

School of Communication
Com 4430: Media Theory and Social Change
Spring 2007

Tuesday and Thursday 2:00- 3.15 P.M. in Room Dunbar 3204

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Or just walk in, if I am in my office

This course examines the role of mass media in modern societies and the effects of media institutions and messages on individuals, communities, and society. Media are an important part of modern society and our lives. So how do media affect us, change our relationships, and impact our attitudes? There is a great deal of interest in the answer to this question. Advertisers would like to know if their messages can influence the audience. Broadcasters would like to know what they should do to be effective. As consumers, we would like to know how we are being influenced by broadcasters and advertisers. The impact of sex and violence in television has been a serious concern of parents and community leaders. But the answer is not simple. Scholars who addressed the question have come up with many, often conflicting, answers. The purpose of this course is preview the theory, research and opinions on how media affect the society; and/or how society shapes the media.

Textbook

Mass communication theory: Foundations, ferment and future by Stanley J. Baran and Dennis K. Davis. Fifth Edition.

You are expected to read the assigned chapter before coming to class each day. A tentative schedule of reading assignments is attached, but modifications and additions to this schedule may be announced in class. It is important that you study (not just read or underline) each reading carefully before coming to class on the day for which it is assigned. The midterm and the final exam will assume a detailed knowledge and understanding of the textbook.

Try to relate the readings and class discussions to your own personal experience and observations on how media affect people. Keep the theories discussed in class at the back of your mind as you watch television, listen to radio and read the newspaper. Ask yourself if your experiences confirm the theories

proposed. Some of these theories are 50+ years old but they reappear in the pronouncements of scholars and leaders even today. When you read a critique of media by politicians or scholars, examine the underlying theoretical assumptions of their position. You will often find that they are taking off from one of these 'old' media theories.

Short Essays

During the semester you will be asked to write several short papers that relate to the theories covered in the textbook and/or other questions. Topics/questions for the papers will be handed out on each Thursday and papers are due on each Tuesday at the start of class. The paper is 400-450 words. The papers must address the question given, brief and to the point. They must be typed and stapled. If you draw on outside sources, proper citation is required. Proofread before you submit. Late submissions will be penalized by one letter grade. I will not access papers a week after the due date. Your grade for the paper will be based on the quality of content. You get an A if you present new information. You get a B if you used only material presented in the textbook or lectures. You get a C for writing a paper that is not supported by any theory. You get a D for writing the paper. You will have an opportunity to debate and refute the positions proposed by others in the class.

Attendance

Simply put, attendance is required. Two excused absences are allowed. You will lose half of your attendance grade (5%) for your third absence and the other half (5%) for the fourth absence. If you have to miss a class for any reason, consider it your responsibility to catch up with the material discussed in that lecture. Be on time for class. For every two times you are late for more than 5 minutes, you will be marked as absent for one class.

Exams

There will be two exams - a midterm and the final. Usually, there will be roughly 20 questions that call for short, one paragraph answers. The exams will be based on all topics discussed in the class and textbooks. Questions that call for short, one-paragraph answers are my normal style. I will give you a study guide with 50 questions before the mid-term and another with 100 questions before the comprehensive final exam.

Academic integrity

You are responsible for making yourself aware of and understanding the policies and procedures in the Undergraduate (pp. 271-272) [Graduate (pp. 24-26)] Catalog that pertain to Academic Integrity. These policies include cheating, fabrication, falsification and forgery, multiple submission, plagiarism, complicity and computer misuse. If there is reason to believe you have been involved in academic dishonesty, you will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs. You will be given the opportunity to review the charge(s). If you believe

you are not responsible, you will have the opportunity for a hearing. You should consult with me if you are uncertain about an issue of academic honesty prior to the submission of an assignment or test.

Classroom etiquette

- Please plan on being in class 5 minutes before class and be ready for class.
- Please turn off your cell phones and beepers before you enter the class.
- Please get a good night's sleep; don't expect to catch up on sleep during class.
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Evaluation

The final grade will be calculated using the following scale:

Attendance	10%
Short Papers	20%
Midterm exam	30%
Final Exam	40%

Grading Scale

94-100 -	A	(4.0)
88-93 -	BA	(3.5)
82-87 -	B	(3.0)
76-81 -	CB	(2.5)
70-75 -	C	(2.0)
65-69 -	DC	(1.5)
60-64 -	D	(1.0)
Less than 60 -	E	(Failing grade)

Course Web Page

There is course web page that you should consult frequently. Discussion questions, announcements, exam grades, etc. are posted on the web page. The address of the course web page is

<http://homepages.wmich.edu/~kayany/masschange>

Tentative Schedule

Week 1: 09th & 11th January
CHAPTER 1: Introduction Media theory,
Foundations of social science theory

Week 2: 16th, & 18th January
CHAPTER 2: Mass Communication Theory

Week 3: 23th, & 25th January
CHAPTER 3: The Rise of Mass Society Theory

Week 4: 30th January & 1st February
CHAPTER 4: Age of Propaganda

Week 5: 6th & 8th February
CHAPTER 5: Normative Theories

Week 6: 13th & 15th February
CHAPTER 6: Limited Effects Theory

Week 7: 20th February
Review
22nd February – MIDTERM EXAM

Week 8: 6th & 8th March
CHAPTER 7: Middle-range Theories

Week 9: **Spring Break**

Week 10: 13th & 15th March
CHAPTER 8: Children, Systems, and Effects

Week 11: 20th & 22nd March
CHAPTER 9: Critical and Cultural Theories

Week 12: 27th & 29th March
CHAPTER 10: Media and Audiences

Week 13: 3rd & 5th April
CHAPTER 11: Media, Culture, and Society

Week 14: 10th & 12th April
CHAPTER 12: Seeking Consensus

Week 15: 17th & 19th April
Course Review

**COMPREHENSIVE FINAL EXAM On
Tuesday, April 25th 12:30 – 2:30 PM**