



UNITED STATES INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

SEMESTER: SPRING 2012

COURSE: JRN 2223: THEORIES OF MASS COMMUNICATION

LECTURER: JOSEPH N. NYANOTI

DAY/TIME –M-W– 3.30 -5.10 PM

VENUE: I

CREDIT: 3

OFFICE HOURS: –T-R-- 10.00-2.00

CONTACT jnyanoti@usiu.ac.ke 0733 866 572

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is aimed at developing knowledge and understanding of various theories relevant to the study of mass communication. The course will focus on the background of the theories, postulates and application in the contemporary mass media industry. It will give students a sound theoretical grounding in media studies and equip them with the competency to work as media professionals in this era of media convergence. It also enables students with the critical thinking skill and confidence to expand their academic sphere through research and critical analysis of media content and practice.

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Understand the basic definitions of mass communication theories
- Draw a trajectory of the evolution of mass communication, mass society and the various theories
- Demonstrate the capacity to show the relationship between theory and the practice of mass communication
- Determine the function of mass communication nationally and internationally
- Demonstrate understanding of the application of communication theories in society
- Relate mass communication theory with critical issues affecting/shaping society

PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES

The course effectively covers two of the seven No. one. The PLO seeks to help you develop critical understanding of communication theories, international mass media systems, structures and information flow.

COURSE CONTENT

Week 1: Introduction

- Defining theory
- Evolution of mass communication/mass society
- Information theory

Week 2: The powerful effects tradition

- Background/the powerful effects tradition
- Postulates of the magic bullet theory
- Applications

Week 3: Theories of the Press

- Authoritarian theory
- Libertarian theory
- Social responsibility theory

ASSIGNMENT 1

Week 4: Agenda-Setting Theory

- Background
- How the media sets the agenda
- Application of agenda setting: priming, framing

Week 5: Gate Keeping Theory

- Background
- Definition of gate-keeping
- Gate-keepers and their gate keeping activities

Week 6: Diffusion of Innovations

- Background
- Basic postulates
- Application

Week 7: Cultivation Theory

- Background
- Basic postulates
- Application

MID SEMESTER EXAMINATION

Week 8: Two-Step Flow Theory

- Background
- Why interpersonal networks are effective
- Application

Week 9: Uses and Gratifications Theory

- Background
- Types of needs met by the media
- Implication of the theory to the media

ASSIGNMENT 2 (group work)

Week 10: Spiral of Silence

- Background
- The role of the media in propaganda
- Application of the theory in media

Week 11: Social Learning Theory

- Background
- Media prosocial and antisocial behaviour
- Application of social learning theory

Week 12: Cognitive Dissonance Theory

- Background
- Key postulates of the theory
- Application of cognitive dissonance in media

Week 13: Critical Theory

- Background
- Key postulates of the theory
- Critical theory and mass media content

Week 14: FINAL EXAMINATION

TEACHING METHODS

Lectures, discussions and class presentations

EXPECTATIONS

As a student of mass communication you are expected to be above average in current affairs, general knowledge and some bit of history. You should therefore read newspapers and watch television every day. As a student of mass communication theory you are expected to read widely in order to appreciate the value of critical thinking. The Internet is another reliable place to turn to for a wide range of knowledge. This course will test you on this through the way you handle your class assignments, presentations and examinations.

You are expected to hand in all class assignments on the set deadline. Being absent from class on the day the assignment is given is no excuse for not doing the work. The same applies to the deadline for handing in the assignment. Students must make use of the library when handling class assignments. All authorities quoted must be cited and a bibliography given at the end of the paper, APA style. All assignments must be in

continuous prose, typed in 12pts. Times New Roman and presented in double-spaced hard copy. You are also expected to send a soft copy of your assignment by email before handing in hard copy.

Class attendance

Attending class is mandatory. Attendance means attending the whole class session, not making some technical appearance. Genuine reasons for being absent, like sickness, must be supported by documentary evidence. It is USIU's policy that missing seven sessions, with or without permission, automatically earns you an F for the course. Any single absenteeism from class without the course instructor's permission will cost you five marks. During mid semester and final examinations, you must strictly follow the instructions on and inside the answer book. Ignoring these instructions will attract a penalty of two marks for each mistake.

Ethics

Ethics and honesty are valued qualities of mass communication professionals. You will be held to these standards in this course. Any student caught cheating or plagiarizing on any assignment or exam will fail the course and should expect to face University disciplinary action.

GRADING

There will be two assignments (one of them group work), mid semester examination and final examination. The points will be distributed as follows:

Class attendance and participation	10%
Two assignments	40%
Mid term examination	20%
Final examination	30%
Total	100%

GRADING SYSTEM

A	90-100
A-	87-89
B+	84-86
B	80-83
B-	77-79
C+	74-76
C	70-73
C-	67-69
D+	64-66
D	63-63
D-	60-61
F	0-59

COURSE TEXT

Defleur, et al. (2010). *Mass Communication Theories: Explaining Origins, Processes, and Effects*. Allyn & Beacon.

OTHER USEFUL READINGS

Baran, S., J., and Davis, D., K.(2006). *Mass Communication Theory: Foundations, Ferment, and Future. Fourth edition* Thomson Wadsworth

Griffin, E. (2000). *A First Look at Communication Theory. Fourth Edition*. McGraw Hill