

COMMUNICATION FOUNDATIONS

IE University

Professor: **RUTH PALMER**

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Academic year: 22-23

Degree course: FIRST

Semester: 1^o

Category: BASIC

Number of credits: 6.0

Language: English

PREREQUISITES

SUBJECT DESCRIPTION

This course introduces communication students to some of the key methods, theories, concepts, and empirical research that have been central to the study of communication over the last century or so. We will examine the factors that influence the media and, in turn, the influence of media on culture and society. The goal of the course is to arm students with critical skills and conceptual tools to a) identify strengths and weaknesses of various media theories; b) understand and analyze current cultural and socio-political phenomena related to media and communication; c) critically evaluate communication research as well as various claims about media effects; and d) go on to specialize in a wide variety of areas within the communication field.

OBJECTIVES AND SKILLS

- Develop an understanding of key communication theories and how they came about in response to specific historical contexts.
- Apply these theories to contemporary issues and problems in society.
- Use social scientific principles to critically evaluate the assumptions, theories, and empirical evidence that support conclusions about media's impact in society.
- Use scholarly, theoretical, and empirical evidence to craft oral and written arguments about the interactions between communication and society.

METHODOLOGY

In this course students learn through a combination of in-class lectures, activities, and discussions, as well as individual reading, writing, and research that takes place outside the classroom. Students prepare for class by reading, listening, or watching the assigned texts, and sometimes completing exercises related to those texts, prior to each class session. During class the key theories and concepts are further explicated and critiqued through interactive lectures, activities, and discussions. Students then practice applying the theories and concepts they have learned in a midterm and final exam, as well as a series of written exercises over the course of the semester in which they demonstrate their growing command of the material and ability to apply it to communication phenomena that surround them.

| Teaching methodology | Weighting | Estimated time a student should dedicate to prepare for and participate in |
|---------------------------|-----------|--|
| Lectures | 26.67 % | 40 hours |
| Discussions | 26.67 % | 40 hours |
| Exercises | 13.33 % | 20 hours |
| Group work | 13.33 % | 20 hours |
| Other individual studying | 20.0 % | 30 hours |
| TOTAL | 100.0 % | 150 hours |

PROGRAM

SESSION 1 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE SCHEDULE BELOW IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE BASED ON THE INTERESTS AND NEEDS OF THE STUDENTS. THE MOST UPDATED INFORMATION ABOUT WHAT YOU NEED TO DO FOR EACH SESSION WILL ALWAYS BE FOUND IN THE ANNOUNCEMENTS SECTION.

Topics: Course introduction

In-class: Discuss the course and the syllabus.

Pre-class: No readings due.

SESSION 2 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

Topic: Practice reading and discussing a current comm issue

In-class: Debate a current issue related to communication and discuss strategies for preparing for class.

Pre-class TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT, SEE ANNOUNCEMENTS TO CONFIRM:

- Read articles about a recent comm issue (TBD) and annotate in feedback fruits

SESSION 3 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

Topics: A Brief History of Mass Media and Defining Fundamental Terms

In-class: Interactive lecture on the history of mass media and definitions of key terms

Pre-class TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT, SEE ANNOUNCEMENTS TO CONFIRM:

- Read ch. 2 in McQuail's Media and Mass Comm Theory, (link below)

Book Chapters: Chapter 2 in McQuail's Media and Mass Comm Theory (ced)

SESSION 4 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

Topic: Overview of How Mass Media Has Been Studied Over Time

In-class: Interactive lecture introducing the academic study of communication

Pre-class TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT, SEE ANNOUNCEMENTS TO CONFIRM

Book Chapters: Read chapter 1, "Understanding and Evaluating Mass Comm Theory," in Baran and Davis text, pp. 1-30. (See Bibliography)

SESSION 5 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

Topic: Mass Society Theory

In-class: Discuss the Turkle TED talk and interactive lecture on Mass Society Theory

Pre-class TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT (SEE ANNOUNCEMENTS TO CONFIRM):

1. Discussion Board: Watch Sherry Turkle TED talk and respond to questions about it in the discussion board, applying what you have read in chapter 1
2. Read about Mass Society Theory in Chapter. 2 of Baran and Davis Text (pp. 31-46 only)
Book Chapters: Mass Society Theory in Chapter. 2 of Baran and Davis Text (pp. 31-46 only) (See Bibliography)

SESSION 6 (ASYNCHRONOUS)

Topic: Applying Mass Society Theory

TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT (SEE ANNOUNCEMENTS TO CONFIRM):

1. Discussion board exercise applying concepts from Mass Society Theory

SESSION 7 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

Topic: Early Propaganda theory

In-class: Interactive lecture and discussion of propaganda theories

Pre-class TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT (SEE ANNOUNCEMENTS TO CONFIRM):

1. Read the second part of chapter 2 in the Baran & Davis text, pp. 46-62.
2. Feedback Fruits: Watch 2 short videos about propaganda during WWI
Book Chapters: chapter 2 in the Baran & Davis text, pp. 46-62. (See Bibliography)

SESSION 8 (ASYNCHRONOUS)

Topic: Work on your essays

TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT (SEE ANNOUNCEMENTS TO CONFIRM):

1. Work on your essays and optional meetings with the professor.

SESSION 9 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

Topic: Using Social Science to Study Communication

In-class: interactive lecture

Pre-class TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT (SEE ANNOUNCEMENTS TO CONFIRM):

1. Read chapter 1 from Schutt's *Investigating the Social World*, "Science, Society, and Social Research," pp. 43-57 and 71-74 only (link below)
2. *** Essay due around now, exact date TBD***
Book Chapters: Investigating the Social World, Chapter 1 (ced)

SESSION 10 (ASYNCHRONOUS)

Topic: Limited Effects Approaches 1: Hovland's Experiments. Spotlight on Method: Experiments

TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT (SEE ANNOUNCEMENTS TO CONFIRM):

1. Read about Hovland's experiments in the Baran and Davis textbook (pp. 99-107)
 2. Watch 2 feedback fruits assignments.
 3. Discussion board: In the discussion board, watch brief recorded lecture and respond to clips from Leni Riefenstahl's *The Triumph of the Will* and Frank Capra's *Why We Fight*
- Book Chapters: Hovland's experiments in the Baran and Davis textbook (pp. 99-107) (See Bibliography)*

SESSION 11 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

Topic: Limited effects theories 2: Two-step flow & Selectivity theories. Method: Surveys

In-class: Interactive lecture about two-step flow, selectivity, and surveys

Pre-class TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT, SEE ANNOUNCEMENTS TO CONFIRM:

1. Read pp. 107-115 and the bottom of p. 128-middle of 130 in the Baran and Davis textbook.
- Book Chapters: pp. 107-115 and the bottom of p. 128-middle of 130 in the Baran and Davis textbook. (See Bibliography)*

SESSION 12 (ASYNCHRONOUS)

Topic: Two-step flow applied: The Case of *Generation Like*

TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT, SEE ANNOUNCEMENTS TO CONFIRM:

1. If you have not either read the book or seen the movie *The Hunger Games*, I recommend that you do one or the other before completing the rest of the assignment. This is not a requirement, but you will appreciate the documentary more if you understand the reference it makes to *the Hunger Games*
2. [Watch](#) the documentary *Generation Like*
3. Meet with your group to discuss the film and submit the discussion guide.

SESSION 13 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

Topic: Uses and Gratifications Approaches. Spotlight on Method: Interviews and Focus Groups.

In-class: Interactive lecture on Uses and Gratifications Approaches

Pre-class TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT, SEE ANNOUNCEMENTS TO CONFIRM:

1. Read "Uses and Gratifications," from *Fundamentals of Media Effects* (link below)
 2. Listen to at least 10 minutes of [an episode of "Hill Top House"](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=hilltop+house+radio+show) (https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=hilltop+house+radio+show)
 3. Read Herta Herzog "on Borrowed Experience" (link below)
- Book Chapters: Chapter. 9: "Uses and Gratifications," Fundamentals of Media Effects, pp. 122-134. (ced)*
- Book Chapters: Herta Herzog's "On Borrowed Experience" (ced)*

SESSION 14 (ASYNCHRONOUS)

Topic: Uses and Gratifications Applied

TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT, SEE ANNOUNCEMENTS TO CONFIRM: Interview your partner and upload your Uses and Gratifications exercise to the assignment in online campus.

SESSION 15 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

Topic: Midterm Exam

Assignment: Complete the Midterm exam. Instructions will be discussed in class.

SESSION 16 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

Topic: The Rise of Critical and Cultural Approaches

In-class: Interactive lecture about critical and cultural approaches

Pre-class TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT, SEE ANNOUNCEMENTS TO CONFIRM:

1. Read in the Baran & Davis textbook about critical cultural approaches (pp. 143-162)

Book Chapters: Baran & Davis textbook about critical cultural approaches (pp. 143-162) (See Bibliography)

SESSION 17 (ASYNCHRONOUS)

Topic: Applying Critical Cultural Approaches

TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT, SEE ANNOUNCEMENTS TO CONFIRM:

1. Read Sarah Banet-Weiser's article, "Branding the Post-Feminist Self: Girls Self-Production and Youtube."
2. Discuss the article with your group and fill out the discussion guide.

Article: "Branding the Postfeminist Self" (ced)

SESSION 18 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

Topic: Applying Critical Cultural Approaches (cont.)

In-class: Discuss the Sarah Banet-Weiser article

Pre-class TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT, SEE ANNOUNCEMENTS TO CONFIRM::

1. No new reading. Be sure you are caught up on the Sarah Banet-Weiser reading, though, because we will discuss it in this class.

Article: Branding the Post-Feminist Self (ced)

SESSION 19 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

Topic: A closer look at the political economy of the media industry

In-class: Interactive lecture on the political economy of the media industry

Pre-class TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT, SEE ANNOUNCEMENTS TO CONFIRM:

1. Read "The Economics of the Media Industry" from Croteau & Hoynes (link below)
2. Read the article about Miley Cyrus and the VMAs from the satirical newspaper *the Onion* (link below. Please remember that this article is a satirical piece!)

Book Chapters: The Economics of the Media Industry (ced)

Article: "Let me explain why Miley Cyrus's VMA performance was our top story this morning," from the satirical newspaper (The Onion)

SESSION 20 (ASYNCHRONOUS)

Topic: Applying what we have learned about the political economy of the media.

TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT, SEE ANNOUNCEMENTS TO CONFIRM: Complete economics of the media industry group activity

SESSION 21 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

Topic: Theories of Media and Social Learning

In-class: Interactive lecture and small group discussion about how we learn from media (media violence, social learning theory, etc).

Pre-class:

1. Read all of chapter 7 in the Baran & Davis textbook, pp. 180-203

Book Chapters: chapter 7 in the Baran & Davis textbook, pp. 180-203 (See Bibliography)

SESSION 22 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

Topic: Agenda setting and priming. Method: content analysis

In-class: Interactive lecture about agenda setting and priming

Pre-class TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT, SEE ANNOUNCEMENTS TO CONFIRM:

1. Read about agenda setting and priming in the Baran & Davis textbook, pp. 300-304
2. Read article "Tweet Blackish to Make Black Lives Matter" about agenda setting and the Black Lives Matter movement (link below)

Book Chapters: Baran & Davis textbook, pp. 300-304 (See Bibliography)

Article: "Tweet Blackish to Make Black Lives Matter (ced)

SESSION 23 (ASYNCHRONOUS)

Topic: Agenda Setting applied

TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT, SEE ANNOUNCEMENTS TO CONFIRM:

1. Watch the 1997 film Wag the Dog with Robert De Niro (students have the option of writing their 2nd essay about this film if they want to).
2. Meet with your group to discuss the film and submit the discussion guide.

SESSION 24 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

Topic: Framing

In-class: Interactive lecture on framing.

Pre-class TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT, SEE ANNOUNCEMENTS TO CONFIRM:

1. Read about framing in Baran and Davis textbook, pp. 346-358
2. Read this article: Riot or resistance? How media frames unrest in Minneapolis will shape public's view of protest on framing and BLM protests (link below)

Book Chapters: Baran and Davis textbook, pp. 346-358 (See Bibliography)

Article: Riot or resistance? How media frames unrest in Minneapolis will shape public's view of protest (The Conversation)

SESSION 25 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

Topic: The Spiral of silence

In-class: Interactive lecture and discussion about the spiral of silence.

Pre-class TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT, SEE ANOUNCEMENTS TO CONFIRM:

1. Read about spiral of silence in the Baran & Davis textbook, pp. 304-306
2. Read Noelle-Neumann's article "The spiral of silence and the social nature of man" (link below)

Book Chapters: Baran & Davis textbook, pp. 304-306 (See Bibliography)

Book Chapters: The Spiral of Silence and the Social Nature of Man (ced)

SESSION 26 (ASYNCHRONOUS)**Topic: Fake news and Disinformation: what is it and why is it happening?!**

TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT, SEE ANOUNCEMENTS TO CONFIRM:

1. Do interactive online lesson
2. **** Essay 2 due around now, exact date TBD****

SESSION 27 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**Topic: Fake news and Disinformation: what is it and why is it happening?!**

In-class: continue discussion of Fake news.

Pre-class TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT, SEE ANOUNCEMENTS TO CONFIRM:

- Readings TBD

SESSION 28 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**Topic: Media literacy**

In-class: Discuss media literacy approaches

Pre-class TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT, SEE ANOUNCEMENTS TO CONFIRM:

- Readings on media literacy TBD

SESSION 29 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**Topic: Catch-up day**

In-class: TBD

Pre-class: TBD

SESSION 30 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**Topic: Final Exam**

Assignment: Complete the final exam. Instructions will be discussed in class.

BIBLIOGRAPHY**Compulsory**

- Stanley J. Baran & Dennis K. Davis. (2020). *Mass Communication Theory: Foundations, Ferment, and Future*. 8th Edition. Oxford University Press. ISBN 9780190942793 (Printed)

EVALUATION CRITERIA

6.1. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

Evaluation is based on a student's attendance and informed participation; activities & exercises; two essays; a midterm exam; and a final exam. Evaluation for each component is described below and will be discussed in greater detail in class prior to each assignment.

6.2. EVALUATION AND WEIGHTING CRITERIA

The final evaluation is determined on the basis of the elements below.

Attendance, Informed Participation, and contribution to the learning atmosphere (10%)

Attendance and participation in class discussions and activities is an important component of this course. Recall that listening carefully is as important a component of participation as speaking. Please be aware of your own style of participation: if you find it difficult to speak up in class, push yourself to do so. If you realize you tend to dominate discussions, make a point of listening to others.

Your participation grade at the end of the semester will be based cumulatively on your contributions over the course of the semester. Participation is graded using the criteria below, which are adapted from this resource:

http://trc.virginia.edu/Publications/Teaching_Concerns/Spring_1996/TC_Spring_1996_Maznevski.htm.

The average level of participation usually satisfies the criteria for a "7", which would correspond to a "B". *Please note that to get a passing grade of 5 you have to come to class consistently having done the reading.*

Grade 0-4,9

Criteria:

When present, not disruptive.

Tries to respond when called on but does not offer much.

Demonstrates very infrequent involvement in discussion.

Grade 5,0-6,9

Criteria:

Demonstrates adequate preparation: knows basic reading facts, but does not show evidence of trying to interpret or analyze them.

Offers straightforward information (e.g., straight from the reading), without elaboration or very infrequently (perhaps once a class).

Does not offer to contribute to discussion, but contributes to a moderate degree when called on.

Demonstrates sporadic involvement.

Grade 7-8,9

Criteria:

Demonstrates good preparation: knows reading facts well, has thought through implications of them.

Offers interpretations and analysis of reading material (more than just facts) to class.

Contributes well to discussion in an ongoing way: responds thoughtfully to other students' points, thinks through own points, questions others in a constructive way, offers and supports suggestions that may be counter to the majority opinion.

Demonstrates consistent ongoing involvement.

Grade 9,0-10,0

Criteria:

Demonstrates excellent preparation: has analyzed readings exceptionally well, relating it to other material (e.g., other readings, course material, discussions, experiences, etc.).

Offers analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of class material (e.g., puts together pieces of the discussion to develop new approaches that take the class further).

Contributes in a very significant way to ongoing discussion: keeps analysis focused, responds very thoughtfully to other students' comments, contributes to cooperative argument-building, suggests alternative ways of approaching material and helps class analyze which approaches are appropriate, etc.

Demonstrates ongoing very active involvement.

Exercises and activities (discussion boards, feedback fruits, group exercises, etc.) (20%)

We will do many activities over the course of the semester, some of which will accompany synchronous classes and some of which will be part of the asynchronous sessions. There may be some quizzes if it seems like we need extra incentive to help people get the reading done before class. Some activities will be graded on participation only, while others will be evaluated according to criteria I will give you before each exercise.

2 Short Essays (30% total -15% each)

You will be required to submit 2 short essays during the semester. These essays are intended to give you the opportunity to apply the theories and concepts from the course to questions that are of particular interest to you, as well as to hone your academic writing skills. Detailed instructions and grading criteria for each of these will be handed out and discussed in class.

Midterm Exam (20%)

An exam will be given midway through the course. The exam will cover the readings, lectures, and discussion topics covered up to that point, and is designed to give you an incentive to review and study the material closely. Detailed instructions and grading criteria for the midterm will be distributed and discussed in class. A study guide will be handed out in advance of the exam, but the best way to prepare for it is to stay on top of the readings and other coursework.

Final Exam (20%)

The final exam will be given at the end of the course. The exam will cover the material from the entire course. Like the midterm, the final exam is designed to give you a good reason to go back and study the material we have discussed, in hopes this will help you retain in. Detailed instructions and grading criteria for the final exam will be distributed and discussed in class. A study guide will be handed out in advance of the exam, but, as with the midterm, the best way to prepare for the final is to stay on top of the readings and other coursework throughout the semester.

RETAKE POLICY

Each student has 4 chances to pass any given course distributed in two consecutive academic years (regular period and Summer period). Students who do not comply with the 70% attendance rule will lose their 1st and 2nd chance, and go directly to the 3rd one (they will need to enrol again in this course next academic year). Grading for retakes will be subject to the following rules:

- Students failing the course in the first regular period will have to do a retake in June or July (except those not complying with the attendance rules, which are banned from this possibility).

- Dates and location of the Summer retakes will be posted in advance and will not be changed. Please take this into consideration when planning your summer.

- The maximum grade that a student may obtain in any type of retake will be 8 out of 10.

Course-specific procedures for the second evaluation period:

- For Communication Foundations the retake grade will be the average between your 2 essay grades and the retake exam grade. The retake exam will be given on the officially scheduled date for the retake during June or July, and it will cover all of the material from the course. If you submitted and passed the two essays during the semester, you will not be required to redo them for the retake; your grades for those essays will simply be averaged with your retake exam grade to determine the retake total grade. However, if you did not pass one or both of the essays during the semester, you will be required to extensively revise and resubmit them by the date of the retake exam. Please remember that if you fail the course during the semester it is your responsibility to be in touch with the professor to get specific instructions for the retake.

| Criteria | Percentage | Comments |
|-------------------------------------|------------|----------|
| Final Exam | 20 % | |
| Midterm exam | 20 % | |
| 2 short essays | 30 % | |
| Activities and exercises | 20 % | |
| Attendance & Informed participation | 10 % | |

PROFESSOR BIO

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Ruth Palmer is a full-time Assistant Professor of Communication at IE University, where her current and past courses include Communication Foundations; Public Opinion, Persuasion, and Engagement; Political Communication; Minorities; Media Relations (in the Master of Corporate Communication); and Negotiation and Public Speaking. She has also taught in the IE-Brown University Summer Program, and co-directed the IE Communications Lab. Dr. Palmer's research explores how citizens think and feel about the news media. Her first book *Becoming the News: How Ordinary People Respond to the Media Spotlight* (Columbia University Press, 2018) explores how it feels for private citizens to interact with journalists and become the subject of a news story. She is currently at work on her second book (also with Columbia University Press), which is about people who avoid news altogether. Her articles have appeared in the academic journals *Journalism*, *Journalism Studies* and the *International Journal of Communication*, as well as in publications aimed at the journalism community and general public, including the *Columbia Journalism Review*, *Nieman Lab*, and *Zócalo Public Square*. She received her PhD in Communication from Columbia University in 2013. Before pursuing her doctorate she earned a B.A. in Comparative Literature from Bryn Mawr College, and worked in the Artistic Administration Department at the Metropolitan Opera.

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OTHER INFORMATION

Office hours: I am happy to meet with students to consult about essays and other concerns related to the course. Stay tuned for information about office hours during the semester.