

American University of Beirut
Faculty of Arts and Sciences
Department: Social & Behavioral Sciences (SBS)
SOAN313 Seminar in Communication Theory and Research

Course Learning Outcomes

The seminar explores the trends in mass communication research by examining milestones of research in the areas of: social impact of the mass media; pro-social manipulation, investigation of specific social issues and events. Selections are made from the Columbia School, the Frankfurt School, the Chicago School, the Toronto School, and British Cultural Studies.

The seminar introduces the student to the theoretical approaches to the communication process (Symbolic organization, message production and processing, discourse and interaction, relationships) and communication context (small group communication, media processing and effects, media and society, culture and communication). Focus is on contemporary communication theories that have emerged in the discipline since the 1950s.

Tentative Readings:

- Berger, C.R. (1991) Communication theories and other curios. Communication Monographs, 58, 101-113
- Coser, L.A. (ed.) (1975) The Idea of Social Structure: Papers in Honor of Robert K. Merton, Harcourt Brace
- Crowley D., and Mitchel D. (1994) Communication Theory Today, Polity Press
- Habermas, J. (1983) The Theory of Communication Action, 2 vols., Beacon Press
- Katz, E., Peters, D. J, Liebes, T., and Orloff, A. (2003), Canonic Texts in Media Research, Polity Press
- Layder, D. (1994) Understanding social theory. Sage Publications
- Lazarsfeld, P.F. (1972), Qualitative Analysis: Historical and Critical Essays, Allyn and Bacon
- Lowery S.A., and DeFleur, M. (1995) Milestones in Mass Communication Research (3rd edition), Longman
- McQuail, D. (1994) Mass Communication Theory (4th edition), Sage Publications
- Merton, R.K., Coleman, J.S., and Rossi, P.H. (1979) Qualitative and Quantitative Research: Papers in Honor of Paul F. Lazarsfeld, Free Press
- Miller, K. (2001) Communication Theories, McGraw Hill
- Noelle-Neumann, E. (1993) The Spiral of Silence (2nd edition), University of Chicago Press

Tentative Areas to be Covered

- I. Milestones in Communication Research
- a. The Columbia School
 - b. The Frankfurt School
 - c. The Chicago School
 - d. The Toronto School
 - e. British Cultural Studies
- II. Theoretical approaches to communication

1. Theories of Communication Processes
 - a. The Scientific and Humanistic approaches to Symbolic Organization
 - b. Message Production
 - i. constructivist theory
 - ii. action assembly theory
 - iii. planning and goals
 - c. Message Processing
 - i. elaboration likelihood model
 - ii. inoculation theory
 - iii. problematic integration theory
 - d. Discourse and Interaction
 - i. coordinated management of meaning theory
 - ii. accommodation theory
 - iii. expectancy violation and interaction Adaptation Theory
2. Theories of Communication Contexts

- a. Organizational Communication
- b. Small Group Communication
- c. Media Processing and Effects
 - i. social cognition theory
 - ii. uses and gratification theory
 - iii. dependency theory
- d. Media and Society
 - i. agenda setting theory
 - ii. spiral of silence theory
 - iii. cultivation theory
- e. Culture and Communication