

MASS COMMUNICATION THEORY • BTMM 1011 SEC 011 • CRN 006778 SUMMER-1 2010

TUTTLEMAN 406 • 10:45 – 12:45 M-TH • 4 credits



COURSE SUMMARY

Did you know *The Matrix* is a film about mass communication theory? In fact, many films explore the role of media and mass communication in society. Most everyone is surrounded by technologies of *mass communication*, yet we rarely consider the underlying theories and methods of these global media systems. Using examples from many films, this course will introduce students to the use of theory for analyzing and understanding the processes of mass communication. Class discussion and the textbook will be combined with the films to create an active learning experience within a multimedia environment. In so doing, we will learn about mass communication via oral, print, and electronic media — the word, the text, the image.

GOALS AND OUTCOMES

The essential goal of this course is for students to comprehend the fundamental theories of mass communication and the role these theories play in how we understand the cultural roles of media. By the end of this course, students will:

- understand the basic mass communication theories that guide our understanding of the effects and roles of mass media.
- be able to analyze media messages from many perspectives, all through the use of mass communication theories.
- have a much deeper understanding of the personal and cultural role of the mass media industries.
- comprehend how mass communication theories are accepted throughout society.
- understand the mass communication processes embedded in the technologies and industries of their future careers.
- discover that mass communication is often at the center of how we perceive “truth” and “reality.”

INSTRUCTOR

Prof. Barry Vacker

Office: Annenberg 224

bvacker@temple.edu

Office hours: Room 406 Tuttleman, before or after my Summer classes; or by appointment

Office phone: 215.204.3623

Preferred methods of contact – interpersonal: 1) come up to me before or after class; 2) drop by during office hours
electronic: 1) send an email; 2) call on the office telephone

REQUIRED TEXT

A First Look at Communication Theory (7th Edition), by Em Griffin (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2009). ISBN: 978-0-07-338502-0. Available at Temple University bookstore.

GRADING AND EXAMS

There will be three exams and one media critique over the course of the semester. If you miss one of the exams, then your grade for that exam will be zero. The breakdown is as follows:

Exam 1	= 20%	(Tuesday, June 2)
Exam 2	= 20%	(Wednesday, June 1)
Final Exam	= 30%	(Monday, June 28)
Report/Present.	= 20%	(Wednesday, June 23)
Attendance	= 10%	100%

Exams may contain three kinds of questions — essay, short answer, multiple choice. The difficulty of the exam questions will vary, but they are designed to test student reading and comprehension of class materials — readings, class discussion, and films/videos. Exam questions will stress the “big picture” rather than trivial details. Approximately 1/3 of the questions will come from the readings in the text, 1/3 from the lectures and class discussions, and 1/3 from the films and videos. The final exam is comprehensive and mandatory.

Note: If you have any questions about your exam grades, you have one week (7 days) to contact Professor Vacker or the TAs and arrange a meeting to discuss your questions. If you have a question about your final exam or total grade, you must contact Professor Vacker within 24 hours of the grade being posted in Blackboard.

Make-up Exams

NO makeup exams are permitted for the tests, unless you miss class for Temple-approved academic events or sports activities, or a religious observance. If you need to miss an exam for one of these reasons, then you need to provide the professor with written and signed (by appropriate school representative) documentation prior to the exam. NO other reasons are acceptable. This is only fair to those fellow students who take the exam as scheduled.

Mass Communication Report

In this project, you will work with your professor in developing a 3-page written report about how a magazine or newspaper article illustrates one of the mass communication theories discussed in the course. You will also do a short Powerpoint or video presentation to the class, explaining your report. During Week 2, you will receive a handout that provides all the details on the project. *Due date: Wednesday, June 23 (no exceptions)*

Attendance

This class relies on class discussion and student participation. To encourage “summer” attendance, I have created an attendance plan. Simply put, the more classes you attend, the more points you earn toward your final grade. Excluding the first day, exam days, and the day your prof will be attending a conference, there will be 20 class meetings. Attend all 20 to get the full 10 points.

Classes <u>Attended</u>	Points <u>Earned</u>	Classes <u>Attended</u>	Points <u>Earned</u>	Classes <u>Attended</u>	Points <u>Earned</u>
20	10	18	7	16	3
19	9	17	5	15	0

Note 1: *It is your responsibility to ensure you are in your assigned seat, otherwise you will be counted absent. If you need to miss class for a religious holiday, please let the professor know in writing and verbally (before or after class, or in office hours).*

Note 2: *Your professor will take great care to make sure the attendance records are 100% accurate. If you have any questions about your absences and attendance records for the semester, it is **your** responsibility to contact your professor and clarify your questions or any issues. You must meet with the professor by Thursday, June 24, to discuss any attendance issues. After June 24, all attendance grades are final. Once we complete the final exam, there will be no time to clarify any issues.*

Final Grades

Final course grades will be assigned as follows:

100-93 = A	89-86 = B+	79-76 = C+	69-66 = D+	59-0 = F
92-90 = A-	85-83 = B	75-73 = C	65-63 = D	
	82-80 = B-	72-70 = C-	62-60 = D-	

Academic Dishonesty

Regarding academic dishonesty, this class will abide by the rules of Temple University. Cheating on exams will get you dropped from the class — NO EXCEPTIONS. The Temple Student Handbook states:

Temple University strongly believes in academic honesty and integrity. Plagiarism and academic cheating are, therefore, prohibited.

There is nothing wrong with citing the works of others, just make sure you give them credit. In return, you get credit for doing so, and citing them can enhance your learning. If you are not certain that you are using or citing materials properly, then please check with the TAs or Dr. Vacker.

Academic honesty and plagiarism

Adapted from the Temple University policy statement on academic integrity, passed by the Academic Senate on April 19, 1989.

Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of another person's labor: another person's ideas, words, or assistance.

There are many forms of plagiarism: repeating another person's sentence as your own, adopting a particularly apt phrase as your own, paraphrasing someone else's argument as your own, or even presenting someone else's line of thinking in the development of an idea as though it were your own. Academic writing is built upon the use of other people's ideas and words — this is how ideas are developed —

but appropriate credit must always be given to the originator.

In general, all sources must be identified as clearly, accurately, and thoroughly as possible. When in doubt about whether to identify a source, either cite the source or consult your instructor. Here are some specific guidelines to follow:

a. *Quotations.* Whenever you use a phrase, sentence, or longer passage written (or spoken) by someone else, you must enclose the words in quotation marks and indicate the exact source of the material, including the page number of written sources.

b. *Paraphrasing.* Avoid closely paraphrasing another's words. Substituting an occasional synonym, leaving out or adding an occasional modifier, rearranging the grammar slightly, or changing the tenses of verbs simply looks like sloppy copying. Good paraphrasing indicates that you have absorbed the material and are restating it in a way that contributes to your overall argument. It is best to either quote material directly, using quotation marks, or put ideas completely in your own words. In either case, acknowledgment is necessary. Remember: expressing someone else's ideas in your own way does not make them yours.

c. *Facts.* In a paper, you will often use facts that you have gotten from a lecture, a written work, or some other source. If the facts are well known, it is usually not necessary to provide a source. (In a paper on American history, for example, it would not ordinarily be necessary to give a source for the statement that the Civil War began in 1861 after the inauguration of Abraham Lincoln.) But if the facts are not widely known or if the facts were developed or presented by a specific source, then you should identify that source.

d. *Ideas.* If you use an idea or ideas that you learned from a lecture, written work, or some other source, then you should identify the source. You should identify the source for an idea whether or not you agree with the idea. It does not become your original idea just because you agree with it.

Penalties for violation of Temple University's academic honesty policies can range from a failing grade for the assignment or the entire course to referral to the university disciplinary committee.

Slackers

If you miss many classes or an exam, then you will have difficulty passing this course. You are expected to actively participate in this course, just like you do with media in your everyday life! Any topic discussed in class will be assumed to have been heard by everyone. If you miss a class, please feel free to ask questions of the professor; however, do not expect him to recite the class lecture for you.

Text messaging, emailing, and web surfing during class: Your mediated world will still exist after 3:10 every day!

Instant access to everything online is surely a permanent feature of digital media in everyday life, especially on college campuses. Obviously, there are many advantages and benefits to these technologies. However, text messaging, emailing, and web surfing in class are far too often a *detriment to concentrating and learning in a college classroom*. First, you cannot concentrate on class material when you are texting and surfing online; this will hinder your understanding of complex ideas and reduce your performance on the exams and projects. Second, the glowing imagery on your laptop or cell phone screen is a distraction and discourteous to others around you, especially when we are screening film clips. So, do yourself and your classmates a favor: avoid texting, emailing, and surfing during class. Your mediated world and friends will still exist when the class is over at 3:10!!!

Email Protocol

Since there are almost 40 students in your professor's two courses, he receives a huge volume of emails. To insure efficient responses and clear communication, he has two requests:

- Please provide him at least 24 hours to reply to your email; it is much better for all concerned that when you get an email response, he has had time to think about it and gather additional information, if necessary.
- Please compose your emails in clear, concise sentences, keeping the length of the email as brief as needed.

It should go without saying that you should use proper grammar and form in composing your email and addressing the TAs and professor. Emails should be written as a brief letter, not a text message. Short, clear emails make for clear communication and help everything to run smoother!

SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS

Any student who has a need for accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact Professor Vacker privately to discuss the specific situation as soon as possible. Contact Disability Resources and Services at 215.204.1280 in 100 Ritter Annex to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

ACADEMIC FREEDOM

Temple University has requested that the following information be included on all course syllabi:

Freedom to teach and freedom to learn are inseparable facets of academic freedom. The University has a policy on Student and Faculty and Academic Rights and Responsibilities (Policy #03.70.02) which can be accessed through the following link: http://policies.temple.edu/getdoc.asp?policy_no=03.70.02.

HOW TO DO WELL IN THIS COURSE

The best way to do well in this course is simple: come to class, pay attention during class, avoid texting and web surfing in class, stay up on the readings, study hard, and have an open mind. Also, let your professor and/or TAs know if you have any questions!

CLASS PROTOCOL

In general, your professor is an easy-going guy who prefers his classes to be open forums for ideas and discourse relevant to class topics. However, a few rules are needed:

- please arrive to class on time; lectures, discussion, and films will begin promptly.
- timely arrivals to class are not only courteous to classmates, but many of these films and shows have very important openings, which are important to understanding the meanings and messages to be discussed in class and in your papers.
- you are encouraged to turn off or silence all cell phones, iPhones, and Blackberries.
- please show respect and courtesy to fellow students at all times;
- eloquence is the most persuasive form of discourse; insults and “in your face” dialogue persuades no one of anything.
- feel free to ask questions during discussions or at appropriate moments during class lecture.
- we want all of you to do well in this class, so feel free to approach your professor and TAs with questions before or after class, or during office hours.

COURSE OUTLINE AND SCHEDULE

BTMM 1011 – Summer 2010

7th Ed (Maroon-colored book)

Week 1	INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS THEORY?	READINGS
Mon May 17	introduction to course; review syllabus; student introductions	—
Tues May 18	what is “theory” and why does it matter? film clip: <i>The Matrix</i> (Wachowski brothers 1999)	Chapters 1 & 2
Wed May 19	ways to think about theory film clips: <i>The Manchurian Candidate</i> (Jonathan Demme 2004)	—
Thurs May 20	mapping the territories of communication theory	Chapter 4
Week 2	MASS COMMUNICATION AND MASS SOCIETY	READINGS
Mon May 24	film clips: <i>Ace in the Hole</i> (Billy Wilder 1951)	—
Tues May 25	media ecology; oral, print, electronic communication	Chapter 24
Wed May 26	media rhetoric; film clips: <i>A Face in the Crowd</i> (Elia Kazan 1957)	—
Thurs May 27	the “rules” of rhetoric; assessing persuasion	Chapter 21
Week 3	GENDER & COMMUNICATION	READINGS
Mon May 31	<i>Memorial Day: no class</i>	—
Tues June 1	gender styles; film clips: <i>You’ve Got Mail</i> (Nora Ephron 1998)	—
Wed June 2	<i>Exam 1</i>	Chapters 1, 2, 4, 21, 24
Thurs June 3	social information; gender and communication	Chapter 11, 33
Week 4	CULTURE AND COMMUNICATION	READINGS
Mon June 7	cultivation theory; cultural studies film clips: <i>Quiz Show</i> (Robert Redford 1994)	—
Tues June 8	big media and the masses: who shapes who?	Chapter 26, 27
Wed June 9	semiotics and the creation of meanings film: <i>Wag the Dog</i> (Barry Levinson 1997)	—
Thurs June 10	no class; professor attending media conference.	—
Week 5	TRUTH AND SETTING THE AGENDA	READINGS
Mon June 14	decoding media symbols and images	Chapter 25
Tues June 15	agenda setting in the media clips: <i>The Year of Living Dangerously</i> (Peter Weir 1982)	Chapter 28
Tues June 16	the media agenda and the public agenda; What to think? Or what to think about?	—
Wed June 17	<i>Exam 2</i>	Chapters 11, 25-28, 33
Week 6	PRESENTATIONS / WRAP-UP COURSE	READINGS
Mon June 21	media ecology; film clips: to be determined	—
Tues June 22	postmodernism, reality, and media.	Chapter 24; pp. 308-311
Wed June 23	<i>media reports and presentations are due</i>	—
Thurs June 24	common threads in communication theory; review for final	Chapter 36
Week 7	FINAL EXAM	READINGS
Mon June 28	<i>Comprehensive Final Exam</i> Note: The Final Exam is mandatory. There are NO exceptions. This date cannot be changed. EVERYONE will take the exam as scheduled.	—

Student Questionnaire (Filling this out is totally voluntary)

To help me get to know this class better, we would like some information about your background, life, goals, etc. It will help us understand your life and ideas much better, and aid us in teaching to you as an individual human being.

1. The two books that most *influenced* my life are:

_____ by _____
_____ by _____

2. The two people (not a family member or relative) I most admire are:

_____ and _____

The two *greatest* films I have ever seen are: _____ & _____

The funniest film I have ever seen is: _____

My favorite female actor is: _____ My favorite male actor is: _____

My 2 favorite pieces of visual art (sculpture, painting, building, advertisement, etc.) are:

_____ why? _____
_____ why? _____

My 2 favorite musicians, bands, composers are: _____ & _____

Which city would be your ideal city in which to live? _____

why? _____

My hometown is: _____

My goals in life are to:

Some questions I have about mass communication that I would like to see addressed in this class are:

OPTIONAL: My name is _____