

JLMC 401
Mass Communication Theory
Fall 2009
M/W/F 2:10-3:00 p.m.
Hamilton 0169 Aug. 24 – Dec.18

Instructor	Dr. Gang (Kevin) Han, Assistant Professor
Office hours:	M/W, 10:00-11:00 a.m.; M, 1:00- 2:00 p.m.; or by appointment
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This introductory course is designed to acquaint you with theory and research in the mass communication field. The course begins with an introduction on definitions, connotations and scopes of “theory” and the basic knowledge about research methodology. As the course continues, the origin, foundations, developments of a variety of mass communication theories will be discussed, where the role and impact of media on individuals, as well as in progressively larger social systems--families, communities, nations and the world – will be explored. By the end of the course, you will have a basic understanding of most of the important areas in mass communication research and theory.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

After you have completed this course, you should be able to:

- understand theories and research about media and mass communication;
- analyze how your media consumption habits affect your (and others);
- creatively and critically evaluate the role and influence of mass media as well as the theories and research about them;
- apply theories and research about media to professional practice;
- critically assess the appropriateness of study designs and data analysis techniques used in mass communication research.

REQUIRED TEXT

Baran, S. J. & Davis D. K. (2009). Mass communication theory: Foundations, ferment, and future (5th Ed.). Boston, MA: Wadsworth.

Sparks, G. G. (2010). Media effects research: A basic overview (3rd Ed.). Boston, MA: Wadsworth.

ADDITIONAL READINGS

McQuail, D. (2005). McQuail's Mass Communication Theory. Sage.

Shoemaker, P. J., Tankard J.W., & Lasorsa D. L. (2004). How to build social science theories. Sage.

Other additional readings will be provided as the semester progresses. In order to keep up with class discussion and lectures, you will need to complete the assigned readings prior to coming to class.

WEB RESOURCE

Baran & Davis' book companion site for students: http://www.wadsworth.com/cgi-wadsworth/course_products_wp.pl?fid=M20b&product_isbn_issn=9780495503637&discipline_number=25

CLASS WEBSITE

This course uses WebCT, the university's Web-based eLearning site to post syllabus, handouts, assignments, important announcements, and grades. WebCT may be accessed from any computer at <https://webct.its.iastate.edu/webct/entryPageIns.dowebct> Information on how to get started is located on the first page of the site (under the tab-Student Support). E-mail messages pertaining to the course will be sent through WebCT, which uses your official @iastate.edu account.

COURSE METHODOLOGY

This course is devoted to creating a student-centered learning environment. Course activities mainly include group presentations and discussion; lectures; reading assignments; term paper and final examination.

GENERAL CLASS POLICIES

Attendance and participation. Your attendance to all classes is expected unless you have an excused absence for athletic competition, medical or family emergency. At the end of the semester if you have missed more than three classes for which you have not been excused, your final course grade will be reduced by a notch, for example from a B to a B-. Habitual lateness and absences more than three times will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

Class formats will primarily be based on presentation and discussion. When we have a presentation and discussion, you need to actively answer questions and ask questions. When we have lectures, you also need to get ready to answer questions. Your appearance in the classroom without answering or being willing to answer any of questions will tremendously and negatively affect the grade you will receive for this category. I welcome questions to clarify the material, to challenge the presenter and the discussant, and I will expect your informed perspective to be shared through comments in class. I will also call on those who have not voluntarily participated. Your active class participation, therefore, will be highly expected, as well as graded. So be prepared!

Classroom Etiquette. To avoid disruptions, please make every effort to get to class on time. If you are late getting to class, please enter the room and get to your seat as quietly as possible. If you need to leave the room during class time, please do so with as little disruption as possible. Talking in class over the professors or fellow classmates participating in the class is unacceptable. Note that we extend our courtesy and respect to all students regardless of personal characteristics, political views, etc., and though we may have some lively discussions, we do not intend to allow anyone to feel uncomfortable or targeted by either ourselves or other classmates, and expect the same courtesy and respect in return.

If you have an ongoing medical issue that affects your attendance in class, please make sure that I am made aware of it.

You are welcome to bring food and beverages into the classroom. However, I ask that you please consume the food in a quiet and undistruptive way. Please help keep the classroom a clean and healthy environment by discarding your trash when class is over.

No cell phone!?

Keeping in Touch. Besides the regular office hours every week, email is the best way to contact me. University policy requires us to use our campus accounts rather than off-site email for official class correspondence.

GROUP PRESENTATION & DISCUSSION (30% of final grade)

We will have one presentation and two discussion sessions every week except for the classes when we have lectures and exams. Three or four students will randomly team up to work together on a specific theory or theoretical topic. In each group, one member will give a formal presentation on behalf of the group on Monday, and the other two will lead formal discussion sessions on the following two class meetings respectively. Each group needs to decide who will be the presenter and who will be the discussants. Workload should be shared evenly and fairly. Topics will be provided and randomly assigned to each group at the beginning of the semester. The presentation and discussions will be peer-reviewed and graded (separate evaluate forms will be provided).

Presentation. Your presentation will have 40 minutes. PPT slides and other visual aid(s) are required. Preparing a brief handout for all class participants is strongly encouraged. The presentation must include, but not limited to, the following aspects:

- Overview
- Origin of theory
- Major research programs/projects

- Major theoretical hypotheses or claims (literature)
- Key terms and concepts
- Key variables and their relationships
- Key researchers and their contributions
- Methodology
- Development and modifications
- Limitations
- Summary and concluding comments

Discussion sessions. Each discussant needs to lead a 40-minute all-class discussion by criticizing the theory presented, supplementing what is thought to be missed from the previous presentation or discussion, additional examples/cases, expanding areas, application of theory in profession and practice, and the ongoing debates over relevant issues (if any). Each discussant thus needs to provide THREE specific questions, by your choice, for each discussion session; 12-15 minutes discussion for each question. The discussant can decide the format of the discussion session in order to encourage fellow students' critical thinking. Visual aid(s) and handouts are highly suggested. Refer to such parts as "Thinking About Theory," "Instant Access," "Critical Thinking Questions" (in Baran & Davis' text) and "Study Box" (in Sparks' text) when preparing discussion questions.

LECTURE TOPICS & COMPANION READING ASSIGNMENTS

Prior to group presentations and discussions, we will have one or more topics to lecture in each class. Reading assignments are expected to be gone through BEFORE each session. Please try to stay current with the reading so that you will have a context for the lecture, although we may cover different material in the lectures than in the readings.

TERM PAPER (30% of final grade)

A term paper that critically analyzes the research literature on mass media/communication is due on Dec. 4 in class. In addition to reviewing the research knowledge, your paper should also assess the quality of this research and describe what more needs to be known about the topic.

This is a major project that will need to work on individually and independently throughout the semester, and will be submitted as a four-part assignment. Assignments are due in class on the date scheduled, which are graded on writing as well as on their content.

- One page description of paper topic, due Sept. 14;
- A list of the top ten research studies for your paper, due Oct. 12;
- A statement of your paper, due Nov. 9;

- Final version, due Dec. 4.

Suggestions on topic selections:

- Agenda-setting
- Diffusion of innovation
- Uses and gratifications
- Cultivation and culture index
- Spiral of Silence
- Framing and public relations
- Media use, political knowledge, and political participation
- TV violence
- Stereotyping
- Effects of pornography
- The influence of pop culture on youth behavior
- Advertising and persuasion
- Critical or cultural theories

These are just a few examples of term-paper topics. You MUST select a topic that is DIFFERENT from the topic that you worked on for group presentation/ discussion. Feel free to develop your own topic. You might find the paper more interesting to write if you examine a communication/ media phenomenon related to your intended profession. As with any term paper, be sure to narrow your topic down sufficiently. For example, you will produce a much better paper if you write about the effects of TV violence on children than about the effects of television on people.

Be sure to concentrate on the research literature on the mass media/ communication you are analyzing. For the most part, therefore, you should avoid articles in the popular press and concentrate on those in academic (social science) journals. Likely sources of research on your topic include *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, *Journal of Communication*, *Communication Research*, *Public Opinion Quarterly*, *Journal of Advertising Research*, *Journal of Public Relations Research*, *Public Relations Review*, *the Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, *New Media & Society*, and *Mass Communication & Society*. These and other good sources are located in the Journalism Reading in Hamilton Hall and in the Parks Library.

Although you may use the Internet to help you with searching journal articles, you cannot cite or quote any sources from the Internet (e.g., Wikipedia) for this paper.

GENERAL POLICIES FOR WRITTEN WORK

Writing is considered one of the most important skills you will develop at your college. Writing for either academic or professional work will emphasize a straightforward, declarative style that is clear and concise; arguments are expected to be well supported with appropriate evidence and demonstrate logical thinking. Writing should be free of hyperbole and excessive rhetoric as well as of spelling and grammatical errors.

Write, proofread, and proofread again. First drafts are rarely (if ever) perfect. Leave yourself time to polish and proofread your work *before* submitting it. I will be happy to meet with you to discuss the overall organization, structure, and strength of your arguments *prior* to the submission of your paper, but you are expected to be responsible

for proofreading your own work. The following source provides some suggestions for proofreading:

- http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/proofing_grammar.shtml

References. You must provide complete citations for each source that you use in your written work—both within the body of your work and in the accompanying list of References. Remember, even if you are paraphrasing someone else’s words (as opposed to using a direct quote), you must still provide a citation. The Internet is not the public domain. Material drawn from Internet sources must also be cited. *Never* make up quotations, sources, “facts,” statistics, or any other material. Be prepared to provide sources for every quotation or disputable fact. As the field of Communication uses the American Psychological Association (APA) citation style format, your papers should use this style. The following websites provide information on how to correctly cite written, electronic, and broadcast sources using APA style:

- <http://www.apastyle.org/pubmanual.html>
- http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_apa.html
- <http://ia.juniata.edu/citation/apa/apa06.htm#lecture>

Format expectations. Papers can be 10 pages long (not including references, and appendices, if any), 12 pt. type, Times New Roman font style. Please double-space and leave adequate margins for me to write comments. Use APA style to clearly cite the sources of your information and include a Reference list identifying the sources of the material you are using in this assignment. All papers must be typed and appropriately bound or stapled. Use page numbers as well as subheadings to clearly identify the different sections of your paper.

Due dates. Assignments are always due at the beginning of class on the designated due date. Deadlines are extremely important in all areas of professional communication; therefore, **no** extensions will be granted for either paper except for documented medical or other emergencies, **not** including computer or printer problems. Be familiar with the location of computer labs on campus and save your work frequently. Late papers will be downgraded 10% — one full grade — for each day that you don’t turn them in.

EXAMS (20% of final grade)

One and only exam is scheduled in the final week. Due to the nature of the information you’ll learn in this class, the test will by necessity be cumulative as well as comprehensive. Test format will be announced in the review session.

GENERAL EXAM POLICIES

You are expected to be on time for the final exam. Class lectures will not cover everything in your assigned readings or the exam, but you will still be responsible for reading and learning that material.

If you are late to the exam, you will only be allowed to do as much as you can in the remaining time allotted. The exam must be written in **pen** (preferably black or blue ink); the exam handed in any other way will receive an automatic 0 point. Leaving the room during the exam is only allowed in emergencies, and will require you to hand in your exam to me for review before you leave the room. You may leave the room when you are done with the exam.

If you miss the final exam for an unexcused absence, you will get 0 points.

The final exam will not be returned. If you have any questions concerning your exam, I'll be happy to go over them with you during office hours.

Make-up exam. It will be offered only to those students who provide an official documentation justifying their missing the tests (e.g. for illness or family emergency, from doctors, student affairs, etc.), requiring a graded response paper on a topic of my choosing. Please note that out-of-town travel plans and over-sleeping are not considered to be valid reasons for missing scheduled exams.

Students with special needs. If you have documented special needs, please let me know at the beginning of the semester. You will also need to go to the Disability Resource Office for coordination of your academic accommodations. The DR is located in the Student Services Building, Room 1076. Phone number: 515-294-6624, TDD: 515-294-6335, Email: awoniyib@iastate.edu

EXTRA CREDIT ASSIGNMENTS

Extra credit opportunities will be offered throughout the semester. The amount of extra credit earned will vary depending upon the nature of the opportunity. You may do up to two of the following extra credit assignments, which you can only do once to receive credit.

1) *Guest speaker/technology-related seminars participation:* This activity depends on the availability of guest speakers. In the positive case, your active participation will receive extra credit as long as you attend at least once (10 points for each, up to 20 points).

3) *Research study participation* (10-20 points): Faculty and graduate students at ISU may be involved in interesting and innovative research on various aspects of mass media. Studies may include surveys, interviews, focus groups, and experiments. This extra credit option depends on the number of studies and participants needed. I will try to keep you informed about opportunities, and I will be in contact with the sponsoring professor as well as his or her research assistants to confirm your complete participation. I do want this to be a learning experience for you both on the subject matter being researched as well as the research methodology being used, and for this course I do want the study to be related to media. If you find out about a media-related study being done in another school that you would like to participate in, please let me know about it in detail, including contact information for the sponsoring professor.

GRADING

I will try to grade your term paper and examination within 2 weeks. Usually I don't return the exam to you. Grades will be posted on the WebCT site for your information.

GENERAL POLICIES FOR GRADES

The “non-negotiable” policy. Please note that assigned grades are not a “basis for negotiation.” No grade re-evaluations request will be considered. Email messages or face-to-face communication requesting an increase of grade or saying that “I am an A student in other classes;” “I should receive an A for this class,” and the like, are NOT acceptable.

The two-week expiration period. I will answer your questions about assignments, except for the grades, for two weeks.

The “keeping track” policy. Your grades for all assignments will be regularly updated to WebCT. Should you notice any problems (missing assignments, grade changes), notify me immediately.

I will be happy to meet with you during my office hours to discuss ways in which you can improve your work.

The “no re-write” policy. Once an assignment has been submitted, however, no “re-writes” or submission of additional work for higher grades will be accepted.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

Any form of academic misconduct—cheating in exams, falsification of data, plagiarism, etc., as described in the ISU Information Handbook —will result in a grade of "F" for the course and we will have to pursue the academic misconduct grievance procedures. In addition, unless you are instructed to work in groups, you are expected to submit your own work.

DISCLAIMER

Any elements of this syllabus are subject to change. Changes will be announced in class, on WebCT, or by e-mail.

SUMMARY: DEADLINES, POINTS, PERCENTAGES AND GRADE SCALE

	DATE/DEADLINE	TOTAL POINTS	% OF GRADE
Assignment #1	Mon., Sept. 14	50	5
Assignment #2	Mon., Oct. 12	50	5
Assignment #3	Mon., Nov. 9	100	10
Final version	Fri., Dec. 4	100	10
Presentation/ discussion	(vary)	300	30
Final exam	Wed., Dec. 16	200	20
Class participation	every week	200	20
		—	—
		1000	100
	EXTRA CREDIT		up to 40 points

Final grade scale.

940-1000	A	C+	770-799
900-939	A-	C	730-769
870-899	B+	C-	700-729
830-869	B	D	600-699
800-829	B-	F	0-599

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1: **Scientific Inquiry about Communication**

(Reading: Sparks, Ch.1, 3; Baran & Davis, Ch.2)

- Mon., Aug. 24 - Introduction to the course: syllabus, schedule, assignments, expectations
 - Self-introduction
- Wed., Aug. 26 - Hand in the Profile Form
 - Self-introduction (continued)
 - Assignment of group presentation/ discussion
 - Foundations of scientific inquiry
- Fri., Aug. 28 - What do communication researches study?
 - Communication *vs.* mass communication
 - Development of mass communication theory

Week 2: **Theory and Conception**

(Reading: Sparks, Ch.1; Baran & Davis, Ch.1)

- Mon., Aug. 31 -Paradigms of Knowing
 - Deductive *vs.* inductive
- Wed., Sept. 2 - What is theory?
 - Types of theory
 - Hypothesis
- Fri., Sept. 4 - Conception, concept, and conceptualization

Week 3: **Methodology**

(Readings: Sparks, Ch. 2)

- Mon. Sept. 7 *Labor Day. NO class.*
- Wed., Sept. 9 - Operationalization, reliability and validity
- Fri., Sept. 11 - Overview of scientific methods
 Content analysis
 Survey
 Experiment

Week 4: **Uses and Gratifications**

(Readings: Sparks, Ch. 4; Baran & Davis, Ch.9)

- Mon., Sept. 14 - Presentation
 - **Assignment #1 due in class**
- Wed., Sept. 16 - Discussion-1
- Wed., Sept. 18 - Discussion-2

Week 5: **Social learning and Media Violence**

(Reading: Sparks, Ch.5; Baran & Davis, Ch. 7)

Mon., Sept. 21 - Presentation
Wed., Sept. 23 - Discussion-1
Fri., Sept. 25 - Discussion-2

Week 6: Cultivation and Stereotype

(Readings: Sparks, Ch. 8, 10; Baran & Davis, Ch. 11)

Mon., Sept. 28 - Presentation
Wed., Sept. 30 - Discussion-1
Fri., Oct. 2 - Discussion-2

Week 7: Persuasion and The Third-Person Effect

(Reading: Sparks, Ch. 8; Baran & Davis, Ch. 1)

Mon., Oct. 5 - Presentation
Wed., Oct. 7 - Discussion-1
Fri., Oct. 9 - Discussion-2

Week 8: Agenda-setting

(Reading: Sparks, Ch. 9; Baran & Davis, Ch. 10)

Mon., Oct. 12 - Presentation
- **Assignment #2 due in class**

Wed., Oct. 14 - Discussion-1
Fri., Oct. 16 - Discussion-2

Week 9: Public Opinion, Opinion Leader and The Spiral of Science

(Reading: Sparks, Ch. 9; Baran & Davis, Ch. 4, 6,10)

Mon., Oct. 19 - Presentation
Wed., Oct. 21 - Discussion-1
Fri., Oct. 23 - Discussion-2

Week 10: News Frames and Framing Effects

(Reading: Sparks, Ch. 9; Baran & Davis, Ch. 11)

Mon., Oct. 26 - Presentation
Wed., Oct. 28 - Discussion-1
Fri., Oct. 30 - Discussion-2

Week 11: Diffusion of Innovation

(Reading: Baran & Davis, Ch. 10)

Mon., Nov. 2 - Presentation
Wed., Nov. 4 - Discussion-1
Fri., Nov. 6 - Discussion-2

Week 12: Impact of New Information Communication Technology

(Reading: Sparks, Ch. 11, 12)

Mon., Nov. 9 - Presentation
- **Assignment #3 due in class**

Wed., Nov. 11 - Discussion-1
Fri., Nov. 13 - Discussion-2

Week 13: **Normative Theory**
(Reading: Baran & Davis, Ch. 5)

Mon., Nov. 16 - Presentation
Wed., Nov. 18 - Discussion-1
Fri., Nov. 20 - Discussion-2

Week 14: *Thanks giving break.* NO class

Week 15: **Critical and Cultural Theories**
(Reading: Baran & Davis, Ch. 8)

Mon., Nov. 30 - Presentation
Wed., Dec. 2 - Discussion-1
Fri., Dec. 4 - Discussion-2
- **Final paper due in class**

Week 16: **Review**

Mon., Dec. 7 - Review for final exam
Wed., Dec. 9 NO class
Fri., Dec. 11 NO class

Week 17: **Final exam** (Tentative) Wed., Dec. 16 (2:15-4:15 p.m.)