

MCOM 3390 - Mass Communication Theory

MW 4:05-5:30 p.m., CAS 106

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Course Description: This course is an overview of mass communication theories emphasizing their development and application in practicum and research. Theories will include those concerning effects, audience psychology and sociological aspects of mass media.

Student Learning Outcomes: By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Understand a broad range of approaches to mass communication theory and models.
2. Describe the ideas that influence the practice and development of communication systems (i.e., print, radio, television, internet, etc.).
3. Develop competence in library research for literature specific to mass communication theory and research.
4. Analyze key concepts and issues in mass communication theory.
5. Determine their own positions concerning media influence and management and review practical applications of those theories.
6. Identify the epistemological, ontological, and axiological placement of the various mass communication theories.
7. Describe the relationship between theory, ethics, and practice.

Course Requirements

1. Required Readings/Media Consumption:

- A. As assigned in class – will be provided on Canvas

1. Required Programs/Software/Technology

- A. Microsoft Word or comparable word processing software.
 1. You may use Google Docs or Pages but your assignment **MUST** be exported to a .DOC or .DOCX format before submission.
 2. You **may not** utilize notepad or notes on your phone. If you submit a screenshot of your notepad on your phone or tablet, you will receive a zero for the assignment.

Evaluation and Grade Calculation -

Assignments	70%
Final Paper	30%
Total	100%
Percent	Letter Grade
90% - 100%	A
80% - 89%	B
70-79%	C
60-69%	D
59% and below	F

1. **Assignments (70%) SLOs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, & 7** - During the semester, students will complete a variety of discussions, in-class activities, and knowledge checks. The purpose of the discussions is to give students an opportunity to explore their personal thoughts on and understanding of the class material and compare/contrast their thoughts to those of their classmates. Each discussion post and required responses will be required to be a minimum length, utilize sources, and adhere to the posted topic. The purpose of the in-class activities is to give students the opportunity to utilize various theories in real-world situations. The knowledge checks are to give students a final opportunity to review the weekly material and test their understanding of the material before moving onto the next topic
2. **Final Paper (30%) SLOs – 3, 4, 5, 6, & 7** - In this final paper, students will select one mass communication theory and apply it to a real-world media phenomenon such as a trend, campaign, controversy, series, or media event. The project allows students to demonstrate their ability to explain theoretical concepts clearly, evaluate relevant scholarship, and analyze the ethical, social, and audience-based implications of media using a theory-based lens. Through structured research and critical thinking, students will explore how theory can help explain media practices and effects, and reflect on the continued relevance of communication theory in today's media landscape.

Class Policies and Expectations

1. Classroom Policies and Expectations

- A. Work hard - learning requires constant reading, researching, thinking, discussing, and working with your classmates and me. Everyone has something important to contribute. My job is to present new information and prepare a climate in which you can contribute your own special knowledge. Your job is to be prepared to contribute.
- B. Participate – you must be an active part of the course to succeed. You will also have to give an effort outside of class.
- C. Treat each other with respect and display common classroom courtesies.
 1. You are responsible for your attitude and how you treat others. I will not tolerate name calling, fighting, students belittling each other for differing opinions, etc. I expect you to act like adults, show each other respect, and

to challenge yourself and each other to learn/understand opinions you may not agree with. If you are not treating individuals with respect or are causing a distraction, you will be asked to leave the classroom.

- D. The use of cellphones, tablets, or other device-use during class times is not allowed unless the need is specified by me (i.e. during an activity). You are not permitted to use cellphones for note taking, checking social media, view/work on material for another course, or simply browse the internet during class times.
1. If you must take a phone call, please leave the classroom before you answer the phone. If you must respond to a message, do it quickly and discreetly. Abuse of this will result in you losing this privilege.
 2. If the only device you have to take notes on is your phone, I will provide you with a notebook to take notes during class.
- E. I use Canvas and email to communicate, post assignments and readings, present feedback and provide a space for you to communicate with your classmates. I expect you to check both daily and stay aware of what is coming up.
- F. Communicate - If you have a problem with anything throughout the semester... getting an assignment in on time, needing to be absent from a class, getting your book, checking out equipment, or anything I'm doing as a professor... talk to me about it. I cannot help you or fix the problem if I am unaware of it.

2. Attendance Policy

- A. Attendance is crucial to student success and students are expected to attend class each time it meets. Lecture material is provided on Canvas, but the lectures go beyond what is in the material. If you do not attend class, you do not gain all the information needed to meet the SLOs. Additionally, students will have a variety of assignments that are started in class. If you miss class but your absence is not considered an excused absence, you will miss participation points on the assignment.
1. **Excused absences include:**
 - Illness supported by a doctor's note.
 - Death in family
 - Documentable emergencies (i.e., car trouble / invoice from mechanic)
 - Religious event that the student has given notice for.
 - School sponsored event that the student has given notice for.
 - Other situations will be handled on a case-by-case basis.
 2. **What is not considered an excused absence:**
 - Work
 - Trip out of the area
 - Oversleeping
 - Appointments that are made after the start of the semester and are not for life/health-threatening reasons.
 - Running errands for yourself or someone else
 - Completing work for or participating in another on-campus organization
 - Forgetting that you had class
 - Anything else that isn't a documentable emergency.

3. Assignment Policies

- A. Assignments have deadlines and these deadlines need to be met. It is your responsibility to utilize time outside of class in an effective manner so you can ensure that you submit each assignment before the due date and time.
 - a. For many assignments, not all, the submission folder will stay open for one week after the due date. Any assignments turned in after the due date will receive a point per day deduction. Specific point values that will be deducted each day can be found on the assignment overviews on Canvas. It is your responsibility to know when the assignment is due for full credit, when the assignment closes, and the number of points that will be deducted each day for late submissions. Assignments will not be accepted after this final date.
- B. Assignments and due dates may be changed at the instructor's discretion with fair notice to students.
- C. I will not accept assignments via email unless there are issues with Canvas and the email includes your assignment and a screenshot of the Canvas malfunction.
- D. Merely completing all assignments does not guarantee that you will pass the course. You must put forth effort and show an understanding of the material to earn a satisfactory grade.
- E. I will not accept screenshots of assignments. Unless otherwise indicated, all assignments must be typed, formatted to be a .DOC or .DOCX (Pages, Google Drive, and other online word processors must be exported to this specific format), and submitted via Canvas.
- F. Assignments will be discussed in class, students will be given a course schedule, Canvas includes a syllabus function that outlines upcoming due dates, due dates can be seen listed on each assignment under the assignment tab in Canvas, assignment due dates can be added to your Canvas calendar, and each due date will be listed in the course modules. There are SEVERAL ways to determine what is coming up due in class. It is your responsibility to be aware of what is coming up due and to stay on top of your assignments.
- G. It is your responsibility to ensure that your assignments are being submitted correctly to Canvas by the due date and time. If an assignment appears to be not submitted beyond the assignment closing, it will receive a zero. If you do not regularly check your grades or check Canvas for technical errors, there is little that can be done at the end of the semester. If you do experience technical difficulties submitting assignments, you must email me before the assignment closes.
- H. All assignments will be checked by plagiarism and AI detection software.
- I. Students will adhere to the highest standards of academic honesty. Plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated. A student who is caught doing either will earn a "0" for that assignment and will be subject to academic and disciplinary action. If a student is caught a second time, they will automatically fail the course.
 - a. In addition to UT Tyler's Student Conduct and Discipline policy, plagiarism/cheating includes:

- i. Self-plagiarism - the use of papers or other materials previously submitted elsewhere. I expect you to submit work created specifically for this class during this semester.
- ii. AI generated content – the purpose of my assignments is for you to explore your understanding of the material on a deeper level, not have a computer explore it for you.

1. UT Tyler AI Statement

A. UT Tyler is committed to exploring and using artificial intelligence (AI) tools as appropriate for the discipline and task undertaken. We encourage discussing AI tools' ethical, societal, philosophical, and disciplinary implications. All uses of AI should be acknowledged as this aligns with our commitment to honor and integrity, as noted in UT Tyler's Honor Code. Faculty and students must not use protected information, data, or copyrighted materials when using any AI tool. Additionally, users should be aware that AI tools rely on predictive models to generate content that may appear correct but is sometimes shown to be incomplete, inaccurate, taken without attribution from other sources, and/or biased. Consequently, an AI tool should not be considered a substitute for traditional approaches to research. You are ultimately responsible for the quality and content of the information you submit. Misusing AI tools that violate the guidelines specified for this course (see below) is considered a breach of academic integrity. The student will be subject to disciplinary actions as outlined in UT Tyler's Academic Integrity Policy.

1. Students can use AI platforms to help prepare for assignments and projects (i.e., brainstorming) and to revise and edit their work (i.e., identify flaws in reasoning, spot confusing or underdeveloped paragraphs, or correct citations).
2. Students may not use AI to generate/create work for submission. All work submitted must come from the student. Any work generated by AI will receive a zero.
3. While AI can be a good starting point for research, the AI platform utilized does not count as an academic source because it can be incorrect or incomplete. It will not be accepted as a source for citing information.

Course Schedule

Date	Agenda	Due today
Week One		
Aug. 24	<u>Course introduction</u> : Syllabus, schedule, etc.	

W Aug. 26	<u>Topic:</u> Understanding & Evaluating Mass Communication Theory Assign: <u>Discussion:</u> Initial Media Theory Reflection due on Wed., 9/2 <u>Assignment:</u> Knowledge Check #1 due Wed., 9/2	
Week Two		
M Aug. 31	<u>Topic:</u> Understanding & Evaluating Mass Communication Theory	
W 9/2	<u>Topic:</u> Origins of Media Theory	<u>Discussion:</u> Initial Media Theory Reflection <u>Assignment:</u> Knowledge Check #1
Week Three		
M 9/7	Labor Day - No class meeting	
W 9/10	<u>Topic:</u> Shifting Perspectives on Influence Assign: <u>Discussion:</u> “Create-A-Theory” due Mon., 9/14 <u>Assignment:</u> Knowledge Check #2 due Wed., 9/17	
Week Four		
M 9/14	<u>Topic:</u> Shifting Perspectives on Influence	<u>Discussion:</u> “Create-A-Theory”
W 9/16	<u>Topic:</u> Research paper Assign: <u>Major:</u> Paper pitch due Fri., 9/25 <u>Major:</u> Paper check-in due Fri., 10/23 <u>Major:</u> Research paper due Fri., 12/4 <u>Discussion:</u> Research paper due Fri., 12/4 Assign: <u>Discussion:</u> Analyzing Propaganda due Wed., 9/23 <u>Assignment:</u> Knowledge Check #3 due Wed., 9/23	<u>Assignment:</u> Knowledge Check #2

Week Five		
M 9/21	<u>Topic:</u> Audience Theories	
W 9/23	<u>Topic:</u> Audience Theories Assign: <u>Major:</u> Paper pitch second submission due Fri., 10/2	<u>Major:</u> Paper pitch <u>Discussion:</u> Analyzing Propaganda <u>Assignment:</u> Knowledge Check #3
Week Six		
M 9/28	<u>Topic:</u> Audience Theories Assign: <u>Discussion:</u> Audience Survey due Wed., 10/7 <u>Assignment:</u> Knowledge Check #4 due Wed., 10/7	
W 9/30	<u>Topic:</u> Contemporary Theories of the Effect of Media	
F 10/2		<u>Major:</u> Paper pitch second submission
Week Seven		
M 10/5	<u>Topic:</u> Contemporary Theories of the Effect of Media	
W 10/7	<u>Topic:</u> Contemporary Theories of the Effect of Media Assign: <u>Discussion:</u> Memes due on Wed., 10/14 <u>Assignment:</u> Knowledge Check #5 due Wed., 10/14	<u>Discussion:</u> Audience Survey <u>Assignment:</u> Knowledge Check #4

Week Eight		
M 10/12	<u>Topic:</u> Critical & Cultural Media Theories	
W 10/14	<u>Topic:</u> Critical & Cultural Media Theories	<u>Discussion:</u> Memes <u>Assignment:</u> Knowledge Check #5
Week Nine		
M 10/19	<u>Topic:</u> Critical & Cultural Media Theories Assign: <u>Discussion:</u> Media Analysis due on Wed., 10/28 <u>Assignment:</u> Knowledge Check #6 due Wed., 10/28	
W 10/21	Workday for final paper – No class meeting	
Week Ten		
M 10/26	<u>Topic:</u> Cognition & Meaning-Making	
W 10/28	<u>Topic:</u> Cognition & Meaning-Making	<u>Discussion:</u> Media Analysis <u>Assignment:</u> Knowledge Check #6

M 11/2	<u>Topic:</u> Cognition & Meaning-Making <u>Assign:</u> <u>Discussion:</u> Meaning-Making due on Wed., 11/11 <u>Assignment:</u> Knowledge Check #7 due Wed., 11/11	
W 11/4	Workday for final paper – No class meeting	
Week Twelve		
M 11/09	<u>Topic:</u> Media & Cognitive Development <u>Assign:</u> <u>Discussion:</u> Media “Rabbit Hole” due Wed., 11/18 <u>Assignment:</u> Knowledge Check #8 due Wed., 11/18	
W 11/11	<u>Topic:</u> Media & Cognitive Development	<u>Discussion:</u> Meaning-Making <u>Assignment:</u> Knowledge Check #7
Week Thirteen		
M 11/16	<u>Topic:</u> Media & Cognitive Development	
W 11/18	<u>Topic:</u> Time, Space, Memory, and Media (Dr. Britt’s Mediated Temporal Consciousness Theory)	<u>Discussion:</u> Media “Rabbit Hole” <u>Assignment:</u> Knowledge Check #8
Week Fourteen		
Thanksgiving break – No class meetings Monday, 11/23 – Friday 11/27		
Week Fifteen		
M 11/30	Paper Workshops	
W 12/2	Paper Workshops	
Su 12/6		<u>Major:</u> Research paper <u>Discussion:</u> Research paper
Week Sixteen		
Finals Week – No class meeting		

