

MMC 6402 Mass Communication Perspectives

Fall 2015. Section 4842. Periods 3-4 Wednesdays and Fridays. Weimer 3020. 4 credits.

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About me: See my [website](#) or follow me (@bikeprof) on [Twitter](#)

If office hours are inconvenient, make an appointment. Or if my door is open, drop in.

ABOUT THIS COURSE

Welcome to Doctoral Studies

Mass Communication Perspectives is required for doctoral students in the College of Journalism and Communications. Most students take it their first semester. To understand why this course is required, consider the purpose of doctoral studies in our college:

The purpose of doctoral studies is to enable you to teach yourself how to think like a social scientist.

That statement has two important elements:

1. You're going to *teach yourself* how to think. Although I can help guide you, I cannot teach you how to think. Only you can. And that self-teaching will continue the rest of your life.
2. You're learning to be a *social scientist*. A doctorate is not merely a terminal degree. It is a license to conduct research. And research must be scientific in order to have validity.

Course Description

If the purpose of doctoral studies is to enable you to teach yourself how to think like a social scientist, this course exists to acquaint you with how social science works. This course examines the principles and assumptions underlying the scientific process. It focuses on the philosophy of science and the role theory plays in scientific inquiry in mass communication.

This course asks questions such as: What is science? How is science different from other ways of knowing? What makes social science different from physical science? Is reality independent of our observations? Does good social science require theory? What makes for good theory? Addressing these philosophical questions is a core element of acquiring a Ph.D. – which, after all, is a doctorate in *philosophy*.

Thinking philosophically is tough, so don't be discouraged if the early readings seem daunting. If your master's involved a thesis, you may have broached some of these questions before. If you have a professional master's or an MBA, you may want to do extra reading to catch up.

Course Objectives

The course is intended to enable you to:

1. Think conceptually as a precursor to conducting scientific research.
2. Write cogent papers exploring the philosophy of science and the development of mass communication theory that can help you prepare for qualifying exams.
3. Write a final explication paper worthy of acceptance at an academic conference.
4. Evaluate mass communication theory and the role it plays in academic research.
5. Become socialized in the world of academic research.

Required Textbooks

- Baran, S.J., & Davis, D.K. (2015). *Mass communication theory: Foundations, ferment, and future* (7th ed.) Boston, MA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning. ISBN: 978-1-285-05207-6.
- Godfrey-Smith, P. (2003). *Theory and reality: An introduction to the philosophy of science*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago press. ISBN: 0-226-30063-3.
- Kuhn, Thomas S. (2012). *The structure of scientific revolutions, 50th anniversary edition*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago press. ISBN: 978-0-226-45812-0.
- Shoemaker, P.J.; Tankard, J.W., Jr. & Lasorsa, D.L. (2004). *How to build social science theories*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. ISBN: 0-7619-2667-4.

Also Required: A Stylebook

Purchase and use either an APA, Chicago, or Bluebook (legal) style manual. If you don't know which to get, purchase the latest (sixth edition) APA guide (I like the [spiral-bound edition](#)) because it is the most common style guide in the social sciences. But whatever you choose, buy a copy in either print or as an e-book. Google is an inadequate substitute for a good style guide.

Writing Guide

Quality academic journals reject poorly written manuscripts no matter how good the research may have been. Therefore, doctoral students must be excellent writers, with a solid command of syntax and grammar for written English.

If your writing skills could stand improvement, both the APA and Chicago style manuals offer helpful grammar and writing advice. You may also wish to consider buying a writing guide such as Strunk & White's [Elements of style](#) or Diania Hacker's [Writer's reference](#). Some students may also benefit from hiring a proofreader such as Ronnie Lovler (rlovler@gmail.com).

Other Readings

Journal articles and other assigned readings are available through the course website on the University of Florida e-learning system. These readings are identified with a "PDF" in the class readings schedule later in this syllabus.

Statistics Resources

This is not a methods or statistics course. However, new doctoral students sometimes wish they had a better grounding in the language of research. I recommend these books (listed in order of usefulness) only if you wish to get a head start on your understanding of quantitative research. None of these books is expected in any way for this class.

- *SPSS survival manual* by Julie Pallant (very helpful primer on stats and how to use SPSS)
- *Statistics in plain English* by Timothy C. Urdan (rooted in education, easy to follow)
- *What is a p value anyway* by Andrew Vickers (biostatistics, but exceptionally cogent)
- *Naked statistics* by Charles Wheelan (popular press for a general audience)

Keeping Up With Readings

Doc students learn to acquire information efficiently under an intensive reading load. Some tips:

- Plan ahead. Budget your time over the semester according to due dates.
- Find topic sentences and key arguments.
- Sift what you can skim from what needs more attention.
- Summarize key points in your own words through brief summaries or simple outlines.

Read on Your Own

You will become a stronger scholar if you immerse yourself in better journals. Some in our field include (in alphabetical order): *Electronic News*, *Health Communication*; *International Journal on Media Management*, *Journal of Advertising Research*, *Journal of Advertising*, *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, *Journal of Communication*, *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, *Journal of Current Issues and Research in Advertising*, *Journal of Health Communication*, *Journal of Public Relations Research*, *Mass Communication & Society*, *Public Relations Inquiry*, *Public Relations Review*, and *Science Communication*.

Class Participation

Part of becoming a scholar is learning how to engage others to challenge assertions. Thus, class participation is critical. Don't let shyness or lack of confidence keep you from contributing to discussion, for it is when we engage each other that we learn the most. (Also, I call on people at random in class to ensure everyone participates.)

Class participation depends on each student having read the material ahead of class. Therefore, you are expected to have read (or skimmed, as the schedule denotes) the material for each class.

Each student gets one "free pass" from having done the readings for that class to accommodate unexpected circumstances. If you wish to claim that pass, e-mail me ahead of class so I won't think you're trying to avoid participating and so I won't call on you. But do come to class.

Attendance is expected unless covered by the UF graduate school [attendance policy](#).

Electronic Devices in Class

Please restrict the use of electronic devices to reading articles or taking (brief) notes. Put away your cellphone and ignore Facebook while in class.

Assignment Weighting

Science paper	20%
Theory paper	20%
Explication paper introduction	5%
Explication paper	55%

Grading Scale

A	100 to 90
B+	89 to 87
B	86 to 83
B-	82 to 80

Grades are based on results, not effort. Details can be found in rubrics in this syllabus. Consult the UF graduate school catalog for details about the [grading policy](#).

Academic Integrity

UF students live by an honor code that prohibits academic dishonesty such as (but not limited to) cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, engaging in unauthorized collaboration, reusing your master’s thesis or a paper from another class, writing a similar paper for two classes, drawing too heavily on another’s work for your own, and having someone else write your paper.

Be aware of the UF graduate school [academic honesty policy](#) as well the one in the college’s Doctoral Handbook. Students have an affirmative obligation to know what is in the handbook and to abide by it. The handbook includes a detailed description of plagiarism, copies of which are available in Chinese, Korean, Mandarin, Portuguese, and Spanish. If you are unsure of citation rules or what requires attribution, ask me *before* turning in a paper. Ignorance is not an excuse.

My default practice for an academic integrity violation is a failing grade for the course and to recommend removal from the graduate program.

Students with Disabilities

If you would benefit from disability-related accommodations, contact the [Disability Resource Center](#) as early in the semester as possible. The center will provide documentation so appropriate accommodations can be made. The center is in Reid Hall, 392-8565.

Help with Coping

The UF [Counseling and Wellness Center](#) is a terrific, free resource for any student who could use help managing stress or coping with life. The center, at 3190 Radio Road on campus, is open for appointments and emergency walk-ins from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. To make an appointment or receive after-hours assistance, call 352-392-1575.

The UF Police can be reached at 392-1111 or, in an emergency, by dialing 911.

Course Evaluations

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online [evaluations](#). You will be notified by email when the evaluations are open, near the end of the semester. Summary [results](#) are available to you and the general public.

ABOUT THE COURSE PAPERS

What makes this course 4 credit hours instead of the usual 3 is the range of material and the three required papers. Two of those are shorter (8 to 10 pages) papers on assigned topics. The third is the major paper for the course, an explication paper of 20 to 25 pages of sufficient quality to be accepted by a regional academic conference. All three are explained below.

Why Two Topical Papers?

You will write two overview/summation papers, each on a core element of the course: the philosophy of science and mass communication theory. These papers will help you prepare for potential qualifying exam questions. Here are some examples of exam questions that drew from material covered in this course:

Philosophy of science

- Although rarely acknowledged, all social science research faces limitations in epistemology and ontology. Describe those limitations from a philosophical standpoint and how knowing them can inform and improve your dissertation.
- Drawing from Steven Chaffee's book on the topic, discuss the process of explication beginning with the focal concept, and describe the steps you will need to take to delineate your study's epistemological and ontological assumptions.

Theory

- Identify the benefits and limitations of theory in mass communication research in general, and for your dissertation in particular.
- What does "theory" mean in mass communication scholarship? What criteria determine whether a mass communication theory is "good"?

Thus, one purpose of these two topical papers is that, two years from now, you can pull these papers from your files and use them to help you prepare for a related qualifying exam question.

More important, these papers are designed to help you think conceptually. Wrestling with definitional issues in science and theory help you become a social scientist.

About the Two Topical Papers (Science and Theory)

1. These are summary papers, not original research studies.
2. Each topical paper must be no less than 8 double-spaced pages but should not be much more than about 10 pages (excluding endnotes/references).

3. These are not full-blown papers, so no title page or abstract is needed. Neither are section headings.
4. These topic papers are overviews about science and theory in the social sciences or mass communication generally. They are not discipline-specific (advertising, journalism, etc.).
5. Most of these papers will summarize what you have learned from the readings and class discussion, so you won't have many sources. Six is sufficient. You may consult other sources beyond those assigned, but you are not required to do so.
6. Every academic paper has to advance an argument. Plan to spend your final 2 pages detailing the argument you wish to make. This will serve as your conclusion.
7. Use primary sources whenever possible. However, secondary sources, such as attributing to Godfrey-Smith a summary of Rene Descartes's writing, are OK for these topical papers. (But note: Secondary sources are *not* allowed for the final explication paper.)
8. Cite all of your sources, but minimize citing class lectures. Published sources are always better than unpublished ones, and published academic sources are best.

(For more, see the Technical Details section, the Academic Writing Tips section, and the rubrics.)

Topical Paper 1: Science

This paper will have a title such as "What Makes the Social Sciences Scientific?" The paper should summarize the key topics covered by the readings and class discussion while sustaining an argument that supports a conclusion.

The paper should address seven of these eight issues:

1. The ontological, epistemological, and axiological parameters of science.
2. How empiricism differs from rationalism.
3. How deduction differs from induction.
4. How Kuhn and Popper differed in their definitions of science.
5. Whether the social sciences can or should imitate the physical sciences.
6. How different truth theories help us define what constitutes science.
7. Whether reality is independent of observation.
8. Structural issues that affect the ability of science to be self-correcting.

As you address those issues, you'll want to focus on a single idea (the title of your paper) so that you can seamlessly connect these different concepts with smooth transitions.

Deadline: By 9:00 a.m. Tuesday, September 22, upload the science paper to the class website and place a paper copy in my mailbox.

Topical Paper 2: Theory

This paper will have a title such as "The Evolution of Mass Communication Theories" or "The Ongoing Dichotomy Between Critical and Effects Theories."

Generally, the first two pages look like this:

- A short introductory paragraph of perhaps three sentences gets right to the conclusion of your paper. (Unlike the science paper, you won't have a single idea driving the paper, which means the conclusion otherwise wouldn't be evident until the end of the paper.)
- The second paragraph explicates the meaning of the word "theory." You can discuss various definitions we'll explore in class and then conclude with your preferred definition.
- The third paragraph details what makes good theory. You can draw from a variety of sources, but synthesize rather than merely summarize. In other words, don't just list the seven attributes identified by Chaffee and Berger.

Next is the core of the paper (about 4 pages). Here you will trace the arc of mass communication theory over the four trends defined by Baran & Davis. Because much of the paper will draw from that single source, you are likely to have several paragraphs that will have only one citation – for Baran & Davis. (If so, the citation goes at the end of the paragraph.)

The core part of the paper should be a synthesis that shows how world events and advancements in fields such as psychology and sociology shaped the development of mass communication theory.

The end is your argument/conclusion (about 2 pages). Some examples:

- Does the Internet era require new theory?
- Could mass communication theory exist without sociology and psychology?
- Have we resolved the debate over whether media are powerful or have limited effects?
- In our field, has theory driven method or method driven theory?

Deadline: By 9:00 a.m. Tuesday, October 20, upload the theory paper to the class website and place a paper copy in my mailbox.

About the Explication Paper

Because this is an advance-level course, the main work product is a paper of sufficient quality to be accepted at a regional conference such as the AEJMC Midwinter Conference or the Southeast Colloquium. Meeting this requirement is necessary to receive a passing grade for the course.

Because the purpose of this class is to improve your conceptualization skills, this is an explication paper, not one built on data. In other words, it relies on rationalism rather than empiricism.

Because explication papers without data are difficult to get accepted at a conference, the focal point of the paper is a model or typology. That model or typology will address or explain a latent problem, issue or phenomenon involving mass communication.

The explication paper must be at least 20 pages and not much more than about 25 pages, double-spaced, not counting the cover page or references. For more details, see the rubric later in the syllabus.

A good example of an explication paper is one that offers a model or a typology:

- A **model** uses standard symbols to help explain relationships and causality among concepts. Examples: identify moderators and mediators that influence how commercial weight-loss advertising is persuasive, show why modalities matter in advertising messages, or explain how transparency in public relations helps nonprofits.
- A **typology** is a parsimonious classification or categorization of a phenomenon. Examples: types of government public diplomacy using public relations theory, types of media literacy, or an examination of who benefits from convergence, all placed along a continuum.

We'll talk more about models and typologies in class, along with examples of such papers (on the course website if you want an early look) that have been published in academic journals.

Unless an extraordinary circumstance such as a medical emergency arises, deadlines are firm:

- The first two to three pages (paper copy) are due by 9:00 a.m. Tuesday, Nov. 3.
- Upload the final, completed paper to the course website by 9:00 a.m. Tuesday, Dec. 15.

Begin thinking of topics early. Feel free to consult with your doctoral adviser. You will submit your proposed introduction (2 to 3 pages) by November 3 so that we can discuss it when we meet individually for 15 minutes the next day. However, we can always meet sooner if you wish.

Explication Paper Proposal Tips

1. Begin with a burning question. Think of something important for which you really want to know the answer – and something that can be answered conceptually.
2. As Chaffee wrote in *Explication*, the purpose of communication science is to reveal the hidden factors that influence what we see. So while observable characteristics such as age or gender may be important, the real power of a study comes in identifying latent characteristics such as self-efficacy or para-social interaction.
3. Follow the example of the assigned journal articles that presented models or typologies without data. Each of the assigned papers identified a problem to be solved. Each explained how the model or typology helps solve that problem.
4. Therefore, identify the *academic* problem you wish to solve, or the problem you wish to solve *academically*.
 - a. Solve an *academic* problem, such as the absence of a clear theoretical framework to differentiate Facebook users.
 - b. Or, solve a problem *academically*, such as a theory-driven explanation for how some Facebook users confer source credibility to casual connections.
 - c. Don't try to solve a professional economic problem, such as how TV stations can monetize its website or a new business model for news.
5. The proposal should identify the problem to be solved. It should identify the focal concept (per Chaffee's *Explication*). If you're presenting a model, list the independent and dependent variables. If you have a rough draft – and all you need for the 2- to 3-page introduction is a very rough draft – of your model or typology, offer it in your proposal.

6. The “problem to be solved” approach should guide how you write the proposal and your paper. Here’s one formula you can consider:
 - a. In graph 1, identify the **focal point**. For example: “The roughly 1 billion Facebook users are not monolithic in their use of the social network but instead seek specific uses that affect how they interact with people offline.”
 - b. In graph 2, identify the **problem**. For example: “However, the academic literature does not adequately differentiate among Facebook users and thus fails to differentiate among the likely effects the social network has on interpersonal communication.”
 - c. End graph 2 with the *purpose* statement. For example: “The purpose of this study is to advance a typology of Facebook users along a continuum drawn from social learning theory to enable researchers to explore how the social network influences interpersonal communication.”
7. Non-academic sources are permissible when explicating a current issue such as the use of big data in programmatic ad buying. However, published articles from peer-reviewed journals are best, and the paper requires 25 of them.
8. Be specific. Be *very* specific. Mass communication is inherently complex. As social scientists, we must break down those complex issues into small, discrete parts so we can isolate variables. Narrow your focal concept. Then narrow it again.

Explication Paper Structure

A social science research paper involving data typically has five parts:

1. Introduction
2. Literature review
3. Method
4. Findings
5. Discussion & conclusion (followed by references or endnotes)

Because a model or typology has no data to report, the structure will be a little different:

1. Cover page with title and the author’s name (1 page).
2. Abstract of about 100 words (1 page).
3. Introduction (about 3 pages) as follows:
 - a. Identify the problem to be solved academically.
 - b. Have a sentence that begins, “The purpose of this study is to”
 - c. Specify the paper’s unique contribution to academic knowledge and its “so what.”
 - d. Identify a theoretical base.
4. Literature review (about 5 pages) that draws from previous studies to illuminate what is known about the problem to be solved.

5. Presentation of the model or typology backed by citations to related academic studies (about 10 to 12 pages). If you have a model, include propositions (which are untested hypotheses) at the end of each variable or construct.
6. Discussion/conclusion (about 3 pages) as follows:
 - a. Explain how the model or typology advances academic knowledge.
 - b. Detail (2 to 3 paragraphs) how the model or typology could guide future research.
 - c. Identify the study's limitations.
 - d. Conclude with a graph with the most persuasive argument for the "so what."

For All Three Papers: Technical Details

- **Purpose:** Each paper should have a sentence that begins "The purpose of this (paper/study) is to ..." In addition, address the "so what?" question in the introduction and conclusion.
- **Length:** Topic papers must be 8 to about 10 pages (not counting a reference list). The final project must be 20 to 25 pages (not counting the cover page and the reference section).
- **Sources:** Use proper academic sources. Use the databases (Ebsco, etc.) available through the library, not solely Google Scholar, which misses a lot of material behind paywalls even if you're on the UF network. Also, Wikipedia is not an academic source.
- **Style:** Either APA (references) or Chicago (endnotes) or Bluebook (footnotes, for legal papers) is acceptable. Style is an important element of academic writing.
- **Writing:** Clarity is essential in formal academic writing. Be precise in word choice, grammar and spelling. Follow grammar guides and dictionaries. Don't worry about an occasional mistake. However, papers with writing that is obtuse, sloppy in the use of mechanics or hobbled by garbled syntax won't be accepted for an academic conference – and thus won't pass muster for this course.
- **Deadlines.** Unless an extraordinary circumstance such as a medical or family emergency arises, deadlines are firm.

For All Three Papers: Academic Writing Tips

1. Academic work is distinguished by frequent use of citations, the explication of terms and concepts, and writing that is focused and lucid.
 - a. Cite early and often. Citations document where you got your material and serve as evidence. For your explication paper, more sources = a better paper.
 - b. Define terms. Apply Chaffee's *Explication*. Vanquish vagueness.
 - c. Write lucidly. Multi-syllabic words swimming in a convoluted syntax is not academic. Clarity in thought and precision in writing is.
 - d. Prefer citations from research articles published in quality peer-reviewed journals.
2. Each paragraph should start with a topic sentence, which describes what the paragraph is about. In a well-written paper, topic sentences collectively serve as an outline or executive summary of a paper. Specific topic sentences will help you write more clearly. For example:

- Too vague: “Two famous writers about the philosophy of science, Karl Popper and Thomas Kuhn, offered different views of science and how it is practiced.” True, but this sentence doesn’t tell the reader how the two differed.
 - Better: “Kuhn described science as a communal practice while Popper saw it as an individual act, a disagreement that reflects a significant definitional issue in the philosophy of science.”
3. Topic sentences define the parameters of each paragraph. If the paragraph is going to explore how Kuhn and Popper differed in their definition of science, stick to that topic. Don’t drift into discussions of empiricism vs. rationalism or views of truth in that same paragraph. Those belong to different paragraphs.
 4. Therefore, write all the topic sentences for the paper first, and then write the paper. If you do, your paper will be much better organized and read more fluently.
 5. Skip the throat-clearing pronouncements such as “this paper will first describe ... then it will detail” or “in the next section we’ll explore.” Such pronouncements waste space and are to be avoided except for lengthy papers in legal journals.
 6. Use past-tense verbs for references of previously published material. A published study does not *say* or *writes* (present tense). It *said* or *wrote* (past tense).
 7. Use quotes sparingly. Summarize and paraphrase the core idea in your own words.
 8. Don’t use first-person pronouns such as *I*, *we*, or *us* to refer to yourself. Don’t use third-person references such as “the author” or “the researcher.” Instead, structure your writing so that you are never heard from.
 9. Similarly, don’t use “I believe” or “I think” statements, which weaken your argument. The statement is what matters, not who said it.
 10. Because what matters most in lit reviews is *what* is said, rather than *who* said it, most references to authors should be reserved for citations.
 - Weak: As Godfrey-Smith (2003) wrote, induction is inherently flawed.
 - Strong: Induction is inherently flawed (Godfrey-Smith, 2003).
 11. Support conclusions with evidence. A paper cannot conclude that “social scientists shouldn’t feel inferior to physical scientists” without first describing why inferiority exists and offering evidence for why the social sciences are equally valid. Unsupported assertions are not conclusions.
 12. Use active voice to identify actors. Writing that “it is believed that science involves math” hides from the reader the key issue of *who* believes that statement.
 13. Use your stylebook (APA, Chicago, or Bluebook) for stylistic issues such as whether to refer to concepts with quotation marks, capital letters, or italics.
 14. Adhering to American English grammar rules improves comprehension while using sloppy grammar impedes readability. You don’t have to know the difference between a transitive and intransitive verb to avoid sentence fragments, match singular nouns with singular pronouns, and use plural possessives properly. (Hint: “media” is a plural noun and thus requires a plural verb.)

Schedule

Part 1: Science paper				
Wed	Aug. 26	1	The Philosophy of Science	
Fri	Aug. 28	2	Key Issues in Defining Science	
Wed	Sept. 2	3	Why Popper and Kuhn Matter	
Fri	Sept. 4	4	What Makes the Social Sciences Different?	
Wed	Sept. 9	5	Does Science = Math?	
Fri	Sept. 11	6	Reality and Truth	
Wed	Sept. 16	7	Is Science Self-Correcting?	
Fri	Sept. 18	8	Review	Paper due 9:00 am Tue, Sept. 22
Part 2: Theory paper				
Wed	Sept. 23	9	Does Theory Matter?	
Fri	Sept. 25	10	What Makes Good Theory?	
Wed	Sept. 30	11	Theory Trend 1: Mass Society	
Fri	Oct. 2	12	Theory Trend 2: Media Effects	
Wed	Oct. 7	13	Theory Trend 3: Cultural/Critical	
Fri	Oct. 9	14	Theory Trend 4: Meaning-Making	
Wed	Oct. 14	15	Do New Media Require New Theory?	
Fri	Oct. 16	16	Review	Paper due 9:00 am Tue, Oct. 20
Part 3: Explication paper				
Wed	Oct. 21	17	Explication	
Fri	Oct. 23	18	Building Theory	
Wed	Oct. 28	19	Models	
Fri	Oct. 30	20	Typologies	Intro due 9:00 am Tue, Nov. 3
Wed	Nov. 4		Individual meetings in lieu of class	
Fri	Nov. 6		No class; homecoming	
Wed	Nov. 11		No class; Veterans Day	
Fri	Nov. 13		(no class; work on presentation)	
Wed	Nov. 18	21	Explication paper presentations 1	
Fri	Nov. 20	22	Explication paper presentations 2	
Wed	Nov. 25		No class; Thanksgiving	
Fri	Nov. 27		No class; Thanksgiving	
Wed	Dec. 2		(no class; work on paper)	
Fri	Dec. 4		(no class; work on paper)	
Wed	Dec. 9		(no class; work on paper)	Paper due 9:00 am Tue, Dec. 15

Science Paper Rubric

	100-90 Excellent	89-80 Good	Less than 80 Unsatisfactory	RESULT
Topic (30%)	Seamlessly evaluates and analyzes at least 6 of the core elements that define science and the social sciences.	Summarizes at least 6 of the core elements that define science and the social sciences.	Summarizes fewer than 6 of the core elements that define science and the social sciences.	
Analysis (20%)	Expertly draws from a core body of evidence using both analysis and synthesis to illuminate the subject.	Competently evaluates applicable material with some analysis, if not synthesis.	Material is presented without analysis or synthesis.	
Sourcing (15%)	At least six quality sources powerfully support the paper, and the paper is built on generous sourcing.	At least six quality sources are used, though perhaps others might have been more useful.	Fewer than six quality sources are used, or sources are used too sparingly to quality as academic work.	
Rhetoric (15%)	Clear topic sentences serve as an effective outline for cogent writing and persuasive argument.	Though the paper may falter at times, the point is clear and supported by competent writing.	Point is unclear, either through faulty conceptualization or inadequate framing of arguments.	
Writing (15%)	Precise syntax and superior usage of grammar, punctuation and spelling result in a lucid and intelligible paper.	Syntax is clear and the relatively few grammar, punctuation or spelling errors do not impede understanding.	Syntax is sometimes garbled and errors in grammar, punctuation and spelling disrupt understanding.	
Style (5%)	Consistently follows APA, Chicago or Bluebook style.	APA, Bluebook or Chicago style is generally followed; errors do not impede readability.	APA, Bluebook or Chicago style is applied so inconsistently that readability is affected.	

Theory Paper Rubric

	100-90 Excellent	89-80 Good	Less than 80 Unsatisfactory	RESULT
Topic (30%)	Defines theory, why theory matters, and “good” theory. Offers a persuasive point while contextualizing mass media theory development and adroitly linking trends.	Defines theory, why theory matters, and “good” theory. Capably describes mass media theory development with some context and a persuasive point while linking trends.	Inadequately defines theory. Covers less than the whole arc of mass media theory development or fails to contextualize it.	
Analysis (20%)	Expertly draws from a core body of evidence using both analysis and synthesis to illuminate the subject.	Competently evaluates applicable material with some analysis, if not synthesis.	Material is presented without analysis or synthesis.	
Sourcing (20%)	At least 6 quality sources powerfully support the paper, and the paper is built on generous sourcing.	At least 6 quality sources are used, though perhaps others might have been more useful.	Fewer than 6 quality sources are used, or sources are used too sparingly to quality as academic work.	
Rhetoric (15%)	Clear topic sentences serve as an effective outline for cogent writing and persuasive argument.	Though the paper may falter at times, the point is clear and supported by competent writing.	Point is unclear, either through faulty conceptualization or inadequate framing of arguments.	
Writing (15%)	Precise syntax and superior usage of grammar, punctuation and spelling result in a lucid and intelligible paper.	Syntax is clear and the relatively few grammar, punctuation or spelling errors do not impede understanding.	Syntax is sometimes garbled and errors in grammar, punctuation and spelling disrupt understanding.	
Style (5%)	Consistently follows APA, Chicago or Bluebook style.	APA, Bluebook or Chicago style is generally followed; errors do not impede readability.	APA, Bluebook or Chicago style is applied so inconsistently that readability is affected.	

Explication Paper Rubric

	100-90 Excellent	89-80 Good	Less than 80 Unsatisfactory	RESULT
Topic (50%)	Paper (1) fills a gap in academic knowledge (2) on an important topic (3) with a compelling model or typology (4) rooted in mass communication theory (5) that exposes latent relationships or factors (6) in a way that can guide future research through testable propositions or similar.	Paper meets five of the six criteria.	Paper meets fewer than five of the criteria.	
Sourcing (20%)	Paper cites at least 25 journal articles, mostly from top journals, to support the variables or constructs used in the model or typology and any propositions that follow.	Paper cites at least 25 valid journal articles that supports most of the variables or constructs used in the model or typology and any propositions that follow.	Fewer than 25 valid journal articles are cited, or the model or typology is adequately supported by sources.	
Writing (15%)	Precise syntax and superior usage of grammar, punctuation and spelling result in a lucid and intelligible paper.	Syntax is clear and the relatively few grammar, punctuation or spelling errors do not impede understanding.	Syntax is sometimes garbled and errors in grammar, punctuation and spelling disrupt understanding.	
Rhetoric (10%)	Clear topic sentences serve as an effective outline for cogent writing and persuasive argument.	Though the paper may falter at times, the point is clear and supported by competent writing.	Point is unclear, either through faulty conceptualization or inadequate framing of arguments.	
Style (5%)	Consistently follows APA, Chicago or Bluebook style.	APA, Bluebook or Chicago style is generally followed; errors do not impede readability.	APA, Bluebook or Chicago style is applied so inconsistently that readability is affected.	

STUDY QUESTIONS FOR THE ASSIGNED READINGS

Part 1: Philosophy of Science

1. Wednesday, August 26: The Philosophy of Science

Godfrey-Smith, Chapter 1: Introduction

From this chapter, you should be able to:

- Articulate why the philosophy of science matters
- Trace the historical development of scientific thought

Study questions:

1. Why study the philosophy of science?
2. What are the differences between epistemological and metaphysical issues?
3. Critique the argument that science is the objective pursuit of truth.
4. What are some flaws with equating science with math?

PDF: Hughes, A.L. (2012, fall). The folly of scientism. *The New Atlantis*, 32-50.

Study questions:

1. Has science rendered philosophy irrelevant? Why or why not?
2. What are the epistemological limitations of science?
3. Are fact-value distinctions a legitimate barrier between science and ethics?

2. Friday, August 28: Key Issues in Defining Science

Godfrey-Smith, Chapter 2: Logic plus empiricism

From this chapter, you should be able to:

- Differentiate empiricism from rationalism
- Describe why positivism arose and how it contributed to empiricism

Study questions:

1. How does empiricism differ from rationalism?
2. What is positivism and why did it arise?

Godfrey-Smith, Chapter 3: Induction and confirmation

From this chapter, you should be able to:

- Grasp the challenges in understanding how observation can confirm theory
- Identify shortcomings in deduction and induction

Study questions:

1. Differentiate between deduction and induction, and identify the significant strengths and weaknesses of each.
2. How do scientists respond to assertions that “evolution is just a theory”?
3. What types of theories can the social sciences prove?

3. Wednesday, September 2: Why Popper and Kuhn Matter

PDF: Popper, K. (1935). *The logic of scientific discovery*. New York, N.Y.: Routledge.

Study questions:

1. Why did Popper reject induction as a way of knowledge? Which of his philosophical ancestors would have most agreed with him?
2. What did Popper propose as the “problem of demarcation” and how did he propose to solve it?
3. What is Popper’s falsification premise?

Godfrey-Smith, Chapter 4: Popper: conjecture and refutation

From this chapter, you should be able to:

- Summarize and critique Popper’s falsification premise.

Study questions:

1. Why do scientists tend to see Popper as a hero?
2. Why was Popper worried about the “problem of demarcation”?
3. How did Popper define the practice of science?
4. What are the limitations of Popper’s falsification premise?
5. In Popper’s view of science, how important is theory?

Kuhn, T.S. (2012). *The structure of scientific revolutions*. Start with the introductory essay by Ian Hacking. For more on Kuhn and the book, see the [entry](#) in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Study questions:

1. What caused Kuhn to write the book, and what academic perspective did he take?
2. In the first sentence of the book, Kuhn wrote that he sought to change the current understanding of science. How was science understood then?
3. How did Kuhn define the practice of science? What process did he identify for how science worked?
4. Most people today would say the primary job of a scientist is to ascertain truth. What did Kuhn say is the scientist’s primary job?
5. What role did psychology play in Kuhn’s evaluation of how science worked?
6. Define these terms Kuhn used: Anomaly. Coherence. Incommensurability. Normal science. Paradigm. Paradigm shift. Pre-paradigm. Puzzle-solving. Revolutionary science.

Godfrey-Smith, chapters 5 & 6: Kuhn and normal science; Kuhn and revolutions

From this chapter, you should be able to:

- Understand the lasting impact of *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*.

Study questions:

1. How did Kuhn and Popper differ in their understanding of whether science is truly open-minded, and which view do you find more convincing?
2. How did Kuhn’s work change our understanding of how science is practiced?

4. Friday, September 4: What Makes the Social Sciences Different?

PDF: Machlup, F. (1961). Are the social sciences really inferior? *Southern Economic Journal*, 27(3), 173-184. doi: 10.2307/1055084

Study questions:

1. The author declined to define social science. Would definition have strengthened or weakened his argument?
2. Which of the nine “grounds of comparison” seem most significant to you and why?
3. The author concludes that inferiority is in the mind of the public, a problem that is curable. Why haven’t we cured it in the half-century since this speech was given?
4. How might the author’s approach have differed if, instead of being an economist, he was a mass communication scholar?
5. How would this 1960 speech be different if he had given it after astronauts walked on the moon in 1969 or after the 2001 terrorist attacks in the U.S.?

PDF: Fay, B., & Moon, J.D. (1977). What would an adequate philosophy of social science look like? *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 7(2), 209-227.

Study questions:

1. How do the authors define humanism and naturalism?
2. How do intentions distinguish the social sciences from the physical sciences?
3. Why is theory important to the social scientist?
4. What do the authors mean by “in the social sciences, concepts partially constitute the reality we study”? (p. 213)
5. How would you answer the question posed in the title?

PDF: Scriven, M. (1994). A possible distinction between traditional scientific disciplines and the study of human behavior. In Michael Martin & Lee C. McIntyre (Eds.), *Readings in the philosophy of social science* (pp. 71-77). Cambridge, MA: Bradford.

Study questions:

1. Evaluate this statement: “The difference between the scientific study of behavior and that of physical phenomena is thus partly due to the relatively greater complexity of the *simplest phenomena we are concerned to account for* in a behavioral theory” (p. 72, his italics).
2. Critique this statement: “I would venture to say that it is extremely improbable that anything remotely corresponding to the simplicity and importance of the concept of universal gravitation can possibly be found in the field of psychology” (p. 75).
3. When the author says (p.76, point 2) that there is a difference between solving a problem and making progress, is he diminishing the work of social scientists?

Godfrey-Smith, chapter 7: Lakatos, Laudan, Feyerabend, and frameworks (skim)

From this chapter, you should be able to:

- Grasp that Kuhn is not the last word on how science works.

Godfrey-Smith, chapter 8: The challenge from sociology of science (skim)

From this chapter, you should be able to:

- See that sociologists portray science as influenced by social forces.

5. Wednesday, September 9: Does Science = Math?

PDF: Ritchie, D. (2003). Statistical probability as a metaphor for epistemological probability. *Metaphor and Symbol* 18(1), 1-11. doi:10.1207/S15327868MS1801_1

Study questions:

1. What does the author mean by this statement (p. 2): “Epistemological probability first served as a metaphor for statistical probability, but the wide-spread adoption of statistical methods as a basis for scientific argumentation has reversed our understanding, so that we now use statistical probability as a metaphor for epistemological probability”?
2. What are some of the embedded, often unacknowledged and potentially problematic assumptions in standard hypothesis testing?
3. What elements of social science research are beyond our ability to measure?

PDF: Trouble at the lab (2013, October 19). *The Economist*, 409, 26-30.

Study questions:

1. If results cannot be replicated, are they scientific?
2. How does statistical probability contribute to scientific error?
3. From what you can gather from the article, are most errors in conducting scientific research individualistic or systemic?
4. Is science self-correcting? Why or why not?

PDF: Clarke, K.A., & Primo, D.M. (2012, April 1). Overcoming “physics envy.” *The New York Times*.

Study questions:

1. What gets lost when social scientists focus their gaze on what can be measured?

6. Friday, September 11: Reality and Truth

Godfrey-Smith, chapter 10: Naturalistic philosophy in theory and practice

From this chapter, you should be able to:

- Define the naturalist view of the philosophy of science.
- Distinguish between coherence and correspondence theories of truth.
- Describe the “theory-ladenness of observation.”

Study questions:

- How does the author describe a naturalist view of how science operates?
- What is the coherence theory of truth? When is it most applicable?
- What is the correspondence theory of truth? When is it most applicable?
- What is the “theory-ladenness of observation” and why does it matter?

Godfrey-Smith, chapter 12: Scientific realism

From this chapter, you should be able to:

- Define and critique scientific realism

Study questions:

- How is scientific realism different from common-sense realism?
- Is scientific realism feasible for the social sciences?

- Is accuracy different from truth?
- How would a social constructionist approach this issue?
- How would an instrumentalist approach this issue?

PDF: Anderson, J.A., & Baym, G. (2004). Philosophies and philosophic issues in communication, 1995-2004. *Journal of Communication* 54(4), 589-615. doi: 10.1111/j.1460-2466.2004.tb02647.x

Study questions:

1. In your own words, what do epistemology, ontology, praxeology, and axiology mean for mass communication scholars?
2. The authors argue from a perspective that combines interpersonal and organizational (or mass) communication. Do those two branches share philosophic perspectives about the nature of truth, or is mass communication different?
3. The authors conclude that we must choose which type of communication scholar we are. Which of the four types offered best fits you and why?
4. On page 606, the authors assert that “journalism studies appears to be the wing of the discipline most explicitly interested in contemporary epistemological thought.” Do you agree or disagree, and why?

PDF: Haig, B.D., & Borsboom, D. (2012). Truth, science, and psychology. *Theory & Psychology* 22(3), 272-289. doi: 10.1177/0959354311430442

Study questions:

1. What are the differences among correspondence, coherence, pragmatist and deflationary theories of truth?
2. This paper adopts the correspondence theory of truth, a viewpoint that most philosophers reject. Do you find their argument persuasive? If the authors are so confident, why did they hedge their bets in the conclusion?
3. The chart on page 280 delineates a hierarchy of truth statements. Which of the four does most research address? Which is the most important? If those two answers are different, what does that say about social science research?

7. Wednesday, September 16: Is Science Self-Correcting?

PDF: Ioannidis, J.P.A. (2012). Why science is not necessarily self-correcting. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 7: 645-654. doi: 10.1177/1745691612464056

Study questions:

1. In what ways does this article involve a distinction between empiricism and rationalism?
2. What is the point of his tongue-in-cheek riff on imaginary Planet F345?
3. Of the list in table 2 (p. 650), which ones reflect disagreements in the philosophy of science? And which are most significant?
4. In what ways do universities unwittingly perpetuate scientific errors?
5. Of the solutions proposed in this article, which would a philosopher of science would say is the most important?

PDF: Cook, B.G. (2014). A call for examining replication and bias in special education research. *Remedial and Special Education*, 35, 233-246. doi: 10.1177/0741932514528995

Study questions:

1. Which of the errors cited in this article are applicable to our field?
2. Does this study explicate bias or error?
3. From a scientific standpoint, which of the proposed reforms are most important to implement in the social sciences and why?

PDF: Yong, E. (2012). Bad copy. *Nature*, 485, 298-300.

Study questions:

1. How does a preference for fresh research (rather than replication) in social science journals reflect a definitional belief about science? What would change if the philosophy of science offered a greater emphasis on replication?
2. Are the issues cited in the paper more individualistic than systemic, or more systemic than individualistic?

PDF: Spilling the beans. (2015, July 25). *The Economist*, pp. 62-63.

Study questions:

4. How does unpublished data pose an impediment to the practice of science?
5. What would it take for the social sciences to create a system like AllTrials?

PDF: Begley, C.G., & Ellis, L. M. (2012). Raise standards for preclinical cancer research. *Nature*, 483, 531-533.

Study questions:

1. The first author participated in a study while at Amgen that sought to replicate 53 landmark cancer studies. Only 6 of the 53 were confirmed. What does that result tell us - and not tell us - about the practice of science?
2. Are the issues cited in the paper more individualistic than systemic, or more systemic than individualistic?

PDF: Schooler, J. (2011). Unpublished results hide the decline effect. *Nature*, 470, 437.

Study questions:

1. What is the most likely cause for the decline effect: human or systemic factors?
2. Why does the decline effect seem evident in the life sciences and social sciences but not the physical sciences?
3. How does the way science is practiced contribute to the decline effect?

8. Friday, September 18: Review

Part 2: Mass Communication Theory

9. Wednesday, September 23: Does Theory Matter?

PDF: Neuman, W.R., Davidson, R., Joo, S., Park, Y.J., & Williams, A.E. (2008). The seven deadly sins of communication research. *Journal of Communication*, 58(2), 220-237. doi: 10.1111/j.1460-2466.2008.00382.x

Study questions:

1. Carefully evaluate the final paragraph on page 221, beginning with “From the broader literature.” What do these data and anecdotes tell us about the application of the scientific method to social science research?
2. The authors conclude that “theory is king” (p. 230) but then note that “theory” is rarely explained. What does the rest of the paper tell us about the state of theory in communication research?

PDF: Chaffee, S.H., & Metzger, M.J. (2001). The end of mass communication? *Mass Communication & Society*, 4(4), 365-379. doi :10.1207/S15327825MCS0404_3

Study questions:

1. Has the era of mass communication been replaced by media communication? What evidence supports your position?
2. Reconsider Table 2 (p. 373) in light of today’s media reality. What would you change in the table and why?
3. Should the rise of the Internet, social media, and mobile communication change how we theorize about mass communication?

PDF: Bryant, J., & Miron, D. (2004). Theory and research in mass communication. *Journal of Communication*, 54(4), 662-704. doi: 10.1111/j.1460-2466.2004.tb02650.x

Study questions:

1. The study found that 32% of articles published in three top journals in the 20th century referenced theory. Of that 32%, half (48%) were mere references. So is theory really king, as Neuman, et al., concluded?
2. Baran & Davis will tell us that four of the most important developments in the development of mass communication theory are the Chicago school, Vienna circle, Frankfurt school, and British cultural studies. Yet the study found those four schools were mentioned in only 3% of 1,806 articles. What does that result suggest to you?
3. What does the list of most popular theories in Table 1 tell us about how social sciences differ from the physical sciences?

PDF: Anderson, C. (2008). The end of theory: The data deluge makes the scientific method obsolete. *Wired*, June 23, 2008. Includes *On the Media* interview on July 18, 2008.

Study questions:

1. Do you agree that powerful computers with enormous linked data sets render the scientific method obsolete?

2. How could you rebut the argument that theory is irrelevant, that we can skip hypotheses and go straight to finding statistically significant correlations?

10. Friday, September 25: What Makes Good Theory?

Baran & Davis, chapter 1: Understanding and evaluating mass communication theory

Study questions:

1. Is a smartphone a mass communication device? Why or why not?
2. Why are lay people generally more willing to accept theory in the physical sciences than in the social sciences?
3. The authors cite four reasons for why applying the scientific method to the social world is difficult. Which of the four is the most significant and why?
4. Critique the authors' definition of theory (p. 13) as "any organized set of concepts, explanations, and principles of some aspect of human experience."
5. The authors suggest different criteria to evaluate each category of theory (p. 18). What would Popper and Kuhn think about that?
6. Compare the four trends (until this edition, the authors called these "eras") identified in this book with the approach Neuman and Guggenheim take in the next reading. Which approach do you find more persuasive?

PDF: Neuman, W.R., & Guggenheim, L. (2011). The evolution of media effects theory: A six-stage model of cumulative research. *Communication Theory* 21(2), 169-196. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-2885.2011.01381.x

Study questions:

1. How do the authors seek to redeem communication theory?
2. How do you interpret the authors' observation (p. 179) that few of the key theories in communication are cited in other disciplines?
3. Inter-coder agreement was low (p. 180) in trying to discern whether a journal article was implicitly relying on a theoretical tradition. What does that finding suggest about how communication scholars utilize theory?
4. How does the authors' central point, that theory evolves, square with the views of how science works as expressed by Popper and Kuhn?

PDF: Chaffee, S.H., & Berger, C.R. (1987). What communication scientists do. In C.R. Berger and S.H. Chaffee (Eds.) *Handbook of communication science* (pp. 99-122). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Study questions:

1. The authors note researchers "bemoan the fact that there is not more good theory in the field" (p. 100). Later (p. 105), the authors say theory and research are related. If there's little good theory, is it because there's little good research?
2. In evaluating theories (pp. 104-105), which of the seven attributes do you think is most important and why? Which is least important and why?
3. The authors list several analytical issues, starting on page 108. Which do you think is most important for your area of research?

4. In the final sentence, the authors assert they are outlining “the work of those who are within the scientific tradition” (p. 119). Whose work would be excluded?

PDF: Kuhn, T.S. (1977). *The essential tension: Selected studies in scientific tradition and change*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago.

Study questions:

1. How do the five characteristics of good theory that Kuhn chooses compare with the criteria identified by Chaffee and Berger?
2. How does Kuhn use this piece to respond to critics who said his *Structure of Scientific Revolutions* improperly injected subjectivity into objective science?
3. Critique Kuhn’s assertion in this piece that the five characteristics he identifies are values, not rules.

PDF: Davison, W.P. (1996). The third-person effect revisited. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 8(2), 113-119. doi:10.1093/ijpor/8.2.113

Study questions:

1. What is the third-person effect? (You’ll need to look elsewhere; this brief essay presumes you already know.)
2. Bryant and Miron found the third-person effect is one of the field’s most-cited theories, yet its origins were inauspicious. What does this article tell you about the development of mass communication theory?
3. What makes the third-person effect good theory?

11. Wednesday, September 30: Theory Trend 1: Mass Society

Baran & Davis, chapter 2: Establishing the terms of the debate over media: The first trend in media theory – mass society and propaganda theory

Study questions:

1. The Fearful Reaction to New Media box on pp. 33-34 demonstrates that fears about media influence are not new. Fair enough. But why do these fears persist?
2. In many countries, broadcasting is seen as a public good. The U.S. has always seen broadcasting as a private business. Does ownership (public or private) affect how people view media?
3. Compare and contrast the Tönnies and Durkheim views of society.
4. From a mass society perspective, how are new media such as Google different from legacy big media? How are they similar?
5. What distinguishes “good” propaganda from “bad” propaganda?
6. How did behaviorism and Freudianism influence mass society theory?

Baran & Davis, chapter 3: Normative theories of mass communication

Study questions:

1. Are normative theories realistic in the United States, where media are owned by large corporations accountable to shareholders? Why or why not?
2. Which normative theory of the press do you embrace and why: marketplace of ideas or social responsibility?

3. Is journalism a profession?

12. Friday, October 2: Theory Trend 2: Media Effects

Baran & Davis, chapter 4: The media-effects trend

Study questions:

1. Why did media effects succeed the mass society/propaganda trend?
2. Did the shift to media effects reflect a change in conceptualization or methodology?
3. Are middle-range theories mostly fresh ideas or restatements of old ideas?
4. How did developments in sociology affect the media-effects trend?
5. The authors once called this trend “limited effects,” as reflected in the portion of chapter 1, pp 21-22, that refers to the “limited-effects trend in media theory.” Is this just sloppy editing or are the terms interchangeable?

13. Wednesday, October 7: Theory Trend 3: Cultural/Critical

Baran & Davis, chapter 5: The emergence of critical cultural trend in North America

Study questions:

1. Why did the cultural/critical studies trend develop in response to the media-effects trend?
2. Was the cultural/critical trend a new development, or a longstanding perspective elevated to new importance?
3. Critical and cultural studies offer a perspective distinct from normative, data-driven mass communication scholarship. Are the viewpoints equally valid? Why?
4. The field of critical studies has always been embraced more in Europe than in the United States. Why?
5. Which of the branches or schools of critical/cultural studies do you find most attractive, and why?
6. Which statement about Marshall McLuhan do you find more persuasive: he was a (a) critical/cultural scholar or (b) technological determinist?
7. How would you respond to the criticism that critical/cultural studies are filled with people who always seem to find what they're looking for?

Baran & Davis, chapter 7, pp. 217 to 224: Reception studies

Study questions:

1. Why does this section belong in chapter 5?
2. Does the research in this section affirm or challenge the common assertion that cultural/critical studies are more ideological than empirical?

PDF: Horkheimer, M., & Adorno, T.W. (1944/2002). The culture industry: Enlightenment as mass deception. In M. Horkheimer and T.W. Adorno, *Dialectic of enlightenment* (pp.94-136), Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press. [Translated from German.]

Study questions:

1. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, written between 1939 and 1944 by Jewish German exiles, is considered one of the most important critical evaluations of mass media ever written. What is your immediate reaction when you read this chapter?

2. This chapter is devoid of statistical analysis. Is it empirical? Is it scientific?
3. Is this chapter primarily rooted in World War II pessimism or is it a timeless critique of mass communication?
4. Which do you think is a more likely explanation for the authors' views: audience passivity or industrial manipulation?

Baran & Davis, chapter 6: Theories of media and human development: children and adolescents

Study questions:

1. Are the theories and research findings presented in this chapter a reflection of the critical/cultural studies trend or a different trend?
2. Do mass media contribute to violence in society? Why or why not? How confident are you in your answer, and why?
3. Do video games contribute to violence in society? Why or why not? How confident are you in your answer, and why?

14. Friday, October 9: Theory Trend 4: Meaning-Making

Baran & Davis, chapter 7 (stopping at p. 217): Audience theories: uses and reception

Study questions:

1. Why did audience-centered theories arise?
2. Defend or debunk the central tenet of these theories: media do not do things to people; instead, people do things with media.
3. Are audience-centered theories appropriate for today's personal media era or are they tailored for media oligopolies?
4. Why were (and are) researchers reluctant to study the audience?
5. Is uses and gratifications a theory or a perspective?

Baran & Davis, chapter 8: Theories of media cognition and information processing

Study questions:

1. Are these theories about mass communication or psychology?
2. ELM is one of the most-used theories in mass communication research, especially in advertising. Is ELM a theory or a description of variance in cognitive effort?

Baran & Davis, chapter 9: Theories of the effect of media on society

Study questions:

1. Do media influence society? Or does society influence media?
2. Agenda-setting, perhaps the field's most popular theory, says media don't tell us what to think but what to think *about*. Is that a distinction without a difference?

15. Wednesday, October 14: Do Today's New Media Require New Theory?

Baran & Davis, chapter 10: Media and culture theories: meaning-making in the social world

Study questions:

1. The theories in this chapter take two perspectives. Culture-centered theories presume that culture influences our world and the role media play. Meaning-

making theories presume that media influence how we understand our world and the role of culture. Which perspective do you find most persuasive?

2. Are the perspectives reflected by these theories more consistent with a meaning-making view or a critical/cultural studies view?
3. Is framing a theory or a method?

Baran & Davis, chapter 11: The future of media theory and research

Study questions:

1. The authors assert that people born after 1990 are more immersed in media than those born earlier. Do you agree? Or are people simply using different media?
2. Have mobile devices changed how people communicate? Or has the technology merely enabled people to fulfill existing desires regarding communication?
3. Which of the following best reflects your view and why?
 - a. The Internet is a new form of communication.
 - b. The Internet is like a telephone, fostering one-to-one communication.
 - c. The Internet is like a mass medium, fostering one-to-many communication.
4. In this era of fragmentation - when the highest rated show on U.S. TV most nights reaches only four percent of the adult audience - is there still a mass media?
5. Argue both sides of this statement:
 - a. The Internet requires new mass communication theory.
 - b. Existing mass communication theories apply to the Internet.

PDF: Lang, A. (2013). Discipline in crisis? The shifting paradigm of mass communication research. *Communication Theory*, 23, 10-24. doi: 10.1111/comt.12000

Study questions:

1. According to Lang, what is our field's paradigm?
2. How did agenda-setting theory fuel a Kuhnian crisis in the field?
3. What intellectual discipline arose in response to the crisis?
4. How does Lang answer the question of whether cultural/critical studies are scientific?
5. Critique Lang's assessment (p. 23) that "I do not believe the discipline can survive much longer as a science if we continue to have only one successful independent variable (i.e., weight of coverage) and one generalizable result (i.e., the media have very small, weak, but persistent effects on people's behavior)."
6. What does Lang promote as a solution to our Kuhnian crisis?

16. Friday, October 16: Review

Part 3: Explication Paper

17. Wednesday, October 21: Explication

PDF: Chaffee, S.H. (1991). *Explication*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Study questions:

1. How is explication different from other forms of definition, and why is explication important for mass communication scholars?
2. Who among the people in our philosophy of science timeline would endorse the author's attempt to demarcate science (last paragraph p.3)?
3. How does reliability differ from validity, and why is validity different from truth? (pp.10-14)
4. What is a focal concept? (pp. 14-18)
5. What does the author mean by "The literature review is often a study in itself"? (p.21)
6. Why does communication study usually measure elements that are *sufficient* rather than *necessary* (p.32), and what's the difference between those terms?
7. Restate this statement (top p.38) in your own words: "Formal operations, such as measurement, scaling, and statistical techniques, do not constitute definitions of concepts in themselves. It is safe to assume that no statistical formula was ever created with a concept of human communication in mind."
8. The author says (p.43), "The choice of method should flow from the definition we are reaching." What implications are embedded in that statement?
9. Most of the time, we're looking for correlations between variables. Why, then, should we care about univariate research? (pp. 51-62)
10. Evaluate whether age (chapter 11) is a valid example for explication or an example of the malleability of language.

18. Friday, October 23: Building Theory

Shoemaker, Tankard, & Lasorsa, preface through chapter 6

Preface and chapter 1:

1. What does it mean to "build" theory?
2. Critique the authors' assertion (p. 3) that the scientific method does not differ substantially between the physical and social sciences, and evaluate how that presumption would apply to theory-building.

Chapter 2:

1. What are the differences among a construct, concept, and variable, and why can a concept never be measured completely (p. 28)?
2. What distinguishes a dependent variable from an independent variable?
3. What are the four types of variables?
4. Why do the authors assert (p. 22) that theory building is best done with continuous-level variables?
5. What are the types of validity and why do they matter?

Chapter 3:

1. When would you use a hypothesis? A research question? An assumption? A proposition?
2. Why is parsimony important in building theory?

Chapter 4:

1. What do the authors mean by “theoretical linkages”?
2. Does it matter whether research statements such as hypotheses are sprinkled through a literature review or grouped at the end of the lit review?
3. Most statistical tests presume a linear relationship between variables. Is that a fair assumption?

Chapter 5:

1. How can a theoretical statement with three variables be more powerful than one with two variables?
2. What are the types of three-variable relationships?

Chapter 6:

1. Four or more variables often result in models, such as on page 101. Why are models valuable in building theory?
2. Why is multiple regression important to use with four or more variables?

Chapter 7:

1. What makes Lasswell’s pithy statement (“who says what in which channel to whom with what effect?”) a model?
2. What are the primary functions of a model?
3. What are the steps in building a model?

Chapter 8:

1. What is the proper role of creativity in science?
2. Which of the authors’ creativity techniques (p. 150) seem most relevant to your research?

Chapter 9:

1. Apply the authors’ 10 steps to building theory (p. 170) to your own research interest and describe how those steps can help you improve your conceptualization.
2. Of the various methods listed to evaluate theory, which is the most scientific? Which would you guess is used the most often? If those are not the same, what does that say about the state of building mass communication theory?

Appendix A & Appendix B:

1. Hint: these appendixes can be very useful in writing research papers.

19. Wednesday, October 28: Models

PDF: Baron, R.M., & Kenny, D.A. (1986). The moderator-mediator variable distinction in social psychological research: conceptual, strategic, and statistical considerations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 51(6), 1173-1182.

Study questions:

1. What is the difference between a moderator and a mediator?

2. Without getting lost in the details, what types of statistical tests are useful to measure a moderator? A mediator?

PDF: Bucy, E.P., & Tao, C.C. (2007). The mediated moderation model of interactivity. *Media Psychology*, 9(3), 647-672. doi: 10.1080/15213260701283269

Study questions:

1. Why does the placement of the moderator matter?
2. Note how the model is built on a typology (p. 648) and explication. Why are both explication and a typology important for this paper?

PDF: Puntoni, S., Schroeder, J.E., & Ritson, M (2010). Meaning matters: Polysemy in advertising. *Journal of Advertising*, 39(2), 51-64. doi: 10.2753/JOA0091-3367390204

Study questions:

1. How do the authors make a case for their theoretical paper?
2. What kind of model is offered in this paper?
3. How do propositions differ from hypotheses?

PDF: Hallahan, K. (2001). The dynamics of issues activation and response: An issues processes model. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 13(1), 27-59. doi: 10.1207/S1532754XJPRR1301_3

Study questions:

1. Despite the lack of data, this paper has become influential in public relations research. What does this paper offer that made it so important?
2. How does this model differ from those in the other two papers?
3. How does this paper offer a “so what” for the proposed model?

PDF: Riddle, K. (2014). A theory of vivid media violence. *Communication Theory*, 24(3), 291-310. doi:10.1111/comt.12040

Study questions:

1. Is this new theory of vivid media violence a new theory or a restatement? If the former, how does the author justify this new theory? If the latter, what would the author have needed to do differently in order to build a new theory?
2. In the model (p. 298), label the following: independent variable(s), dependent variable(s), mediator(s), and moderator(s).
3. What distinctive contribution does the author make toward mass communication theory?

PDF: Squiers, L., Peinado, S., Berkman, N., Boudewyns, V., & McCormack, L. (2012). The health literacy skills framework. *Journal of Health Communication*, 17, 30-54. doi: 10.1080/10810730.2012.713442

Study questions:

1. What is the primary problem the authors seek to solve with this paper and why does it matter?
2. How do the authors determine which variables to include in their model?

3. The authors chose a linear model that excludes “ecological influences” listed at the bottom of Figure 2. Which of these would you have included in the model, and how would a redrawn model look? (Note: This would make an excellent question for a qualifying exam.)
4. What latent variables are missing here? Which ones would you include?

20. Friday, October 30: Typologies

PDF: Kalyanaraman, S., & Sundar, S.S. (2008). Portrait of the portal as a metaphor: Explicating web portals for communication research. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 85(2), 239-256. doi: 10.1177/107769900808500202

Study questions:

1. How do the authors justify the use of metaphor as an organizing tool?
2. How does Table 1 advance the typology?

PDF: Domingo, D., & Heinonen, A. (2008). Weblogs and journalism: A typology to explore the blurring boundaries. *Nordicom Review*, 29(1), 3-15.

Study questions:

1. Although this paper is a bit dated, how does its typology contribute to academic understanding today?
2. The suggestions for future research are a bit thin and could have benefitted from testable propositions. Write two propositions this paper could have advanced.

PDF: Holbert, R.L. (2005). A typology for the study of entertainment television and politics. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 49(3), 436-453. doi: 10.1177/0002764205279419

Study questions

1. How does this paper’s typology differ from those of the other two papers?
2. Does this paper flow from a theoretical base or does it create theory?