

**City University of Hong Kong  
Course Syllabus**

**offered by Department of Media and Communication  
with effect from Semester A 2024 / 25**

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**Part I Course Overview**

**Course Title:** Communication Theories and Social Change

**Course Code:** COM8003

**Course Duration:** One semester

**Credit Units:** 3

**Level:** R8

**Medium of Instruction:** English

**Medium of Assessment:** English

**Prerequisites:**  
*(Course Code and Title)* None

**Precursors:**  
*(Course Code and Title)* None

**Equivalent Courses:**  
*(Course Code and Title)* None

**Exclusive Courses:**  
*(Course Code and Title)* None

## Part II Course Details

### 1. Abstract

The course aims to:

examine the interplay between major social theories and media studies that seeks to explain the dynamics of social change. It will explore the *meta-theoretical* assumptions of various "paradigms" that inform our theorizing in the field of communication.

### 2. Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

| No. | CILOs  | Weighting | Discovery-enriched curriculum related learning outcomes |    |    |
|-----|--|-----------|---|----|----|
|     |  |           | A1  | A2 | A3 |
| 1.  | Critically discuss and evaluate the extensive literature on social theories and media studies  | 50%       | ✓   | ✓  |    |
| 2.  | Apply theories to students' research work, aiming to the discovery of new knowledge in the relevant domain through innovative approaches | 50%       |   | ✓  | ✓  |
|     |  | 100%      |   |    |    |

A1: *Attitude*

*Develop an attitude of discovery/innovation/creativity, as demonstrated by students possessing a strong sense of curiosity, asking questions actively, challenging assumptions or engaging in inquiry together with teachers.*

A2: *Ability*

*Develop the ability/skill needed to discover/innovate/create, as demonstrated by students possessing critical thinking skills to assess ideas, acquiring research skills, synthesizing knowledge across disciplines or applying academic knowledge to self-life problems.*

A3: *Accomplishments*

*Demonstrate accomplishment of discovery/innovation/creativity through producing /constructing creative works/new artefacts, effective solutions to real-life problems or new processes.*

### 3. Learning and Teaching Activities (LTAs)

| LTAs                    | Brief Description   | CILO No. |   | Hours/week |
|-------------------------|---|----------|---|------------|
|                         |   | 1        | 2 |            |
| Discussion and analysis | Discuss and analyze the principles of social theories and media studies | ✓        | ✓ | 3          |
| Essay                   | Write review essays on selected topics                                  | ✓        | ✓ | NA         |

#### 4. Assessment Tasks/Activities (ATs)

| Assessment Tasks/Activities                               | CILO No. |   | Weighting | Remarks |
|---|----------|---|-----------|---------|
|   | 1        | 2 |           |         |
| Continuous Assessment: <u>100</u> %                       |          |   |           |         |
| Participation in class discussion and presentation        | ✓        | ✓ | 30%       |         |
| Research proposal   | ✓        | ✓ | 70%       |         |
| Examination: <u>NA</u> % (duration: _____, if applicable) |          |   |           |         |
|   |          |   | 100%      |         |

## 5. Assessment Rubrics

Applicable to students admitted in Semester A 2022/23 and thereafter

| Assessment Task                      | Criterion  | Pass (P)   | Failure (F)   |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|---|
| 1. Class discussion and presentation | ABILITY to participate in class discussion regarding theories that are related to media and communication.                   | Highly active, constructive, and meaningful participation and discussion.  | Unsatisfactory level of class participation. Rarely participate in class discussion.              |
| 2. Research proposal                 | ABILITY to design a research project that aims to test, improve, or develop a theory in the area of media and communication. | High levels of originality, logical coherence and clarity with academic rigor. High level of academic quality of research design aims to test, improve or develop the theory in the area of study. | Poor quality of research design aims to test, improve or develop the theory in the area of study. |

The student is expected to present the analysis of the assigned readings and participate in the discussion. The student is expected to produce a significant research paper (approximately 20-30 pages) and/or several short papers (8-10 pages each) as required by the instructor.

Applicable to students admitted before Semester A 2022/23

| Assessment Task                      | Criterion  | Pass (P)  | Failure (F)   |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|---|
| 1. Class discussion and presentation | ABILITY to participate in class discussion regarding theories that are related to media and communication.                   | Highly active, constructive, and meaningful participation and discussion.   | Unsatisfactory level of class participation. Rarely participate in class discussion.        |
| 2. Research proposal                 | ABILITY to design a research project that aims to test, improve, or develop a theory in the area of media and communication. | High levels of originality, logical coherence and clarity with academic rigor. High level of academic quality of research design to test, improve or develop the theory in the area of study. | Unsatisfactory level of design to test, improve or develop the theory in the area of study. |

The student is expected to present the analysis of the assigned readings and participate in the discussion. The student is expected to produce a significant research paper (approximately 20-30 pages) and/or several short papers (8-10 pages each) as required by the instructor.

## Part III Other Information

### 1. Keyword Syllabus

Pragmatism, structural-functionalism, conflict management, Marxism(s) and post-modernism as they relate to the current status of media studies. Meta-methodological debate on empirical, interpretative, and critical communication theories.

### 2. Reading List

#### 2.1 Compulsory Readings

Recommended Reading:

|     |  |
|-----|--|
| 1.  | Hardt, Hanno (1992). <i>Critical Communication Studies</i> . New York: Routledge.  |
| 2.  | Turner, Graeme (1996). <i>British Cultural Studies</i> . London: Routledge.  |
| 3.  | Thompson, John B (1995). <i>The Media and Modernity</i> . Stanford: Stanford University Press.   |
| 4.  | Curran, James & Michael Gurevitch (Eds.). (2006). <i>Mass Media and Society</i> . London: Arnold.  |
| 5.  | Merton, Robert K. (1968). <i>Social Theory and Social Structure</i> (pp. 493 509). New York: Free Press.   |
| 6.  | Carey, James W. (1989). <i>Communication as Culture</i> . New York: Routledge.   |
| 7.  | Munson, Eve Stryker & Catherine A. Warren (Eds.). (1997). <i>James Carey: A Critical Reader</i> . Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press       |
| 8.  | Williams, Raymond (1982). <i>The Sociology of Culture</i> . New York: Schocken.  |
| 9.  | Rogers, Everett M. (1994). <i>A History of Communications Research</i> . New York: Free Press.   |
| 10. | Gouldner, Alvin (1976). <i>The Dialectic of Ideology and Technology</i> . New York: Oxford University Press.                                       |
| 11. | Park, Robert (1967). <i>On Social Control and Collective Behavior</i> (Ralph H. Turner, Ed.). Chicago: U of Chicago Press.                         |
| 12. | Giddens, A. (1978). <i>Positivism and its critics</i> . In Bottomore & Nisbet (Eds.), <i>A History of Sociological Analysis</i> . New York: Basic. |
| 13. | McCarthy, Thomas (1979). <i>The Critical Theory of Jurgen Habermas</i> . Cambridge: MIT Press.   |
| 14. | Coser, Lewis (1956). <i>The Functions of Social Conflict</i> . New York: Free Press.   |
| 15. | Dahrendorf, Ralf (1959). <i>Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society</i> . Stanford: Stanford UP.  |
| 16. | Tichenor, P. J., G. A. Donohue & C. Olien (1979). <i>Community Conflict and the Press</i> . Beverly Hills: Sage.                                   |
| 17. | Golding, Peter & Graham Murdock (Eds.). (1997). <i>The Political Economy of the Media</i> (2 volumes). Brookfield, Vermont: Elgar.                 |
| 18. | Garnham, Nicholas (1989). <i>Capitalism and Communication</i> . Newberry Park, CA: Sage.   |

|     |   |
|-----|---|
| 19. | Smythe, Dallas (1994). Counterclockwise: Perspectives on Communication (Thomas Guback, Ed.). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.   |
| 20. | Mosco, Vincent (1996). The Political Economy of Communication. London: Sage.  |
| 21. | Curran, James & Myung-jin Park (Eds.). (2000). De-westernizing Media Studies. London: Routledge.  |
| 22. | Hall, S. (Ed.). (1997). Representation. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.  |
| 23. | Hall, S. (1976). Culture, the Media and the Ideological Effect. In James Curran, Michael Gurevitch & Janet Woollacott (Eds.), Mass Communication and Society. London: Edward Arnold.                |
| 24. | Hall, Stuart (1982). The Rediscovery of 'Ideology': Return of the Repressed in Media Studies. In Gurevitch, Bennett, Curran, & Woollacott (Eds.), Culture, Society, and the Media. London: Methuen. |
| 25. | Hall, Stuart (1986). Cultural Studies: two paradigms. In Richard Collins, et. al., Media Culture & Society. Beverly Hills: Sage.  |
| 26. | Downing, John (1996). Internationalizing Media Theory. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.   |
| 27. | Williams, R. (1977). Marxism and Literature. New York: Oxford University Press.   |
| 28. | Gitlin, Todd (1978). The Whole World is Watching. Berkeley: University of California Press.   |
| 29. | Tuchman, Gaye (1978). Making News. New York: Free Press.  |

## 2.2 Additional Readings