

MMC 6400: Mass Communication Theory and the Digital World Fall 2014 Graduate Course

Master of Arts in Mass Communication, Specialization in Social Media
College of Journalism and Communications
University of Florida

Instructor: Jennifer Braddock, Ph.D.

Skype: drjbraddock

Twitter: @drjbraddock

email: jbraddock@ufl.edu

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 past 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 a final group 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 Sakai as PDFs or as a link to online materials.

Assignments

Lecture Discussion Posts (LDP) (60 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 Sakai, 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 TWELVE (12) LDPs this semester and each one is worth FIVE (5) points.

Lecture Discussion Posts (LDPs) Rubric					
0	1	2	3	4	5
No Post is written or posts includes plagiarized content (all outside content must be in quotations or student will receive a '0')	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.	The post fails to meet the word count requirement but <i>does</i> respond to all questions posted (or vice versa). The responses however, are not well presented or well thought out. Ideas are not organized nor do they offer something new to the discussion. There may be several grammatical or spelling errors or outside content is not appropriately cited.	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.	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.	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.

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 11:55 pm EST**. Create your post in Sakai, under the Discussion section (see left side toolbar).

Reading Reaction Post (RRP)

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 Sakai 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, 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, students will include at the end of their own post 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 the class (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 Sakai. RRs are due no later than **Sunday at 11:55 PM EST** each week. Students will then respond to at least TWO other students' RRQs no later than **Wednesday at 11:55 PM.** (This gives you approximately three days between your making your RRP (Sunday) and responding on other students' RRs to answer their RRQs.) You will have until the following Sunday at 11:55 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) RRs 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 12 assigned RRs (with RRQs) (one in each module) and they will be worth five points each. Create your post in Sakai, 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>

Reading Reaction Posts (RRPs) Grading Rubric					
0	1	2	3	4	5
No Post is written or post includes plagiarized content (all content must be appropriately cited or student will receive a '0')	The post fails to meet the word count requirement. The post does synthesize the material. The post is not well organized and fails to draw connections between the content of the readings and current applications and/or does not contain discussion question/responses for colleagues. There are many spelling or grammar errors or content is not appropriately cited.	The post fails to meet the word count requirement but <i>does</i> synthesize the material (or vice versa). The synthesis however, is not well presented or well thought out. Ideas are not organized nor do they offer something new to the discussion. There may be several grammatical or spelling errors or content is not appropriately cited. Or student fails to post/respond to 2 questions or follow-up with discourse where applicable.	The post meets the word count requirement and synthesizes the readings. The level of response is average with disorganized ideas or the ideas are not well presented. There may be grammatical or spelling errors as well, or content is not appropriately cited and/or student fails to post/respond to 2 questions or follow-up with discourse where applicable.	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. Content is cited appropriately (Ex. "According to Servaes(2006)..."). Post either does not meet requirement for word count or has spelling/grammatical errors. Post includes questions and student responds to two other questions and continues the discourse where applicable.	Post is accurate, relevant and well written. The student addresses all assigned readings/videos with reflective ideas that have substance and depth. Ideas are original and offer something new to the discussion. Content is cited appropriately (Ex. "According to Servaes(2006)..."). Post meets requirements for word count and is without grammatical or spelling errors. Students pose and thoughtfully respond to at least 2 questions from other students and continue the discourse where applicable.

Mini-Module Assignments (MMA) (80 pts.)

These assignments are spread throughout the course 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 within the module itself on the Course Modules page in Sakai. 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 11:55 pm EST of the week assigned (with the exception of the Twitter Party Mini-Module Assignment which is TBD but takes place during week 12). Rubrics (where applicable) are available with each MMA in the Assignments tab of Sakai.

Self-Reflection Paper (100 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 2b 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](#) for assistance with APA-style writing.

Group Project Assignment

Students will be randomly assigned by the TA to groups* of three to four colleagues depending on the class size to complete this assignment. As a group, students will choose one theoretical perspective or paradigm and then utilize that perspective to analyze and evaluate the mass communication strategies of two organizations/companies/entities. Students will rank order theory options, but will be assigned a theory by the Instructor/TA. ****The goal of this project is to APPLY the theoretical perspective in terms of how the two companies your group chooses might have used your theory in the past, or how the companies might use it in the future; all within the context of the digital world.****

-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
Theory of the group's choosing (Requires instructor approval, no need to rank order if not using this option)

Theory choices should be ranked in order of preference by the group and emailed by one individual from each group to the instructor no later than **Sunday, 9/7/14 at 11:55 PM EST**. Preference will be given by the date I receive the email followed by the ranking of topics. Groups that fail to meet the deadline will be assigned at will. Topic assignments will be posted in Sakai.

These are the components:

1) Group Paper: ONE (1) ten- to twelve-page (10-12) paper, APA style, double-spaced, 1" margins, 12 pt. Times New Roman Font. Project rubric provided in the Course Modules section of Sakai under 'Module 2.'

2) Group Presentation with Slides: Groups may select to audio record their 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 company you chose as your main exemplar (10-15 slides).

3) Peer evaluations: Will count for 20% of each individual group member's grade, form provided in Sakai, Module 10. As a result, each student in a group may not receive the same grade for this project. It behooves students to work together as a team, to each pull their own weight and put together the best project possible.

4) 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.

5) Group Discussion question: Each **group** 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 (the Presentation should include similar information)

I. 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. (2-3 pg.)

III. Identify and describe at least two (2) or more companies/entities/organizations/individuals whose use (past and/or present) of mass media (including digital applications) provides examples of your theory or portions of your theory in action. Your companies should be active in the digital world either via social media, creation or use of digital technologies, etc. 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. (1 pg.)

IV. Apply the theory—Show how the theory your group chose applies to mass communication today, particularly in the case of the company you chose in section III. You can include traditional media, communication technologies, social media, computer-mediated communication or any other mass communication context we've discussed over the course of the semester in which to situate your discussion. (2-3 pgs.)

V. Compare and Contrast the two (2) companies/organizations/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). (2 pgs.)

VI. Extend the theory(ies)—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.)

This project has multiple components and cooperation among group members is integral to successful completion of the various tasks. All components (paper, presentation, evaluations, reading assignments and discussion questions) from ALL GROUPS must be **uploaded into Sakai no later 11:55 pm EST on 10/23/14** into **Module 10**. Uploads from all groups at the same time will eliminate issues with plagiarism, questions of copying ideas, etc. To upload your project components, go to Sakai, 'Assignment' and choose 'Group Project.' See the [OWL at Purdue](#) for assistance with APA-style writing.

*If group work poses too much of a challenge, individual students may elect to complete this assignment on their own. Please note no concessions will be given and individual work will be assessed in the same manner as group work.

Deadlines for the Group Project

9/8/14, 11:55 PM EST: TOPIC EMAIL: Email ranked topic selections to the instructor and TA. Topic preference given in order of email receipt, followed by rank order of topics.

9/15/14 11:55 PM EST: DIVISION OF RESPONSIBILITIES EMAIL: Email the assignment of each component of the project by individual group member (who's doing what) to the instructor and TA along with a timeline/plan for completion (informal, can simply be a list of dates for each portion leading up to the final deadline).

10/23/14 11:55 PM EST: ALL GROUP PROJECTS DUE IN SAKAI. This includes presentation materials, paper, peer evaluations, reading assignments, and discussion questions. **Upload all materials from ALL groups into Module 10.**

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

Assignments	Point Value
Lecture Discussion Posts (LDP) (12)	60
Reading Reaction Posts (RRP) (12)	60
Module Mini-Assignments (4)	80
Self-reflection paper (1)	100
Group Presentation (1)	200
Total Points	500

Modules

Module/Week	Topics Covered	Assignments
Module 1, 8/25-8/31: Introduction, What makes good theory?	Introduction to the Course and Syllabus Defining the Digital World What makes good theory?	Weekly Post(s): Introductions Post; Lecture Discussion Post (LDP), Reading Reaction Post (RRP)
Module 2, 9/1-9/7: Mass Communication Theory, An overview, Pt. 1	Mass Communication Theory Overview: Early Trends	Lecture Discussion Post (LDP), Reading Reaction Post (RRP), Topic Rank Email Rank due to Instructor and TA by 9/7 at 11:55 PM EST (assigned in order of receipt/ranking)
Module 3, 9/8-9/14: Mass Communication Theory, An Overview, Pt. 2	Mass Communication Theory Overview: Early Trends, Cont.	LDP, RRP, Division of Responsibilities Email due to Instructor and TA by 9/14 11:55 PM EST
Module 4, 9/15-9/21: Theory and Application: Individual Perspectives	Uses and Gratifications Theory, Information Processing Theory, Media Systems Dependency	LDP, RRP, Mini-Module Assignment (MMA) #1: DUE by 9/21 by 11:55 PM EST.
Module 5, 9/22-9/28- 10/12: Theory and Application: Individual Perspectives (Cont.)	Elaboration Likelihood Model, Media Richness Theory, Social Presence Theory and Conversational Maxims	LDP, RRP
Module 6, 9/29-10/5: Theory and Application: Relationships, the Self, and CMC	Social Presentation Theory, Impression Management, Social Information Processing Theory	LDP, RRP MMA #2 The Retweet DUE by 10/5 11:55 PM EST.
Module 7, 10/6- 10/12: Theory and Application: Sociological	Gatekeeping, Agenda Setting, Priming, Framing, Social Responsibility	LDP, RRP

Module 7, 10/6-10/12: Theory and Application: Sociological Perspectives	Gatekeeping, Agenda Setting, Priming, Framing, Social Responsibility	LDP, RRP
Module 8, 10/13-10/19: Mass Communication theory and society	Diffusion of Innovations, Knowledge Gap, Spiral of Silence, Cultivation Theory	LDP, RRP MMA #3 War, Spiral of Silence DUE by 10/19 11:55 PM EST.
Module 9, 10/20-10/26: Intercultural Theories **10/23 11:55 PM EST: ALL GROUP PRESENTATIONS DUE IN SAKAI**	Intercultural Communication Theories and Digital media	LDP, RRP, **10/23 11:55 PM EST: ALL GROUP PRESENTATIONS DUE IN SAKAI**
Module 10, 10/27-11/2:	Lecture/Readings/Posts: Group Project Assignment	LDP, RRP
Module 11, 11/3-11/9:	Lecture/Readings/Posts: Group Project Assignment	LDP, RRP
Module 12, 11/10-11/16: The future of mass communication theory	Mass Communication Theory and the Digital World: Eyes on the Future and Changing Landscapes, TBD (covering topics not chosen from group project)	LDP, RRP, MMA #4: Twitter Party #UFMassComm [TBD]

Grading Scale

A	93-100	465-500
A-	90-92.9	450-464
B+	87-89.9	435-449
B	83-86.9	415-434
B-	80-82.9	400-414
C+	77-79.9	385-399
C	73-76.9	365-384
C-	70-72.9	350-364

D+	67-69.9	335-349
D	63-66.9	315-334
D-	60-62.9	300-314
E	Below 60	0-299

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. 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 assignments and Group 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 in late will receive a 1-point (out of five possible points) deduction for each business day they are late.

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 responses 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>

Getting Help:

For issues with technical difficulties for E-learning in Sakai, please contact the UF Help Desk at:

- Learning-support@ufl.edu
- (352) 392-HELP - select option 2
- <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> for:

- Counseling and Wellness resources
 - <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> 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>

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>

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>.

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.