

MASS COMMUNICATION THEORY I

American University of Central Asia

Course	JOR 490.1 (6 credits) Fall 2016
Course Meetings	Tuesdays and Thursdays at 12:45-14:00
Location	TBD
Instructor	Dina Kassymbekova
Email	dina.kassymbekova@mail.com
Office Hours	Tuesdays and Thursdays at 12:30-16:00

Course Description and Learning Outcomes

In this course you will learn to identify the theory and framework of mass communication. We will discuss, as well, some of the strengths and criticisms of theories and seek to apply them to cases to help understand communication in our society in general, and for communication workers in particular.

The purpose of this class is to give students exposure to the broad spectrum of communication theories and help them to develop critical thinking skills about communication issues. By the end of the course, you will be able to read and understand mass communication research and see how theories help us explain the phenomena of mass communication.

These objectives support the Journalism and Mass Communication Department's broader goal to prepare students to contribute to their societies through understanding the roles of media in society, thinking critically about media issues, and respecting the diversity of thought and analysis of media systems. Specifically, students will do the following:

- Learn and analyze the main approaches to communication theory, including structural, behavioral, and cultural traditions of analysis.
- Understand and apply theories about media organizations, media content, media audiences, and media effects.
- Appreciate mass media research and become critical media consumers.

Resources for the Course: See the last page of this syllabus.

Course Requirements:

Class Participation

Good class participation involves regular attendance, consistent submission of assignments, contributing to the ongoing discussion of the class in an informed and responsible manner, being attentive to that conversation, and being respectful of the participants in it. Monopolizing discussion time, interacting aggressively with your classmates, and sleeping during class are examples of disrespectful behaviors and are not indicative of "good" class participation.

Written assignments (2)

During semester two, written assignments will be offered to provide an active participation opportunity for students who prefer to express their thoughts in written form. The work should be submitted via e-course before the deadline. Late work will not be accepted.

Presentation

Each student is expected to prepare a presentation on a topic assigned by the instructor. Presentations will be prepared and demonstrated in groups. If you miss your presentation, you will not be able to make up. Presentation dates can be changed in advance, provided you agree with another peer group to swap your presentation dates. Please email your Power Point slides to the instructor at least 48 hours before your scheduled date. Failure to meet this 48-hour rule means that you will not be allowed to present and you will lose your presentation points.

Essay:

Each student is expected to write an essay during this semester. Essays should be submitted via e-course before the deadline. Late work will not be accepted.

Attendance/Punctuality/Participation:

- Students are expected to attend all classes and complete assignments on time. Regular attendance for this course is mandatory. All students are also expected to be in class and in their seats at the beginning of each class period. Students who arrive more than ten minutes late for class, or who leave before the class has ended will be marked absent for that class, unless there is a legitimate excuse for doing so. If you have a compelling reason to be absent, or late, because of an illness or other emergency, please discuss it with the instructor.
- If you miss six or more classes, you will receive zero points for the class participation/attendance.
- You are expected to help keep this course stimulating and the discussions relevant by completing the assigned reading and written assignments. You are responsible for contributing to class discussions based on the readings.

Additional Course Policies

- Please turn off all cell phones/electronic devices before entering class. Students using any electronic devices without instructor's permission during class will be excused from the class.
- Please complete each reading assignment prior to the day it is assigned so you can take part in discussions in class and apply the techniques learned from reading.
- Students must respect people's diversity and to be aware of the various ways in which language can be discriminatory. Thus, everyone should avoid using biased language both in the class discussions and in written assignments.
- Important announcements, supplemental materials, etc. will be communicated via E-mail. Each student is expected to have a valid E-mail address and to check their E-mail often.

Plagiarism Policy

Please familiarize yourself with AUCA plagiarism policy as stated in the AUCA Student Handbook. If you plagiarize you will receive failing grade for the assignment AND for the course.

It may seem to be easy to recognize something that is plagiarized. However, there is growing blurry line about recognizing what plagiarism is. Typically, there are ten types of plagiarism. *TurnItIn* software outlines some common plagiarism practices. For example,

- (1) The act of changing key words or phrases but retaining the essential content of the source
- (2) Self-plagiarism. This is something when a student submits the same work to more than one class.
- (3) A mixture of copied material from several different sources without proper citation
- (4) A written piece that includes citations to non-existent or inaccurate information about sources
- (5) "Aggregator." This typically includes proper citation, but the paper contains almost no original work.

Grading Criteria

Class Attendance/ Class Participation	20%
Written assignments (2)	20% (10 % each)
Presentations	30%
Essays	30%
Total	100 %

Grade Appeal

If you disagree with a grade, please come speak to me so I explain why you got the grade. If still disagreement persists, then speak with your academic advisor about filing an appeal. There is no grade negotiation. Grades are earned not given

Grading Scale:

A 93-100 Excellent
A- 90-92 Excellent
B + 87-89 Good
B 83-86 Good
B- 80-82 Good
C + 77-79 Average
C 73-76 Average
C- 70-72 Average
D+ 67-69 Poor
D 63-66 Poor
D- 60-62 Poor
F 0-59 Failure

(TENTATIVE) COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1

Thu, September 1. Course introduction. Syllabus, course objectives, grading criteria etc.

Week 2

Tue, September 6. Definition of mass media. Different types and evolution of mass media. New media versus old.

Thu, September 8. Case study new and old media.

Week 3

Tue, September 13. Public holiday (Kurban Ait). No class

Thu, September 15. Elements and processes of mass communication.

Week 4

Tue, September 20. Mass communication models.

Thu, September 22. Mass communication theories as part of social science. Terminology. Different approaches to analysis.

Week 5

Tue, September 27. Mass communication in historical perspective. Four eras of mass communication theory.

Thu, September 29. Four eras of mass communication theory. Reasons for paradigm shifts.

Week 6

Tue, October 4. Preparation for group assignments. How to prepare a presentation and present successfully.

Thu, October 6. The 'mass' concept. Mass society and mass culture. Origins, assumptions, examples and limitations of mass society theory.

Week 7

Tue, October 11. Case study mass culture

Thu, October 13. Propaganda. Definitions. Origins.

Week 8

Tue, October 18. Propaganda. Major theories.

Thu, October 20. Case study propaganda

Week 9

Tue, October 25. Normative theories. Origins. Libertarianism.

Thu, October 27. Normative theories. Main theories, influence.

Week 10

Tue, November 1. Case study journalism ethics.

Thu, November 3. . Limited effects theory.

Week 11

Tue, November 8. Fall Break. (No classes)

Thu, November 10. Fall Break. (No classes)

Tue, November 8.

Thu, November 10.

Week 12

Tue, November 15. Preparation for essay. How to write an essay.

Thu, November 17. Focus on functionalism and children. Media violence debate.

Week 13

Tue, November 22. Case study media violence.

Thu, November 24. Critical theories of mass communication

Week 14

Tue, November 29. Cultural theories of mass communication.

Thu, December 1. Review session

Week 15

Tue, December 6. Contemporary mass communication theory. The rise of media theory. Changes in media theory and research.

Thu, December 8. Preview: Audience theories. The role of media in the social world. Meaning-making in the social world.

Week 16

Tue, December 13. Essay feedback.

Thu, December 15. Course review. Student reflection on their learning experiences

Note: The schedule is only tentative and subject to change. All changes will be announced in class and/or sent by email. Please check your AUCA email regularly for the most up-to-date information.

RESOURCES FOR THE COURSE (available in the AUCA library)

- Baran, Stanley and Davis, Dennis (2015). *Mass Communication Theory* (7th edition). (**also available as an e-book on e-course**)
- McQuail, Denis and Sven Windahl (1993). *Communication Models* (2nd edition).
- McQuail, Denis (2010). *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory* (6th edition). (Several chapters are available as e-books)
- Werner J. Severin and James W. Tankard Jr. (2000) *Communication Theories: Origins, Methods and Uses in the Mass Media* (5th Edition).
- Jack Rosenberry and Lauren A. Vicker (2008) *Applied Mass Communication Theory: A Guide for Media Practitioners* 1st Edition.