

Communication 7941 Fall 2017

Mass Communication and the Social System

Tu&Th 2:20PM-3:20PM, Derby Hall 3116

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

- “Mass Communication and Social System“ is an overview course that will introduce students to academic research and theories that pertain to the societal and social levels of mass communication content, processes, and effects.
- Given the diversity of areas that can be considered relevant for this domain, content will be tailored to the students’ interests--example theories and concepts include social identity, spiral of silence, knowledge gap, diffusion of innovation, media dependency, two-step flow, social support (& health), framing (on social/societal levels), as well as additional theories/concepts per students’ suggestions.
- Within these contexts, we will read both theoretical essays and empirical studies. Specific objectives of the course are to: 1) understand relevance of and gain knowledge/expertise in both classic and current research and theories that pertain to the societal and social levels of mass communication processes and effects, 2) Provide thoughtful discussion, critique, and extension of current theorizing and research, 3) Allow students to select concepts in the mass communication and society realm that they will explicate to advance theoretical and empirical work in this realm, 4) equip them with the skill-set and confidence (in critical and creative thinking) to venture off and to utilize novel applications in the mass communication and society context, including designing their own studies, 5) and develop projects aimed to advance research domain in theoretical and/or empirical ways, with the potential for publication.
- Each week, one session will be held in interactive lecture-style presentation of content coupled with seminar discussions of readings, and one session as research lab presentations & discussion of ideas on research projects and theory developments.
- Each meeting session will be 1 hour long. Students will post small assignments (reading responses and writing analyses), requiring about 20 minutes, as online activities prior to each session. This approach serves to keep you engaged with the readings and your own project through ‘ongoing’ involvement based on small-step assignments for good reading and writing practices.

Course Requirements and Grading

- Grading components: 1) Reading response postings for ‘lecture’ sessions, 2) in-class exams, 3) presentation on research project / theory development, 4) research project discussion contributions, submitted on ‘index cards’, 5) writing analysis postings, 6) research paper on planned research project or theory paper; 7) peer feedback points for activities in which students support each other’s research paper writing.

The maximum of regular points is 100. Standard OSU grading scheme for final grade is: 93--100 (A), 90--92.9 (A-), 87--89.9 (B+), 83--86.9 (B), 80--82.9 (B-), 77--79.9 (C+), 73--76.9 (C), 70--72.9 (C-), 67--69.9 (D+), 60--66.9 (D), Below 60 (E).

Learning goals	Activities	Grading Component	Points
Knowledge on theory and evidence, learn how to ‘conquer’ a new area	Instructor presentations, readings, Reading responses	Reading response postings, 2 pts each	1) 20 max (12 opportunities)
		2 in-class exams, each 10 pts max	2) 20 max
Skills in presenting research	Class presentation and discussion (on draft plans, to refine project through discussion)	Research presentations	3) 20 max
Skills in generating research ideas, designing projects	Research discussions & brainstorming	Submission of index cards	4) 8 max (9 opportunities)
Skills in conceptualizing and writing up research	Weekly writing analysis Formally write up one research project	Writing analysis postings	5) 8 max (9 opportunities)
		Research paper	6) 20 max
Assessing research ‘in the making’	Writing workshop	Providing peer reviewing	7) 4 max, 2 bonus possible
			Sum: 100 (2 bonus)

One session per week will consist of instructor presentation and discussion, the other session will be a student presentation (in ‘research lab’ style) and discussion, designed to encourage and refine students’ own theoretical and empirical projects. You should master the reading assignments and come to class prepared with questions, criticisms, and comments. As such, you should read the material with an eye for generating questions and discussion in class.

Readings

Readings are made available through permanent links to electronic holdings at the library or the class website available at carmen.osu.edu. The specific readings are listed with associated sessions, see schedule and list of references.

Reading Response Postings

Each week, you will post your reading notes (incl. comments, own ideas, questions, clarification needs) as reaction to the assigned readings. **Each reaction paper will be at least 100 words long and have three distinct, unique thoughts/comments/questions specific thoughts.** (An example for an overly generic comment or question would be 'What else could be examined with this theory/approach?' or 'I enjoyed the article' because you could ask/state this in response to any scholarly publication, even without reading it). To get you thinking along the right track, these questions may be related to:

- Concepts you find particularly relevant; how are they explicated?
- Is the use of concepts coherent? How well do theoretical concepts connect to empirical operationalizations?
- Portions of the readings you disagree with
- Broader theoretical issues raised by the readings
- Empirical and/or theoretical questions raised by the readings
- How the readings relate to or contradict previous readings or other research in the field

In your reaction, do not spend time summarizing the readings, but rather get right to your evaluations, comments, and critiques. In your reaction, you may wish to address the following:

- How does this theory/research overlap and diverge from others we have discussed (or those we haven't discussed)?
- Are there any flaws or inconsistencies in the studies and/or in the arguments being made?
- Are additional questions raised by the theory and/or research results?
- Are you convinced? Why or why not?
- What are the implications (practical or theoretical) of the conclusions reached by the authors?
- What future research is needed in this area? **Particularly, how can this theory apply to your research interest/area?**

All reading response posting must be posted to the Carmen discussion board by 11:00 am on the day of the related class meeting. Response postings will be evaluated based on the rules/guiding questions outlined above.

In the lecture-style session BEFORE your research presentation, you will NOT post a reading response and instead will post an informal summary of other students' postings, due at 2 pm that day (if you foresee time may not suffice, please get in touch with instructor).

Exams

There will be two exams, which may include multiple-choice, short-answer, and short essay questions. The exams serve to check on your knowledge and understanding of the class content, as well as another writing exercise.

Research Presentation and ‘Set’

Early in the semester, you will choose a topic that you will use for your class presentation and ultimately for your research paper. It is assumed that the topic will ‘evolve’ during the course of the semester, so it may change considerably.

The idea is that the students’ topics will relate to the topics in the ‘lecture-style’ sessions, such that a research presentation will follow the related ‘lecture-style’ session. At minimum, the topic needs to connect with mass communication and social system aspects.

You will take a first stab at the topic by selecting a ‘**set**’ of articles most closely related to your research interest or purpose, also early in the semester. You may extend this set or swap out articles, as you learn and think more about your research topic or redefine it.

Your ‘set’ of articles will also be the material that you work with for your ‘weekly writing analysis’ assignments, see below.

Your class presentation has several purposes: You will need to develop a distinct research purpose, aiming to fill a gap in the literature. As you work on your topic and your presentation, you will refine your ideas and extend your knowledge through further literature research and reading (self-guided or with your instructor’s input). Your class presentation will be an exercise in engaging other scholars with your topic, to pick their brains and to gather more ideas and ways to look at your research topic. The time frame to do so will be 1 hour (realistically representing a colloquium meeting or a job talk).

During that time frame, you should factor in time for questions and discussion. Your classmates will be encouraged to provide input and ideas. A good approach to accommodate the fact that sometimes more, or sometimes less discussion will occur is to have optional presentation blocks toward the end that you can, but don’t have to, include.

The grading of the presentation is specified in the grading rubric below.

Research Discussion Participation and Index Cards

Your grade in this course will, in part, be based on regular and thoughtful participation in seminar discussion. It is not enough for you to merely come to class or to do the readings. Rather, you must actively discuss the readings and engage in discussion with the instructor and other students. Each student should come to class ready to discuss the readings and raise questions about them. To this end, each student will contribute to the development of a classroom environment where ideas are examined from various perspectives. In combination with regular and thoughtful participation, please also treat others with respect while they are

speaking. This means giving them/me your full and undivided attention. While I understand the use of laptops in class for taking notes and/or referring to assigned readings, they should not be used for anything else, under any circumstances, during class. Please do not check your email, send email, work on other academic material, or do anything unrelated to this seminar while we are holding class.

In each of the sessions where students present research paper / project plans, you will be asked to submit an **index card** with your thoughts, comments, and ideas – this serves to encourage you to spell out your contributions, have you practice creative and analytical thinking ‘on the go,’ and help your fellow students with their projects. The index cards will be reviewed by both the presenting student and by your instructor. It should explicate three distinct, unique thoughts/comments/questions specific thoughts in response to the session’s presentation.

Research Papers

In a 12 - 24 page research paper, you should address an original aspect of mass communication, involving social/societal aspects. You will have several options: You can choose between a concept explication paper, a research proposal, or a literature review. Your paper should address a gap in the literature on a particular topic and/or theory in this realm of mass communication science. I encourage you to select a paper topic you are interested in pursuing further after the semester is over.

You may collaborate with another student in this class on the paper. However, these groups must include no more than two people. Collaborating on the research paper is a great way to pool resources and to create a finished product that is even more likely to be ready to collect data and submit to a conference or journal. However, be aware that you will turn in one paper as a group and therefore share the same grade, so choose colleagues wisely.

The paper should follow standard APA formatting guidelines.

Your papers will be evaluated based on a grading rubric (included in this syllabus). Your paper should conclude with a set of testable hypotheses. For a research proposal, the appropriateness of your study designed to test those hypotheses will be considered.

At several points during the semester, you will be asked to report on your paper progress (topic selection, rationale, relevant related studies, hypotheses, and possibly the research design). You also will present your paper draft to the class and receive detailed “reviews.”

This paper also is an exercise in developing a theoretical argument and in scholarly writing. Weekly writing analysis assignments will assist you with working on the relevant skills and knowledge. ;

- To make the grading of the course papers transparent, a grading rubric is included in this syllabus and will be posted on Carmen.
- Upload to Carmen dropbox per deadline in timetable (upload time counts as submission time).

- Late submission penalty—1 pt per hour that has begun past submission deadline (except for documented emergencies).

Concept Explication Paper

Choose one larger concept or several related concepts in the realm of media psychology and explicate it/them (see Chaffee, 1991, for guidance on concept explication). This endeavor should involve definitions, theoretical embedding, and a review of existing empirical operationalizations. Both your own elaboration and careful use of literature will be important. Chaffee, S. H. (1991). *Communication concepts I: Explication* (pp. 1-42). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Theory Development Paper

Choose a topic for which you wish to develop/extend theory in the realm of media psychology—be sure to build on existing theory and clarify how your work extends prior theorizing. You may marry concepts/ideas from different theoretical frameworks in the interest of advancing theory. Both your own elaboration and careful use of literature will be important.

Reynolds, P. D. (2007). *A primer in theory construction*. Boston: Pearson.

Research Proposal Paper

Design a study that will advance our understanding of a specific area related to media psychology. In this paper students will review the relevant literature, propose hypotheses, and lay out the research method and specific research design. The ideal paper will serve as the basis for an article students will submit to an academic conference or a scientific journal.

Research Program Paper

Outline a program of research based on at least one of the theories discussed in class (2-3 studies). Given the page constraints, you cannot go into great detail on each study. Your goal is to demonstrate the logic of the set of studies in relation to the theory or theories you are interested in testing, in light of existing research. You are encouraged to use box-and-arrow figures to explain your theory and your research program.

Writing Analysis Postings and Peer Reviews

To support you with the development of scholarly writing skills, you will perform weekly writing analysis tasks and post them on a Carmen discussion board. The analyses tasks will be completed with your ‘set’ of articles that you chose for your personal research topic. (If you encounter particular difficulties, you can also utilize another article for that writing analysis purpose.)

Your writing analysis posting should at least contain three distinct thoughts/points/comments, along with 1-2 concluding sentences.

For example, one time you will be asked to extract the ‘advance organizers’ in the ‘set’ of articles. You can extract three examples from three articles and then offer a conclusion on how well these example ‘advance organizers’ fulfilled their purpose (i.e., orient the reader). The timetable lists the prompts for the weekly writing analysis postings. Please ask your instructor if those prompts are not clear.

In the writing workshops, you will be asked to write peer reviews and feedback for other students' paper drafts. Your feedback to others should be based on the grading rubric.

Attendance

You are expected to attend class sessions regularly. If you don't attend the class consistently, you will not do well in this course. Please notify your instructor by email if you cannot attend a session.

Academic Misconduct

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term "academic misconduct" includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct <http://studentlife.osu.edu/csc/>

Academic misconduct is any activity that compromises the academic integrity of the institution or subverts the educational process. Examples of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to:

- 1) Violation of course rules as contained in this course syllabus or other information provided.
- 2) Providing or receiving information during examinations, or providing or using unauthorized assistance on individual assignments.
- 3) Plagiarism, including the use of information from any uncredited source.
- 4) Alteration of grades or marks in an effort to change the earned grade or credit.
- 5) Failure to report incidents of academic misconduct.

In short, don't cheat on exams or assignments, don't plagiarize yourself or others, and treat everyone in this class with the respect they deserve. You are encouraged to talk with me beforehand if you have any doubt about practices that might result in charges of academic misconduct. Take particular note of #5 above; if you observe others engaging in academic misconduct, you are required to let me know, otherwise you become a party to the misconduct, and penalties are as severe as if you had participated. Similarly, if I suspect an instance of academic misconduct in this class, I am required by university regulations to notify the University Committee on Academic Misconduct, in accordance with The Ohio State University Code of Student Conduct and rules of faculty governance.

Accommodations

The University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions), please let me know via email immediately so that we can privately discuss options. You are also welcome to register with Student Life Disability Services to establish reasonable accommodations. After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion. SLDS contact information: slds@osu.edu ; 614-292-3307; slds.osu.edu ; 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue.

Copyright Disclaimer

The materials used in connection with this course may be subject to copyright protection and are only for the use of students officially enrolled in the course for the educational purposes associated with the course. Copyright law must be considered before copying, retaining, or disseminating materials outside of the course.

Diversity

The School of Communication at The Ohio State University embraces and maintains an environment that respects diverse traditions, heritages, experiences, and people. Our commitment to diversity moves beyond mere tolerance to recognizing, understanding, and welcoming the contributions of diverse groups and the value group members possess as individuals. In our School, the faculty, students, and staff are dedicated to building a tradition of diversity with principles of equal opportunity, personal respect, and the intellectual interests of those who comprise diverse cultures.

Title IX

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories (e.g., race). If you or someone you know has been sexually harassed or assaulted, you may find the appropriate resources at <http://titleix.osu.edu> or by contacting the Ohio State Title IX Coordinator, Kellie Brennan, at titleix@osu.edu

Seminar Timetable: Date / Topic (each row represents one week)	
8/22 Introduction – syllabus	8/24 – Basics: Mass Communication <u>Post your reading notes online prior to this session, 11:00 am</u>
8/29 Discuss thoughts on targeted research plans/projects <u>Post a draft research topic (purpose/goal) along with selection of ‘your 3-4 key publications set’ (incl. references and abstracts) online prior to session, 11:00 am</u>	8/31– Basics: Social System/Levels of Analysis <u>Post your reading notes online prior to this session, 11:00 am</u>
9/5 Knowledge gap <u>Post your reading notes online prior to this session, 11:00 am</u>	9/7 – Diffusion of Innovation /moral/norms <u>Post your reading notes online prior to this session, 11:00 am</u>
9/12 presentation & project development 1 Student presenter: JUSTIN <u>Extract and post ‘advance organizer’ in your ‘set’</u>	9/14 – Spiral of silence <u>Post your reading notes online prior to this session, 11:00 am</u>
9/19 presentation & project development 2 Student presenter: DANIEL <u>Extract and post statements on relevance (usually in intro & discussion sections) in your ‘set’</u>	9/21 – Changing Information Environment <u>Post your reading notes online prior to this session, 11:00 am</u>
9/26 presentation & project development 3 Student presenter: JESSICA M <u>Extract and post transitions in your ‘set’</u>	9/28 – Polarization, Mediatization of Politics <u>Post your reading notes online prior to this session, 11:00 am</u>
10/03 presentation & project development 4 Student presenter: MATT <u>Extract and post key definitions of theoretical concepts in your ‘set’</u>	10/05 – Exam 1
10/10 Social cognitive theory <u>Extract and post key operationalizations in your ‘set’</u>	Fall break (Oct 12-13)

Seminar Timetable: Date / Topic (each row represents one week)	
10/17 presentation & project development 5 Student presenter: KARA <u>Extract and post key conclusions in your 'set'</u>	10/19 – parasocial/intergroup contact <u>Post your reading notes online prior to this session, 11:00 am</u>
10/24 presentation & project development 6 Student presenter: HANNAH <u>Extract overall structure and argumentation flow in your 'set'</u>	10/26 – Morality & Media <u>Post your reading notes online prior to this session, 11:00 am</u>
10/31 presentation & project development 7 Michael <u>Develop and post your own overall structure and argumentation flow for own paper</u>	11/02 – Belief Gaps <u>Post your reading notes online prior to this session, 11:00 am</u>
11/07 presentation & project development 8 DINAH <u>Extract and post limitations in your 'set'</u>	11/09 – Social Norms/roles <u>Post your reading notes online prior to this session, 11:00 am</u>
11/14 presentation & project development 9 JESSICA F <u>Post updated overall structure and argumentation flow for own paper</u>	11/16 – No meeting – <i>NCA conference</i>
Thanksgiving Break	
11/28 Exam 2	11/30 writing workshop
12/5 writing workshop	12/7 research paper due at 11:00 am, upload to carmen dropbox

COMM 7841 Presentation Grading Rubric

While this rubric has a 40 point scale, the presentation is worth 20 points max (so listed points divided by 2)

Category	Max	Amateur (0-2)	Fair (3-4)	Good (5-6)	Excellent (7-8)
Innovative thoughts, ideas	8	Presentation merely rehashes existing ideas or class discussions	Presentation tries to frame research problems in new ways	Presentation offers some new aspects/ thought to existing research discussions	Presentation develops an innovative idea/thought in a convincing fashion
Understanding of content	8	Presentation reflects fundamental misunderstandings/ lack of knowledge	Presentation reflects some misunderstandings/some gaps in knowledge	Presentation reflects good understanding with small gaps in knowledge or small misunderstandings	Presentation reflects thorough understanding of treated subjects; terms and examples are used appropriately
Logic of overall argument (coherence)/Quality of Conclusions	8	Presentation of ideas is choppy and disjointed; doesn't flow; development of thesis is vague; no apparent logical order to writing	Concept and ideas are loosely connected; flow and organization are choppy	Most information presented in logical sequence; generally very organized	Ideas clearly stated/developed; specific, appropriate examples support argument; ideas flow together well; succinct but not choppy; well-organized
		Amateur (0)	Fair (1)	Excellent (2)	
Introduction/relevance of problem	2	No introduction/relevance statement	Vague introduction/relevance statement	Concise and compelling introduction/relevance statement	
Advance Organizer	2	No AO	Incomplete AO	Concise AO that provides good 'preview' of paper	
Use of terminology/definitions	2	Inconsistent use of terms/terms not defined, no references provided	Some key terms not defined/used inconsistently or without references	Key terms clearly defined/used consistently, with references	
Transitions (cohesion)	2	Insufficient transitions	Some sections lack transitions	Sections have smooth transitions that help to orient the reader and that clarify overall argument	
Clarity of presentation (clear sentences, use of examples, analogies, metaphors, etc.)	2	Unclear, scrambled sentences, confusing examples	Mostly clear presentation, but some passages are unclear	Clear speech and expression, complete succinct sentences, helpful examples/analogies	
Use of references	2	Important statements without references, many citations missing	Some statements lack references, some citations missing, substantial gaps/errors in references	Statements backed up with references, citations are complete	
Grammar, spelling	2	Many typos and grammatical errors	Some typos and grammatical errors	Slides/handout reflect thorough proof-reading	
APA style references	2	References don't follow APA style	References mostly follow APA style, but some aspects deviate	References follow APA	
TOTAL	40				

COMM 7841 Research Paper Grading Rubric

While this rubric has a 40 point scale, research paper is worth 20 points max (so listed points divided by 2)

Category	Max	Amateur (0-2)	Fair (3-4)	Good (5-6)	Excellent (7-8)
Understanding of content	8	Paper reflects fundamental misunderstandings/ lack of knowledge	Paper reflects some misunderstandings/some gaps in knowledge	Paper reflects good understanding with small gaps in knowledge or small misunderstandings	Paper reflects thorough understanding of treated subjects; terms and examples are used appropriately
Innovative thoughts, ideas	8	Paper merely rehashes existing ideas or class discussions	Paper tries to frame research problems in new ways	Paper offers some new aspects/ thought to existing research discussions	Paper develops an innovative idea/thought in a convincing fashion
Logic of overall argument (coherence)/Quality of Conclusions	8	Presentation of ideas is choppy and disjointed; doesn't flow; development of thesis is vague; no apparent logical order to writing	Concept and ideas are loosely connected; flow and organization are choppy	Most information presented in logical sequence; generally very organized	Ideas clearly stated/developed; specific, appropriate examples support argument; ideas flow together well; succinct but not choppy; well-organized
		Amateur	Fair	Excellent	
Introduction/ relevance of problem	2	No introduction/ relevance statement	Vague introduction/ relevance statement	Concise and compelling introduction/ relevance statement	
Advance Organizer	2	No AO	Incomplete AO	Concise AO that provides good 'preview' of paper	
Use of terminology/definitions	2	Inconsistent use of terms/terms not defined, no references provided	Some key terms not defined/used inconsistently or without references	Key terms clearly defined/used consistently, with references	
Transitions (cohesion)	2	Insufficient transitions	Some sections lack transitions	Sections have smooth transitions that help to orient the reader and that clarify overall argument	
Clarity of writing (clear sentences, use of examples, analogies, metaphors, etc.)	2	Unclear, scrambled sentences, confusing examples	Mostly clear writing, but some passages are unclear	Clear writing, complete succinct sentences, helpful examples/analogies	
Use of references/	2	Important statements without references, many citations missing	Some statements lack references, some citations missing	Statements backed up with references, citations are complete	
Grammar, spelling	2	Many typos and grammatical errors	Some typos and grammatical errors	Paper reflects thorough proof-reading	
APA style in paper (headings, tables, figures, etc.)	2	Paper doesn't follow APA style	Paper mostly follows APA style, but some aspects deviate	Paper follows APA	
TOTAL	40				