

MMC 6400 Digital Communication Theory
Online Graduate Course (3 credit hours)
College of Journalism & Communications, University of Florida

Instructor:

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Required Reading:

It is required that you purchase the following two texts (all are available in hard copy and electronically):

Baran, S., and Davis, D. (2012). *Mass Communication Theory: Foundations, ferment, and future*. 6th Edition. UK: Thomson

Laughey, D. (2010). *Media Studies: Theories and approaches*. UK: Kamera Books.

Recommended Reading:

Gorham, J. (Ed.) (2012). *Annual Editions: Mass media*. 18th Edition. New York: McGraw Hill.

Links to the articles in this Gorham text are provided on the course site. However, the actual text also offers useful information about themes within the articles that may prove useful and categorizes them into specific areas.

Readings are assigned in each module of learning. These assigned readings will provide pertinent information regarding each area of theory we are reviewing; and will give you excellent support when developing your theory-based projects. In addition, you are expected to refer to these readings when posting to the weekly Discussion Board.

The Baran & Davis textbook is also linked to a Website:

www.cengagebrain.com that you will use throughout the semester. You can take self-quizzes to determine your understanding and retention of the material, use their site as a resource for additional sources (they have extensive listings & pertinent Websites for each chapter), and review key concepts that you wish to incorporate into your projects.

You are also encouraged to read excerpts from the e-books/sites listed below. These Sage textbooks provide additional information about specific communication theories and are available online through the UF library.

Eadie, W. F. (2009). *21st century communication: A reference handbook*. Los Angeles: Sage.

Littlejohn, S.W. & Foss, K.A. (2009) *Encyclopedia of communication theory*. Los Angeles: Sage.

Course Description:

The course examines a wide range of the roles of the media in society and their effects on individuals, groups and culture. Students will be introduced to the major theories used in communications work, and specific areas of knowledge gained from research into media effects.

In this course students will develop knowledge about theories that explain the world of mass, digital and user-centric communication structures, critically evaluate theories as applied to specific communication problems, and develop a detailed understanding of a particular theoretical approach. The course will also review the ongoing changes in media and audiences, examining potential new directions for future research and theoretical development.

Course Goals

This course is to explore the theoretical foundations of communication and understand how media theories interpret the historical and current role(s) of mass, digital and user-centric media and how people are now engaged with multi-media structures.

Course Objectives

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Identify/recall the key terms and concepts of major media theories.
2. Recognize theoretical concepts and define their practical applications.
3. Explain and summarize the ideas specific to each area of media theory, including mass media, digital and user-centric media systems.
4. Interpret how media theorists “see” the world, using cultural communicative signs and symbols.

5. Recognize how and why media may impact our lives, reviewing past and current local, regional, national and international events.
6. Illustrate a detailed understanding of at least one specific theoretical approach to mass, digital or user-centric communications.
7. Demonstrate an understanding of how theoretical concepts about multi-media structures have practical application.
8. Analyze and evaluate the content and intent of media messages, using specific theoretical models to support a position.
9. Compare and contrast media theories, applying the concepts to issues inherent in digital and mass communication structures.
10. Discuss how the semiotics of media impact audiences, and which theories are applicable to this orientation.
11. Discuss how media structures have impacted world events, and propose specific theories that support a report of media's impact.
12. Design a detailed multi-media project justifying the validity of a specific media theory or body of theories, using cultural artifacts to support a position.
13. Compare and contrast two or more specific schools of communication theory, identifying the primary theoretical orientations and how they differ and/or are similar.
14. Prove or disprove one specific communication theory, supporting an evaluation with specific cultural examples.
15. Examine potential new directions for future research and theoretical development.

Course Format and Requirements:

The course will be comprised of lectures throughout the semester, interactions on the Discussion Board, several LIVE question and answer sessions through UF's Adobe Connect classroom (**dates are TBA**), self-monitoring non-graded quizzes, various multi-media (including books, videos, etc.), two essay exams and two team projects (one project mid-way through the course and the Final Project).

Always make a backup copy of your work--lost originals or 'crashes' are not acceptable excuses for missed deadlines.

Discussion Boards, In-class discussion and class activities

Class discussion and group interaction are vital to learning in this course. You will be expected to participate in discussions and provide substantive interaction throughout the course. Periodically, team activities may be assigned on the Discussion Board to enhance learning. Students will be graded on participation and completion of Discussion Board requirements.

You are expected to interact on the discussion board at least three times every week (one original post and 2 responses). Please review the rubric posted on the Discussion Board under “Grading Criteria for Discussion Boards.” Consider this an opportunity to interact with classmates and respond to their posts. I expect to see quality discussion about the course content that reflect the skills you are gaining. Remember to respect the alternative viewpoints of your classmates. Additional Guidelines for posting are provided on the course website through the SAKAI system.

Discussion Board Points: (75 maximum points)

Points awarded **weekly** for **THREE** discussion board posts (one original and two responses) are as follows:

- 5 points: articulate and thoughtful posts about subject under study; dialogued with fellow students; read at least 50% of group posts
- 4 points: completed posts on time; dialogued with fellow students
- 3 points: completed posts on time; did not engage with fellow students
- 2 points: did not engage with fellow students; poor reflection of subject.
- 1 point: inadequate preparation indicated by posts
- 0 points: late or no posts

You must read 50% of your group’s posts to gain all 5 points! One point will be deducted if you do not read the required number of posts.

Review the “grading criteria” section on the Discussion Board for more details about grading parameters.

Two Exams & Two Projects will build to completion of the course

You will complete a total of two (2) essay exams and two (2) team projects assessing your knowledge about specific media theories and their practical application to media interactions. Each project builds on your understanding of media’s role in the social environment and how theory is applicable.

- **Two Essay Exams**
 - Essay exams will cover the material in the main readings and lectures, so be sure to note when there is substantial overlap between the content in lectures and readings. These concepts will very likely be part of the exam. You will be expected to explain theories and apply them to specific scenarios.
 - **The essay exams will be open for 48 hours, but you will have only 3 hours to complete the exam (within that 48 hour time frame). The exam dates are noted on the due-dates-document.**

- **Two Team Projects:**
 - Project One: Deconstruction of cultural artifact = 45 points
 - Project Two (final project): Content analysis = 55 points

Team Project Two (final project) (55 points)

Students will develop a final team project that reflects knowledge gained through this course, using a variety of media formats.

This group project is a culmination of your knowledge gained in this class and other studies to date. You may stay on the same team you worked with on Project 1. See the Assignments Section for more information on the projects. You are encouraged to start early if you are interested in a particular issue or body of theory.

Project Due Dates:

Students are expected to meet deadlines. Meet the assigned deadlines or the system's Assignment Tool will not accept your work. Early submission is accepted. Please check each assignment block for the date parameters.

You must adhere to all deadlines and guidelines in the course. Late work will not be accepted. If you know you must miss a deadline, your work must be turned in PRIOR to the date you expect to miss.

Correct spelling and grammar are paramount in communications. You will lose points for every misspelled word and grammar/punctuation error.

Always make a backup copy of your work--lost originals are not an acceptable excuse for missed deadlines.

Grading /Final Evaluation

Each student should keep track of his/her own grades. There are a total of 250 points possible in this course. Please refer to the rubrics for each component to understand what's required. Grades will be based on the following:

- **Fifteen class discussion board questions worth 5 points each for a total of 75 points. Note:**
 - There are 10 Modules, and some of them are two weeks long. The two-week long modules will have two discussion board posts instead of just one. Please review each Module carefully for clarity about what's required.
- **Two Essay Exams:**
 - **Exam One: 35 points**
 - **Exam Two: 40 points**
- **Two group projects:**
 - **Project One: Deconstruction of cultural artifact=total worth of 45 points**
 - **Project Two (Final Project): Content analysis=total worth of 55 points**

Grading Scale

| Grade Earned | Minimum Points | Maximum Points |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| A+ | 245 | 250 |
| A | 233 | 244 |
| A- | 225 | 232 |
| B+ | 218 | 224 |
| B | 208 | 217 |

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| B- | 200 | 207 |
| C+ | 193 | 199 |
| C | 183 | 192 |
| C- | 175 | 182 |
| D | 150 | 174 |
| F | 0 | 149 |

Use the link below to gain more information on current UF grading policies.

<http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/staff/grades.html>

Students with Disabilities

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 accommodation.

The Honor Code

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.

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, 392-1261