

# Journalism 412

## Mass Communication Theories

### Fall 2015

Tuesdays and Thursdays 3:30 p.m. to 4:45 p.m. in SS/PA 211

#### INSTRUCTOR

Todd Henneman  
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Office hours: 1 p.m. to 2 p.m. Mondays and Wednesdays and 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. Thursdays

#### OVERVIEW

This course introduces students to dominant communication theories, their strengths and weaknesses and their potential for practical application to media practitioners and consumers.

#### COURSE GOALS AND STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successfully completing the course, students will be able to:

- ◆ Explain the basic tenets of mass communication theories.
- ◆ Apply theories to identify the powers that mass communicators exert.
- ◆ Understand the limits on influence of mass communicators.
- ◆ Use theories and analytical tools to become better media producers and consumers.

#### REQUIRED TEXT

McQuail's Mass Communication Theory, 6<sup>th</sup> edition, by Denis McQuail: Sage.  
Please note: Other readings will be posted on Beachboard.

#### CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE

- ◆ Arrive on time. Arrive prepared. Plan to stay for the full time.
- ◆ Turn off or silence cell phones and put them away.
- ◆ Refrain from talking when others are, even if you're discussing class topics.
- ◆ Show respect for the opinions of others even when you disagree.

#### EMAIL

Check your CSULB email at least daily because it is our primary form of communication.

#### ATTENDANCE

Attendance is essential, and I will take attendance every class. Regularly attending class creates a better experience for all of us by making discussions more interesting and fun.

You can have one unexcused absence — and only one — without it hurting your grade. Anyone missing more than three consecutive classes will be docked one letter grade at the end of the semester. That means if you have an A at the end of the semester but you also have three consecutive unexcused absences, your final letter grade will be lowered to a B. The only exception: a documented medical reason (for example, you have a doctor's note).

If you miss a class, you still are responsible for knowing the material presented in class, schedule changes and other announcements. I suggest exchanging phone numbers and email addresses with two classmates so you can contact them in case you miss a class session.

## ASSIGNMENTS

Students are expected to have completed assigned reading before class. In-class exercises cannot be made up. Late work will not be accepted for unexcused absences. An absence is excused with written documentation from a doctor, instructor or coach that explains the reason. Computer problems are not valid reasons for late work. If you miss a class when an assignment is due,

- Ask a classmate to turn in your assignment;
- Leave it in my mailbox, and ask for the time of submission to be noted on it.
- Or attach the assignment to an email and send it by the time that day's class begins.

## LEARNING ASSESSMENT

Grades will be based on points earned from assignments, participation and exams. Your work will be judged on your ability to understand, analyze, synthesize and apply theories. Never use Wikipedia as a source. Written work will be judged on spelling, grammar, clarity, organization, relevance of material and comprehensiveness. Rubrics will be posted on Beachboard. Assignments should not be sent by email.

**A:** 100-90%

**B:** 89-80%

**C:** 79-70%

**D:** 69-60%

**F:** 59% or lower

Please keep copies of your completed work, including graded work returned to you. I encourage students who are struggling to seek help. Schedule an appointment to see me and bring your graded assignments.

### Discussion questions (10%)

Ten times during the semester (a little less than once a week), students should post a question or comment on Beachboard inspired by the week's reading. For Tuesday's class, the question/comment should be posted by Sunday at 11:59 p.m. For Thursday's class, the question should be posted by Tuesday at 11:59 p.m.

### Discussion leader (10%)

Each student is responsible for presenting a 15-minute overview of the readings for the session. It should focus on the strengths of weaknesses of the theories/concepts. The student also should select two questions or comments from those posted on Beachboard to facilitate a short discussion connected to the assessment.

**Participation (10%):** Points are awarded for the number of sessions attended over the semester and (separately) for contributing to discussions. We will have small-group and full-class discussions. Your regular involvement affects your grade. An "A" reflects both near-perfect attendance and regularly participating in discussions, making thoughtful comments that show you have read the material. Merely being present — but not participating in discussions — will not earn an "A" for the participation portion of the grade.

**Research project (30%):** You will apply a theory or theories from the class to a topic that interests you in a minimum 1,200-word paper. It could apply "framing" of news coverage of a particular event, for example. Or it could look at the meanings different people reached after receiving the same message (newspapers, TV news, sitcoms). You should use proper academic style. Detailed instructions will be provided in class.

**Exams (40%):** We will have a midterm and a final, and these exams must be taken on the scheduled date.

## ABOUT YOUR INSTRUCTOR

Todd Henneman has degrees from Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism and the University of California, Los Angeles. He began his career working for regional newspapers owned by the Tribune Co. and eventually became a staff writer for the San Francisco Chronicle. He also has written freelance pieces for clients ranging from the Los Angeles Times to The Advocate magazine. He also has taught at the University of Southern California and California State University, Northridge. He continues to write for magazines and Web sites.

## CSULB POLICIES

### ABSENCES FROM CLASS

Grades in a course may be adversely affected by absences, and students should seek clarification from the instructor regarding the course absence policy. Make-ups usually are granted in strict accordance with CSULB policy, which defines excused absences as (1) illness or injury to the student; (2) death, injury or serious illness of an immediate family member or the like; (3) religious reasons; (4) jury duty or government obligation; (5) CSULB-

sanctioned or approved activities [2002-03 Catalog, p. 75]. These and any other requests for an excused absence must be documented.

### **ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION**

Attendance is mandatory. Roll will be taken at the beginning of each class. Attendance and participation affect your grade. If you expect to miss a day for a reason that meets the CSULB policy (see previous paragraph), send me a detailed e-mail message before class begins. At the next class session, you must provide some kind of written confirmation, verifying that the absence meets the CSULB policy.

### **UNEXCUSED ABSENCES**

An unexcused absence means that you did not alert me in advance that you were not coming or did not provide documentation showing that your absence was excused. You are allowed one unexcused absence with no penalty, but two unexcused absences are considered excessive and will reduce your cumulative score by one letter grade. If you miss a lab exercise, quiz or exam, you will receive a score of zero for it.

### **RESPONSIBILITY FOR COURSE CONTENT**

If you must miss a class, you are still responsible for the information. If your absence is excused, I will give you any notes or handouts from that day. If your absence is unexcused, you must get the information or documents from a fellow student.

### **MAKE-UPS**

If you miss the midterm or final, you may make it up only if your reason meets the threshold set by CSULB policy. If your absence is not excused, please don't ask for a make-up. I also reserve the right to compensate students who make the effort to attend class, remain alert and prepared, and fully participate.

### **SEAT IN CLASS**

An enrolled student may lose his/her seat in class if he/she misses the first class meeting without notifying the instructor. At the instructor's discretion, a student who attends the first class but not subsequent classes may also be dropped from the course.

### **WITHDRAWAL FROM CLASS**

Students may withdraw from a class from the third to the 12<sup>th</sup> week for "serious and compelling reasons." Normally these are defined as anything of import that is beyond the control of the student. This includes, but is not necessarily limited to, death or serious illness in a student's immediate family or a documented change in a student's work schedule. Poor performance, tardiness and unexcused absences are not considered a serious or compelling reason beyond the student's control for purposes of withdrawal.

### **REPEAT / DELETE**

Any student who receives a grade of D, F, WU or NC must retake this course for a passing grade before being eligible to enroll in JOUR 311, which is the gateway to most upper division journalism courses. Under the university's repeat/delete policy, your failing grade will be erased one time from your transcript when your passing grade is added.

### **CSULB CHEATING/PLAGIARISM/FABRICATION POLICY**

CSULB takes issues of academic dishonesty very seriously. If you use any deceptive or dishonest method to complete an assignment, take an exam or gain credit in a course in any other way, or if you help someone else to do so, you are guilty of cheating. If you use someone else's ideas or work and represent it as your own without giving credit to the source, you are guilty of plagiarism. This does not apply if the ideas are recognized as common knowledge, or if you can show that you honestly developed the ideas through your own work. Any instructor can show you the correct ways of citing your sources, and you should use quotation marks, footnotes or endnotes and bibliographic references to give credit to your sources according to the format recommended by your instructor.

### **RESPONSES, PENALTIES AND STUDENT RIGHTS**

Students should consult the appropriate sections of the Catalog for examples of cheating, fabrication and plagiarism, and instructor and/or CSULB response options in such circumstances. The Catalog also outlines student rights. Any instance of academic dishonesty may result in your immediate expulsion from the class with a grade of "F" and/or other sanctions, as the instructor deems appropriate.

### **STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

It is the student's responsibility to inform me within the first two weeks of the semester of the need for a reasonable accommodation because of a disability. Disabled Student Services (5-5061) evaluates students' needs and provides resources.

**CLASS SCHEDULE**  
(subject to change)

<b>Week 1</b> Aug. 25	<b>Course overview, expectations and introductions</b>
Aug. 27	<b>Key terms and ideas in mass communication</b> <b>Reading:</b> Chapter 2
<b>Week 2</b> Sept. 1 and Sept. 3	<b>Rise of mass media: a brief history</b> <b>Reading:</b> Chapter 2
<b>Week 3</b> Sept. 8 and Sept. 10	<b>Concepts and models</b> <b>Reading:</b> Chapter 3
<b>Week 4</b> Sept. 15 and Sept. 17	<b>Theory of media and society</b> <b>Reading:</b> Chapter 4
<b>Week 5</b> Sept. 22 and Sept. 24	<b>Gender and the mass media</b> <b>Reading:</b> Sections 5.4 through 5.7 in Chapter 5
<b>Week 6</b> Sept. 29 and Oct. 1	<b>Normative theory</b> <b>Reading:</b> Chapter 7
<b>Week 7</b> Oct. 6 and Oct. 8	<b>Media economics and governance</b> <b>Reading:</b> Chapter 9
<b>Week 8</b> Oct. 13 and Oct. 15	<b>Pressures and demands</b> <b>Reading:</b> Chapter 11
<b>Week 9</b> Oct. 20	<b>Media consumption discussion</b>
Oct. 22	<b>Midterm</b>
<b>Week 10</b> Nov. 3 and Nov. 5	<b>Production of Media Culture</b> <b>Reading:</b> Chapter 12
<b>Week 11</b> Nov. 10 and Nov. 12	<b>Media content</b> <b>Reading:</b> Chapter 13
<b>Week 12</b> Nov. 17 and Nov. 19	<b>Audience formation and experience</b> <b>Reading:</b> Chapter 18

**Week 13**

No class. Thanksgiving break.

**Week 14**

Dec. 1  
and Dec. 3

**Processes and models of media effects**

**Reading:** Chapter 19

**Week 15**

Dec. 7

**Media and social change**

**Reading:** Pages 498 and 499 in Chapter 18

Dec. 9

**Review**

**Week 16**

Dec. 15

**Final** 2:45 p.m. - 4:45 p.m.