

**Course Syllabus**  
**BCA 601: Theories of Mass Communication**  
**Fall 2021**

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**Instructor:** Dr. Trevor Diehl  
**Office:** Moore 313  
**Office Hours:** T/W/TH 2:00-3:00 or virtual by appointment  
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**Bulletin Description**

Examination of theories and application of conceptual frameworks as applied to the study of mass communication.

**Course Objectives**

After completion of this course, successful students will be able to:

1. Explain and present the terms, concepts, and historical development of theories of mass communication.
2. Recognize and discuss theoretical frameworks through analyses and critique of published journal articles in areas related to mass communication.
3. Explicate and apply mass communication theory and research design concepts to your own research agenda.

**Textbooks**

McQuail, D., & Deuze, M. (2020). *Mcquail's media and mass communication theory* (7th ed). SAGE.

Other texts as required by the instructor.

**Course Methodology and Structure**

The course will meet once a week. Our meetings will be a mix of lecture, student presentations, discussion of readings, group exercises, and research workshops. To get the most out of class, all readings and assignments for a particular class should be finished before that meeting. This is a graduate seminar, and you are expected to help drive the class discussion. If you do not participate, the class will stall, and we will all miss an opportunity to learn from one another.

**Breakdown of Grade by Components**

<i>Participation (10%)</i>	
Class discussion and engagement	10%
<i>Concepts (40%)</i>	
Reading reactions	15%
Article reviews	15%
Theory presentation	10%
<i>Research Projects (50%)</i>	
Annotated Bibliography	20%
Media Theory Analysis First Draft	10%
Theory Analysis Paper	20%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Letter Grade Scale**

<b>A</b> = 100-93.50%	<b>C+</b> = 79.49-76.50%
<b>A-</b> = 93.49-89.50%	<b>C</b> = 76.49-73.50%
<b>B+</b> = 89.49-86.50%	<b>E</b> = 73.49-0%
<b>B</b> = 86.49-83.50%	
<b>B-</b> = 83.49-79.50%	

**Major Assignments**

A total of 1,000 points are available for this course. Details for each assignment will be available on Blackboard.

- 1) *Participation in class discussion and group exercises (100 points)*: **Students are expected to participate in every class discussion with thoughtful and insightful contributions.** Students are expected to have read and digested course readings, as well as completed weekly assignments, before coming to class. This course will be conducted in seminar format, which means that there must be discussion from students to foster learning.
- 2) *Applied theory article reviews (150 points total, 50 points each)*: You will analyze the theory presented in three journal articles of your choice (at least two of these must be empirical). You need to gain approval from the instructor for the first article you use. After the first journal article analysis, you may gain advice from the instructor, but it is not required. Each journal article analysis is worth 5% of your final course grade. Analyses will be due Fridays @ 11:59 PM as listed on the schedule and must be submitted through Blackboard. Late papers will not be accepted.
- 3) *Presentation on a theory (100 points)*: Early in the semester, you will sign-up to present on a theory discussed in the textbook for that week. You will be an expert on the topic for that day. Plan on a 10 to 15-minute presentation. I may also call on you to help foster discussion that day.
- 4) *Reading reaction assignments (150 points)*: Each Friday @ Noon, questions will be posted on Blackboard regarding the next week's readings. Students are expected to write short essays using the readings from the course textbook. Reactions should not exceed 3 pages, (double spaced in 12-point font with 1-inch margins) but should be at least two pages. Reactions are due **Wednesdays by Noon through Blackboard**. There will be 10 reading reactions during the semester, the grades from your best 8 will count toward your final course grade.
- 5) *Annotated bibliography (200 points)*: To place your research interests within the greater context of the field, you will conduct an annotated bibliography (about 15-20 entries) that focuses on three theories/conceptual areas of scholarship (5-7 articles per-theory) and reviews their application in peer-reviewed journal articles.
- 6) *Theoretical analysis paper (300 points)*: The goal of this class is to produce an extended literature review (3,000-5,000 words excluding references and title pages, figures, etc.) that addresses a salient topic in media and mass communication research. Papers will ideally trace the foundations and development of a relatively narrow set of ideas, discuss the empirical applications and core findings, offer a summary of the 'cutting edge', and propose a potentially novel research question. The paper should serve as a 'deep background' that can be edited and revised for a literature review in a Plan B or Thesis. 300 Points are distributed into: *Proposal (2 pages, 25 points)*, *Extended Abstract (5-7 pages, 75 points)* and a *Full Paper (200 points)*.

## BCA 601 Workload

This is a graduate-level course and students are expected to invest considerable time and effort into their education experience.

## Policies and Equipment

### Late Work/Missed Assignments

*I will not grade any assignment more than 7 days late.* Much of the work in this class cannot be late because the class meeting for that day depends on your contribution. In that case, I will not accept late work. Otherwise, you will lose one letter grade per day if you fail to hand-in an assignment when due (an 'A' paper will automatically become a 'B' paper). Please note that for the final papers, late papers will not be accepted except in cases of exceptional circumstances.

### Attendance

Attendance will be taken every class, although no grade component is attached. Students are expected to come to every class on time and stay for the entire class. If you should miss a class, it is your responsibility to get class information and notes from your peers. **You are responsible for announcements made in class during your absence or tardiness.**

### Incompletes

The last day to withdrawal from (or drop) the course is **Friday November 5th**. If you find that you are unable to complete this course before then (due to illness or some other obstacle to attending class and completing assignments), then you should drop the class. If you find that you are unable to complete this course after November 5th, then you can request an incomplete if the following two requirements are met:

- 1) You must be able to document that some extreme and unavoidable circumstance is preventing you from completing this course.
- 2) At the time you make the request, you must be passing the course. Do not wait until you have missed graded material to request the incomplete.

Requests for an Incomplete must be submitted by **Friday, December 11th at 5:00 PM**, in a formal email, with written verifiable documentation from an appropriate source about your circumstances. If you do not meet the above requirements, then do not request an Incomplete. This email should also include the pending assignments you need to complete along with a plan for completing them in a timely manner.

## BCA & CMU Policies

### COVID-19 University Requirements

Face coverings, such as masks, and social distancing (6 feet apart) are required in all buildings and classrooms ([CMU's policy on face coverings](#)). Students who have forgotten their face coverings may obtain a disposable mask from one of the 40 vending areas on campus. Vending machine locations are available on the [Fired Up for Fall website](#).

### **Excused face-to-face class attendance while in quarantine or isolation**

Student health, safety, and wellbeing are the university's top priorities. To help ensure your wellbeing and the wellbeing of those around you, please follow the guidance below related to the ongoing

COVID-19 pandemic and current health and safety protocols. Any faculty, staff or student who has tested positive for COVID-19, who has symptoms related to COVID-19, or who has had known exposure to COVID-19 must contact the [CMU COVID Tracking Team](#). If you test positive for COVID-19, you must isolate [according to posted guidelines](#). If you have had known exposure or are identified through contact tracing as having come into [close contact with someone who has COVID-19](#), in most cases, it will be recommended you quarantine. If you are \*fully vaccinated AND do NOT have symptoms, you MAY not have to quarantine. This will be determined by the CMU COVID tracking team and/or the health department.

To keep the university community as safe and healthy as possible, you will be expected to follow these guidelines. Please reach out to me as soon as possible if you need to quarantine or isolate so that we can discuss arrangements for your continued attendance and participation in class.

### **Students with Disabilities**

Central Michigan University provides students with disabilities reasonable accommodations to participate in educational programs, activities, or services. Students with disabilities who require accommodation to participate in class activities or meet course requirements should contact the instructor as soon as possible so that arrangements can be made. Students with disabilities requiring accommodation to participate in class activities or meet course requirements must first register with the Office of Student Disability Services (120 Park Library, telephone 774-3018; TDD 774-2586). Reasonable accommodations will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

### **Policy on Academic Integrity**

Because academic integrity is a cornerstone of the University, students are responsible for learning and upholding professional standards of research, writing, assessment, and ethics in their areas of study. Written or other work which students submit must be the product of their own efforts and must be consistent with appropriate standards of professional ethics. Academic dishonesty, which includes cheating, plagiarism and other forms of dishonest or unethical behavior, is prohibited. A student is not permitted to withdraw from a course in which an instructor has imposed academic consequences for academic misconduct. Consequences include a warning or reprimand, a requirement to resubmit work (with an additional reduction in grade for the assignment), a lowering of the grade for the assignment (including withholding of any credit for the assignment), or a lowering of the grade for the entire course (including failing the course). Serious incidents of academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct for formal proceedings seeking disciplinary sanctions under the [Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities and Disciplinary Procedures](#).

### **School of BCA Policy on Classroom Civility**

All CMU students are expected to comply fully with the Responsibilities of Students, as stated in the CMU Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities and Disciplinary Procedures, available online at: <https://www.cmich.edu/ess/studentaffairs/Pages/Student-Rights.aspx>

### **Intellectual Property Protection Statement**

In order to protect the intellectual property interests of the instructor, the privacy interests of student members of the class, and to encourage an open and fair exposition of all student views in the classroom without fear that student views expressed will be recorded and possibly posted in another forum, recording of classroom lectures and conversations is not permissible without the express, prior written consent of the instructor. Unauthorized recording of classroom activity shall be considered a violation of the CMU Student Code of Rights, Responsibilities and Disciplinary Procedures.

BCA 601 Fall Semester 2021

Course Schedule, Assignments, and Readings

**\*All due dates, topics, and readings subject to change at instructor's discretion\***

Schedule Key

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Major assignment due



Reading and/or response due



Presentation on a theory

*M&D = Course text*

*\*All readings should be complete before class*

*\*\*Additional readings will be added during the semester and posted to Blackboard, please check this document weekly*

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**Week                      Topics, Readings & Assignments**

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Sept 1                      Course introduction, research tips and reading academic journals

*Review the syllabus and content on Blackboard*



Sign up for the day to present a theory

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Sept 8                      Major themes in media theory and why media (history) matters

*M&D Part 1 Preliminaries (Chapters 1 & 2)*

*Boyle & Schmierbach, CH 2 Excerpt (p.1-16)*



Workshop: Approval of first journal article review

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Sept 15                      From key terms to models of mass communication

*M&D Part 2 Theories (Chapters 3 & 4)*

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Sept 22                      The Frankfurt School and Critical Theory Part 1

*M&D Part 2 Theories (Chapters 5)*

*Additional readings TBD*



**DUE:** First journal article review/analysis Friday, Sept 24 @ Midnight

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Sept 29	Emerging media, community, and participation   <i>M&amp;D Part 2 Theories (Chapters 6)</i>  <i>Additional Readings TBD</i>
Oct 6	Macro-level ideas: Media as social structure and Critical Theory Part 2   <i>M&amp;D Part 3 Structures (Chapters 7-9)</i>  <i>Additional Readings TBD</i>   <b>DUE:</b> Second journal article review/analysis Friday, Oct 8 <sup>th</sup> @ Midnight
Oct 13	Media Organizations   <i>M&amp;D Part 4 Structures (Chapters 10-11)</i>   Presentation on a theory from the text
Oct 20	Media Content and Methods of Inquiry   <i>M&amp;D Part 5 Content (Chapters 12-13)</i>   Presentation on a theory from the text
Oct 27	Media Audiences and Operationalizing Concepts 1   <i>M&amp;D Part 6 Audiences (Chapters 14-15)</i>   Presentation on a theory from the text
Nov 3	Media Effects and Operationalizing Concepts 2   <i>M&amp;D Part 7 Effects (Chapters 16-17)</i>  <i>Additional Readings TBD</i>   Presentation on a theory from the text
Nov 10	Dealing with change and new approaches   <i>M&amp;D Epilogue (Chapter 18)</i>  <i>Additional Readings TBD</i>   <b>DUE:</b> Third journal article review/analysis Friday, Nov. 12 <sup>th</sup> @ Midnight

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Nov 17      Workshop: Writing literature reviews for journalism and mass communication +  
lab on Annotated Bibliography

 **DUE:** 2-page proposal (topic + 10 references) Wednesday Nov. 17<sup>th</sup> @ 6 pm

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Nov 24      *No Classes*

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Dec 1      **No Formal Class – Individual Conferences with the Instructor**

 **DUE:** Annotated bibliography by Wednesday Dec. 1<sup>st</sup> @ Noon

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Dec 8      **No Formal Class – Individual Conferences with the Instructor**

 **DUE:** Extended abstract of theory paper Wednesday Dec. 8<sup>th</sup> @ Noon

Dec 15      Final session, paper presentations

 **DUE:** Final papers due @ Midnight after final consultations

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