

# JOUR 801 RESEARCH I: THEORY

William Allen White School of Journalism and Mass Communications, University of Kansas  
Fall 2016, Wednesdays, 4:30–7 p.m., 303 Stauffer-Flint

## INSTRUCTOR

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## OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Identify where the major theories that guide mass communication research fit within the general model of communication.
- Critically evaluate the major theories that guide mass communication research.
- Develop a research interest into a concept-focused and theory-driven mass communication model.
- Write academically using American Psychological Association (APA) style.

## TEXTBOOKS

Baran, S. J. & Davis, D. K. (2012). *Mass communication theory: Foundations, ferment, and future* (6th ed.). Boston, MA: Wadsworth.

American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

## ASSIGNMENTS (470 POSSIBLE POINTS)

### Readings and discussions

You will be asked to read two or three readings for class each week. In addition, you will read much more for your individual assignments. While you should be reading the assigned articles in their entirety, you should focus on understanding each article's introduction and literature review, method, and discussion sections. For this class, it is not imperative that you fully understand each article's results section.

Many of the class readings will be challenging. We will clarify each reading in class. But you need to come prepared, having read all of the readings ahead of time, and generated insightful questions about each.

To better understand each theory, you will want to map it onto the general model of mass communication, which we will discuss on the first day.

## **Research assignments**

**All research assignments are due by 8 a.m. on their due dates.** Assignments submitted late receive zero points. Material on pages that exceed page maximums will not be read or used in evaluation. Assignments not submitted through Blackboard will not be graded.

We will use a “scaffolding” approach to the research assignments. That is, each new assignment will build on the previous assignment and the feedback you receive. Instead of thinking about these as six separate assignments, think of them as one, semester-long project that you get to revise (and make better) several times.

### **a. Initial sources**

Due Aug. 31 (5 points).

Find three sources about your research topic. Each source needs to be of a different type. Possible source types include: non-academic article, encyclopedia entry, academic journal article, book, book chapter. After citing each source, write a sentence or two explaining what the sources says about your topic. Submit these citations and sentences online. Bring the sources to class (digital or physical copies).

### **b. Research interest explanation**

Due Sept. 7 (10 points).

In two or three paragraphs, explain what you are interested in researching. Explain why you are interested in this and what contribution your research might make. Explain what you know so far about your idea (if anything), and how you know this. Explain what you don’t know and how you plan to find this out.

### **c. Research question**

Draft due Sept. 14 (5 points). Final research question due Sept. 21 (10 points).

In one paragraph, explain the relevance of your research topic (a summary and expansion of your research interest assignment). Think about this as the first paragraph of your paper, in which you are making an argument for why your research topic is important enough to write about. Then state your research question. significance

### **d. Annotated bibliography**

Working list due Sept. 28 (5 points). Draft due Oct. 5 (10 points). Final bibliography due Oct. 12 (75 points).

An annotated bibliography is a list of references, with each reference followed by a summary (annotation) of the referenced work. The following is an example of one entry in an annotated bibliography:

Ho, J. Y. C., & Dempsey, M. (2010). Viral marketing: Motivations to forward online content. *Journal of Business Research*, 63, 1000–1006. doi: 10.1016/j.jbusres.2008.08.010

**Theory.** The authors use the theoretical framework of FIRO (Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation) (Schutz, 1966), to predict and test online users’ motivations to share marketing content by way of e-WOM (electronic word-of-mouth). According to FIRO, three needs motivate

individuals to communicate with one another: the need to feel included (i.e., belong), the need to show affection, and the need to control their social environment. Drawing on this framework, the authors predict that online users share content (1) to belong, (2) to distinguish themselves from others, (3) to engage in altruism, (4) to exert control over their personal growth, and (5) because they are curious.

**Method & Results.** The authors' predictions were tested with a survey of 582 undergraduate students. The dependent variable was the frequency with which respondents forwarded electronic information in a typical week. Data were analyzed with a structural equation model (SEM). Results confirmed that all motivations except for the need to belong predict online information sharing.

**Implications.** This is a useful study because it offers a theoretical model that can be adapted to predict the sharing of online news. It also identifies potential predictors of news sharing: the need to individuate, the need to be altruistic, and the need to control one's growth. Curiosity does not seem to fit with the other predictors – it should predict information gathering but not information sharing. Although it could be tied to issue involvement.

You will use these types of works in your bibliography: academic (peer-reviewed) journal articles, academic book chapters, academic books, non-academic research reports (e.g., Pew; use a limited number). You will NOT use these types of works in your bibliography: blog posts, websites, newspaper and magazine articles (including trade publications), theses and dissertations, unpublished research papers (including conference papers), encyclopedia entries, textbooks, non-academic books.

The goal of the working list is to show that you have started finding good references, and that you can list them using APA style. Master's students will have a minimum of five references in the working list, and doctoral students will have a minimum of 10 references. The working list does not need to include summaries/annotations (but it can).

The draft will include summaries/annotations. Master's students will have a minimum of eight references in the draft. Doctoral students will have a minimum of 15 references in the draft.

For the final annotated bibliography, Master's students will have between 15 and 25 references. Doctoral students will have between 25 and 40 references.

### **e. Concept explication**

Concept topic due Oct. 19 (5 points). Outline due Oct. 26 (10 points). Final concept explication due Nov. 2 (100 points).

The goal of this assignment is an exhaustive analysis of a concept that's central to your research question.

First, identify a concept to explicate. Here are some concepts that I have come across recently in mass comm. research: attention, burnout, digital literacy, engagement, interactivity, opinion leadership, parental mediation, polarization, radicalization, religiosity, sexual debut, sexual media diet, social capital, social media use, sharing, television viewing, voting, willingness to disclose, writing efficacy. These are just a few examples; there are many, many other concepts out there. You only have to identify one to explicate.

You will then find many articles and book chapters that discuss and use your concept.

For the concept topic assignment, start with your research question and explain how your concept relates to your research question. Briefly introduce your concept. This should be no longer than two paragraphs.

Your paper will be structured as follows:

(1) Introduction (about 1 page). In this section, you will introduce the concept, explain why it's a concept worth studying, how it relates to your research question, and foreshadow what else you will say in the paper.

(2) Conceptual definitions (3-5 pages). In this section, you will thoroughly explain how non-researchers and researchers have defined this concept (and corresponding concepts), how they have used it, and what they have found about it. You will write about how this concept is related to other concepts and theories in mass comm. research (e.g., what predicts it and/or what it predicts). You will critically evaluate what others have written about this concept. You will explain which of the conceptual definitions and relationships are relevant to your research.

(3) Operational definitions (3-5 pages). In this section, you will write about how the concept has been measured. You will critically evaluate the different empirical approaches and explain why some are better than others. You will explain which of the empirical approaches are relevant to your research.

(4) Conclusion (2-4 pages). In this section, you will synthesize everything you wrote in the previous two sections. You will clearly explain how you intend to define the concept in your research, how you intend to measure it, why, and what you expect to find.

(5) Reference list. Follow APA citation style and list all of the works that you cite in the text. Follow APA citation style for in-text citations. Persistent style mistakes in the text or in the reference section will decrease your grade.

The outline will include all of the above sections. Each section will include one or more point, which will become the topic sentences in your final version of the assignment. The outline may (but may not have to) include additional writing, expanding on your main points.

## **f. Theory development**

Theory topic due Nov. 9 (5 points). Outline/draft due Nov. 16 (10 points). Final theory paper due Nov. 30 (100 points).

The goal of this assignment is an exhaustive analysis of a theory that's central to your research question. Theories explain relationships between concepts, so your theory should be closely related to the concept you explicated in the previous assignment

First, identify a theory to develop. Here are some of the theories we will talk about in class: cultivation, exemplification, gatekeeping, selective exposure, social cognitive theory, third-person perception, uses and gratifications. There are many others out there. You only have to choose one.

You will then find many articles and book chapters that discuss, test, and expand your theory.

For your theory topic assignment, start with your research question and introduce your concept(s). Then explain how your theory relates to this concept. Briefly summarize your theory. This should be no longer than two paragraphs.

Your paper will be structured as follows:

- (1) Introduction (about 1 page). In this section, you will introduce your theory, explain how it relates to your research question, and foreshadow what else you will say in the paper.
- (2) Historical background (3-5 pages). In this section, you will thoroughly explain how the theory came to be and how it has developed over time. If there are elements of the theory that do not pertain directly to how you will be using it, you can explain those succinctly in this section. You also will critically evaluate what others have written about this theory.
- (3) Relevance to the research question and concepts (3-5 pages). In this section, you will write about how the theory relates to your research question and your focal concept(s). You will summarize what others have found using this theory in research that's similar to yours. You will explain what you expect to find using these concepts and theory. You can finish this section with hypotheses, if there is enough evidence to formulate them.
- (4) Conclusion (2-4 pages). In this section, you will synthesize everything you wrote in the previous two sections. You will clearly explain how this theory explain what you expect to happen in your research.
- (5) Reference list. Follow APA citation style and list all of the works that you cite in the text. Follow APA citation style for in-text citations. Persistent style mistakes in the text or in the reference section will decrease your grade.

The outline/draft will include all of the above sections. Each section will include one or more point. Each point will become the topic sentences in your final version of the assignment. The outline also will include some additional writing, expanding on your main points.

### **g. Final paper**

Draft of the introduction due Dec. 7 (10 points). Final paper due Dec. 14 (100 points).

This paper will integrate your concept explication and theory development assignments. You will add an introduction and transitions to these prior assignments that will frame them as a cohesive and convincing argument.

The goal of a research paper's introduction and literature review sections is to convince readers that the study being undertaken is worth pursuing. This is also the goal of this assignment. Re-work what you have written already in a way that argues for conducting your study. Emphasize what research has found in this area, what has been overlooked, and how your research will fill this gap.

## GRADING

Letter grade	Points	What it means
A	94-100	Flawless work
A-	90-93	Excellent work with a few minor issues that can be addressed easily
B+	87-89	Solid work with several minor issues
B	84-86	Solid work with a number of minor issues and at least one major issue
B-	80-83	Work meets most expectations but requires some considerable revisions
C+	77-79	Work meets some expectations and requires considerable revisions
C	74-76	Work meets fewer expectations than it misses
C-	70-73	Work misses most expectations
D+	67-69	At least one key element is completely absent and work exhibits other major flaws
D	64-66	More than one key element is completely absent
D-	60-63	Work needs almost a full re-write
F	0-59	Work is either missing or needs a full re-write

## CLASS SCHEDULE

**Week 1: Wednesday, Aug. 24 | Introduction to class | Research questions | Sources**

**Week 2: Wednesday, Aug. 31 | Social science and mass communication theory**

1. Post a list of three initial sources about your topic on Blackboard by 8 a.m. (see Research assignments section, above, for more instructions). Bring the sources to class (digital or physical copies).
2. Read chapter 1 in *Mass Communication Theory* (stop at p. 13), and be prepared to discuss the following ideas: social science, scientific method, third-person effect, theory, postpositivist theory.
3. Read chapter 1 in the *Publication Manual of the APA*. Focus on sections 1.01-1.06 and 1.10. Flag the guidelines from this chapter that seem most important.

**Week 3: Wednesday, Sept. 7 | Two step flow and individual differences**

1. Submit your research interest explanation on Blackboard before 8 a.m.
2. Read chapter 6 in *Mass Communication Theory*, stopping on p. 148. Be prepared to discuss the following concepts: War of the Worlds, limited effects perspective, two-step flow theory, gatekeepers, opinion leaders.
3. Read sections 1 and 4 in the following article. Be prepared to discuss these concepts: Five-factor model of personality (and each of the five factors), shyness and narcissism, the study's findings and limitations, and the implications of this study (e.g., potential effectiveness of Facebook advertising). Note any questions or arguments you have about this study and bring them up in class.

Ryan, T., & Xenos, S. (2011). Who uses Facebook? An investigation into the relationship between the Big Five, shyness, narcissism, loneliness, and Facebook usage. *Computers in Human Behavior, 27*, 1658–1664.

4. Read chapter 2 in the *Publication Manual of the APA*. Focus on sections 2.01, 2.05-2.08, 2.11, and Figure 2.1. Flag the guidelines from this chapter that seem most important.

#### **Week 4: Wednesday, Sept. 14 | Media effects theories**

1. Submit the draft of your research question on Blackboard before 8 a.m.
2. Read the following chapter [see the Additional Readings folder on Blackboard]:

Potter, W. J. (2014). Patterns in the use of theory in media effects research. In R. S. Fortner & P. M. Fackler (Eds.), *The handbook of media and mass communication theory* (pp. 95–114). Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons.
3. Thinking about your research topic and using information from Potter’s chapter, write a one-paragraph reflection addressing the following questions: Is your research topic a “media effects” topic? If so, which of the theories Potter lists might explain something about your topic? Looking at the table on p. 102, to which types of effects and functions is your topic related? If your research topic is not a media effects topic, what type of theory might explain parts of your topic? Bring your reflection to class.
4. Read sections 6.22-6.32 in chapter 6 of the *Publication Manual of the APA*. Flag the guidelines that seem most important.

#### **Week 5: Wednesday, Sept. 21 | Media selection | Bibliography introduction**

1. Submit your revised research question on Blackboard before 8 a.m.
2. Read pp. 154-157 chapter 6 of *Mass Communication Theory*. Be prepared to discuss cognitive dissonance and selective exposure. Read pp. 241-257 in chapter 9 of *Mass Communication Theory*. Be prepared to discuss the following concepts: active-audience theories, uses and gratifications approach, surveillance, correlation of parts of society, transmission of social heritage, entertainment, and limitations of the uses-and-gratifications approach.
3. Read the following article, focusing on pp. 542-549 and 556-558, and be prepared to discuss goals for information selection, congruent selectivity, navigational structures, and informational motives not included in this study. Note any questions or arguments you have about this study and bring them up in class.

Edgerly, S., Vraga, E. K., McLaughlin, B., Alvarez, G., Yang, J., & Kim, Y. M. (2014). Navigational structures and information selection goals: A closer look at online selectivity. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 58*(4), 542–561.
5. Read chapter 7 in the *Publication Manual of the APA*. Focus on sections 7.01-7.05. Flag the guidelines that seem most important.

### **Week 6: Wednesday, Sept. 28 | Message processing | Intro to concept explication**

1. Submit on Blackboard before 8 a.m. a working list of the references you have found so far for your annotated bibliography. Minimum entries: five for Master's students and ten for doctoral students.
2. Read pp. 262-273 in chapter 9 of *Mass Communication Theory*. Be prepared to discuss the following concepts: information processing theory, limited cognitive resources, schemas, elaboration likelihood model (ELM), peripheral route, central route, entertainment theory.
3. Read the following article, focusing on pp. 777-779 (stopping at Study 1), and pp. 785 (starting at General Discussion) to the end. Be prepared to discuss the theory that these authors develop and test in this study, and the constituent theories on which they draw in the process of developing their theory.

Small, D. A., & Verrochi, N. M. (2009). The face of need: Facial emotion expression on charity advertisements. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 46(6), 777-787. doi: 10.1509/jmkr.46.6.777

4. In chapter 3 of the *Publication Manual of the APA*, read sections 3.01-3.17. Flag the guidelines that seem most important.

### **Week 7: Wednesday, Oct. 5 | Diffusion and digital divide**

1. Submit a draft of your annotated bibliography on Blackboard before 8 a.m. Minimum entries, with a synopsis of each: eight for Master's students and 15 for doctoral students.
2. Read pp. 278-293 in chapter 10 of *Mass Communication Theory*. Be prepared to discuss the following concepts: innovation diffusion theory, early adopters, change agents, social marketing theory, digital divide, media system dependency theory.
3. Read the following article and be prepared to discuss how the authors use digital divide, diffusion of innovations, and uses and gratifications theories to set up their study, and how their findings about economic instability, educational trajectories, and social isolation contribute to these theories.

Bobkowski, P. S., & Smith, J. E. (2013). Social media divide: Characteristics of emerging adults who do not use social network websites. *Media Culture & Society*, 35(6), 771-781. doi:10.1177/0163443713491517

4. In chapter 3 of the *Publication Manual of the APA*, read sections 3.18-3.23. Flag the guidelines that seem most important.

### **Week 8: Wednesday, Oct. 12 | Priming and agenda setting**

1. Submit your annotated bibliography on Blackboard before 8 a.m.
2. Read pp. 293-303 in chapter 10 of *Mass Communication Theory* and be prepared to discuss the following concepts: agenda setting, priming, agenda building, framing theory, second-order agenda setting, frames, the spiral of silence.



3. Read the following article before class, focusing on pp. 34-39 and 47-51. Be ready to discuss priming and the structure of memory, examples of priming in mass media, and what this study contributes to the operationalization of priming intensity, particularly in the context of sexual content. This study is not the easiest, so note any questions you have while reading this study and bring them up in class.

Carpentier, F. R. D., Northup, C. T., & Parrott, M. S. (2014). Revisiting media priming effects of sexual depictions: Replication, extension, and consideration of sexual depiction strength. *Media Psychology, 17*(1), 34–54. doi: 10.1080/15213269.2013.870045

4. Skim chapter 4 in the *Publication Manual of the APA*. Notice the many detailed guidelines that are here and make a mental note to look up these guidelines when you write your papers. Flag the guidelines that seem most important.

### **Week 9: Wednesday, Oct. 19 | Framing**

1. Submit your concept explication topic on Blackboard before 8 a.m.
2. Read pp. 330-339 (stop before “Reforming journalism based on ...”) in chapter 11 of *Mass Communication Theory*. Be prepared to discuss the following concepts: frame analysis, frame, hyperritualized representations, and primary/dominant reality.
3. Read the following article before class, focusing on pp. 219-225 and 232-235. Be prepared to discuss how framing has been used in sports journalism, performance and character frames, the object-evaluation model, the role of fandom and religion in sports enjoyment. Note any questions or arguments you have about this study and bring them up in class.

Lewis, N., & Weaver, A. (2015). More than a game: Sports media framing effects on attitudes, intentions, and enjoyment. *Communication & Sport, 3*(2) 219-242.

4. Read sections 6.03-6.09 and 6.11-6.21 in chapter 6 of the *Publication Manual of the APA*. Flag the guidelines that seem most important.

### **Week 10: Wednesday, Oct. 26 | Cultivation and Media literacy**

1. Submit your concept explication outline on Blackboard before 8 a.m.
2. Read pp. 340-347 and 351-354 in chapter 11 of *Mass Communication Theory*. Be ready to discuss the following: cultivation analysis, violence index, message system analysis, cultivation, mainstreaming, resonance, and media literacy.
3. Read the following article, focusing on pp. 5-9 and 14-17. Be ready to discuss: connections between cultivation, priming, and dual-process theories; and reactance. Note any questions or arguments you have about this study and bring them up in class.

Russell, C. A., Russell, D. W., Boland, W. A., & Grube, J. W. (2014). Television’s cultivation of American adolescents’ beliefs about alcohol and the moderating role of trait reactance. *Journal of Children and Media, 8*(1), 5–22. doi: 10.1080/17482798.2014.863475

**Week 11: Wednesday, Nov. 2 | Media production and newsroom sociology | Guest speaker: Scott Reinardy, Ph.D.**

1. Submit your concept explication on Blackboard before 8 a.m.
2. Watch your email and Blackboard for the readings for this class.

**Week 12: Wednesday, Nov. 9 | Race, ethnicity and social identity | Guest speaker: Joseph Erba, Ph.D.**

1. Submit your theory topic on Blackboard before 8 a.m.
2. Read the following articles before class:
  - a. Whittler, T. E., & Spira, J. S. (2002). Model's race: A peripheral cue in advertising messages? *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 12(4), 291–301. doi:10.1207/15327660260382333
  - b. Cano, C. R., & Ortinau, D. J. (2012). Digging for “Spanish gold:” How to connect with Hispanic consumers. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 52(3), 322–332. doi:10.2501/JAR-52-3-322-332

**Week 13: Wednesday, Nov. 16 | Critical cultural and feminist theories | Guest speaker: Barbara Barnett, Ph.D.**

1. Submit an outline (and any draft writing) of your theory paper on Blackboard before 8 a.m.
2. Read pp. 209-222 in chapter 8, and pp. 260-261 in chapter 9 of *Mass Communication Theory*.
3. Read the following article [see Blackboard]. Note any differences you notice between the structure, voice, and overall “feel” of this article versus articles we read earlier in this class.

Barnett, B. (2008). Framing rape: An examination of public relations strategies in the Duke University lacrosse case. *Culture & Critique*, 1, 179-202. doi:10.1111/j.1753-9137.2008.00018.x

**Week 14: Wednesday, Nov. 23**

1. No class today. Enjoy your Thanksgiving break. Work on your theory paper

**Week 15: Wednesday, Nov. 30 | Normative theories in legal research | Guest speaker: Jonathan Peters, Ph.D.**

1. Submit your theory paper on Blackboard before 8 a.m.
2. Read pp. 96-126 in chapter 5 of *Mass Communication Theory*.
3. Watch your email and Blackboard for additional readings for this class.

**Week 16: Wednesday, Dec. 7 | Integrative media theories**

1. Submit the introduction to your final paper on Blackboard before 8 a.m.
2. Read the following article, focusing on pp. 751-755 and 768-770. Be prepared to discuss the reinforcing spirals perspective, the contribution of primary socialization theory and social development theory to the authors' argument. Think about how this study is about both media selection and effects. Note any questions or arguments you have about this study and bring them up in class.

Slater, M. D., & Hayes, A. F. (2010). The influence of youth music television viewership on changes in cigarette use and association with smoking peers: A social identity, reinforcing spirals perspective. *Communication Research*, 37(6), 751–773. doi: 10.1177/0093650210375953

**Finals week: Wednesday, Dec. 14**

1. Submit your final paper on Blackboard before 4:30 p.m.