

MMC 6402 Mass Communication Perspectives

Fall 2019. Section 4842. Periods 3-4 Wednesdays and Fridays. Weimer 3020. 4 credits.



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Office hours: Periods 5-6 (11:45a to 1:40p) on Wednesday and Friday (after this class)

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About me: See my [website](#) or follow me (@bikeprof) on [Twitter](#)

If office hours are inconvenient, make an appointment. Or if my door is open, drop in.

ABOUT THIS COURSE

Course Purpose

To foster conceptual thinking required of mass communication researchers by exploring the philosophy of science and the role of theory in scientific inquiry.

Course Description

This four-credit, advanced-level course is for doctoral students in the UF College of Journalism and Communications. It is designed to be taken in a doctoral student's first semester to provide a foundation for subsequent coursework and offer an overview of intellectual perspectives in our field. Three papers are required: two summary papers evaluating key elements of the philosophy of science and mass communication theory, and a conference-quality conceptual paper explicating an original model or typology.

Course Objectives

The course is intended to enable you to:

1. Become adept at conceptual thinking and thus begin to teach yourself how to think like a social scientist.
2. Identify the fundamental elements and disagreements that define science as both a practice and a discipline.
3. Evaluate the role that theory plays in communication research, both normatively and descriptively, and identify the characteristics of "good" theory.
4. Immerse yourself in the intellectual rigor of academic research.

Required Textbooks

- Baran, S.J., & Davis, D.K. (2015). *Mass communication theory: Foundations, ferment, and future* (7th ed.) Boston, MA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning. ISBN: 978-1-285-05207-6.
- Godfrey-Smith, P. (2003). *Theory and reality: An introduction to the philosophy of science*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago press. ISBN: 0-226-30063-3.

- Kuhn, Thomas S. (2012). *The structure of scientific revolutions, 50th anniversary edition*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago press. ISBN: 978-0-226-45812-0.
- Shoemaker, P.J.; Tankard, J.W., Jr. & Lasorsa, D.L. (2004). *How to build social science theories*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. ISBN: 0-7619-2667-4.

Purchase an APA Stylebook

The style guide used most often in our field is the *American Psychological Association (APA) publication manual*, sixth edition. It is available in a [spiral-bound edition](#). Beyond its technical advice, it is an excellent primer in how to structure and write a research article.

Grading in this course presumes you have access to an APA Stylebook and are becoming familiar with its key elements. Perfection is not expected, but familiarity is.

If you are in legal studies, the [Bluebook](#) style manual can be used in this course.

Writing Help

Quality academic journals reject poorly written manuscripts no matter how good the research may have been. Therefore, doctoral students must be good writers, with a solid command of syntax and grammar for scholarly, written English.

If your writing skills could stand improvement, the *APA publication manual* offers helpful grammar and writing advice. You may also wish to consider buying a writing guide such as Strunk & White's [Elements of style](#) or Diana Hacker's [Writer's reference](#).

In the past, some students who have felt less confident in their writing in English have asked for a recommendation for an editor or a proofreader. I can offer these:

- Dr. Johanna Cleary, retired UF professor, jcleary@jou.ufl.edu
- Catherine-Nevil Parker, freelance editor, cobradraumr@gmail.com

In listing these editors or proofreaders, I am in no way implying that I expect you to hire one of them or anyone else. Conversely, listing them here is in no way an implication that they will be available for you. Both are independent contractors who decide what work to take on, in a time frame of their choosing, and for a rate they set. I simply list them as good possibilities should you wish to know names.

Other Readings

Journal articles and other assigned readings are available through the course website on Canvas, the UF e-learning system. These readings are identified with a "PDF" in the class readings schedule later in this syllabus.

Read on Your Own

The assigned readings and textbook are insufficient to enable you to think like a social scientist. You will become a better scholar faster if you routinely immerse yourself in research articles found in better journals in our field, such as (in alphabetical order):

Electronic News, Health Communication, International Journal on Media Management, Journal of Advertising Research, Journal of Advertising, Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, Journal of Communication, Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly, Journal of Current Issues and Research in Advertising, Journal of Health Communication, Journal of Public Relations Research, Mass Communication & Society, Public Relations Inquiry, Public Relations Review, and Science Communication.

Join an Academic Association

Join at least one of these, the three leading academic associations in our field. Each offers reduced student rates. In alphabetical order:

- Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, or [AEJMC](#). Mostly for mass communication. Membership begins anytime.
- International Communication Association, or [ICA](#). Addresses both interpersonal and mass communication. Membership year begins October 1.
- National Communication Association, or [NCA](#). Mostly for interpersonal communication. Membership begins anytime.

Class Participation

Part of becoming a scholar is learning how to engage others to challenge assertions. Thus, class participation is critical. Don't let shyness or lack of confidence keep you from contributing to discussion, for it is when we engage each other that we learn the most. (Also, I call on people at random in class to encourage participation.)

Class participation depends on each student having read the material ahead of class. Therefore, you are expected to have read (or skimmed, as the schedule denotes) the material for each class.

Each student gets one "free pass" from having done the readings for that class to accommodate unexpected circumstances. If you wish to claim that pass, e-mail me ahead of class so I won't think you're trying to avoid participating and so I won't call on you unless you volunteer. But do come to class.

Attendance is expected unless covered by the UF graduate school [attendance policy](#).

Electronic Devices in Class

Please restrict the use of electronic devices to reading articles or taking (brief) notes. Put away your cellphone and ignore Facebook while in class.

Assignment Weighting

Science paper (due 9 am Monday, Sept. 16)	20%
Theory paper (due 9 am Monday, Oct. 7)	20%
Explication paper (due 9 am Monday, Dec. 9)	60%

Grading Scale

A	100 to 90
B+	89 to 87
B	86 to 83
B-	82 to 80

Grades are based on results, not effort. Details can be found in rubrics in this syllabus. Consult the UF graduate school catalog for details about the [grading policy](#).

Academic Integrity

UF students live by an honor code that prohibits academic dishonesty such as (but not limited to) cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, engaging in unauthorized collaboration, reusing your master's thesis or a paper from another class, writing a similar paper for two classes, drawing too heavily on another's work for your own, and having someone else write your paper.

Be aware of the UF graduate school [academic honesty policy](#) as well the one in the college's Doctoral Handbook. Students have an affirmative obligation to know what is in the handbook and to abide by it. The handbook includes a detailed description of plagiarism, copies of which are available in Chinese, Korean, Mandarin, Portuguese, and Spanish. If you are unsure of citation rules or what requires attribution, ask me *before* turning in a paper. Ignorance is not an excuse.

My default practice for an academic integrity violation is a failing grade for the course and to recommend removal from the graduate program.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the [Disability Resource Center](#) (352-392-8565) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter, which must be presented to me when requesting accommodation. Such requests should be made as soon as possible – preferably at the start of the semester – so that I can adjust to the accommodation and therefore assist you in your learning.

Academic Resources

- E-learning technical support: 352-392-4357 (select option 2) or e-mail to Learningsupport@ufl.edu or reach the [website](#).
- For career advice and planning, or even help selecting a major or minor, contact the [Career Resource Center](#) in the Reitz Union, 392-1601.
- For help in finding resources, ask a UF librarian through [Library Support](#).
- General study skills and tutoring available from the [Teaching Center](#), Broward Hall, 392-2010 or 392-6420.
- Have a complaint? See the [UF Complaints Policy](#) for links and directions.

Course Evaluations

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via this [link](#). Summaries of course evaluation [results](#) are available to students.

Health and Wellness

Your well-being is important to the University of Florida. The U Matter, We Care initiative is committed to creating a culture of care on campus by encouraging everyone to look out for one another and to reach out for help if a person is in need.

If you or a friend is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu so that the U Matter, We Care Team can reach out to the student in distress. A crisis counselor is available, including nights and weekends, by calling 352-392-1575.

The U Matter, We Care team can help connect students to many other helping resources including, but not limited to, victim advocates, housing staff, and the Counseling and Wellness Center. Asking for help is a sign of strength.

In an initiative announced August 1, 2019, UF declared that graduate assistants (along with faculty and staff) have access to a new employee assistance program (EAP) through ComPsych. The service provides up to six free counseling visits per person, per event, per calendar year. This includes employees and each member of the household. The toll-free number, available 24/7, is 833-306-0103.

The EAP now provides worklife services such as referrals for child care or elder care. More information can be found on the EAP [website](#).

In case of emergency, call 911.

ABOUT THE COURSE PAPERS

What makes this course 4 credit hours instead of the usual 3 is the range of material (years ago, the philosophy of science was a separate 1-credit course) and the three required papers. Two of those are shorter (8 to 10 pages) papers on assigned topics. The third is the major paper for the course, an explication paper of 20 to 25 pages of sufficient quality to be accepted by a regional academic conference. All three are explained below.

Why Two Summary Papers?

You will write two summary papers, each on a core element of the course: the philosophy of science and mass communication theory. These papers will help you prepare for potential qualifying exam questions. Here are examples of exam questions that draw from material covered in this course:

Philosophy of science

- Evaluate the primary ontological and epistemological challenges to your dissertation and describe how your study will seek to compensate for them while acknowledging the study's axiological assumptions.
- Justify the inductive approach of your dissertation and contrast its benefits and weaknesses to a deductive one that your study could have used instead.

Theory

- Identify the benefits and limitations of theory in mass communication research in general, and for your dissertation in particular.
- The prospectus identified that the study would rely on communication identity theory. What criteria makes this a "good" theory for your study, and how does the theory shape the assumptions of the study?

More important, these papers are designed to help you think conceptually. Wrestling with definitional issues in science and theory help you become a social scientist.

About the Two Summary Papers (Science and Theory)

1. These are summary papers, not original research studies.
2. Each paper should be 8 to 10 double-spaced pages, excluding references.
3. These are not full-blown papers, so no title page or abstract is needed. Start the first page with the title on the top and start the paper on the next (double-space) line.
4. These papers are overviews about the social sciences and mass communication; they are not discipline-specific (advertising, public relations, etc.).
5. Most of these papers will summarize what you have learned from the readings and class discussion, so you won't have many sources. Seven is sufficient. You may consult other sources beyond those assigned, but you are not required to do so.
6. Use primary sources whenever possible. However, secondary sources, such as attributing to Godfrey-Smith a summary of Rene Descartes, are OK for these topical papers. (Note: Secondary sources are *not* allowed for the final explication paper.)

7. Cite all of your sources, but minimize citing class lectures. Published sources are always better than unpublished ones, and published academic sources are best.

(For more, see the Technical Details section, the Academic Writing Tips section, and the rubrics.)

Summary Paper 1: Science

Use this title: "Applying the Philosophy of Science to My Research." Copy each point below (you can change the order) and then address each. In other words, this is not a thematic paper but a series of short essays about 1.5 pages each. Apply these questions to a dissertation topic you may pursue or potential research program.

1. Define science as it applies to your dissertation or research program, focusing on what to you are its two most salient characteristics and its two primary deficiencies.
2. Describe how Kuhn and Popper differed in their definitions of science, and identify whose approach you find most applicable to your dissertation or research program.
3. Compare naturalistic and interpretivist approaches to reality, and the four primary truth theories, and justify which approach you prefer and why.
4. Mindful of distinctions between the social and physical sciences, define and apply ontology, epistemology, and axiology to your dissertation or research program.
5. Contrast empiricism and rationalism, and explain which approach you are most likely to employ in your dissertation or research program and why.
6. Identify how deduction differs from induction and justify which you are most likely to use in your dissertation or research program and why.

Deadline: Before 9:00 a.m. Monday, September 16, upload to the Canvas website.

Summary Paper 2: Theory

The three-fold purpose of the paper is to (a) define and justify mass communication theory, (b) trace its development and ongoing debates, and (c) advance an argument about theory.

Unlike the science paper, this one advances an argument. Therefore, give it a title. Just two examples: "Why Mass Communication Theory is Still Dependent on Psychology" or "How a Media Effects Paradigm Reflects Unresolved Conflicts over Theory Development."

This paper will address the development of mass communication *theory* as a singular idea, not individual *theories*.

Use three headings:

1. Theory Defined (which could have 3 subheads: Define, Good, and Why)
2. Development of Mass Communication Theory
3. Conclusion, which is the argument identified in the title of the paper

Begin the paper with an introductory 3-ish sentences foreshadowing your conclusion.

Theory Defined (about two to three pages, about 1 paragraph each for these subheads):

- *Definition.* Compare and contrast definitions we will explore in class and conclude with your preferred definition – either someone else’s or one you create.
- *Good:* Describe three to five key characteristics of good theory. Draw from Kuhn and Chaffee & Berger to identify the attributes that, for you, make for good theory.
- *Why:* Justify why theory matters for mass communication research.

Theory Development (about four pages):

Trace the development of mass communication theory. Choose one of these three perspectives: (1) four reactionary trends per Baran & Davis, or (2) as an evolution per Neuman & Guggenheim, or (3) as an ongoing dialectic between strong and limited effects.

Contextualize the development of mass communication theory by showing how it was shaped by factors such as world events, evolution in mass media, and advancements in psychology and sociology.

If a paragraph relies solely on a single source such as Baran & Davis, which is acceptable for this summary paper, the citation goes at the end of the paragraph.

Conclusion (about two pages):

End with a single argument of about two pages that reflects the paper’s title. Examples of questions that may help stimulate your thinking about that argument are:

- Could mass communication theory exist without sociology and psychology?
- Has the debate over whether media are powerful or have limited effects been resolved?
- Is critical studies one of four trends (Baran & Davis) or a separate paradigm?
- Why does communication or mass communication have so many theories?
- Does a new media era require new theories?

Deadline: Before 9:00 a.m. Monday, October 7, to the Canvas website.

About the Explication Paper

Because this is an advanced-level course, the main work product is a paper of sufficient quality to be accepted at a regional conference such as the AEJMC Midwinter Conference or the Southeast Colloquium. Meeting this requirement is necessary to pass the course.

Because the purpose of this class is to improve your conceptualization skills, this is an explication paper, not one built on data. It relies on rationalism rather than empiricism. Because explication papers without data are difficult to get accepted at a conference, the focal point of the paper is a model or typology. That model or typology will address or explain a latent problem, issue, or phenomenon involving mass communication.

The explication paper should be a total of about 25 to 30 double-spaced pages. That figure is for the entire paper, including a cover page and references.

A example of an explication paper for this course is one that offers a model or a typology:

- A model uses moderators and a mediator, along with an independent variable and a dependent variable, to help explain relationships and causality among concepts. Examples: factors that influence how commercial weight-loss advertising is persuasive, why modalities matter in advertising messages, or how transparency in public relations facilitates crisis communication.
- A typology is a parsimonious classification or categorization of a phenomenon aligned with an explanatory factor. Examples: types of government public diplomacy using public relations theory, types of media literacy, or an examination of who benefits from convergence, all placed along a continuum.

We will talk more about models and typologies in class, with data-free papers that have been published in academic journals. Conceptual papers without data are infrequently published in journals, though they are a little more common in conferences.

Unless a medical or family emergency arises, deadlines are firm:

- The first two to three pages are due by email by 9:00 a.m. Monday, October 28.
- Upload the final paper to the Canvas website by 9:00 a.m. Monday, December 9.

Feel free to consult with your adviser for ideas. Submit your proposed introduction (2 to 3 pages) by October 28 so that we can discuss it when we meet individually for 15 minutes in lieu of class. However, we can always meet sooner to discuss your ideas if you wish.

Explication Paper Tips

1. Begin with a *burning question*. Identify something important for which you really want to know the answer such as, “Why are phones so addictive for young adults?” Without a compelling burning question, it’s impossible to develop a good model or typology. Further, the burning question comes first, and then the model or typology is developed to answer it. Developing a model or typology without first crafting a burning question is of no value.
2. Craft a burning question that can be answered conceptually *without data*. For example, a question such as “Does personalization or customization increase purchase intentions?” is best answered by data and would not be suitable for an explication paper.
3. Start your burning question with *why* or *how*.
4. As Chaffee wrote in *Explication*, the purpose of communication science is to reveal the hidden factors that influence what we see. So while observable characteristics such as age or gender may be important, the real power of a study comes in identifying latent characteristics such as homophily or para-social interaction.
5. Follow the example of the assigned journal articles that presented models or typologies without data. Each of the assigned papers identified a problem to be solved. Each explained how the model or typology helps solve that problem.
6. Identify the *academic* problem you wish to solve, or the problem you wish to solve *academically*.

- a. Solve an *academic* problem, such as the absence of a clear theoretical framework to differentiate Snapchat users.
 - b. Or, solve a problem *academically*, such as a theory-driven explanation for how some Facebook users confer source credibility to casual connections.
 - c. Don't try to solve a professional economic problem, such as how TV stations can monetize a website or best practices for corporate reputation repair.
7. The introduction (Oct. 28) should identify the problem to be solved. It should identify the focal concept (per Chaffee's *Explication*). If you're presenting a model, list the independent and dependent variables. If you already have a rough draft of your model or typology, offer it in your proposal. Otherwise, at least list the focal concepts and any other key concepts you have identified for the model or typology.
 8. The "problem to be solved" approach guides how you write the introduction and paper. Here's one formula you can consider:
 - a. In graph 1, identify the *focal point*. For example: "The 2.2 billion active Facebook users are not monolithic in their use of the social network but instead seek specific uses that affect how they interact with people offline."
 - b. In graph 2, identify the *problem*. For example: "However, the academic literature does not adequately differentiate among Facebook users and thus fails to differentiate among the likely effects the social network has on interpersonal communication."
 - c. End graph 2 with the *purpose* statement. For example: "The purpose of this study is to advance a typology of Facebook users along a continuum drawn from social learning theory to guide research exploring how the social network influences certain types of interpersonal communication."
 9. In a linear causation model, in which an independent variable (IV) leads to a dependent variable (DV) through a single mediator, the proposition for moderators located between the IV and the mediator link those two. Similarly, the P's for moderators located between the mediator and the DV link those two. Example:
 - a. IV: Transparent communication initiative
 - b. Mediator: Change self-efficacy
 - c. Moderator: Internal locus of control
 - d. P1: Transparent communication initiatives are more likely to lead to change self-efficacy if the employee has an internal locus of control.
 10. For a model, operationalize each conceptual variable (moderator or mediator) by specifying just before each hypothesis how that variable would be measured.
 11. Non-academic sources are permissible, especially in identifying the problem, especially if taking an inductive approach. However, published articles from peer-reviewed journals are best, and the paper requires at least 25 of them.
 12. Parse complex issues into small, discrete parts.
 13. Narrow your focal concept. Then narrow it again. (Most papers start out too broad.)

Explication Paper Structure

A social science research paper involving data typically has five parts:

1. Introduction
2. Literature review
3. Method
4. Findings (data)
5. Discussion & conclusion

Because a model or typology has no data to report, the structure will be a little different. Here is one potential recipe:

1. Cover page with title and the author's name (1 page).
2. Abstract of about 100 words (1 page).
3. Introduction (3 to 5 pages) as follows:
 - a. Identify the problem to be solved academically and specify the purpose of the study (complete a sentence that begins, "The purpose of this study is to ...")
 - b. Identify the "so what" to the study – its significance and contribution. This is both the specifics of the study and the larger field in which it is situated, such as audience analysis, media psychology, etc.
 - c. Identify the "donut hole" for the study. The "donut" are published studies that are close to the subject you wish to pursue, and the "hole" is the gap your study will fill that has not be addressed by published research.
 - d. Describe the theoretical base, the one theory that is foundational to your model or typology.
4. Presentation of the model or typology backed by citations to lots of academic studies (about 12 to 15 pages). If you have a model, include propositions (untested hypotheses) at the end of each variable or construct. If you have a typology, include propositions at the end of the core part of the paper.
5. Discussion/conclusion (about 3 pages) as follows:
 - a. Explain how the model or typology advances academic knowledge.
 - b. Detail (2 to 3 graphs) how the model or typology can guide future research.
 - c. Identify the study's limitations.
 - d. Conclude with a graph with the most persuasive argument for the "so what."

For All Three Papers: Technical Details

- **Purpose:** For the theory and explication papers, include early in the paper a statement that begins, "The purpose of this paper is to ..."
- **Length:** Topic papers must be 8 to 10 double-spaced pages (not counting a reference list). The final project must be 25 to 30 double-spaced pages (including the cover page and the reference section).
- **Sources:** Use proper academic sources. Use the databases (Ebsco, etc.) available through the library, not solely Google Scholar.

- **Style:** Either APA (references) or Bluebook (footnotes, for legal papers) is acceptable. Style is an important element of academic writing.
- **Writing:** Clarity is essential in formal academic writing. Be precise in word choice, grammar and spelling. Follow grammar guides and dictionaries. Don't worry about an occasional mistake. However, papers with writing that is obtuse, sloppy in the use of mechanics or hobbled by garbled syntax won't be accepted for an academic conference – and thus won't pass muster for this course.
- **Deadlines.** Unless an extraordinary circumstance such as a medical or family emergency arises, deadlines are firm.

For All Three Papers: Academic Writing Tips

1. Academic work is distinguished by frequent use of citations, the explication of terms and concepts, and writing that is focused and lucid.
 - a. Cite early and often. Citations document where you got your material and serve as evidence. For your explication paper, more sources = a better paper. Also, in a conference-quality paper (the explication paper, not the summary papers), a majority of sentences will be followed with one or more citations.
 - b. Define terms. Apply Chaffee's *Explication*. Vanquish vagueness.
 - c. Write lucidly. Multi-syllabic words swimming in a convoluted syntax is not academic.
 - d. Prefer citations from research articles published in quality peer-reviewed journals.
2. Each paragraph should start with a topic sentence, which describes what the paragraph is about. In a well-written paper, topic sentences collectively serve as an outline or executive summary of a paper. Specific topic sentences will help you write more clearly. For example:
 - Too vague: "Two famous writers about the philosophy of science, Karl Popper and Thomas Kuhn, offered different views of science and how it is practiced." (True, but this sentence doesn't tell the reader how the two differed.)
 - Better: "Kuhn described science as a communal practice while Popper saw it as an individual act, a disagreement that reflects a definitional divide in the philosophy of science."
3. Topic sentences define the parameters of each paragraph. If the paragraph is going to explore how Kuhn and Popper differed in their definition of science, stick to that topic. Don't drift into discussions of empiricism vs. rationalism or views of truth in that same paragraph. Those belong to different paragraphs.
4. Therefore, write all the topic sentences for the paper first, and then write the paper. If you do, your paper will be much better organized and read more fluently.
5. Each paragraph should have at least three sentences to develop the idea expressed in the topic sentence.

6. Skip the throat-clearing pronouncements such as “this paper will first describe ... then it will detail” or “in the next section we’ll explore.” Such pronouncements waste space. They are really suitable only for lengthy papers in legal journals.
7. Use past-tense verbs for references of previously published material or statements:
 - Incorrect: Baran and Davis *define* theory as ...
 - Correct: Baran and Davis *defined* theory as ...
8. Do not use lengthy quotations in the literature review. Summarize and paraphrase the core idea in your own words. A brief quotation such as Klapper’s “nexus of mediating variables” is OK. Block quotations (see APA style) are not.
9. Don’t use first-person pronouns such as *I*, *we*, or *us* to refer to yourself. Don’t use third-person references such as “the author” or “the researcher.” Instead, structure your writing so that authorship is not explicit.
10. Similarly, don’t use “I believe” or “I think” statements, which weaken your argument. The statement is what matters, not who said it.
11. Because what matters most in lit reviews is *what* is said, rather than *who* said it, references to authors should be reserved for citations.
 - Incorrect: As Godfrey-Smith (2003) wrote, induction is inherently flawed.
 - Correct: Induction is inherently flawed (Godfrey-Smith, 2003).
12. Support conclusions with evidence. A paper cannot conclude that “social scientists shouldn’t feel inferior to physical scientists” without first describing why inferiority exists and offering evidence for why the social sciences are equally valid. Unsupported assertions are not conclusions.
13. Use active voice. Writing that “it is believed that induction is inferior to deduction” hides from the reader the key issue of *who* believes that statement.
14. Use your style manual (APA or Bluebook) for stylistic issues such as whether to refer to concepts with quotation marks, capital letters, or italics.
15. Adhering to American English grammar rules improves comprehension while using sloppy grammar impedes readability. You don’t have to know the difference between a transitive and intransitive verb to avoid sentence fragments, match singular nouns with singular pronouns, and use plural possessives properly. (Hint: “media” is a plural noun and thus requires a plural verb.)

Tentative Schedule

Part 1: Philosophy of Science				
Wed	Aug. 21	1	Science Defined	
Fri	Aug. 23	2	Epistemology	
Wed	Aug. 28	3	Popper & Kuhn	
Fri	Aug. 30	4	Social Science	
Wed	Sept. 4	5	Reality & Truth	
Fri	Sept. 6	6	Does Science = Math?	
Wed	Sept. 11	7	Systemic Flaws	
Fri	Sept. 13		No class (prof at conference)	Paper due 9 am Mon, Sept. 16
Part 2: Mass Communication Theory				
Wed	Sept. 18	8	Does Theory Matter?	
Fri	Sept. 20	9	What Makes Good Theory?	
Wed	Sept. 25	10	Media Effects	
Fri	Sept. 27	11	Critical Studies	
Wed	Oct. 2	12	Present and Future	
Fri	Oct. 4		No class (UF Homecoming)	Paper due 9 am Mon, Oct. 7
Part 3: Explication				
Wed	Oct. 9	13	Explication	
Fri	Oct. 11	14	Building Theory	
Wed	Oct. 16	15	Models	
Fri	Oct. 18	16	Typologies	
Wed	Oct. 23	17	Designing the Explanation Paper	
Fri	Oct. 25	18	Designing the Explanation Paper	Intro due 9 am Mon, Oct. 28
Wed	Oct. 30		Individual meetings in lieu of class	
Fri	Nov. 1		Individual meetings in lieu of class	
Wed	Nov. 6		No class so you can work on your paper	
Fri	Nov. 8		No class so you can work on your paper	
Wed	Nov. 13	19	Class presentations 1	
Fri	Nov. 15	20	Class presentations 2	
Wed	Nov. 20		No class so you can work on your paper	
Fri	Nov. 22		No class so you can work on your paper	
Wed	Nov. 27		No class; Thanksgiving break	
Fri	Nov. 29		No class; Thanksgiving break	
Wed	Dec. 4		No class so you can work on your paper	Paper due 9 am Mon, Dec. 9

Philosophy of Science Paper Rubric

	100-90 Excellent	89-80 Good	Less than 80 Unsatisfactory	Result
Philosophy of science summary (70%)	Paper adroitly analyzes the core definitional issues of science and applies them to the student's research strain in answering the six assigned questions.	Paper accurately summarizes the core definitional issues of science and applies them to the student's research strain in answering the six assigned questions.	Paper either fails to accurately summarize the core definitional issues or does not adequately apply them to the student's research strain in answering the six assigned questions.	
Sourcing (10%)	At least seven quality, primary sources are cited and the paper is appropriately sourced per academic style.	At least seven sources are cited and most material in the paper is properly sourced.	Fewer than seven sources are used, or too many sections of the paper lack proper sourcing.	
Writing (15%)	Writing is lucid and engaging: clear topic sentences, contextual transitions, precise syntax and word use, and superior use of grammar, punctuation and spelling.	Writing is understandable: any errors in structure, word use, syntax or writing mechanics may slow readability but does not hamper comprehension.	Writing is too often difficult to decipher because of faulty reasoning, garbled syntax, or mechanical errors.	
Style (5%)	Consistently follows APA, Chicago, or Bluebook style.	A few style errors are made but without impeding readability.	Style errors are frequent or substantial enough to impede readability.	

Mass Communication Theory Paper Rubric

	100-90 Excellent	89-80 Good	Less than 80 Unsatisfactory	Result
Part 1: Theory defined (30%)	Paper (1) compares and contrasts definitions of theory before arriving at one summary definition, (2) justifies three to five key elements that make for good theory, and (3) expertly explains why theory matters to mass communication.	Paper (1) draws from several sources to define theory, (2) summarizes three to five elements that make for good theory, and (3) explains why theory matters to mass communication.	Paper fails to adequately (1) define theory, (2) define good theory, or (3) explain why theory matters to mass communication.	
Part 2: Theory develop. (30%)	Paper (1) adroitly traces the development of mass comm theory and (2) contextualizes it among three developments: world events, media, and related disciplines.	Paper (1) traces the development of mass comm theory and (2) places it in context with two developments (world events, media, or related disciplines).	Paper fails to trace the development of mass comm theory or to place it in context with more than one development (world events, media, or related disciplines).	
Part 3: Argument (20%)	Advances a persuasive argument regarding mass comm theory.	Advances an argument regarding mass comm theory.	Fails to advance an argument regarding mass comm theory.	
Sourcing (10%)	At least seven quality, primary sources are cited and the paper is appropriately sourced per academic style.	At least seven sources are cited and most material in the paper is properly sourced.	Fewer than seven sources are used, or too many sections of the paper lack proper sourcing.	
Writing (10%)	Writing is lucid and engaging: clear topic sentences, contextual transitions, precise syntax and word use, and superior use of grammar, punctuation, and spelling.	Writing is understandable: any errors in structure, word use, syntax or writing mechanics may slow readability but does not hamper comprehension.	Writing is too often difficult to decipher because of faulty reasoning, garbled syntax, or mechanical errors.	

Explication Paper Rubric

	100-90 Excellent	89-80 Good	Less than 80 Unsatisfactory
Introduction (20%)	Intro (1) offers a compelling burning question involving communication, (2) clearly states a focal concept, (3) evokes latency, (4) fills an academic gap, and (5) can be answered without data.	Intro (1) offers a burning question involving communication, (2) states a focal concept, (3) evokes latency, (4) fills an academic gap, and (5) can be answered without data.	Intro (1) lacks a burning Q involving communication, or (2) lacks a focal concept, or (3) does not evoke latency, or (4) is duplicated by published research, or (5) is better answered by data.
Conceptual model or typology (60%)	<p>For both: (1) is shaped by a theory, (2) is justified by observational evidence and published research from at least 25 articles from quality journals, and (3) poses at least four operationalized propositions.</p> <p>Model: answers the burning question via a persuasive explanation for how the IV influences the DV through six to ten distinct moderators plus a mediator that are mostly latent variables.</p> <p>Typology: answers the burning question via a complete and orthogonal typology that offers its real insight by its pairing with an intriguing continuous variable.</p>	<p>For both: (1) offers a theory, (2) is justified and explicated by observational evidence and published research from at least 25 journal articles, and (3) poses at least four operationalized propositions.</p> <p>Model: answers the burning question via a sensible explanation for how the IV influences the DV through six to ten distinct moderators plus a mediator that are mostly latent variables.</p> <p>Typology: answers the burning question via an orthogonal typology that offers insight by its pairing with another variable.</p>	<p>For both: (1) lacks theory, or (2) offers insufficient evidence or cites fewer than 25 journal articles, or (3) offers fewer than four operationalized propositions.</p> <p>Model: fails to answer the burning question, or offers an unclear explanation for how the IV influences the DV, or offers too few or too many moderators, or lacks a mediator, or mostly involves explicit variables.</p> <p>Typology: fails to answer the burning question, or offers a typology that is neither complete nor orthogonal, or fails to pair the typology with one or more variables that can generate insight.</p>
Conclusion (10%)	Conclusion (1) suggests empirical study that could be conducted as a result of the model or typology, (2) identifies study's conceptual limitations, and (3) describes how the model or typology advance theory.	Conclusion (1) suggests empirical study that could be conducted as a result of the model or typology, (2) identifies study's conceptual limitations.	Conclusion only suggests empirical study that could be conducted as a result of the model or typology without identifying conceptual limitations or advancing theory.
Writing (10%)	Writing is lucid and engaging: clear topic sentences, contextual transitions, precise syntax and word use, and superior use of grammar, punctuation and spelling.	Writing is understandable: any errors in structure, word use, syntax or writing mechanics may slow readability but does not hamper comprehension.	Writing is too often difficult to decipher because of faulty reasoning, garbled syntax, or mechanical errors.

ASSIGNED READINGS BY DATE AND STUDY QUESTIONS

Part 1: Philosophy of Science

1. Wednesday, August 21: Science Defined

Godfrey-Smith, Chapter 1: Introduction

From this chapter, you should be able to:

- Articulate why the philosophy of science matters
- Trace the historical development of scientific thought

Study questions:

1. Why study the philosophy of science?
2. How is epistemology different from metaphysics?
3. Which of the four ways to approach the philosophy of science makes the most sense to you?

PDF 1a: Zelizer, B. (2016). Communication in the fan of disciplines. *Communication Theory*, 26(3), 213–235. <https://doi.org/10.1111/comt.12094>

Study questions:

1. (This article touches on themes that we'll discuss over the next few weeks, so some will make more sense later. For now, let's consider what this essay about communication says about science as a way of knowledge.)
2. What are communication's academic neighbors and what does the field implicitly share with those neighbors in the pursuit of science?
3. In what ways is communication different from its academic neighbors?
4. If communication is different in its approach, it is scientific?

PDF 1b: Wimmer, R.D., & Dominick, J.R. (2014). *Mass media research: An introduction* (10th ed.). Boston, MA: Wadsworth. [pp. 10-13]

Study questions:

1. Do you agree with the authors that all six characteristics must be followed in order for research to be scientific?
2. What critiques can you offer for each of the six characteristics listed?

PDFs 1c: Science Timeline and Bios (mine)

Study questions:

1. What common themes or principles can you glean from these people and their approach to science?

PDF 1d: Philosophical Systems (mine)

Study questions:

1. Do these shifts in philosophies reflect continual progress or a back-and-forth dialectic?
2. What other historical events can you think of that shaped these changes in philosophies?

2. Friday, August 23: Epistemology

Godfrey-Smith, Chapter 2: Logic plus empiricism

From this chapter, you should be able to:

- Differentiate empiricism from rationalism
- Describe why positivism arose and how it contributed to empiricism

Study questions:

1. How does empiricism differ from rationalism?
2. What is positivism and why did it arise?

Godfrey-Smith, Chapter 3: Induction and confirmation

From this chapter, you should be able to:

- Grasp the challenges in understanding how observation can confirm theory
- Identify shortcomings in deduction and induction

Study questions:

1. Differentiate between deduction and induction, and identify the significant strengths and weaknesses of each.
2. How do scientists respond to assertions that “evolution is just a theory”?
3. What types of theories can the social sciences prove?

PDF 2a: A proper reckoning. (2016, May 12). *The Economist*. Retrieved from www.economist.com

Study questions:

1. What is the epistemological justification for treating feminist economics as a distinct branch of that social science?
2. If feminist economics is justified, what about feminist media studies?

PDF 2b: Haraway, D. (1988). Situated knowledges: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective. *Feminist Studies*, 14(3), 575-599.

Study questions:

1. (This now-classic essay was a response to a 1986 book by Sandra Hardin, *The science question in feminism*, evaluating the epistemological role of gender in science. Godfrey-Smith rejects her critique in chapter 9.)
2. Haraway assails a central premise in science, rational and disembodied objectivity. Can science be science without objectivity?
3. How would embracing Haraway’s vision of feminist objectivity alter a researcher’s epistemology?

PDF 2c: Hughes, A.L. (2012, fall). The folly of scientism. *The New Atlantis*, 32-50.

Study questions:

1. Has science rendered philosophy irrelevant? Why or why not?
2. What are the epistemological limitations of science?
3. Are fact-value distinctions a legitimate barrier between science and ethics?

3. Wednesday, August 28: Popper and Kuhn

PDF 3: Popper, K. (1935). *The logic of scientific discovery*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Study questions:

1. Why did Popper reject induction as a way of knowledge? Which of his philosophical ancestors (see timeline) would have agreed with him?
2. What did Popper identify as the “problem of demarcation” and how did he propose to solve it?
3. What is Popper’s falsification premise? (Hint: It’s different from his demarcation solution.)

Godfrey-Smith, Chapter 4: Popper: conjecture and refutation

From this chapter, you should be able to:

- Summarize and critique Popper’s falsification premise.

Study questions:

1. Why do scientists tend to see Popper as a hero?
2. Why was Popper worried about the “problem of demarcation”?
3. How did Popper define the practice of science?
4. What are the limitations of Popper’s falsification premise?
5. In Popper’s view of science, how important is theory?

Kuhn, T.S. (2012). *The structure of scientific revolutions*. Start with the introductory essay by Ian Hacking. For more on Kuhn and the book, see the [entry](#) in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Study questions:

1. What caused Kuhn to write the book, and what academic perspective did he take?
2. In the first sentence of the book, Kuhn wrote that he sought to change the current understanding of science. How was science understood then?
3. How did Kuhn define the practice of science? What process did he identify for how science worked?
4. Most people today would say the primary job of a scientist is to ascertain truth. What did Kuhn say is the scientist’s primary job?
5. What role did psychology play in Kuhn’s evaluation of how science worked?
6. Define these terms Kuhn used: Anomaly. Coherence. Incommensurability. Normal science. Paradigm. Paradigm shift. Pre-paradigm. Puzzle-solving. Revolutionary science.

Godfrey-Smith, chapters 5 & 6: Kuhn and normal science; Kuhn and revolutions

From this chapter, you should be able to:

- Understand the lasting impact of *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*.

Study questions:

1. How did Kuhn and Popper differ in their understanding of whether science is truly open-minded, and which view do you find more convincing?
2. How did Kuhn’s work change our understanding of how science is practiced?

4. Friday, August 30: Social Science

PDF 4a: Rosenberg, A. (2016). *Philosophy of social science* (5th ed.). Boulder, CO: Westview. [chapter 2]

Study questions:

1. What are the two arguments advocated in this chapter?
2. Why have the social sciences not found laws as have the physical sciences?
3. Which of the two approaches – naturalism and interpretivism – do you embrace and why?

PDF 4b: Machlup, F. (1961). Are the social sciences really inferior? *Southern Economic Journal*, 27(3), 173-184. doi:10.2307/1055084

Study questions:

1. The author declined to define social science. Would definition have strengthened or weakened his argument?
2. Which of the nine “grounds of comparison” seem most significant to you and why?
3. The author concludes that inferiority is in the mind of the public, a problem that is curable. Why haven’t we cured it in the half-century since this speech was given?
4. How might the author’s approach have differed if, instead of being an economist, he was a mass communication scholar?
5. How would this 1960 speech be different if he had given it after astronauts walked on the moon in 1969 or after the 2001 terrorist attacks in the U.S.?

PDF 4c: Fay, B., & Moon, J.D. (1977). What would an adequate philosophy of social science look like? *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 7(3), 209-227. doi:10.1177/004839317700700301

Study questions:

1. How do the authors define humanism and naturalism?
2. How do intentions distinguish the social sciences from the physical sciences?
3. Why is theory important to the social scientist?
4. What do the authors mean by “in the social sciences, concepts partially constitute the reality we study”? (p. 213)
5. How would you answer the question posed in the title?

PDF 4d: Scriven, M. (1994). A possible distinction between traditional scientific disciplines and the study of human behavior. In Michael Martin & Lee C. McIntyre (Eds.), *Readings in the philosophy of social science* (pp. 71-77). Cambridge, MA: Bradford.

Study questions:

1. Evaluate this statement: “The difference between the scientific study of behavior and that of physical phenomena is thus partly due to the relatively greater complexity of the *simplest phenomena we are concerned to account for* in a behavioral theory” (p. 72, his italics).
2. Critique this statement: “I would venture to say that it is extremely improbable that anything remotely corresponding to the simplicity and importance of the concept of universal gravitation can possibly be found in the field of psychology” (p. 75).

3. When the author says (p.76, point 2) that there is a difference between solving a problem and making progress, is he diminishing the work of social scientists?

Godfrey-Smith, chapter 7: Lakatos, Laudan, Feyerabend, and frameworks (skim)

Objective: Understand that Kuhn is not the last word on how science works

Godfrey-Smith, chapter 8: The challenge from sociology of science (skim)

Objective: See that sociologists portray science as influenced by social forces

5. Wednesday, September 4: Reality and Truth

Godfrey-Smith, chapter 10, section 3: The theory-ladenness of observation

Study questions:

- What is theory-ladenness of observation and why does it matter?

PDF 5a: Anderson, J.A., & Baym, G. (2004). Philosophies and philosophic issues in communication, 1995-2004. *Journal of Communication* 54(4), 589-615.

doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466.2004.tb02647.x

Study questions:

1. In your own words, what do epistemology, ontology, praxeology, and axiology mean for mass communication scholars?
2. The authors argue from a perspective that combines interpersonal and organizational (or mass) communication. Do those two branches share philosophic perspectives about the nature of truth, or is mass communication different?
3. The authors conclude that we must choose which type of communication scholar we are. Which of the four types offered best fits you and why?
4. On page 606, the authors assert that "journalism studies appears to be the wing of the discipline most explicitly interested in contemporary epistemological thought." Do you agree or disagree, and why?

PDF 5b: Haig, B.D., & Borsboom, D. (2012). Truth, science, and psychology. *Theory & Psychology* 22(3), 272-289. doi:10.1177/0959354311430442

Study questions:

1. What are the differences among correspondence, coherence, pragmatist and deflationary theories of truth?
2. This paper adopts the correspondence theory of truth, a viewpoint that most philosophers reject. Do you find their argument persuasive? If the authors are so confident, why did they hedge their bets in the conclusion?
3. The chart on page 280 delineates a hierarchy of truth statements. Which of the four does most research address? Which is the most important? If those two answers are different, what does that say about social science research?

6. Friday, September 6: Does Science = Math?

PDF 6a: Ritchie, D. (2003). Statistical probability as a metaphor for epistemological probability. *Metaphor and Symbol* 18(1), 1-11. doi:10.1207/S15327868MS1801_1

Study questions:

1. What does the author mean by this statement (p. 2): “Epistemological probability first served as a metaphor for statistical probability, but the widespread adoption of statistical methods as a basis for scientific argumentation has reversed our understanding, so that we now use statistical probability as a metaphor for epistemological probability”?
2. What are some of the embedded, often unacknowledged and potentially problematic assumptions in standard hypothesis testing?
3. What elements of social science research are beyond our ability to measure?

PDF 6b: Barrowman, N. (2018). Why data is never raw. *The New Atlantis*, 56(Summer/Fall), 129–135. Retrieved from <https://www.thenewatlantis.com/publications/why-data-is-never-raw>

Study questions:

1. How does this essay especially relevant for social scientists?
2. The author states that raw data is an oxymoron because “data is always the product of cognitive, cultural, and institutional processes that determine what to collect and how to collect it” (p. 132). What example(s) from your research focus would illustrate each of the (a) cognitive, (b) cultural, and (c) institutional processes?
3. As a social scientist, what steps will you take in your research to address the issues identified in this essay?

PDF 6c: Mahoney, J., & Goertz, G. (2006). A tale of two cultures: Contrasting quantitative and qualitative research. *Political Analysis*, 14(3), 227-249. doi:10.1093/pan/mpj017

Study questions:

1. This article was in a special issue of *Political Analysis* devoted to “causal complexity and qualitative methods.” How does that theme shape the scope of the arguments advanced in this paper?
2. The authors suggest (p. 228) that most political scientists (true for most all social scientists, too) mostly stick on one of the two cultures summarized on p. 229. Which culture feels most comfortable for you, and why?
3. How does the perspective of each culture shape the kind of questions asked?
4. In their discussion on causal effects, the authors note that some social scientists insist that generalizability is a core feature of science (p. 231), which in turn suggests quantitative methods. Which is the chicken and which is the egg in this equation?
5. How does a methodological preference help define science?

PDF 6d: Bennis, W. G., & O'Toole, J. (2005). How business schools lost their way. *Harvard Business Review*, 83(5), 96-104.

Study questions:

1. Why do the authors (who could be speaking just as vigorously about mass communication programs) think the academy has adopted the scientific model, and why do they think it a mistake?
2. Should science – does science – consider practical relevance important?

3. What axiology is embedded in this critique?

7. Wednesday, September 11: Systemic Flaws

PDF 7a: Ioannidis, J.P.A. (2012). Why science is not necessarily self-correcting.

Perspectives on Psychological Science, 7: 645-654. doi:10.1177/1745691612464056

Study questions:

1. In what ways does this article involve a distinction between empiricism and rationalism?
2. What is the point of his tongue-in-cheek riff on imaginary Planet F345?
3. Of the list in table 2 (p. 650), which ones reflect disagreements in the philosophy of science? And which are most significant?
4. In what ways do universities unwittingly perpetuate scientific errors?
5. Of the solutions proposed in this article, which would a philosopher of science would say is the most important?

PDF 7b: John, L. K., Loewenstein, G., & Prelec, D. (2012). Measuring the prevalence of questionable research practices with incentives for truth telling. *Psychological Science*, 23(5), 524-532. doi:10.1177/0956797611430953

Study questions:

1. What evidence supports or challenges the goal of the study, to achieve more reliable estimates of researcher engagement in questionable research practices?
2. Aside from fabricating data, which of these 10 questionable research practices do you find less defensible?
3. Presuming these results are indicative of our field as well, what do they tell us about the practice of science?

PDF 7c: Open Science Collaboration (2015). Estimating the reproducibility of psychological science. *Science*, 349(6251). doi:10.1126/science.aac4716

Study questions:

1. What does this article implicitly presume and explicitly assert about the philosophy of science?
2. Without getting lost in the details of the statistical tests, what assessment can you make about the methodology used?
3. What do the explanations for the findings (discussion section) tell us about science from both a descriptive and a normative approach?
4. Does this study question replication or affirm the decline effect (per Schooler)?
5. Is this study showing that half of studies in top quality journals could be reproduced an indictment of how science is practiced or confirmation that science works?

PDF 7d: Yong, E. (2012). Bad copy. *Nature*, 485, 298-300.

Study questions:

1. The chart on p. 300 shows that a preference for statistically significant results permeates many disciplines, including physical, life and social sciences. Why?
2. Are the issues cited largely individualistic or systemic?

PDF 7e: Schooler, J. (2011). Unpublished results hide the decline effect. *Nature*, 470, 437. doi:10.1038/483531a

Study questions:

1. What is the most likely cause for the decline effect: human or systemic factors?
2. Why does the decline effect seem evident in the life sciences and social sciences but not the physical sciences?
3. How does the way science is practiced contribute to the decline effect?

PDF 7f: Simmons, J. P., Nelson, L. D., & Simonsohn, U. (2011). False-positive psychology: Undisclosed flexibility in data collection and analysis allows presenting anything as significant. *Psychological Science*, 22(11), 1359-1366. doi:10.1177/0956797611417632

Study questions:

1. What is the problem with false positives?
2. Is the authors' construct of "researcher degrees of freedom" a fair assessment, or is this just another example of publication bias?
3. How workable are the authors' recommendations?

PDF 7g: Levine, T. R., Weber, R., Hullett, C., Park, H. S., & Lindsey, L. L. M. (2008). A critical assessment of null hypothesis significance testing in quantitative communication research. *Human Communication Research*, 34(2), 171-187. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2958.2008.00317.x>

Study questions:

1. How are flaws inherent in null hypothesis significance testing an indicator of faulty science rather than errors in practice or interpretation?
2. If null hypothesis significance testing is inherently flawed, why is it so widely accepted?
3. Whom have we studied who would applaud the authors' conclusion that riskier tests would help advance science?

Friday, September 13: No Class (prof at conference)

Part 2: Mass Communication Theory

8. Wednesday, September 18: Does Theory Matter?

PDF 8a: Neuman, W.R., Davidson, R., Joo, S., Park, Y.J., & Williams, A.E. (2008). The seven deadly sins of communication research. *Journal of Communication*, 58(2), 220-237.

doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466.2008.00382.x

Study questions:

1. Carefully evaluate the final paragraph on page 221, beginning with “From the broader literature.” What do these data and anecdotes tell us about the application of the scientific method to social science research?
2. The authors conclude that “theory is king” (p. 230) but then note that “theory” is rarely explained. What does the rest of the paper tell us about the state of theory in communication research?

PDF 8b: Bryant, J., & Miron, D. (2004). Theory and research in mass communication. *Journal of Communication*, 54(4), 662-704. doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466.2004.tb02650.x

Study questions:

1. The study found that 32% of articles published in three top journals in the 20th century referenced theory. Of that 32%, half (48%) were mere references. So is theory really king, as Neuman, et al., concluded?
2. Baran & Davis will tell us that four of the most important developments in the development of mass communication theory are the Chicago school, Vienna circle, Frankfurt school, and British cultural studies. Yet the study found those four schools were mentioned in only 3% of 1,806 articles. What does that result suggest to you?
3. What does the list of most popular theories in Table 1 tell us about how social sciences differ from the physical sciences?

PDF 8c: Walter, N., Cody, M. J., & Ball-Rokeach, S. J. (2018). The ebb and flow of communication research: Seven decades of publication trends and research priorities. *Journal of Communication*, 68(2), 424–440. <https://doi.org/10.1093/joc/jqx01>

Study questions:

1. (This study was published for a 2018 update to the 1983 and 1993 Ferment in the Field special editions, referenced in the subtitle of Baran & Davis text. It offers many valuable findings, but we’ll focus on theory for now.)
2. Although the percentage of studies using theory has grown over 65 years, how do you interpret the finding that roughly 1 in every 3 studies published in the 2010s – in the leading journal in the field – lack theory?
3. What conclusions can you draw from the finding that the most prevalent theoretical framework (framing) was cited in just 6% of studies?
4. The authors express mild concern that the most commonly used theories were developed in other fields and many years ago. What argument can you make to either to amplify or assuage that concern?

PDF 8d: Royme (Stafford), M. B. (2016). Research and Publishing in the Journal of Advertising: Making Theory Relevant. *Journal Of Advertising*, 45(2), 269-273. doi:10.1080/00913367.2016.1156592

Study questions:

1. How does the author respond to concerns that data are gathered before identifying theory?
2. What two elements (p. 271) characterize “good” theory?
3. What does the author think of an emphasis on well-worn theories?
4. Do you find the author’s emphasis on theory as a bridging tool between academics and practitioners to be workable?

PDF 8e: Chaffee, S.H., & Metzger, M.J. (2001). The end of mass communication? *Mass Communication and Society*, 4(4), 365-379. doi :10.1207/S15327825MCS0404_3

Study questions:

1. Has the era of mass communication been replaced by media communication? What evidence supports your position?
2. Reconsider Table 2 (p. 373) in light of today’s media reality. What would you change in the table and why?
3. Should the rise of the Internet, social media, and mobile communication change how we theorize about mass communication?

PDF 8f: Weimann, G., Weiss-Blatt, N., Mengistu, G., Tregerman, MM., & Oren, R. (2014). Reevaluating “The end of mass communication?” *Mass Communication and Society*, 17(6), 803-829. doi:10.1080/15205436.2013.851700

Study questions:

1. After re-evaluating four theoretical perspectives identified by Chaffee and Metzger, the authors conclude that remain valid pending adjustment. Is that to the field’s credit, or should some theories be allowed to die?
2. What does this article’s findings suggest to you about whether mass communication matters?

9. Friday, September 20: What Makes Good Theory?

Baran & Davis, chapter 1: Understanding and evaluating mass communication theory

Study questions:

1. Is a smartphone a mass communication device? Why or why not?
2. Why are lay people generally more willing to accept theory in the physical sciences than in the social sciences?
3. The authors cite four reasons for why applying the scientific method to the social world is difficult. Which of the four is the most significant and why?
4. Critique the authors’ definition of theory (p. 13) as “any organized set of concepts, explanations, and principles of some aspect of human experience.”
5. The authors suggest different criteria to evaluate each category of theory (p. 18). What would Popper and Kuhn think about that?
6. Compare the four trends (until this edition, the authors called these “eras”) identified in this book with the approach Neuman and Guggenheim take in the next reading. Which approach do you find more persuasive?

PDF 9a: Neuman, W.R., & Guggenheim, L. (2011). The evolution of media effects theory: A six-stage model of cumulative research. *Communication Theory* 21(2), 169-196. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2885.2011.01381.x

Study questions:

1. How do the authors seek to redeem communication theory?
2. How do you interpret the authors' observation (p. 179) that few of the key theories in communication are cited in other disciplines?
3. Inter-coder agreement was low (p. 180) in trying to discern whether a journal article was implicitly relying on a theoretical tradition. What does that finding suggest about how communication scholars utilize theory?
4. How does the authors' central point, that theory evolves, square with the views of how science works as expressed by Popper and Kuhn?

PDF 9b: Chaffee, S.H., & Berger, C.R. (1987). What communication scientists do. In C.R. Berger and S.H. Chaffee (Eds.) *Handbook of communication science* (pp. 99-122). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Study questions:

1. The authors note researchers "bemoan the fact that there is not more good theory in the field" (p. 100). Later (p. 105), the authors say theory and research are related. If there's little good theory, is it because there's little good research?
2. In evaluating theories (pp. 104-105), which of the seven attributes do you think is most important and why? Which is least important and why?
3. The authors list several analytical issues, starting on page 108. Which do you think is most important for your area of research?
4. In the final sentence, the authors assert they are outlining "the work of those who are within the scientific tradition" (p. 119). Whose work would be excluded?

PDF 9c: Kuhn, T.S. (1977). *The essential tension: Selected studies in scientific tradition and change*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago.

Study questions:

1. How do the five characteristics of good theory that Kuhn chooses compare with the criteria identified by Chaffee and Berger?
2. How does Kuhn use this piece to respond to critics who said his *Structure of Scientific Revolutions* improperly injected subjectivity into objective science?
3. Critique Kuhn's assertion in this piece that the five characteristics he identifies are values, not rules.

PDF 9d: Davison, W.P. (1996). The third-person effect revisited. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 8(2), 113-119. doi:10.1093/ijpor/8.2.113

Study questions:

1. What is the third-person effect? (You'll need to look elsewhere; this brief essay presumes you already know.)

2. Bryant and Miron found the third-person effect is one of the field's most-cited theories, yet its origins were inauspicious. What does this article tell you about the development of mass communication theory?
3. What makes the third-person effect good theory?

10. Wednesday, September 25: Media Effects

Baran & Davis, chapter 2: Establishing the terms of the debate over media: The first trend in media theory – mass society and propaganda theory

Study questions:

1. The Fearful Reaction to New Media box on pp. 33-34 demonstrates that fears about media influence are not new. Fair enough. But why do these fears persist?
2. In many countries, broadcasting is seen as a public good. The U.S. has always seen broadcasting as a private business. Does ownership (public or private) affect how people view media?
3. Compare and contrast the Tönnies and Durkheim views of society.
4. From a mass society perspective, how are new media such as Google different from legacy big media? How are they similar?
5. What distinguishes “good” propaganda from “bad” propaganda?
6. How did behaviorism and Freudianism influence mass society theory?

Baran & Davis, chapter 3: Normative theories of mass communication

Study questions:

1. Are normative theories realistic in the United States, where media are owned by large corporations accountable to shareholders? Why or why not?
2. Which normative theory of the press do you embrace and why: marketplace of ideas or social responsibility?
3. Is journalism a profession?

Baran & Davis, chapter 4: The media-effects trend

Study questions:

1. Why did media effects succeed the mass society/propaganda trend?
2. Did the shift to media effects reflect a change in conceptualization or methodology?
3. Are middle-range theories mostly fresh ideas or restatements of old ideas?
4. How did developments in sociology affect the media-effects trend?
5. The authors once called this trend “limited effects,” as reflected in the portion of chapter 1, pp 21-22, that refers to the “limited-effects trend in media theory.” Is this just sloppy editing or are the terms interchangeable?

Baran & Davis, chapter 7 (stopping at p. 217): Audience theories: uses and reception

Study questions:

1. Why did audience-centered theories arise?
2. Defend or debunk the central tenet of these theories: media do not do things to people; instead, people do things with media.

3. Are audience-centered theories appropriate for today's personal media era or are they tailored for media oligopolies?
4. Why were (and are) researchers reluctant to study the audience?
5. Is uses and gratifications a theory or a perspective?

Baran & Davis, chapter 8: Theories of media cognition and information processing

Study questions:

1. Are these theories about mass communication or psychology?
2. ELM is one of the most-used theories in mass communication research, especially in advertising. Is ELM a theory or a description of variance in cognitive effort?

Baran & Davis, chapter 9: Theories of the effect of media on society

Study questions:

1. Do media influence society? Or does society influence media?
2. Agenda-setting, perhaps the field's most popular theory, says media don't tell us what to think but what to think *about*. Is that a distinction without a difference?

Baran & Davis, chapter 10: Media and culture theories: meaning-making in the social world

Study questions:

1. The theories in this chapter take two perspectives. Culture-centered theories presume that culture influences our world and the role media play. Meaning-making theories presume that media influence how we understand our world and the role of culture. Which perspective do you find most persuasive?
2. Are the perspectives reflected by these theories more consistent with a meaning-making view or a critical/cultural studies view?
3. Is framing a theory or a method?

YouTube: Frank Capra Why We Fight, [chapter 1](#) (Watch about 20 minutes or so)

Study questions:

1. Imagine you are Carl Hovland tasked with studying whether these films for U.S. soldiers in WW2 were effective. How would you measure it?
2. Is this education or propaganda? What's the difference?

11. Friday, September 27: Critical Studies

Baran & Davis, chapter 5: The emergence of critical cultural trend in North America

Study questions:

1. Why did the cultural/critical studies trend develop in response to the media-effects trend?
2. Was the cultural/critical trend a new development, or a longstanding perspective elevated to new importance?

3. Critical and cultural studies offer a perspective distinct from normative, data-driven mass communication scholarship. Are the viewpoints equally valid? Why?
4. The field of critical studies has always been embraced more in Europe than in the United States. Why?
5. Which of the branches or schools of critical/cultural studies do you find most attractive, and why?
6. Which statement about Marshall McLuhan do you find more persuasive: he was a (a) critical/cultural scholar or (b) technological determinist?
7. How would you respond to the criticism that critical/cultural studies are filled with people who always seem to find what they're looking for?

Baran & Davis, chapter 7, pp. 217 to 224: Reception studies

Study questions:

1. Why does this section belong in chapter 5?
2. Does the research in this section affirm or challenge the common assertion that cultural/critical studies are more ideological than empirical?

PDF 11: Horkheimer, M., & Adorno, T.W. (1944/2002). The culture industry: Enlightenment as mass deception. In M. Horkheimer and T.W. Adorno, *Dialectic of enlightenment* (pp.94-136), Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press. [Translated from German.]

Study questions:

1. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, written between 1939 and 1944 by Jewish German exiles, is considered one of the most important critical evaluations of mass media ever written. What is your immediate reaction when you read this chapter?
2. This chapter is devoid of statistical analysis. Is it empirical? Is it scientific?
3. Is this chapter primarily rooted in World War II pessimism or is it a timeless critique of mass communication?
4. Which do you think is a more likely explanation for the authors' views: audience passivity or industrial manipulation?

Baran & Davis, chapter 6: Theories of media and human development: children and adolescents

Study questions:

1. Are the theories and research findings presented in this chapter a reflection of the critical/cultural studies trend or a different trend?
2. Do mass media contribute to violence in society? Why or why not? How confident are you in your answer, and why?
3. Do video games contribute to violence in society? Why or why not? How confident are you in your answer, and why?

12. Wednesday, October 2: Present and Future

Baran & Davis, chapter 11: The future of media theory and research

Study questions:

1. The authors assert that people born after 1990 are more immersed in media than those born earlier. Do you agree? Or are people simply using different media?
2. Have mobile devices changed how people communicate? Or has the technology merely enabled people to fulfill existing desires regarding communication?
3. Which of the following best reflects your view and why?
 - a. The Internet is a new form of communication.
 - b. The Internet is like a telephone, fostering one-to-one communication.
 - c. The Internet is like a mass medium, fostering one-to-many communication.
4. In this era of fragmentation – when the highest rated show on U.S. TV most nights reaches only four percent of the adult audience – is there still a mass media?
5. Argue both sides of this statement:
 - a. The Internet requires new mass communication theory.
 - b. Existing mass communication theories apply to the Internet.

PDF 12a: Lang, A. (2013). Discipline in crisis? The shifting paradigm of mass communication research. *Communication Theory*, 23(1), 10-24.

doi:10.1111/comt.12000

Study questions:

1. According to Lang, what is our field's paradigm?
2. How did agenda-setting theory fuel a Kuhnian crisis in the field?
3. What intellectual discipline arose in response to the crisis?
4. How does Lang answer the question of whether cultural/critical studies are scientific?
5. Critique Lang's assessment (p. 23) that "I do not believe the discipline can survive much longer as a science if we continue to have only one successful independent variable (i.e., weight of coverage) and one generalizable result (i.e., the media have very small, weak, but persistent effects on people's behavior)."
6. What does Lang promote as a solution to our field's Kuhnian crisis?

PDF 12b: Bennett, W.L., & Iyengar, S. (2008). A new era of minimal effects? The changing foundations of political communication. *Journal of Communication*, 58(4), 707-731. doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466.2008.00410.x

Study questions:

1. Why do the authors presume (p. 708) that media communication has been in a "strong effects" period?
2. Why do the authors assert that the field may be returning to a "minimal effects" period?
3. Why are the authors dismissive of the agenda-setting "juggernaut" (p. 708)?

4. Why do the authors conclude that political communication “is adrift theoretically” (p. 713)?
5. Do you agree that an era of “the personally mediated society” (p. 723) requires new theorization?

PDF 12c: 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(1), 15-34. doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466.2009.01470.x

Study questions:

1. Which arguments in Bennett and Iyengar do the authors of this article most wish to rebut?
2. These two articles offer an insight into both the nature of learned academic debate and the importance of explication (our next class). After reading both articles, which do you find more persuasive, and why?
3. Are we in an era of minimal effects?

PDF 12d: Singer, J.B. (2016). Transmission creep: Media effects theories and journalism studies in a digital era. *Journalism Studies*. Advance online publication. doi:10.1080/1461670X.2016.1186498

Study questions:

1. Although focused on journalism studies, Singer’s evaluation speaks to the larger issue of conceptualizing “mass” media for the digital age. What is her suggestion for how to rethink media?
2. Singer identifies media effects theories in three general areas (behavioral, attitudinal, and cognitive) and shows that all have failed to live up to their theoretical predictions. Is this an indication that media theories are unable to predict?
3. What does Singer suggest is necessary for traditional theories to remain relevant today?

PDF 12e: Thorson, J., & Wells, C. (2016). Curated flows: A framework for mapping media exposure in the digital age. *Communication Theory*, 26(3), 209-328. doi:10.1111/comt.12087

Study questions:

1. In the purpose statement for the paper (p. 310), the authors say they are responding to a call for theoretical innovation, evaluating modern definitions of information flow, and suggesting a way for research design to account for growing complexity. Which of these three does the paper do best?
2. Is this paper mostly applicable to the authors’ specialty of political communication or is it equally applicable to other specialties?
3. Does a curated flows perspective mostly supplement or mostly replace traditional notions of information flow in a mass media era?

Following are four brief entries on four theories for a digital age.

PDF 12f. Weiss, D. (2009). Media equation theory. In S.W. Littlejohn & K.A. Foss (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Communication Theory* (pp. 636-637). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412959384.n236>

Study questions:

1. Which of your criteria for “good” theory is or are most salient for this theory?
2. Is this theory substantially distinctive for a digital age?

PDF 12g. Dennis, A.R. (2009). Media richness theory. In S.W. Littlejohn & K.A. Foss (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Communication Theory* (p. 642). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412959384.n238>

Study questions:

1. Which of your criteria for “good” theory is or are most salient for this theory?
2. Is this theory substantially distinctive for a digital age?

PDF 12h. Hassan, R. (2009). Network society. In S.W. Littlejohn & K.A. Foss (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Communication Theory* (pp. 683-684). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412959384.n257>

Study questions:

1. Which of your criteria for “good” theory is or are most salient for this theory?
2. Is this theory substantially distinctive for a digital age?

PDF 12i. Ramirez, A. (2009). Social information processing theory. In S.W. Littlejohn & K.A. Foss (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Communication Theory* (pp. 898-899). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412959384.n347>

Study questions:

1. Which of your criteria for “good” theory is or are most salient for this theory?
2. Is this theory substantially distinctive for a digital age?

Friday, October 4: No Class (UF Homecoming)

Part 3: Explication

13. Wednesday, October 9: Explication

PDF 13: Chaffee, S.H. (1991). *Explication*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Study questions:

1. (This book – the most important reading in this class – has been out of print for years.)
2. How is explication different from other forms of definition, and why is explication important for mass communication scholars?
3. Who among the people in our philosophy of science timeline would endorse the author's attempt to demarcate science (last paragraph p.3)?
4. How does reliability differ from validity, and why is validity different from truth? (pp.10-14)
5. What is a focal concept? (pp. 14-18)
6. What does the author mean by "The literature review is often a study in itself"? (p.21)
7. Why does communication study usually measure elements that are *sufficient* rather than *necessary* (p.32), and what's the difference between those terms?
8. Restate this statement (top p.38) in your own words: "Formal operations, such as measurement, scaling, and statistical techniques, do not constitute definitions of concepts in themselves. It is safe to assume that no statistical formula was ever created with a concept of human communication in mind."
9. The author says (p.43), "The choice of method should flow from the definition we are reaching." What implications are embedded in that statement?
10. Most of the time, we're looking for correlations between variables. Why, then, should we care about univariate research? (pp. 51-62)
11. Evaluate whether age (chapter 11) is a valid example for explication or an example of the malleability of language.

14. Friday, October 11: Building Theory

Shoemaker, Tankard, & Lasorsa, entire book

Preface and chapter 1:

1. What does it mean to "build" theory?
2. Critique the authors' assertion (p. 3) that the scientific method does not differ substantially between the physical and social sciences, and evaluate how that presumption would apply to theory-building.

Chapter 2:

1. What are the differences among a construct, concept, and variable, and why can a concept never be measured completely (p. 28)?
2. What distinguishes a dependent variable from an independent variable?
3. What are the four types of variables?
4. Why do the authors assert (p. 22) that theory building is best done with continuous-level variables?
5. What are the types of validity and why do they matter?

Chapter 3:

1. When would you use a hypothesis? A research question? An assumption? A proposition?
2. Why is parsimony important in building theory?

Chapter 4:

1. What do the authors mean by “theoretical linkages”?
2. Does it matter whether research statements such as hypotheses are sprinkled through a literature review or grouped at the end of the lit review?
3. Most statistical tests presume a linear relationship between variables. Is that a fair assumption?

Chapter 5:

1. How can a theoretical statement with three variables be more powerful than one with two variables?
2. What are the types of three-variable relationships?

Chapter 6:

1. Four or more variables often result in models, such as on page 101. Why are models valuable in building theory?
2. Why is multiple regression important to use with four or more variables?

Chapter 7:

1. What makes Lasswell’s pithy statement (“who says what in which channel to whom with what effect?”) a model?
2. What are the primary functions of a model?
3. What are the steps in building a model?

Chapter 8:

1. What is the proper role of creativity in science?
2. Which of the authors’ creativity techniques (p. 150) seem most relevant to your research?

Chapter 9:

1. Apply the authors’ 10 steps to building theory (p. 170) to your own research interest and describe how those steps can help you improve your conceptualization.
2. Of the various methods listed to evaluate theory, which is the most scientific? Which would you guess is used the most often? If those are not the same, what does that say about the state of building mass communication theory?

Appendix A & Appendix B:

1. Hint: these appendixes can be very useful in writing research papers.

15. Wednesday, October 16: Models

PDF 15a: Holbert, R. L., & Park, E. (2019). Conceptualizing, organizing, and positing moderation in communication research. *Communication Theory*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ct/qtz006>

Study questions:

1. How does a moderator differ from a mediator (not mentioned in this article)?
2. Why is a moderator a common form of theory building?
3. If most of the moderated relationships reported in this meta-study were not hypothesized by the original authors, is it still science?
4. If you were to develop a conceptual model for a research project, which of the three types would you choose and why?

PDF 15b: Bucy, E.P., & Tao, C.C. (2007). The mediated moderation model of interactivity. *Media Psychology*, 9(3), 647-672. doi:10.1080/15213260701283269

Study questions:

1. Why does the placement of the moderator matter?
2. Note how the model is built on a typology (p. 648) and explication. Why are both explication and a typology important for this paper?

PDF 15c: Puntoni, S., Schroeder, J.E., & Ritson, M (2010). Meaning matters: Polysemy in advertising. *Journal of Advertising*, 39(2), 51-64. doi:10.2753/JOA0091-3367390204

Study questions:

1. How do the authors make a case for their theoretical paper?
2. What kind of model is offered in this paper?
3. How do propositions differ from hypotheses?

PDF 15d: Hallahan, K. (2001). The dynamics of issues activation and response: An issues processes model. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 13(1), 27-59. doi:10.1207/S1532754XJPRR1301_3

Study questions:

1. Despite the lack of data, this paper has become influential in public relations research. What does this paper offer that made it so important?
2. How does this model differ from those in the other two papers?
3. How does this paper offer a “so what” for the proposed model?

PDF 15e: Riddle, K. (2014). A theory of vivid media violence. *Communication Theory*, 24(3), 291-310. doi:10.1111/comt.12040

Study questions:

1. Is this new theory of vivid media violence a new theory or a restatement? If the former, how does the author justify this new theory? If the latter, what would the author have needed to do differently in order to build a new theory?
2. In the model (p. 298), label the following: independent variable(s), dependent variable(s), mediator(s), and moderator(s).
3. What distinctive contribution does the author make toward mass communication theory?

PDF 15f: Squiers, L., Peinado, S., Berkman, N., Boudewyns, V., & McCormack, L. (2012). The health literacy skills framework. *Journal of Health Communication*, 17(supplement 3), 30-54. doi:10.1080/10810730.2012.713442

Study questions:

1. What is the primary problem the authors seek to solve with this paper and why does it matter?
2. How do the authors determine which variables to include in their model?
3. The authors chose a linear model that excludes “ecological influences” listed at the bottom of Figure 2. Which of these would you have included in the model, and how would a redrawn model look? (Note: This would make an excellent question for a qualifying exam.)
4. What latent variables are missing here? Which ones would you include?

16. Friday, October 18: Typologies

PDF 18a: Kalyanaraman, S., & Sundar, S.S. (2008). Portrait of the portal as a metaphor: Explicating web portals for communication research. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 85(2), 239-256. doi:10.1177/107769900808500202

Study questions:

1. How do the authors justify the use of metaphor as an organizing tool?
2. How does Table 1 advance the typology?

PDF 18b: Holbert, R.L. (2005). A typology for the study of entertainment television and politics. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 49(3), 436-453. doi:10.1177/0002764205279419

Study questions

1. How does this paper’s typology differ from those of the other two papers?
2. Does this paper flow from a theoretical base or does it create theory?

PDF 18c: Fast, K., Örnebring, H., & Karlsson, M. (2016). Metaphors of free labor: A typology of unpaid work in the media sector. *Media, Culture & Society* 38(7), 963-978. doi:10.1177/0163443716635861

Study questions

1. What role, if any, does theory play in this typology?
2. How does the rationale for the metaphors used in this typology differ from that advanced by Kalyanaraman & Sundar?
3. What is the “so what” to this study?
4. Can you offer one or two propositions that might enable this typology to be fruitful for research?