

**San José State University**  
**Mass Comm 290**  
**Theory of Mass Communication**  
**Fall 2017**

**Course and Contact Information**

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<b>Office Hours:</b>	Wednesday 3:00-6:00 p.m. (DBH209H); Thursday 11:45 a.m.-12:45 p.m. (DBH108), and by appointment
<b>Class Days/Time:</b>	Monday 6:00 - 8:45 p.m.
<b>Classroom:</b>	DBH225
<b>Instructor:</b>	Richard Craig
<b>Office Location:</b>	DBH108

**Course Format**

**Faculty Web Page**

Course materials such as syllabus, handouts, notes, assignment instructions, etc. can be found on my faculty web page at <http://www.profocraig.com>. You may follow me on Twitter at [@SJSUProfCraig](https://twitter.com/SJSUProfCraig) or on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/Profocraig>. You should regularly check your e-mail or my Facebook or Twitter to learn of any updates.

**Syllabus Supplement**

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**Course Description**

Basic theories of communications systems. Functional comparisons of various communications systems in relation to political structure. Communications theories in related disciplines of psychology, sociology, anthropology, economics and political science. Prerequisite: MCOM 210 or instructor consent.

## Course Learning Outcomes (CLO)

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

- CLO1.** Demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications.
- CLO2.** Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information..
- CLO3.** Think critically, creatively and independently.
- CLO4.** Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work.
- CLO5.** Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve.

These Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs) support the Program Learning Objectives (PLOs) of the School of Journalism and Mass Communications, which may be found [here](#).

## Required Texts/Readings

### Textbook

Denis McQuail, *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory* (6<sup>th</sup> Edition).  
ISBN-10: 1849202923 | ISBN-13: 978-1849202923

Textbook is available from the Spartan Bookstore and numerous online outlets.

### Other Readings

Other required online readings will be posted on the class home page throughout the semester. You will receive advance notice for all additional readings.

### Other Technology Requirements

Since we will regularly go over online readings and discuss them in class, please bring a laptop or tablet computer to class whenever possible. If this is a problem, let me know and I'll help you find a solution.

## Course Requirements and Assignments

MC290 is a graduate seminar. Graduate students are expected to think critically and to contribute to the body of knowledge in the various sub-fields of mass communications. In a seminar the instructor tries to minimize lecturing and maximize the contributions of students. Students are expected to complete their assignments and readings before the date listed, and to be prepared to contribute to the discussion.

Students should ask questions about the readings and what they are hearing from the instructor, and challenge that material when appropriate. Guest speakers may occasionally conduct course meetings, and any material they share is considered a class text for learning and discussion.

In terms of grading, this course requires **regular class participation**, two **book chapter critiques**, a **midterm presentation**, and a **final paper**.

**Class Participation.** As noted above, a seminar requires extensive student participation and discussion of readings and course concepts. As such, it counts for a higher percentage of your grade than in some other

classes. The instructor will keep notes on student participation across the different subjects throughout the semester.

**Chapter Critiques.** You will submit two 3-5 page critiques of individual chapters from the readings, or of individual articles assigned throughout the semester. These critiques should briefly summarize the chapter within the context of the book, then discuss the chapter's strengths and weaknesses in terms of subject matter, clarity and effectiveness of writing, or any other areas of note. **The instructor prefers receiving one critique before the midterm presentation and one after, but there are no formal deadlines for this assignment other than completion of both by the end of the semester.**

### **Midterm Presentation.**

The midterm presentation will involve identifying a particular theory or theorist discussed in the readings or in class, and relating their concepts to current events or the work of a current writer or scholar. You will present this to the class on **October 23** in a 5-7 minute presentation. We'll discuss this as the date nears.

### **Final Paper, Proposal and Abstract.**

The final paper will be a 15-20 page discussion and analysis and/or review of a particular theory, genre of research or scholar discussed during this semester. This can be an extension of your midterm presentation but must involve considerably more in-depth work. I define these things fairly broadly, so feel free to run ideas by me before the paper proposal is due.

**You will be expected to have settled on at least a general topic, turn in a proposal and be able to discuss it in class by Oct. 9.** This won't necessarily be set in stone – you can make changes to the paper topic if you need to along the way – but it gets you thinking about and working on the paper early in the semester. It also gives you time to make any necessary adjustments to put together a quality piece of research.

The paper will require both a bibliography and footnotes/endnotes; at least 50 percent of the bibliography should come from academic journals. You will receive a detailed handout about the seminar paper within the first few class sessions.

**You are required to write a 500-word abstract of your final paper.** The abstract should provide a summary of the major points made in your paper. Since academic papers often require an abstract, this is to prepare you for that process, which forces you to boil down your paper into its most important points. You will turn in the abstract at the end of the semester along with your finished paper.

**The paper is due on December 11,** the last day of class. **In addition to writing the paper, you will present it to the class in a 5-7 minute oral presentation.** The last class session will be set aside for this purpose.

### **Writing:**

This is a graduate-level class, and your writing will be graded accordingly. You will be expected to keep minor style errors and typos to a minimum. Mechanical errors – style, spelling, punctuation, minor grammar errors – will hurt your grade on writing assignments. This includes the same error made more than once.

Misspelling the name of a person, an institution or position in your projects is a major error and will result in a failing grade on the assignment. This is not meant to scare you, just to make sure you get your information in order before you write. Assignments with any other factual errors will also receive a failing grade.

Please note that I'm not in the business of giving failing grades – as long as you understand and adhere to these rules, I won't have any problem with you. Above all, if you have questions about any of these rules and how they might apply to a given assignment, please contact me before the due date.

**See syllabus supplement for information on attendance, deadlines, classroom protocols, academic honesty and other issues not covered here.**

Assignments are weighted as follows:

- Class participation: 20 percent
- Chapter critiques: 10 percent
- Midterm presentation: 20 percent
- Final paper: 50 percent

### **University Policies**

Per University Policy S16-9, university-wide policy information relevant to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, etc. will be available on Office of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs' [Syllabus Information web page](http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/>

## MCOM290/Mass Communication Theory, Fall 2017 Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
1	Sept. 4	<b>LABOR DAY – NO CLASS</b>
2	Sept. 11	Introduction <i>McQuail, Chapters 1-2</i>
3	Sept. 18	Concepts and Models <i>McQuail, Chapter 3</i>
4	Sept. 25	Media, Society and Culture <i>McQuail, Chapters 4-5</i>
5	Oct. 2	Developing Technologies <i>McQuail, Chapter 6</i>
6	Oct. 9	<b>NO CLASS</b>
7	Oct. 16	Normative Theory <i>McQuail, Chapter 7</i> <b>FINAL PAPER PROPOSAL DUE</b>
8	Oct. 23	Media Structures <i>McQuail, Chapter 8 (please also skim Chapters 9-10)</i>
9	Oct. 30	Media Organizations <i>McQuail, Chapters 11-12</i>
10	Nov. 6	<b>MIDTERM PRESENTATIONS</b> Media Content <i>McQuail, Chapters 13-14</i>
11	Nov. 13	Audience Theory <i>McQuail, Chapters 15-16</i>
12	Nov. 20	Media Effects Processes and Models <i>McQuail, Chapter 17-18</i>
13	Nov. 27	News and Public Opinion <i>McQuail, Chapter 19</i>
14	Dec. 4	Political Communication <i>McQuail, Chapter 19, continued</i>
15	Dec. 11	<b>FINAL PAPER DUE</b> Summary <i>McQuail, Chapter 20</i>