

# Media Theory

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## Course Outcomes

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By the end of the course you will be able to:

1. Clearly state what the key contributions to media studies have been in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.
2. Describe how and why different theories of the media were and are generated.
3. Compare and contrast the main contemporary media theories.
4. Apply a variety of media theories to the core meaning of journalism.
5. Synthesize different theoretical perspectives in order to put forward one's own argument on recent changes in journalism.

## Assessment

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### Midterm Exam (20%)

Midterm exam covers all reading and lecture material from in the form of definitions, identifications of key ideas, and short answers.

### Short weekly Comments & Activities and Group Presentation (10%)

350 word comments on the weekly reading and other activities should be posted on the course web page and brought by students to class every week. They will serve to extend the conversation opened by the group presenting the text that week. This will also allow students to share interests, questions, and concerns related to the topic.

### • Academic Article (20%)

In a 1,500 word academic article, students will select different theories from the course and apply them to examples from contemporary journalism.

### • Final Exam (50%)

Final Exam will consist of analyzing and evaluating a text from the course reading.

## Course Plan

	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Text</i>	<i>Language &amp; Academic Skills</i>	<i>Assignments</i>
1	Introduction to Accepted Views of the Media	–	Applying theoretical concepts. Reading strategies: Critical analysis.	Find examples from newspapers or film of different overviews of the role of the media in society.
2	Modernity	Theodor Adorno & Max Horkheimer, "The Culture Industry" (...) [1944]	Expressing opinion Giving peer feedback Presentation skills	Identify the main organising sentence for the text and write a 350-word comment.
3	Transmission	Harold Lasswell, "The Structure and Function of Communication in Society" [1948]	Describing theories. Working in groups. Presentation skills. Giving peer feedback.	Identify and define key concepts within the text for our media theory glossary.
4	Persuasion & Influence	Elihu Katz and Paul F. Lazarsfeld, <i>Personal Influence</i> [1955]	Comparing and contrasting. Discussing. Working in groups and presentation skills. Giving peer feedback.	Relate the argument of Katz & Lazarsfeld to Lasswell's theory of the media impact on people.
5	Prosthesis	Marshall McLuhan, <i>Understanding Media</i> [1964].	Evaluating. Expressing opinion.	Write a 350 word comment expressing your own judgement on the author's article.
Midterm Exam				
6	Signs	Roland Barthes, "The Photographic Message" [1977].	Working in groups and presentation skills. Giving peer feedback.	Select a recent news photograph and decipher possible messages according to Barthes.
7	Media Rituals	James Carey, "A cultural Approach to Communication" [1999].	Comparing and contrasting	Identify the author's argument and philosophical assumption.
8	Public / Civil Sphere	Jürgen Habermas, "The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article" 2006).	Applying theories.	Find an example of new story in which journalism seems to be working for the civil sphere.
9	Agenda Setting and Framing	Maxwell McCombs and Donald L. Shaw, "The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media (1999).	Applying theories.	Shortlist headlines from three different newspapers. Contrast and compare the way in which they set the agenda.
10	Convergence	Henry Jenkins, "Quentin Tarantino's Star Wars?"	Evaluating	Write a 350 word comment evaluating Jenkins' view of the new media and advancing your own argument.

