

J384 Mass Communication Theory (08125)

Dr. Tom Johnson

Fall 2016

TTH 3:30-5, CMA 3.130

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Office Hours: TTH 11-12:30, by appointment and when you least expect it.

Really, if you see my door at least partly open come on in.

REQUIRED READINGS

1. Bryant, Jennings, & Oliver, Mary Beth. (Eds.). (2009). *Media effects: Advances in theory and research* (3rd ed.). New York: Routledge.

2. Weekly readings posted on Canvass.

CATALOGUE DESCRIPTION

Study of the processes and effects of mass communication. Three lecture hours a week for one semester. Required of all candidates for the Master of Arts degree with a major in journalism and Ph.D. students. Prerequisite: Graduate standing and consent of the graduate adviser.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Mass Communication Theory (J384) is the first of two basic graduate courses in mass communication theory. It introduces the student to mass communication theory and research, and focuses on theories of audience and effects. The class is designed to introduce students to the wide range of mass communication theories that have developed over the last 100 or so years in order to help you understand how the media operate, how they affect individuals and society, how social forces shape the media and how individuals use and create meaning from the media. The purpose of the course is to help students develop their own perspectives on mass communication, its meaning and its significance. The practical objective of the class is to provide students with enough insight into the range of mass communication theories to be able to pose significant theoretical questions and to learn how to build the literature review sections for research papers and for their theses or dissertations.

Learning Objectives	Assessment Techniques
The ability to identify, describe, and critically evaluate the assumptions, theories, and empirical evidence supporting conclusions about media effects in the study of mass communications	Classroom exams Classroom discussions Article reviews Term paper
The ability to understand how the media operate, how the media affect individuals and society, how social forces shape the media and how individuals use and construct meaning from the media.	Classroom discussions Classroom exams Written assignments
Sufficient knowledge of a wide range of mass communication theories to be able to write the literature review portions of a research paper	Theory term paper
Sufficient knowledge of a variety of mass communication theories to pass the doctoral theory competency exam	Comprehensive exam-type questions practice Classroom exams
The ability to comprehend and critique mass communication research articles	Critiques of peer-reviewed journal articles using mass communication theories
The ability to initiate and execute students' own original research and build new mass communication theories	Theory term paper
The ability to apply mass communication theory and research to future career situations	Theory term paper Classroom discussion

ASSIGNMENTS

This course will be a mixture of lecture, discussion and research. This course is a graduate seminar, not a lecture course. While I will be lecturing most class periods, the success of the class depends on you attending class, doing all the assigned readings and actively participating in class discussion. To encourage discussion, I have created a Facebook group for the class, UT Mass Communication Theory (J384) Rules! You are not required to join, but I send announcements through there as well as through the canvass e-mail and some things are posted that might be of help to you in better understanding mass communication theory. Everyone is expected to participate in discussion and discussion counts for as much as an exam grade.

Listed below are the major requirements for the class:

1. Research Article Extended Abstract Assignment: You will summarize and critique a research article from a recent (past five years) issue of an academic research journal that presents original research on mass communication (not an essay, critique, review, etc.) The article should relate to your term paper topic. The article should summarize the main points of the article, but also offer a critique of the strengths and the weaknesses of the theory portion of the article. These journals are good sources for articles that present original research on mass communication: *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, *Journal of Communication*, *Communication Research*, *Communication Theory*, *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, *Newspaper Research Journal*, *Journalism Studies*, *Journalism Practice*, *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator*, *Mass Communication & Society*, *New Media & Society*, *Public Opinion Quarterly*, *International Journal of Communication*, *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*.

- a. On **September 21**, turn in a copy of the research journal article you propose to examine. The paper must be on an article that takes a hypothesis-testing approach (i.e., either tests an explicit hypothesis or hypotheses or addresses one or more explicit research questions).
- b. On **Oct. 5**, submit your research article extended abstract. In four to five page provide the following information: (1) a complete article reference that includes the author's full name; article title; journal name, number, volume and year of publication, and page numbers; (2) the author's statements of the hypotheses tested or the research questions addressed. (3) the author's definitions of each of the key concepts mentioned in the hypotheses and research questions; if a key concept is not defined by the author then you define it as you think the author intended; (4) a summary of the study's results. (5) your own brief critique of the research, evaluating the quality and appropriateness of the theoretical framework, the strengths and weaknesses of the evidence presented and the importance of the findings; feel free to include suggestions for ways to advance study on this topic.

2. Term Paper: In writing your term paper, you may take one of two approaches:

(1) **The Topical Paper.** Each student will write a literature review portion of a research paper on a communication topic of your choice. At least one of the theories needs to be one we discuss in class. However, the other theory could also be from the class or also come from another discipline such as sociology or political science or it could be a mass communication theory that we do not discuss. The literature review should be between 12 and 15 pages, excluding references. The literature review may serve as the foundation of a conference paper or your thesis or dissertation. The paper should be in standard research report form with an introduction, a problem statement, a discussion of the theories and their linkages and discussion of literature on the "variables" that you would be investigating would you write the complete research paper. I would also like to see a list of research questions or hypotheses the paper would "test." The paper must be written in a scholarly style, present comprehensive reviews of the literature on the issues and the theories involved, as well as include citations and a bibliography. This cannot be the same literature review written for another class (I do compare notes with Dr. Chyi and other professors; see the honor code below). A brief discussion of your topic is due **Sept 28**. A bibliography of sources is due **Oct. 26**. The introduction and problem statement is due **Nov. 9**. A rough draft is due **Nov. 28** and the final draft of the paper is due **Dec. 14**. The final paper is due at 4:30 (either physically or electronically).

(2) **The Theory/Model/Construct Paper.** Select a single communication theory, model or construct (major general concept). Provide a critical literature review of the theory, model or construct. A critical literature review identifies, organizes and presents the existing literature, and then offers a critique of that literature, with the goal of illuminating directions for future research. A brief discussion of your topic is due **Sept 28**. A bibliography of sources is due **Oct. 26**. The introduction and problem statement is due **Nov. 9**. A rough draft is due **Nov. 28** and the final draft of the paper is due **Dec. 14**. The final paper is due at 4:30 (either physically or electronically).

3. Exams: There will be a midterm and final exam. They will involve definitions, multiple choice and short essay questions. The second exam is not comprehensive. However, it is important to be able to integrate ideas from different theories, so some major ideas discussed during the first half of the semester may appear on the final exam.

4. Participation leader: In the past, I haven't always had the robust discussion of the readings that I would like. Therefore, for each reading I will assign a

discussion leader. As discussion leader, you don't need to submit a critique or analysis of the reading. You simply need to be well versed on the reading to be able to answer questions about the readings and to ask questions of me and to your fellow classmates. I would be sure that you understand the reading and have questions both for me and for discussion for the rest of the class. Each time you are discussion leader you can earn up to 10 points based on my perception of how well you understand the reading and generate questions both to me to help classmates better understand the readings as well as to be able to ask questions to generate discussion.

Grading:

Exam 1:	100 points
Exam 2:	100 points
Term Paper	150 points
Research Article Extended Abstract:	50 points
Participation:	100 points

ATTENDANCE:

Participation is vital to the success of the class and therefore attendance is mandatory. You need to contact me **in advance** if you are going to miss a class. All tests must be taken during their scheduled time unless you have made prior arrangements. The assignments are due at the beginning of class on their due date except the term paper which is due by the end of the working day on the date indicated. Assignments will be reduced a half a letter grade for every day they are late. I will not accept any papers more than a week late.

Religious Holy Days Observance Policy:

The Texas Education Code specifies that an institution of higher education shall excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence. A student who misses classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day should inform the instructor as far in advance of the absence as possible, so arrangements can be made to complete an assignment within a reasonable time after the absence.

<http://catalog.utexas.edu/general-information/academic-policies-and-procedures/attendance/>

Students with Disabilities:

Please notify your instructor of any modification/adaptation you may require to accommodate a disability-related need. You will be requested to provide documentation to the Dean of Student's Office in order that the most appropriate accommodations can be determined. Specialized services are available on campus through Services for Students with Disabilities.

<http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/>

Policy on Scholastic Dishonesty:

The University defines academic dishonesty as cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, falsifying academic records, and any act designed to avoid participating honestly in the learning process. Scholastic dishonesty also includes, but is not limited to, providing false or misleading information to receive a postponement or an extension on a test, quiz, or other assignment, and submission of essentially the same written assignment for two courses without the prior permission of the instructor. By accepting this syllabus, you have agreed to these guidelines and must adhere to them. Scholastic dishonesty damages both the student's learning experience and readiness for the future demands of a work-career. Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct/>

The Honor Code:

The core values of the University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the University is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

TOPICS:

Listed below are the tentative topics to be discussed in the course. The order of discussion might change, especially to accommodate guest speakers.

Date Topics, Readings, Assignments Due

I. Introduction to Mass Communication Theory

Week 1: Introduction to the class
Aug. 30

Week 2:
Sept. 5, 7 Mass Communication Theory

Readings:

1. Baran, S. I., & Davis, S. (2009). Understanding and evaluating mass communication theory. In *Mass Communication Theory*
2. Chafee, S.H., & Berger, C.R. (1987). What communication scientists do. In C.R. Berger, M.E. Roloff, & D. Roskos-Ewoldsen (Eds.). *Handbook of Communication science* (pp.99-122, 2nd edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
3. Perloff, R.M. (2015). Mass communication research at the crossroads: Definitional issues and theoretical direction for mass and political communication scholarship in an age of online media

Recommended Readings:

1. Chaffee, S.H., & Metzger, M.J. (2001). The end of mass communication? *Mass Communication & Society*, 4, 365-379.
2. Metzger, M.J. (2009). The study of media effects in the era of Internet communication. In R.L. Nabi & M.B. Oliver (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of media processes and effects* (pp. 561-576). Los Angeles: Sage.

II. Historical Development of the Mass Communication Field

Week 3

Sept. 12, 14

Mass Society theory and limited effects theories

Readings:

1. Baran, S. I., & Davis (2009). Four eras of mass communication theory in *Mass Communication Theory*

A. Powerful Effects

2. Lowery, S., & DeFleur, M. (1995). The Payne Fund Studies: The effects of movies on children.

In *Milestone in Mass Communication Research*

3. Cantril, H. (1940). The Invasion from Mars: Radio panics America. In S. Lowery and M. DeFleur, *Milestones in Mass Communication*, Longman Publishers.

B. Limited Effects

1. Lazarsfeld, P.F., Berleson, B., & Gaudet, H. (1948). The People's Choice: The media in a political campaign. In *Milestones in Mass Communication Research*

2. Hovland, C.I. Lumsdaine, A.A. and Sheffield, F.D. (1949). Experiments with Film: Persuading the American soldier in World War II in *Milestones in Mass Communication Research*

Recommended

1. Bennett, W.L., & Iyengar, S. (2008). A new era of minimal effects? The changing foundations of political communication. *Journal of Communication*, 58, 707-731

2. Holbert, R. L. Garrett, R. K. Gleason, L. S. (2010). A new era of minimal effects? A Response to Bennett and Iyengar. *Journal of Communication* 60, 15–34.

Week 4

Sept. 19, 21

Limited Effects and Middle Range Theories: Two-Step Flow/Opinion Leadership and Selective Exposure

Readings:

1. Joseph Klapper, (1960). *The Effects of Mass Communication*

2. Katz. E., & Lazarsfeld, P.F. (1955). Personal Influence: The Two Step Flow of Communication. In

Milestones in Mass Communication Research

3. Stroud, N. J. (2011). Selective exposure in theory and practice. In Stroud, *Niche News*

Recommended Reading

1. Weeks, B. E., Ardèvol-Abreu, A., & Gil de Zúñiga, H. (2015). Online influence? Social media use, opinion leadership, and political persuasion. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*,

Due: Submit article for extended abstract, Sept. 21

Week 5
Sept. 26, 28

Diffusion of Innovations/Technology Adoption Model, Return to Powerful Effects

1. Rogers, E. M., Singhal, A., & Quinlan, M. M. (2009). Diffusion of innovations. In D. W. Stacks & M. B. Salwen (Eds.), *An integrated approach to communication theory and research* (2nd ed., pp. 418–434). New York, NY: Taylor & Francis.
2. Atkin, D., Hunt, D. S., Lin, C. A. (2015). Diffusion theory in the new media environment: Toward an integrated technology adoption model. *Mass Communication & Society*.

Submit topic for Term Paper, Sept. 28

III. Media and Audiences

Week 6 Uses and Gratifications
Oct. 3, 5

Readings:

1. Bryant and Oliver, Chapt. 8
2. Katz, E. Blumler, J.G., & Gurevitch, M. (1974). Utilization of Mass Communication by the Individual. In J. G. Blumler and E. Katz (Eds.), *The Uses of Mass Communications: Current Perspectives and Gratifications Research*, Sage Publishers.
3. Sundar, S. S., & Limperos, A. M. (2013). Uses and Grats 2.0: New Gratifications for New Media, *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*

Due: Submit extended abstract Oct. 5

Week 7

Oct. 10-12

Agenda Setting

Readings:

Bryant and Oliver, chapt. 1

1. Vu, H. T., Guo, L., & McCombs, M. E. (2014). Exploring “the world outside and the pictures in our heads” A network agenda-setting study. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 91(4), 669-686.
2. Shaw, D. L., and Weaver, D. H. (2014). Epilogue: media agenda setting and audience agenda melding. In M. McCombs, *Setting the Agenda: Mass Media and Public Opinion* Cambridge: Polity.

Week 8

Oct. 17, 19

Midterm, Oct. 19

Week 9

Oct. 24, 26

Framing

Readings:

1. Entman, R. E. (1993). Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm. *Journal of Communication*, 43, 51-58.
2. Cacciatore, M. A., Scheufele, D. A., & Iyengar, S. (2016). The end of framing as we know it ... and the future of media effects. *Mass Communication and Society*, 19(1), 7-23.
3. Meraz, S., & Papacharissi, Z. (2016) Networked framing and gatekeeping. In *The SAGE handbook of digital journalism*.

Bibliography of paper due Oct. 26

IV. Knowledge Gaps and Belief Gaps

Week 10

Oct. 31, Nov. 2

Readings:

Bryant and Oliver, chapt 6,

1. Tichenor, P.J. Donohue, G.A. and Olien C. E. (1970). Mass media flow and differential growth in knowledge. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 34, 159-170.

2. Hwang, Y., & Jeong, S. H. (2009). Revisiting the knowledge gap hypothesis: A meta-analysis of thirty-five years of research. *Journalism & Mass Communications Quarterly*.
3. Hindman, D. B. (2012). Knowledge gaps, belief gaps, and public opinion about health care reform. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*.
- 4.

IV. Contemporary Mass Communication Theory

Week 11
Nov. 7, 9

Theories of Media, Culture and Society
Hostile Media Effect and Spiral of Silence

Readings:

Bryant and Oliver, chapt. 12

1. Noelle-Neumann, E. (1974). The spiral of silence: A Theory of public opinion. *Journal of Communication*, 24, 43-51,
2. Tsfati, Y., Stroud, N. J., & Chotiner, A. (2013). Exposure to ideological news and perceived opinion climate: Testing the media effects component of spiral-of-silence in a fragmented media landscape. *International Journal of Press/Politics*
3. Vallone, R. P., Ross, L., & Lepper, M. R. (1985). The hostile media phenomenon: Biased perception and perceptions of media bias in coverage of the Beirut massacre. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 49, 577–585.
4. Perloff, R. M. (2015). A three-decade retrospective on the hostile media effect. *Mass Communication and Society*, 18(6), 701-729.

Recommended

1. Lang, K. & Engel Lang, G. (2012). What is this thing we call public opinion? Reflections on Spiral of Silence. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*.

Due: Introduction and Problem statement for term paper, Nov. 9

Week 12
Nov. 14, 16

Theories of Media Production
Gatekeeping and Hierarchy of Effects Models

Readings:

1. White, D.M. (1950). The “gatekeeper”: A case study in the selection of news. *Journalism Quarterly*, 27(4), 383-390.
2. Breed, W. (1955). Social control in the newsroom: A functional analysis. *Social Forces*, 33(4), 326-335.
3. Shoemaker, P.J., & Vos, T.P. (2009). Understanding gatekeeping. In Shoemaker, P.J., & Vos, *Gatekeeping Theory*, 9-30. New York: Routledge
5. Meraz, S., & Papacharissi, Z. (2016) Networked framing and gatekeeping. In *The SAGE handbook of digital journalism*

V. Media Effects

Week 13

Nov. 22

Social capital, civic engagement and political communication effects

Readings: Bryant and Oliver, chapt. 10 and 11

1. Boulianne, S. (2009). Does Internet use affect engagement? A meta-analysis of research. *Political Communication*, 26, 193 -211
2. Boulianne, S. (2013). Social media and participation. A meta-analysis of research. *Political Communication*, 26, 193-211.
3. R. D (1995), Bowling Alone: America's declining social capital. *Journal of Democracy* 6, 65-78
4. Ellison, N., Lampe, C., Steinfield, C., & Vitak, J. (2011). With a little help from my Friends: Social network sites and social capital. In Z. Papacharissi (Ed.), *A networked self: Identity, community and culture on social network sites*. New York: Routledge.

Week 14

Nov. 28, 30 **The Media and Gender**

Readings: Bryant and Oliver, Chapt. 22

1. Perloff, R. M. (2014). Social media effects on young women’s body image concerns: Theoretical perspectives and an agenda for research. *Sex Roles*.

2. Everbach, T. (2013). Women's (mis) representation in news media. In Cory Armstrong (ed.) *Media disparity: A gender battleground*.
3. Chess, S., & Shaw, A. (2015). A conspiracy of fishes, or how we stopped worrying about #GamerGate and embrace hegemonic masculinity. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*.

Rough Draft of paper due Nov. 28

Week 15

Dec. 5, 7 Second Exam, Dec. 7

Dec. 7: Final draft of term paper due Dec. 14, 4:30 p.m.

Term paper (Literature Review Approach):

The main assignment for this course is to write the literature review portion of a research project on a topic that you could more fully explore after the semester ends. The literature review must examine at least two theories. At least one of the theories needs to be one that we discuss in class. However, the other theory could come from another discipline such as sociology or political science, it could be a theory that we do not discuss and certainly it could be another theory that we discuss in class. The literature review should be between 12 and 15 pages, excluding references. The literature review may serve as the foundation of a conference paper or your thesis or dissertation. The paper should be in standard research report form with an introduction, a problem statement, a discussion of the theories and their linkages and discussion of literature on the "variables" that you would be investigating would you write the complete research paper. I would also like to see a list of research questions or hypotheses the paper would "test." The paper must be written in a scholarly style, present comprehensive reviews of the literature on the issues and the theories involved, as well as include citations and a bibliography. The paper will be submitted in stages. A discussion of each of the stages is below.

Guidelines for Theory Term Paper Topic

Ideas for paper topics may come from a variety of sources such as lectures, the assigned course readings, or from the current events you encounter through mass media. You are going to spend a lot of time with this topic, so it is important to choose one that suits your interests. Additional ideas will come from looking for sources. The Bryant and Oliver text has an extensive bibliography that will be an excellent resource for topics and sources.

You must choose a narrow, specific topic. For instance use of mobile devices is too broad. However, examining how Korean students use cell and smart phones for political information is more specific.

Your discussion of your topic needs to include two things:

1. Describe the issue you will investigate in the paper using the two theories. For instance, you might want to investigate whether social network sources, blogs or traditional media are more successful in influencing your attitudes on an issue like gay marriage

2. Name the two (or more theories) that you will use (e.g. framing and gatekeeping). Tell me why you think that these theories are relevant to your study and how they are related. At least one of the theories should be one we discuss in class. However, the other theory could come from another discipline such as sociology or political science or it could be a theory that we do not discuss.

Your description of the topic should be typed and should be at least one good size paragraph long.

Term paper topic due: Sept. 28. The Topic will be worth 5 points

Bibliography

The bibliography is a listing of sources you believe you will use in the paper. You must have a minimum of 20 sources. Why require a bibliography at such an early date? First, this will enable you to see if there are already studies on the topic to guide you in writing the literature review. Second, by doing a literature search I believe it will help you organize your literature review. One mistake is that people only think the relevant research is the one directly on their topic. So, for instance, if you are looking at motivations for Korean students to use a smart phone for political information you need to go well beyond that specific topic. For instance, you need to have a discussion about prevalence of smart phones in South Korea, studies that look at Korean use of similar media and how it differs from other countries like the United States. You need to know what is known about general motivations for using smart phones and any studies looking at using smart phones for political use. If you are looking at predictors, you need sections on those predictors and smart phone use.

The bibliography is due Oct. 26 and will be worth 10 points

Introduction and Problem Statement

Think of an introduction as like a lead for a news story. A good introduction should make clear to the reader what the topic is about and good ones do it in an interesting way. One of the biggest problems I see in writing introductions is people weight it down with statistics about the medium they are studying without giving an idea of what the paper will be about. The problem statement spells out specifically what the paper will address and how it will address it. For instance, in a paper I wrote recently that combined credibility and selective exposure theory, I wrote: "This study employs a survey of politically interested Internet users during the 2008 presidential campaign to test the relative influence of credibility and reliance on selective exposure to online political sources. This study tests whether

credibility of, and reliance on, political blogs, websites, broadcast television sites, and online newspapers predict selective exposure to online political sources after controlling for political and demographic factors.”

A good introduction and problem statement also needs to give a justification for why the study is important. For instance, in the study mentioned above I discussed how it is important to study the factors that predict selective exposure because it can lead to more polarized and fragmented political views. I also noted one of the contributions of the study was being one of the first test whether or not credibility of a medium is synonymous with reliance or whether they are distinct concepts

The introduction and problem statement is due Nov. 9 and is worth 10 points

Rough Draft of your Literature Review, Hypotheses and Research Questions

People often struggle in writing literature reviews; I think they are the hardest and most time-consuming part of a research paper. You should do a thorough up-to-date review of the research, looking at journal articles, books, book chapters and conference papers for research in the area. If you are looking at new technologies, trade journals and media articles can be helpful too. Texas has a lot of good databases on its library research. Many people like to use one of the broad databases like Academic Search Complete, but for most papers I prefer more specialized databases like [Communication & Mass Media Complete](#). If you are new to research, the database portion of the UT library website also has tips for researching. This is not supposed to be a dissertation-length review but I would like you to summarize clearly and cogently the major articles in the area. You can use our textbook as a guide to bring in important research, but you should not use it as a listed source.

In writing your literature review I would certainly use the best studies that you are looking for as guides. There are no hard and fast rules for writing a literature review, but I usually go from general to specific. For instance, if there is important background material (such as Koreans and smart phone use statistics) I might begin with that. Usually I begin with the theories and discuss them and then examine the linkages between the theories. I look for research on the topic and the theory and then I have sections on specific relationships. For instance, for the article on credibility and selective exposure of online sources, I first looked at media credibility, then Internet credibility. I then looked at selective exposure and then online selective exposure. I then looked at the research that combined the two theories. Then I looked at specific relationships: reliance and credibility, reliance

and selective exposure, political measures and selective exposure and credibility and political measures and selective exposure and credibility.

The other problem I see in literature reviews is the researcher organizes it study by study rather than trying to synthesize the literature. Writing it study by study makes it difficult for the reader to understand the literature and I believe hurts the flow of the literature review.

Hypotheses and research questions:

A hypothesis is a proposed explanation for a phenomenon while a research question poses a question to address the problem. Normally you use a hypothesis when you have literature to back your explanation. Research questions are more appropriate when the literature offers conflicting views on the expected relationship or when there simply isn't enough literature on the subject to allow you to make a definitive statement. Hypotheses and research questions are written in terms of the relationship expected between the independent and dependent variables. For interested in the study discussed above, one of the hypotheses was: Heavy reliance on a) political blogs and b) political websites will lead individuals to purposely connect to online political sources that SHARE their point of view on political issues, after controlling for political and demographic factors. One of the research questions was: Do perceptions of credibility of a) political blogs, b) political Websites, c) broadcast news websites, and d) newspaper websites influence whether individuals purposely connect to online political sources that SHARE their point of view on political issues after controlling for political and demographic factors?

I often suggest that people write the hypotheses and research questions *before* they write the literature review because hypotheses and research questions should flow naturally and logically from your literature review. Also the hypotheses and research questions spell out the relationships you are going to test and these relationships should be discussed in the literature review.

The rough draft of your literature review, hypotheses and research questions will be due Nov. 28 and worth 25 points

Final Draft

One of the major factors I will be looking at in the final paper is how well you were able to address the concerns raised in the rough draft. I will focus mainly on the literature review (including the introduction and problem statement) and to a much lesser extent on the research questions/hypotheses and methods. I will be

asking questions such as: Do I get a clear idea from the introduction what the paper is about? Does the problem statement clearly set out what the study is about and how it will be done? Does the introduction and problem statement give a sense of what makes the study important? I will look at the completeness of the literature review: Does it seem to have a comprehensive look at the literature as well as discuss the relationships that tested in the hypotheses/research questions? Is the literature review organized in a logical fashion? Does it involve a cogent discussion of the literature? That is, does it do a nice job synthesizing the literature rather than discuss it study by study? Do the research questions/hypotheses spell out what are the variables tested and the relationships between the variables?

The final paper is due at 4:30 on Dec 14. It is worth 100 points

The Theory/Model/Construct Paper. While the literature review paper is designed to provide the context for you to conduct a traditional quantitative study, the theory/model/construction paper is designed to be a complete study that you can submit to a conference/and or publication. Select a single communication theory, model or construct (major general concept). Provide a critical literature review of the theory, model or construct. A critical literature review identifies, organizes and presents the existing literature, and then offers a critique of that literature, with the goal of illuminating directions for future research. An example is the article “With a Little Help from my Friends” by Ellison and associates. The article examines a major theory, social capital on Facebook use. Like most theory papers, it goes into extensive detail discussing the theory of social capital and also a linkage between social capital and Facebook in offline and online communication. It talks about Internet and social capital before centering on social media and social capital. The authors talk extensively about the links between social media and social capital with sections on ties vs. friends, the role of Facebook in generating social capital, they have a section linking it to reasons why people use Facebook and social capital. You will notice that the paper doesn’t simply provide a literature review on the topic, but adds analysis particularly in its section on mechanism of generation of social capital. An important part is the discussion of future directions the research can go.

The structure is similar to the literature review in that it begins with an introduction and problem statement. The main part of the paper looks in-depth at the theory and the topic you are linking it to. Because this is a complete paper, you don’t have research questions/hypotheses or methods, but rather end with the section on future research. The paper must be written in a scholarly style, present comprehensive reviews of the literature on the issues and the theories involved, as well as include citations and a bibliography. The paper will be submitted in stages. A discussion of each of the stages is below.

Guidelines for Theory Term Paper Topic

Ideas for paper topics may come from a variety of sources such as lectures, the assigned course readings, or from the current events you encounter through mass media. You are going to spend a lot of time with this topic, so it is important to choose one that suits your interests. Additional ideas will come from looking for sources. The Bryant and Oliver text has an extensive bibliography that will be an excellent resource for topics and sources.

You must choose a theory and a clear topic that you will examine with the theory.

Your discussion of your topic needs to include two things:

1. Describe the theory you will investigate in the theory paper and the topic you will link it to, for instance how Mexican Americans use social media (uses and gratifications as theory).
2. Explain how you will use the theory to explore your general topic of interest.

Your description of the topic should be typed and should be at least one good size paragraph long.

Term paper topic due: Sept. 28. The Topic is worth 10 points

Bibliography

The bibliography is a listing of sources you believe you will use in the paper. You must have a minimum of 20 sources. Why require a bibliography at such an early date? First, this will enable you to see if there are already studies on the topic to guide you in writing the literature review. Second, by doing a literature search I believe it will help you organize your literature review. One mistake is that people only think the relevant research is the one directly on their topic. So, for instance, if you are looking at motivations for Korean students to use a smart phone for political information you need to go well beyond that specific topic. For instance, you need to have a discussion about prevalence of smart phones in South Korea, studies that look at Korean use of similar media and how it differs from other countries like the United States. You need to know what is known about general motivations for using smart phones and any studies looking at using smart phones for political use. If you are looking at predictors, you need sections on those predictors and smart phone use.

The bibliography is due Oct. 26 and will be worth 10 points

Introduction and Problem Statement

Think of an introduction as like a lead for a news story. A good introduction should make clear to the reader what the topic is about and good ones do it in an interesting way. One of the biggest problems I see in writing introductions is people weight it down with statistics about the medium they are studying without giving an idea of what the paper will be about. The problem statement spells out specifically what the paper will address and how it will address it. For instance, in a paper I wrote recently that combined credibility and selective exposure theory, I wrote: "This study employs a survey of politically interested Internet users during

the 2008 presidential campaign to test the relative influence of credibility and reliance on selective exposure to online political sources. This study tests whether credibility of, and reliance on, political blogs, websites, broadcast television sites, and online newspapers predict selective exposure to online political sources after controlling for political and demographic factors.”

A good introduction and problem statement also needs to give a justification for why the study is important. For instance, in the study mentioned above I discussed how it is important to study the factors that predict selective exposure because it can lead to more polarized and fragmented political views. I also noted one of the contributions of the study was being one of the first test whether or not credibility of a medium is synonymous with reliance or whether they are distinct concepts

The introduction and problem statement is due Nov. 9 and is worth 10 points

Rough Draft of your Topic paper

People often struggle in writing literature reviews; I think they are the hardest and most time-consuming part of a research paper. You should do a thorough up-to-date review of the research, looking at journal articles, books, book chapters and conference papers for research in the area. If you are looking at new technologies, trade journals and media articles can be helpful too. Texas has a lot of good databases on its library research. Many people like to use one of the broad databases like Academic SearchComplete, but for most papers I prefer more specialized databases like Communication & Mass Media Complete. Google Scholar can also be helpful because you can find later studies that have cited each work. If you are new to research, the database portion of the UT library website also has tips for researching. This is not supposed to be a dissertation-length review but I would like you to summarize clearly and cogently the major articles in the area. You can use our textbook as a guide to bring in important research, but you should not use it as a listed source.

In writing The Topic Paper I would suggest finding other ones and look at their styles. The Ellison and associates paper on your reading list also will be of help. Typically they spend time talking about how the theory developed and go into depth into the theory itself. The paper then often finds a link between your theory and your topic that is discussed in some depth. The major part of the paper is what we know about the theory and the topic. Also, if you look at the Topical papers you will see not simply reporting what studies found but also analysis that helps explain the relationship between the topic and the theory.

One problem I often see in any kind of literature review is the researcher organizes it study by study rather than trying to synthesize the literature. Writing it study by study makes it difficult for the reader to understand the literature and I believe hurts the flow of the paper

The rough draft of your literature review, hypotheses and research questions will be due Nov. 28 and worth 25 points

Final Draft

One of the major factors I will be looking at in the final paper is how well you were able to address the concerns raised in the rough draft. I will be asking questions such as: Do I get a clear idea from the introduction what the paper is about? Does the problem statement clearly set out what the study is about and how it will be done? Does the introduction and problem statement give a sense of what makes the study important? I will look at the completeness of the literature review: Does it seem to have a comprehensive look at the literature on the theory and does it link the theory well and completely with the topic? Is the topic paper organized in a logical fashion? Does it involve a cogent discussion of the literature? That is, does it do a nice job synthesizing the literature rather than discuss it study by study? Does it offer a thorough discussion of what research should be examined next in the future review section and does the future review section advance studies that relate logically to the rest of the paper.

The final paper is due at 4:30 on Dec 14. It is worth 100 points