

Journalism 395 Theory Building (Unique No. 08450) meets Fridays, 12-3 p.m., in CMA 4.150.

INSTRUCTOR: Dominic (Nick) Lasorsa, Ph.D. **OFFICE HOURS:** Mondays and Wednesdays, 12:30 to 2 p.m., and by appointment. **OFFICE:** BMC 3.320. **PHONE:** (512) 471-1966. **MAILBOX:** Journalism School Mailroom. **EMAIL:** lasorsa@austin.utexas.edu. **FAX:** (512) 471-7979.

Course Description. Theory Building is a three-credit graduate-level course that teaches students how to construct social science theories. Models of the theory building process are analyzed by tracing the development of popular contemporary social science theories. Using theory building techniques and following specific theory building steps, students advance their own social science theory.

Learning Objectives. Students learn to: (1) envision and define a theoretical concept; (2) compose a theoretical statement relating two or more theoretical concepts; (3) devise theoretical linkages (rationales) for a theoretical statement; (4) propose appropriate measurements of key theoretical concepts; (5) construct and use a theoretical model; (6) apply creativity exercises to theory building tasks, and (7) evaluate new and existing theories, including their own.

Course Requirements. Carefully read assigned readings and participate in class discussions based on them. Graded assignments include class exercises/participation, homework assignments, readings, a class presentation and a term paper. See “*Grading*” below for values of various course requirements. See “*Course Schedule*” below for deadlines.

Classwork. Students are expected to attend class, to be prepared to discuss textbook readings, to engage in class exercises and to participate in class discussions. Over the course of the semester, each student, in a series of specific steps, develops his or her own theory or advances an existing theory. In class sessions, students report their progress, respond to constructive critiques, and constructively critique the work of others.

Homework. Students complete 10 homework assignments designed to demonstrate their understanding of course readings, lectures, exercises and discussions.

Term Paper. Put it all together. Write a term paper that attempts to build theory. Expand upon the course readings, assignments and exercises to produce an essay designed to enlighten us (expand our knowledge) about some aspect of social science. Identify two key social science concepts. Define them. Propose a hypothesis or research question that relates these two key concepts. Provide theoretical and operational definitions (linkages providing rationales for the hypothesis or research question). Explain how this research helps us better understand some social scientific phenomenon or process. To do this will require a comparison to the existing social science literature. Tell us (1) what science already knows about the relationship between your two key concepts and (2) what specifically your work will contribute to that knowledge. Include full references to works cited, using a standard social science citation style. The term paper should be about 15 double-spaced pages of main text (not including references, tables, figures, etc.).

Presentation. Students will make a concise, organized, information-packed five-minute class presentation on their term paper. The presentation will include a one-page handout for other members of the class which highlights key points about their theory building. Make enough copies for all class members.

Texts.

How to Build Social Science Theories, by Pamela Shoemaker, James Tankard & Dominic Lasorsa. Additional readings may be given out in class and posted to our course web site.

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 that arrangements can be made to complete an assignment within a reasonable time after the absence. <http://www.utexas.edu/student/registrar/catalogs/gi03-04/ch4/ch4g.html#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://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>

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/sjs/acint_student.php.

Grading.	<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Value</u>
	Classwork	10%
	Homework	50%
	Term paper	30%
	<u>Class presentation</u>	<u>10%</u>
	TOTAL	100%

Class schedule.

Friday, January 17.

INTRODUCTION TO THEORY BUILDING.

READING: CHAPTER 1. (Optional.)

Friday, January 24.

THEORETICAL CONCEPTS.

READING: CHAPTER 2.

DUE: HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT ONE.

Friday, January 31.

EXPLICATION, PART 1.

READING: *Explication*, SECTIONS 1-6, pp. 1-42.

Friday, February 7.

EXPLICATION, PART 2.

READING: *Explication*, SECTIONS 7-12, pp. 43-73.

Friday, February 14.

THEORETICAL STATEMENTS.

READING: CHAPTER 3.

DUE: HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT TWO.

Friday, February 21.

THEORETICAL AND OPERATIONAL LINKAGES.

READING: CHAPTER 4.

DUE: HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT THREE.

Friday, February 28.

CREATIVITY IN THEORY BUILDING, PART 1.

READING: CHAPTER 8, pp. 145-157.

DUE: HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT FOUR.

Friday, March 7.

CREATIVITY IN THEORY BUILDING, PART 2.

READING: CHAPTER 8, pp. 157-166.

DUE: HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT FIVE.

Friday, March 14

SPRING BREAK.

Friday, March 21.

THREE-VARIABLE STATEMENTS.

READINGS: CHAPTER 5.

DUE: HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT SIX.

Friday, March 28

TERM PAPER & RESEARCH PRESENTATION WORK.

Friday, April 4.

COMPLEX STATEMENTS, PART 1.

READING: CHAPTER 6, pp. 85-98.

DUE: HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT SEVEN.

Friday, April 11.

COMPLEX STATEMENTS, PART 2.

READING: CHAPTER 6, pp. 98-106.

DUE: HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT EIGHT.

Friday, April 8.

THEORETICAL MODELS.

READING: CHAPTER 7.

DUE: HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT NINE.

Friday, April 25.

EVALUATING THEORIES.

READINGS: *CHAPTER 9.*

DUE: HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT TEN.

Friday, May 2.

RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS.

DUE: TERM PAPER.