MMC 6400: Mass Communication Theory and the Digital World
Spring 2015
College of Journalism and Communications
University of Florida

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Office Hours (via Skype): By Appointment, hours vary each week

Over the course of this semester 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.

Course Objectives:

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 the digital world
4) Display knowledge of the most current digital platforms and technologies and how communication theories inform our use of those platforms
5) Evaluate and incorporate the theories discussed, as well as new theories, into an individual project demonstrating mastery of the theory at hand
6) Compare, contrast, and critique current theories and their potential applications in the digital world
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

There are no required textbooks for this course. All readings will be provided in Canvas as PDFs or as a link to online materials.

Assignments

All assignment information is also posted in the ‘Assignments’ tab or the ‘Discussions’ tab in Canvas.

Lecture Discussion Posts (LDP) (70 pts.)
Students will create ONE (1) Lecture Discussion Post (LDP) each week in response to prompts and/or questions posed by the instructor in each individual module’s discussion forum (choose ‘Discussions’ from the vertical toolbar on the left in Canvas, then click on the desired module and begin.) The questions posed each week will be different so be sure to **answer the question(s) within each individual discussion forum.** Posts must be at least **350-500** words in length and should completely answer each and every question posed by the instructor. Students who fail to answer all questions will lose points. Where applicable, LDPs should include thoughtful responses and discourse that connect what is discussed throughout the lecture to the student’s work or experience with social media and/or mass communication. There will be fourteen (14) LDPs this semester and each one is worth **FIVE (5) points.**

### Lecture Discussion Posts (LDPs) Grading Rubric

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<th>1</th>
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<th>5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Post is written or posts includes plagiarized content (all outside content must be in quotations or student will receive a &quot;0&quot;)</td>
<td>The post fails to meet the word count requirement. The post does not address all questions posed or offer a thoughtful, well-developed response for the questions that are answered. Post is not well organized. There are many spelling or grammar errors or outside content is not appropriately cited.</td>
<td>The post fails to meet the word count requirement but does respond to all questions posted (or vice versa). The responses however, are not well presented or well thought out. Ideas are not organized or do they offer something new to the discussion. There may be grammatical or spelling errors as well, or outside content is not appropriately cited.</td>
<td>The post meets the word count requirement and answers all questions posed. The level of response is poor with disorganized ideas or the ideas are not well presented. There may be grammatical or spelling errors as well, or outside content is not appropriately cited.</td>
<td>Post is accurate, relevant and well written. The student addresses all questions in the prompt with thoughtful and reflective ideas that have substance and depth. If used, outside content is cited appropriately (Ex. “According to Servaes(2006)...”). Post either does not meet requirement for word count or has spelling/grammatical errors.</td>
<td>Post is accurate, relevant and well written. The student addresses all questions in the prompt with thoughtful, reflective ideas that have substance and depth. Ideas are original and offer something new to the discussion. If used, outside content is cited appropriately (Ex. “According to Servaes(2006)...”). Post meets requirements for word count and is without grammatical or spelling errors.</td>
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</table>

Again, each LDP will contain different questions posed by the instructor, thus students should pay attention to the prompt within each individual discussion forum for guidance. Posts must be between 350 and 500 words long.

Each post is worth five (5) points. Please see the rubric above for information regarding point distribution. All Discussion Postings are due by **Sunday at 11:00 PM EST.** Create your post in Canvas, under the Discussion section (see left side toolbar).
In addition to the LDP, students will create ONE (1) Reading Reaction Post (RRP) of 350-500 words each week based on the assigned readings/media links found in the Course Modules section of the Canvas site.

Students will not be responding to specific questions posed by the instructor, but rather will offer a synthesis (not just a summary) of the ideas presented in the readings/videos. Student posts should compare and contrast the readings and/or any competing ideas presented within the readings. Further to this analysis of the readings/videos, students should draw connections between the content of the readings and applications of that information to the digital world, either in their professional work or personal experiences. This is your opportunity to discuss your own thoughts and how these readings resonate with you.

In addition to the synthesis and analysis of the readings/videos, students will include at least TWO (2) discussion questions (RRQs) to encourage engagement with their colleagues. These questions are NOT included in your 350-500 word count. These questions should spur additional, thoughtful discussion among your peers (not just ‘yes’ or ‘no’ questions). Then, students will respond to at least TWO (2) other students’ posted discussion questions with 100-300 word responses under the Discussions tab in Canvas. RRP responses are due no later than Sunday at 11:00 PM EST each week. Students will then respond to at least TWO other students’ RRQs no later than Wednesday at 11:00 PM. (This gives you approximately three days between making your RRP (Sunday) and responding on other students’ RRP posts to answer their RRQs.) You will have until the following Sunday at 11:00 PM EST to respond to any comments made on your original post. Here’s an example of how it should work:

1. Sunday night: Matt posts his RRP of 350-500 words and adds 2 RRQs
2. Matt then goes to two other students’ (Susie and Tim) RRP posts and answers each of their RRQs in 100-300 words no later than Wednesday night.
3. Matt continues to monitor his own RRP and sees if other students have answered his questions. If they have, he responds by the following Sunday evening, perhaps even checking his thread as he’s working on the next week’s post, due that same evening.
4. Matt congratulates himself for meeting all deadlines and encouraging discussion, and celebrates by eating a cookie.

In order to receive full credit students must respond to all student discussion posts on their own threads. If no one posts to your RRQs, 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 14 assigned RRPs (with RRQs) (one in each module) and they will be worth five points each. Create your post in Canvas, under the Discussion section (see left side toolbar).

For more information on the main components of a synthesis, see the link below. You are not required to write a synthesis essay as the post suggests, but this offers a resource for how to synthesize materials and draw connections between the readings in addition to adding your own experiences.

https://www.msu.edu/~jdowell/135/Synthesis.html

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading Reaction Posts (RRPs) Grading Rubric</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
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**Mini-Module Assignments (MMA) (80 pts.)**

These assignments are spread throughout the semester and will offer opportunities for students to apply what they’ve learned in a digital context. Each assignment is different and full details are offered in the Assignments tab in Canvas. There will be four (4) mini-modules assignments worth 20 points each, for a total of 80 points.
Again, the goal is the make connections between theory and use of theory in actual mass or mediated communication contexts. All Mini-Module assignments are due Sunday at 11:00 PM EST of the week assigned (with the exception of the Twitter Party Mini-Module Assignment which is TBD but takes place during Module 15).

**Self-Reflection Paper (80 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 social media application from their own perspectives.

This four- to five- (4-5) 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?
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 includes references.

**Paper specifications:** 4-5 pages, APA-style, double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12 pt. font, 1” margins

See the [OWL at Purdue](https://owl.purdue.edu) for assistance with APA-style writing.

**Due 4/22 by 11:00 PM EST**

**Individual Project Assignment (200 pts.)**

Students will choose one theoretical perspective or paradigm and then utilize that perspective to analyze and evaluate the mass communication strategies of **two (2) organizations/companies/entities.** Students will rank order theory options, but will be assigned a theory by the Instructor.
**The goal of this project is to APPLY the theoretical perspective in terms of how the two companies you choose might have used your theory in the past, or how the companies might use it in the future; all within the context of the online communication.**

- Theory Choice: The list below contains the theories for use in this project:

  - Two-step Flow Theory
  - Herman and Chomsky’s Propaganda Model
  - Diffusion of Innovations
  - Media Systems Dependency
  - Social Responsibility Theory
  - Interactivity Theory
  - Framing Theory
  - Expectancy-Value Theory
  - Information Processing Theory
  - Elaboration Likelihood Model
  - Agenda-Setting Theory
  - Social Network Theory/Network Theory
  - Uses and Gratifications Theory
  - Other Theory of your choosing (requires instructor approval)

Theory choices should be ranked in order of preference and emailed to the instructor no later than **Sunday, 1/18/15 at 11:00 PM EST**. Preference will be given by the date I receive the email followed by the ranking of topics. Individuals that fail to meet the deadline will be assigned at will. Topic assignments will be posted in Canvas.

**These are the components:**

1) Paper: ONE (1) seven- to ten-page (7-10) paper, APA style, double- spaced, 1” margins, 12 pt. Times New Roman Font. Project rubric provided in the Assignments tab in Canvas.

2) Presentation with Slides: 10-15 slides. You may select to audio record the slide presentation OR simply provide a transcript that students/the instructor may follow through each slide (by placing a word for word transcription of the presentation in the “notes” section of PowerPoint). If using the transcript option, avoid cutting and pasting content from the paper directly into PowerPoint.

There is **NO VIDEO COMPONENT** necessary, though students are welcome to provide a video version of their presentation as long as the slides are visible. Keep in mind for your presentation content especially (and to some extent the paper content) that we have already covered these theories via lecture or readings (some in great depth, others are just mentioned), so you’ll want to bring something new to the table. While your paper may offer a detailed description of the theory, you’ll
want to focus on providing new information to your audience (i.e. your colleagues).
Use 1-2 slides to briefly summarize/review the theory itself and then move on. Teach us something new with regard to the digital world—a new application of the theory, a new study that has come out, a contemporary perspective, etc. and use the companies you chose as your main exemplars (10-15 slides).

3) ONE (1) Reading: One (1) academic article that adds something to the discussion aside from what is offered in your presentation slides OR one (1) current, web-linked article situating the topic (albeit potentially implicitly) within contemporary communication contexts as related to your theory. Academic articles can be accessed by searching the UF Library online or conducting a Google Scholar search. Non-academic articles could be found on sites like Mashable or via an online search of newspapers like the New York Times. If choosing a non-academic source, ensure that the article is relevant and contains credible sources. Wikis are not permitted.

4) Group Discussion questions: Each individual will submit TWO (2) discussion questions for the weekly discussion posts, one (1) from your assigned reading selection (RRP) and one (1) based on the information in your presentation (LDP).

Paper Outline (Include these as headers in your paper)

I. Theory summary—Describe and summarize the theory to include major tenets, historical foundations, research applications, etc. Be sure to situate the theory among the paradigms we discussed at the beginning of the course (trends, etc.). (2 pgs.)

II. Evaluate the theory—Discuss the theory’s goodness based on the criteria presented in Module 1, talk about past and present applications. (1 pg.)

III. Identify and describe at least two (2) or more companies/entities/organizations whose use (past and/or present) of digital mass media as defined in the lecture in module 1. Your companies should be active in the digital world either via social media, creation or use of digital technologies, etc. (1 pg.)

IV. Apply the theory—Show how the theory you chose applies to mass communication today, particularly in the case of the companies you chose in section III. You can include traditional media, communication technologies, social media, computer-mediated communication or any other online mass communication context we’ve discussed over the course of the semester in which to situate your discussion. Remember that you can apply your theory to your companies’ past digital communications or predict how these theories might inform their future use of communication in the digital world. (2-3 pgs.)

V. Compare and Contrast the two (2) companies/entities’ use of media based on the chosen theory/paradigm. Include examples. Any texts or
evidence of actions you can analyze may be included (including texts that are written about your companies). (1-2 pgs.)

VI. Extend the theory—What new characteristics can you add to the theory? How can the theory be expanded to meet the changing digital landscape? Be sure to summarize the most recent published findings regarding your theory (this will require some research using the UF Libraries and/or Google Scholar), if any, so that you are bringing something new to the theoretical discourse. Also depict how the theory can be adapted to current trends in the digital world based on what you’ve learned during this course. Use examples to support the adaptation of this theory and also state how your extension of the theory might apply to the company/entity/organizations you chose. Outline potential future applications of your theory. (1-2 pgs.)

All components (paper, presentation, evaluations, reading assignments and discussion questions) must be uploaded into Canvas no later 11:00 PM EST on Wednesday, 4/1/15 into the Assignments tab. Uploading all materials from each individual at the same time will eliminate issues with plagiarism, questions of copying ideas, etc. To upload your project components, go to Canvas, ‘Assignments’ and choose ‘Individual Project.’

See the OWL at Purdue for assistance with APA-style writing.

Deadlines for the Individual Project

**Sunday, 1/18/15 at 11:00 PM EST:** THEORY SELECTION EMAIL: Email ranked theory selections to the instructor. Theory preference given in order of email receipt, followed by rank order of theories.

**1/25/15 at 11:00 PM EST:** SCHEDULE OF WORK: Email the instructor a timeline/plan for completion (informal, can simply be a list of dates for each portion leading up to the final deadline).

**4/1/15 11:00 PM EST:** ALL INDIVIDUAL PROJECTS DUE IN CANVAS. This includes presentation materials, paper, reading assignments, and discussion questions. **Upload all materials into the Assignments tab.**

At any time: If you are having trouble with any component of this assignment, please feel free to contact the instructor for guidance or clarification.

Assignments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Point Value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lecture Discussion Post (LDP)</td>
<td>70</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 pts. x14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading Reaction Post (RRP)</td>
<td>70</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 pts. x14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Module/Week</td>
<td>Readings/Lecture/Media</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Module 1, 1/6-1/11</strong>&lt;br&gt;Course Overview&lt;br&gt;Course Overview</td>
<td>Introduction to the Course and Syllabus, Defining the Digital World</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Module 3, 1/20-1/25&lt;br&gt;1/19-MLK Holiday</strong>&lt;br&gt;Mass Communication Theory, An overview, Pt. 1&lt;br&gt;Mass Communication Theory Overview: Early Trends</td>
<td>Mass Communication Theory Overview: Early Trends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Module 4, 1/26-2/1</strong>&lt;br&gt;Mass Communication Theory, An Overview, Pt. 2</td>
<td>Mass Communication Theory Overview: Early Trends, Cont.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Module 6, 2/9-2/15</strong>&lt;br&gt;Theory and Application: Individual Perspectives (Cont.)</td>
<td>Elaboration Likelihood Model, Media Richness Theory, Social Presence Theory and Conversational Maxims</td>
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| **Module 8, 2/23-3/1**<br>Theory and Application: Sociological Perspectives | Gatekeeping, Agenda Setting, Priming, Framing, Social Responsibility | LDP, RRP
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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</thead>
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#3 War and the Spiral of Silence Due by 3/15 at 11:00 PM EST |
| Module 10, 3/16-3/22 | Intercultural Theories | Hall, Hofstede, Development and Social Change | LDP, RRP |
| Module 11, 3/23-3/29 | Advertising Theories | Online Advertising and Communication Strategies | LDP, RRP |
| Module 12, 3/30-4/5 | Public Relations Theories | Public Relations and Communicating with Stakeholders | LDP, RRP  
Individual Presentations Due in Canvas by WEDNESDAY, 4/1 at 11:55 PM EST |
| Module 13, 4/6-4/12 |  | INDIVIDUAL PRESENTATIONS | LDP, RRP |
| Module 14, 4/13-4/19 |  | INDIVIDUAL PRESENTATIONS | LDP, RRP |
#4 Twitter Party #UFMassComm [TBD], Self-Reflection Paper DUE 4/22 at 11:00 PM EST |

**Grading Scale**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Points Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100</td>
<td>463-500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92</td>
<td>448-462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89</td>
<td>433-447</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-86</td>
<td>413-432</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82</td>
<td>398-412</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
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<td>73-76</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-72</td>
<td>348-362</td>
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<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69</td>
<td>333-347</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>63-66</td>
<td>313-332</td>
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<td>D-</td>
<td>60-62</td>
<td>298-312</td>
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<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Below 60</td>
<td>0-297</td>
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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. Mini-module, Individual Project, and Self-Reflection paper assignments turned in late will be assessed a full letter grade deduction for each business day (M-F, excluding holidays) they are late. Mini-module, Individual Project, and Self-Reflection paper assignments turned in less than a full business day late will receive a 5% point deduction prior to grading. Lecture Discussion and Reading Response posts (and comments) turned a full business day late or less will receive a 1-point (out of five possible points) deduction, followed by additional points for each day late until the assignment reaches a ‘0.’

  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.

- **Communication**
  If students have questions or concerns they are encouraged to communicate with the instructor via email or Skype. Please allow 48 hours for email responses or to schedule a Skype 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](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
  - (352) 392-HELP - select option 2
  - [https://lss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml](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](http://www.distance.ufl.edu/getting-help) for:
  - Counseling and Wellness resources
    - [http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx](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](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](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](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](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.