

MEJO 705
Theories of Mass Communication
Fall 2018
Carroll Hall 338
Mondays 9:30 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.

Dr. Anne Johnston
356 Carroll Hall
962-4286
amjohnst@email.unc.edu
Office hours: Wed 2-3 & by appointment

Course Description and Purpose

The purpose of this course is to explore the theories that are most directly tied to our understanding of media. Our field is a multidisciplinary field, and as such, we have borrowed and learned from theories which originated in other disciplines. To honor that tradition, we will explore theories from communication, sociology, psychology, political science, to name a few, and we will discuss theories from a variety of worldviews (social science theories and critical/cultural theories).

Learning Objectives

Following completion of the course, you should be able to:

- ✓ Articulate the main premises of theories used in media/communication research
- ✓ Analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the theories and what they offer to media scholarship
- ✓ Critique how the theories have been used to frame and direct research in media scholarship
- ✓ Write a theory literature review and develop a proposal built on a theory

Contacting me and turning in assignments

If you have questions, please email me at the address listed above. If I don't respond to you within 24 hours during weekdays, please assume that I didn't receive your email, and email me again. I would also be happy to set up an appointment to meet with you. I will check email weekly from Monday morning until Friday afternoon. Please turn in a hard copy of any papers or assignments unless otherwise instructed.

Important UNC policies and procedures

Honor Code

Students must adhere to the letter and spirit of the [university honor system](#). Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated – this includes plagiarism, cheating or any false means of obtaining a grade – and may result in failure of the course, and suspension or expulsion from the university. If I suspect academic dishonesty, I have a duty to report it to the MJ-School's senior associate dean for undergraduate studies, the Student Attorney General, or the judicial programs officer in the Dean of Students' office for further action. For information on how to avoid plagiarism, go to The Writing Center's [plagiarism](#) site.

Special Accommodations:

If you require special accommodations to attend or participate in this course, please let the

instructor know as soon as possible. If you need information about disabilities visit the Accessibility Services website at <https://accessibility.unc.edu/>

Diversity:

The University's policy on Prohibiting Harassment and Discrimination is outlined in the 2015-2016 Undergraduate Bulletin <http://www.unc.edu/ugradbulletin/> UNC is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community and does not discriminate in offering access to its educational programs and activities on the basis of age, gender, race, color, national origin, religion, creed, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

Title IX/SAFE at UNC

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender is a Civil Rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, etc. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find the appropriate resources here <http://campusconversation.web.unc.edu/resources/>

AEJMC values

The School of Media and Journalism's accrediting body outlines a number of values that our majors should be aware of and competencies our majors should be able to demonstrate by the time they graduate from our program. You can learn more about them here under the heading "Professional values and competencies"

<http://www2.ku.edu/~acejmc/PROGRAM/PRINCIPLES.SHTML#vals&comps>

In this class, we will focus on the following values:

- think critically, creatively and independently;
- critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;
- contribute to knowledge appropriate to the communications professions in which they work.

Required Readings

Textbooks:

Baran, S. J., & Davis, D. K. (2015). Mass communication theory: Foundations, ferment, and future (7th ed.). Stamford, CT: Cengage Learning.

Littlejohn, S.W., Foss, K. A., and Oetzel, J. G. (2017). Theories of human communication (11th ed.). Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, Inc.

In addition to these textbooks, I will post other required readings to the Sakai site. Be sure to check the folder on Sakai for readings we will discuss in class that week.

Course Requirements and Grades

In all graduate courses, students are expected to participate in discussions on assigned readings and on their own research interest, to provide critiques of and comments on course readings, and to produce a final original research or research proposal by the end of the semester.

Graduate grades are H, P, L, and F.

If you are still trying to understand what graduate grades mean, here's a general description.

- H means a truly outstanding performance in the class and on assignments.
- P is a good, solid performance overall in the class and on assignments.
- L is a performance in the class and on assignments that is below the acceptable level for graduate students. It means the student does not understand the course material very well, does not have a grasp of what is required in this area at the graduate level, and is not participating in the class at the level expected of graduate students.
- F is failing.

Below, I've tried to give you a general idea of how different requirements will be weighted in this course. Your grade, generally, is determined by: active participation in class, grades on assignments and papers, and your work in class in relation to others.

- Attendance & Participation – 5%
- Leading class discussion – 20%
- Paper I_ Introduction, theory literature review – 30%
- Final Paper_ Research proposal for a study using the theory – 45%

Attendance & participation (5%): As you know, attendance and participation in graduate classes are critically important. Skipping class or missing class for travel is not an option at the graduate level. However, if you have an emergency and need to miss class, please email me beforehand and tell me the day you plan to miss and the reason. You are also expected to be in class when the class starts and to come prepared to participate in class discussions. That is, you are expected to be familiar with all of the readings and prepared to discuss them.

Leading class discussion on course readings and presenting a scholarly article on research using theory (20%): An important part of your participation in a graduate course is your ability to lead our discussions on some of the assigned chapters/readings. Each of you will select two chapters/readings listed on the syllabus and will lead our conversation about that chapter/reading. Everyone should read all readings; our discussion leaders will help focus our critique and understanding of the readings through questions and comments they have about the readings. If you are leading our class discussion, you are not meant to provide a point by point summary of the reading for us, but rather to call our attention to some important points about the reading and provide some questions for us to consider discussing.

In addition, each of you will bring in a current scholarly article that reports on research that uses a theory. We have three days during the semester that we will be talking about these, and you'll be assigned to a day. Please send this article to me one week prior to when you are assigned to present this research so I can upload it to the Sakai site for your classmates to read. For this session, you'll review (using course readings) the main principles of the theory. Then you'll explain how the research applied, used or tested that theory. What did the research add to the theory? Formulate some questions and comments that you'd like us to consider in discussing the research.

Paper I_ Introduction, theory literature review (30%): You will write an 8 to 10-page introduction to, literature review of the theory and scholarship, for the area you would like to study (and plan to present in your research proposal). You may use any reference style you wish (APA style is fairly straightforward and easy to use), but please use it consistently throughout your paper. You will include a revised version of this work in your final paper for the class: a research proposal.

Paper II_ Research proposal (45%)

The proposal will include a title page, a revision of Paper I, with a discussion of the procedures you would use to investigate research that flows from your literature review and theory discussion. You will explain how you will explore the topic, with special attention to providing a detailed discussion of how your proposed study will use the theory outlined in your theoretical background/literature review, and what important information your proposed research will add to an understanding of and to the development of the theory you've selected. The research proposal should be about 15-18 pages.

Tentative Course Schedule

MONDAY

August 27	Introduction to the course, course polices, assignments
September 3	Labor Day – no class
September 10	Introduction and overview: Theories and the communication/media discipline <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Baran & Davis (Ch. 1 & 2)• Littlejohn, Foss & Oetzel (Ch. 1 & 2; Ch. 5 pp. 145-157)• (Sakai): Naples, N. & Gurr, B. (2014). Feminist empiricism & standpoint theory. In S. N. Hesse-Biber (Ed.), <i>Feminist research practice</i> (2nd ed) (pp. 14-41). Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.
September 17	Theories about organizations and group behavior <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Baran & Davis (Ch. 3)• Littlejohn, Foss & Oetzel (Ch. 8 & 9)• (Sakai): Webster, J. G. (2011). The duality of media: A structurational theory of public attention. <i>Communication Theory</i>, 21, 43-66.❖ Hand in paragraph about your tentative theory/be prepared to discuss in class
September 24	Theories governing special audiences or contexts <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Baran & Davis (Ch. 6)• Littlejohn, Foss & Oetzel (Ch. 10; optional - Ch. 7)• (Sakai): Ruben, B. D. (2016). Communication theory and health communication practices: The more things change, the more they stay the same. <i>Health Communication</i>, 31, 1-11.
October 1	Examining theory in current research: Discussion of scholarly articles
October 8	Theories addressing communicators and audiences <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Baran & Davis (Ch. 7 & 8)• Littlejohn, Foss & Oetzel (Ch. 3; Ch. 5 pp. 167-180)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Sakai): Green, M. C., Brock, T. C., & Kaufman, G. F. (2004). Understanding media enjoyment: The role of transportation into narrative worlds. <i>Communication Theory, 14</i>, 311-327.
October 15	Paper I_ Theory/literature review due ❖ Discussion of paper & theory
October 22	Theorizing the effects of media & communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baran & Davis (Ch. 4 & 9) • Littlejohn, Foss & Oetzel (Ch. 5 pp. 157-167) • (Sakai): Luca, N. R., & Suggs, L. S. (2013). Theory and model use in social marketing health interventions. <i>Journal of Health Communication, 18</i>, 20-40.
October 29	Examining theory in current research: Discussion of scholarly articles
November 5	Theories about culture's influence on message construction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baran & Davis (Ch. 5, 10, & 11) • Littlejohn, Foss & Oetzel (Ch. 4, 11 & 12; Ch. 6 pp. 200-210) • (Sakai): Tynes, B., Schuschke, J., & Noble, S. U. (2016). Digital intersectionality theory and the #BlackLivesMatter movement. In S. U. Noble & B. M. Tynes (Eds.), <i>The intersectional internet: Race, sex, class, and culture online</i> (pp. 21-40). New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing.
November 12	Theorizing gender, race and identity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Littlejohn, Foss & Oetzel (Ch. 3) • (Sakai): McIntosh, H., & Cuklanz, L. (2014). Feminist media research. In S. N. Hesse-Biber (Ed.), <i>Feminist research practice</i> (2nd ed) (pp. 264-295). Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.
November 19	Examining theory in current research: Discussion of scholarly articles
November 26	Individual meetings re: final papers/research proposals
December 3	Last day of class ❖ "High density" presentations of research proposals
~~~~~	
December 10	Final papers/research proposals due at <u>noon</u>