

JCOM 5020/6020—Mass Communication Theory—Fall 2005

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Office hours:
Wednesdays 8:30-11:30 a.m.
Thursdays 2:30-4:30
Other times by appointment

Class meeting times and location:

Tuesdays and Thursdays 5-6:15 p.m., 312 Animal Science Building

Required texts:

The Beginnings of Communication Study in America: A Personal Memoir (1997), by Wilbur Schramm. Edited by Steven H. Chaffee and Everett M. Rogers.

Mass Media, Social Control, and Social Change: A Macrosocial Perspective (1999). Edited by David Demers and K. Viswanath.

Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, fifth edition (2001).

Optional text:

Media Effects: Advances in Theory and Research, second edition (2002). Edited by Jennings Bryant and Dolf Zillmann.

Course Objectives

We will launch the fall 2005 JCOM 5020/6020 class by examining the history of communication as a field of study—its roots, early research, strengths, weaknesses. With this foundation, we will dig into the current understanding of the process and effects of mass communication. The Demers and Viswanath text is built on the premise that the mass media are agents of social change or social control, and we will often build our discussions around this framework.

In terms of specific objectives, you should exit JCOM 6020:

- 1.) able to discuss the history of communication study and the work of researchers who were important in the development of the field;
- 2.) prepared to discuss key readings and ideas about mass communication process and effects and identify important new work as it emerges;
- 3.) armed with a greater understanding of social science research choices;
- 4.) able to develop a thorough, meaningful literature review.

Meeting the Objectives

The main approach we will take in this class will involve discussion—lots of it. Each of us has a valuable contribution to make, and I'll encourage everyone to ask questions, discuss, and debate. Sometimes I will serve as the main Question Poser and Discussion Leader. Other times, you will fill that role (with guidance and support from me).

Grading

I use a two-tier grading system. For JCOM 6020, your preliminary grade will be calculated based on your performance on assignments (35%), a final project (35%), and a cumulative final exam (30%). That grade will then be adjusted based on class attendance to determine your final grade. For JCOM 5020, the final exam is optional. If you choose to take it and it raises your grade, I will calculate your grade as described above. If you do not take the final or you take it and it lowers your grade, I will calculate your preliminary grade from your assignments and final project using the proportions below (one part assignment #1, three parts assignment #2, three parts assignment #3, six parts literature review, and one part presentation/handout) and then adjust based on attendance. Note: No matter how high your grades are on assignments, you must complete all parts of the final project and take the final exam to pass JCOM 6020 and all parts of the final project to pass JCOM 5020. Here are specifics.

Assignments (35%)

Assignment #1: The Forefathers (5%). You will research the work of one of the forefathers discussed by Schramm in *The Beginnings of Communication Study in America* (Lasswell, Lazarsfeld, Lewin, and Hovland) and come to class prepared to strengthen our discussion with what you have learned about that forefather's research. In addition, you will prepare a two- to three-page handout (front side only, double spaced) on your researcher's work. This will serve two purposes. First, it will expand your colleagues' knowledge and, later in the semester, help them study for the final exam. Second, it will demonstrate that you have identified key points about your researcher's work, can explain those points, and can apply basic APA style. Your handout will be due at the beginning of class on the day we discuss your researcher.

Assignment #2: Discussion Leader (15%). Individually or in pairs, you will lead discussion on a chapter from the Demers and Viswanath text. This will involve the following, all of which will be factored into your grade:

- a.) reading the chapter ahead of time;
- b.) meeting with me after you've read the chapter but no later than two weeks before the discussion date to talk about the chapter, additional readings you'd like to assign to your colleagues, and innovative ways to approach the discussion;
- c.) making those additional readings available to everyone at least one week before the discussion;
- d.) coming to class prepared to summarize the main points of the chapter and lead discussion.

This assignment is designed to encourage you to explore the material in greater depth, share your insights, and help us develop new insights of our own. You will lead the discussion—and it should be a discussion (hold the lecturing to a minimum, please). You will be expected to grab and hold our interest, prod us into participating, and push us to stretch our thinking.

Assignment #3: Discussion Leader Redux (15%). You will repeat assignment #2 for another Demers and Viswanath chapter. You may work with a partner for one discussion leader assignment; you must lead at least one discussion on your own.

Final Project (35%)

The final project gives you an opportunity to explore a mass communication theory, model, or area of inquiry (which may not be a formal theory) in more depth. You may choose a subject covered in class or one of the many others. The project has three parts, all of which must be completed if you are to pass the class.

Literature Review (30%). After mining the relevant sources, you will write a literature review of approximately 25 to 30 double-spaced pages giving us a picture of your theory or model, its roots, its development, researchers who were important in that development, its strengths and shortcomings, its current status, and where it appears to be headed. This paper will be due in 308a Animal Science no later than 11 a.m. on Wednesday, December 7. Along with your paper, you will submit photocopies of all your supporting material—journal articles, book chapters, etc. These will be returned

with your paper.

Oral Presentation and Summary Handout (5%). You will prepare a formal 25- to 30-minute presentation on your theory or model to deliver in class. Presentation dates will be November 29, December 1, and December 6. You will also prepare a two- to three-page handout (front side only, double spaced) summarizing your literature review. This should be ready to give to your colleagues at the beginning of your presentation. Think of the handout as a tool for them to use in studying for the final exam or in refreshing their memory about this theory or model.

Final Exam (30%)

The cumulative final exam will help me evaluate how well you have grasped and can apply the material discussed throughout the semester. It will be an essay test held Thursday, December 15 from 3:30 to 5:20 p.m. in one of the JCOM computer labs.

Attendance

Each of us has something valuable to contribute to JCOM 5020/6020, which means your presence in class is important. However, experience has taught me that even the prospect of participating in a scintillating discussion of mass communication theory isn't enough to lure some students to class. To give these students the additional incentive they need, I've devised a formula for grading attendance. As noted above, I will calculate your preliminary grade based on the quality of your work then adjust that grade based on attendance. You may miss all or part of three classes with no penalty. After that, I will lower your grade 0.1 point (on a 4.0 scale) for every time you miss part of the class (arrive a minute or two late, leave early, mysteriously disappear during the middle) but are present for at least half of it. I will lower your grade 0.2 for every time you are absent for more than half of the class period. In other words, if your preliminary grade is 3.6 and you are absent four times, I will lower your grade to 3.4. If you miss four classes and are late once, your grade will drop to 3.3.

This means you can skip three of our 26 or so class sessions with no penalty. Note that I don't keep track of your reasons for missing class and make no exceptions for those who skip class three times because they feel like it and then get the flu and miss more classes. **Save your three cuts for an emergency.**

Two Sure-Fire Ways to Fail JCOM 6020

Missing Deadlines

One of the easiest, most reliable ways of jeopardizing your grade is to miss deadlines. Deadlines for assignments, final projects, and the final exam are not negotiable; all late work will receive an F. I understand that things beyond your control sometimes prevent you from meeting a deadline. If you feel you have a legitimate excuse (for example, you were in the hospital in a coma or fighting pneumonia for three weeks), come see me and bring documentation from someone other than your parents or spouse. I will try to do what's fair to you and to those who met the deadline. NO extensions will be granted for problems stemming from computer malfunctions. For example, if you e-mail an assignment to me and the attachment won't open, it goes down in my grade book as a missed assignment.

Cheating

The second sure-fire way to jeopardize your grade in this class is to get caught cheating. The University expects students and faculty alike to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty. For a complete definition, see the *General Catalog* or the *Code of Policies and Procedures for Students at Utah State University*. In brief, the policy states that cheating, falsification, or plagiarism can result in a warning, grade reduction, probation, suspension, expulsion, charges for damages, withholding of transcripts or degrees, removal from a class, community service assignment, referral to appropriate counseling, or other disciplinary actions deemed appropriate by the university judiciary.

The JCOM Department has a zero-tolerance policy for plagiarism. Any form of academic dishonesty—including plagiarism—will result in an automatic F for the course and a report to the dean of the College. JCOM majors who engage in proven academic dishonesty may be dropped from the major. Students who hand in similar or identical work will receive an F regardless of who copied from whom. If you have questions about what is considered acceptable work under strict codes of academic honesty, see the publications above or consult me.

The Instructor

This is my fifth year as a USU faculty member. Previously, I taught at Cornell University, Seattle Pacific University, the University of Washington, and Seattle University. Before I began teaching, I worked as a writer and photographer for agricultural magazines. My more recent work has involved collaborating with my husband, a nature photographer, on packages of text and photos aimed at travel and photography publications. In addition, I worked in nonprofit public relations. My current research interests center around print media (for example, how newspapers portray domestic violence fatalities) and methodology (such as the fairly new method of cognographics).

Counting kindergarten through college (a bachelor's degree from Cornell University, master's degree from the University of South Carolina's College of Journalism, and doctorate from the University of Washington's School of Communications), I was a student for 23 years. I suspect the way I design courses is a reflection of things I liked and disliked during my two decades sitting in classrooms. My hope is that we'll enjoy learning from and teaching each other as we explore mass communication theory.

JCOM 6020 Schedule

Many of the readings listed below are from the Schramm and Demers/Viswanath texts, others are on reserve in the Science and Technology Library, and still others will be distributed as handouts. Please make photocopies of the reserve readings so you have them to refer to during class. Your colleagues and I will add to this list as we prepare to lead discussions on the Demers/Viswanath chapters. If you miss a class, check with me to see whether new reading assignments were announced. Please complete all readings before you come to class on the date for which the reading is listed.

Thurs., September 1

Assignments—Skim APA manual before class to prepare for APA style discussion.
Select a forefather for assignment #1.
Choose Demers/Viswanath chapters for assignments #2 and #3.

Tues., September 6

Handout—"Philosophical Foundations: What Is Theory?" from *Communication Theories: Perspectives, Processes, and Contexts*, second edition (2005), Katherine Miller.

Thurs., September 8

Schramm text—"Editors' Foreword," pp. ix-xii.
Chapter 1 ("The Forefathers of Our Forefathers"), pp. 3-20.

Reserve—Chapter excerpt on Robert E. Park and the Chicago School, Everett M. Rogers. *A History of Communication Study: A Biographical Approach* (1994), pp. 172-202.

Tues., September 13

Schramm text—Chapter 2 ("Harold Lasswell: Politics, Power, and the Significant Symbol"), pp. 21-42.

Chapter 3 (“Paul Lazarsfeld: From Market Research to Media Effects to Social Reinforcement”), pp. 43-65.

Reserve—“Communications Research Since Lazarsfeld,” Elihu Katz. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, v. 51 (Winter 1987), pp. S25-S45.

Assignment—Extra readings of your choice for assignment #1 (Lasswell and Lazarsfeld).
Researcher handout due for those assigned Lasswell or Lazarsfeld.

Thurs., September 15

Schramm text—Chapter 4 (“Kurt Lewin: The Field, the Group, and Communication”), pp. 67-86.

Chapter 5 (“Carl Hovland: Experiments, Attitudes, and Communication”), pp. 87-105.

Chapter 6 (“The Heritage They Left Us”), pp. 107-121.

Assignment—Extra readings of your choice for assignment #1 (Lewin and Hovland).
Researcher handout due for those assigned Lewin or Hovland.

Tues., September 20

Schramm text—Chapter 7 (“Wilbur Schramm: The Founder”), pp. 125-153.

Chapter 8 (“Institutionalization of Advanced Communication Study in American Universities”), pp. 155-180.

Reserve—“The State of Communication Research,” Bernard Berelson, with responses by Schramm, Riesman, and Bauer. *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, v. 23 (Spring 1959), pp. 1-17.

“The Unique Perspective of Communication: A Retrospective View,” Wilbur Schramm. *Journal of Communication*, v. 33 (Summer 1983), pp. 6-17.

“Taking Stock of a Discipline,” Gerald R. Miller. *Journal of Communication*, v. 33 (Summer 1983), pp. 31-41.

“Institutional Sources of Intellectual Poverty in Communication Research,” John Durham Peters. *Communication Research*, v. 13 (October 1986), pp. 527-559.

“Communication Research: A History,” Jesse G. Delia. *Handbook of Communication Science* (1987), eds. Charles R. Berger and Steven H. Chaffee, pp. 20-98.

Thurs., September 22

Demers/Viswanath—Foreword, Preface, and Introduction (“Mass Media from a Macrosocial Perspective”), pp. ix-xiii and 3-28.

Chapter 1 (“Cultivation and Social Control”), James Shanahan and Victoria Jones, pp. 31-50.

Reserve—“Media Consumption and Perceptions of Social Reality: Effects and Underlying Processes,” L. J. Shrum. *Media Effects: Advances in Theory and Research* (2002), eds. Jennings Bryant and Dolf Zillman, pp. 69-95.

Tues., September 27

Demers/Viswanath—Chapter 2 (“The Effect of the Mass Media on Opinion Formation”), Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, pp. 51-76.

Reserve—“News Influence on our Pictures of the World,” Maxwell McCombs and Amy Reynolds. *Media Effects: Advances in Theory and Research* (2002), eds. Jennings Bryant and Dolf Zillman, pp. 1-18.

Thurs., September 29

Demers/Viswanath—Chapter 3 (“Media Dependency Theory: Origins and Directions”), Debra Merskin, pp. 77-98.

Extra readings assigned by discussion leader.

Tues., October 4

Demers/Viswanath—Chapter 10 (“Changing the Media Production Process: From Aggressive to Injury-Sensitive Traffic Crash Stories”), Sandra J. Ball-Rokeach et al., pp. 229-262.

Thurs., October 6

Demers/Viswanath—Chapter 4 (“Social Control, Social Change and Local Mass Media”), Douglas Blanks Hindman, pp. 99-116.

Assignment—One-page summary of the theory, model, or area of inquiry you plan to explore for your final project plus a bibliography of at least 10 relevant sources.

Tues., October 11

Demers/Viswanath—Chapter 5 (“Social Control, Social Change and the Knowledge Gap Hypothesis”), Emanuel Gaziano and Cecilie Gaziano, pp. 117-136.

Thurs., October 13

Demers/Viswanath—Chapter 6 (“Structural Pluralism and Media Accounts of Risk”), Sharon Dunwoody and Robert J. Griffin, pp. 139-158.

Tues., October 18

Demers/Viswanath—Chapter 7 (“Community Pluralism and the ‘Tipping Point’: Editorial Responses to Race and Related Structural Change”), Oscar H. Gandy Jr., pp. 159-181.

Thurs., October 20

Demers/Viswanath—Chapter 8 (“Shaping the News Mirror: Community Structure, Reporter Specialization and Content Diversity”), William F. Griswold, pp. 183-196.

Tues., October 25

Demers/Viswanath—Chapter 11 (“Entertainment-Education Media Strategies for Social Change: Promises and Problems”), William J. Brown and Arvind Singhal, pp. 263-280.

Thursday, October 27

Demers/Viswanath—Chapter 12 (“A Rhetorical Analysis of Rupert Murdoch’s Vision for Social Change”), Ian G. Weber, pp. 281-304.

Tues., November 1

Demers/Viswanath—Chapter 13 (“Social Control, Social Change and the Mass Media’s Role in the Regulation of Protest Groups”), Douglas M. McLeod and James K. Hertog, pp. 305-330.

Thurs., November 3

Demers/Viswanath—Chapter 14 (“Journalistic Occupational Development and Discourses of Power”), Patricia L. Dooley, pp. 333-357.

Tues., November 8

Demers/Viswanath—Chapter 15 (“Sociocultural Evolution and the Gratification Niche”), John Dimmick, pp. 359-374.

Thurs., November 10

Demers/Viswanath—Chapter 16 (“Corporate News Structure, Social Control and Social Change”), David Demers, pp. 375-397.

Tues., November 15

Demers/Viswanath—Chapter 17 (“Justifying Change and Control: An Application of Discourse Ethics to the Role of Mass Media”), Theodore L. Glasser and Peggy J. Bowers, pp. 399-418.

Thurs., November 17

Readings to be announced.

November 22 & 24 NO CLASS. Work on final project and enjoy Thanksgiving.

November 29, December 1 & 6 Final presentations.

Wed., December 7 Literature review and supporting materials due in my office by 11 a.m.

Thurs., December 8

Demers/Viswanath—Introduction (“Mass Media from a Macrosocial Perspective”), pp. 3-28.
Conclusion (“What Promotes or Hinders the Role of Mass Media as an Agent of Social Control or Social Change?”), pp. 419-424.

Thurs., December 15 Final exam—3:30-5:20 p.m.