ................................................................. 50%
Presentations .............................................................. 20%
Reactions to readings .................................................... 20%
Participation ............................................................... 10%

Final papers:
Students will produce a research paper that will be of sufficient quality for submission to the annual convention of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication or the International Communication Association. The paper will be written in sections. The due dates for individual sections are listed on the tentative schedule. The paper can deal with any theory we will discuss this term and involve any appropriate methodology.

Presentations:
Each class period from week 3 through week 15, 2 or 3 students will discuss current research on the topic of the week. Students will be responsible for finding articles pertinent to the assigned topics and clear the articles with the instructor. The number of presentations that each student will be responsible for will depend upon the size of the class. A sign-up sheet will be brought to class next Wednesday. Topics will be selected on a first-come, first-served basis. Students will also write a two to three page paper discussing the article. This paper will be turned in along with a Xeroxed copy of the article under discussion.

Reactions to readings:
Students will be required to turn in brief reactions and questions dealing with the assigned topic of the week. The papers should be no longer than 1 or 2 pages. In these papers, students should critically evaluate the readings and include points made in the readings that were not clear. Papers are due Tuesday at noon and should be sent via email to me.

Participation:
Students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the readings for that day. Students should not feel shy or intimidated. There are no dumb questions or comments. Ask lots of questions if you don’t understand something. Comment if you think something is stupid. All students should offer their thoughts in class.

Expectations:
Students are expected to attend each class session and will be graded on class participation. Assignments must be turned in on time on the date they are due. One full
letter grade will be deducted for each day an assignment is late. Your written work should be of professional quality; spelling, grammar, and punctuation count. Please make sure that all work is your own and that the sources of information are accurately quoted and represented.

**Plagiarism; Cheating or other Academic Misconduct:** The Academic Integrity Statement for the College of Journalism and Communications can be found here: http://www.jou.ufl.edu/grad/forms/Plagiarism-Guideline.pdf
In addition, all students are bound by the university’s Honor Code Policy at http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/honorcode.php. Anyone who violates these policies in this course will receive a failing grade in this course and face further sanctions from the college and university.

**Special needs:** Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting an accommodation. This course conforms to all requirements of the ADA and handles with sensitivity all matters related to gender, race, sexual orientation, age, religion or disability. Please alert the instructor if any issues arise.

**Syllabus Changes:** The instructor reserves the right to alter the syllabus or course schedule as the need arises. This includes the possibility of guest speakers and special presentations, some of which may be scheduled outside of class time. Note: Some of the content for this syllabus was taken from syllabi from previous classes.

**Final tips on getting good grades:**
Come to class on time. Contact me before class if you cannot attend. Come to class prepared to discuss topics by completing all of the assigned readings ahead of time. TURN OFF your cell phones. Laugh at my jokes.
Tentative schedule:

Week 1:
Jan. 7: Intro, Definitions  
Readings: Handouts.

Week 2:
Jan. 14: History of research  
Readings: Handouts  
Assignment I due

Week 3:
Jan. 21: Cultivation I: Violence  
Student presentations I  
Readings: Hirsch; Gerbner; Hirsch; Kahlor.

Week 4:
Jan. 28: Cultivation II: Gender  
Student presentations II  
Readings: Chen; Ogles  
Introduction sections due

Week 5:
Feb. 4: Agenda-Setting I  
Student presentations III  
Readings: McCombs & Shaw; McCombs; Li.

Week 6:
Feb. 11: Agenda-setting, priming and framing II  
Student presentations IV  
Readings: Entman; McCombs; D’Angelo; Zhang; Lim; Killebrew.  
Literature review sections due

Week 7:
Feb. 18: Diffusion of Innovations  
Student presentations V

Week 8:
Feb. 25: Introduction to Uses & Gratifications  
Student presentation VI
Readings: Katz; Greer; Creasman; Dimitrova; Edwards

**Methodology sections due**

**Week 9:**
March 4: Spring Break, No class.

**Week 10:**
March 11: Knowledge Gap and Digital Divide
Student presentation VII
Readings: Tichenor; Vishwanath; McLeod; Weir.

**Week 11:**
March 18: International News Flow
Student presentation VIII

**Week 12:**
March 25: Third-person effect, Spiral of Silence
Student presentation IX
Readings: Davison; Boynton; Salwen.

**Week 13:**
April 1: Journalism traditions and news routines
Influences on media content
Student presentation X
Readings: White; Tuchman; Breed; Brown, Feldstein; Kim.

**Week 14:**
April 8: Critical/Cultural research
Student presentation XI
Readings: Carey; Brennen.
Additional readings

**Week 15:**
April 15: Final paper presentations

**Week 16:**
April 22: Final paper presentations

**Final papers due at the beginning of class.**
J8056, Assignment I

Scan any mass communication academic journal (see the partial list on the syllabus). Find a article that address a “theory” not mentioned on our syllabus. Provide a full citation of the article. Write a theoretical definition of the theory. Summarize the results of the article in one paragraph. Is this a “theory” or not? Why?