

University of Maryland, College Park  
Department of Communication

**COMM 698D - Diffusion of Innovations**  
(Special Problems in Communication)

Spring 2001

Time: Mo 7:00-10:00  
Place: Skinner 2127

Instructor: Dr. Michael F. Meffert  
Office: Skinner 2118  
Office Hours: Monday 10:30-11:30, Wednesday 1:30-3:00, and by appointment  
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**Course Description**

The seminar provides an in-depth introduction to theories and research on the diffusion of innovations, an approach that seeks to explain the process by which new ideas or products spread over time via communication channels among members of a social system. Diffusion theory can be applied in many settings such as health communication, marketing, news diffusion, policy diffusion, and the adoption of new technologies.

**Readings**

- Rogers, Everett M. 1996. *Diffusion of Innovations*. New York: Free Press.
- Weimann, Gabriel. 1994. *The Influentials: People Who Influence People*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Special Issue of *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* on "The Social Diffusion of Ideas and Things," eds. Paul Lopes and Mary Durfee, Vol. 566, November 1999.
- Reading Packet.

**Requirements/Assignments**

The final grade for the course will be based on the following requirements:

- 3 x Reaction Paper                      15% (5% each)
- 2 x Discussion Leader                  40% (20% each)
- 1 x Research Paper                      30%
- Participation                              15%

**Reaction Papers**

Students are expected to write 3 short reaction papers of approx. 3 pages during the semester, in weeks of their choice (but excluding weeks with a discussion leader assignment). The papers

should offer a short, critical evaluation of (some of) the readings of a given week. They are due at noon each Monday and may be submitted as hardcopy or as email attachment.

### ***Discussion Leader***

Each student will choose two of the topics on the course schedule and, in consultation with the instructor, present and discuss recent research and/or the current status of the theory on that topic to the class. The presentation should include a brief outline of the key findings, methods, implications, and limitations of the research topic. The discussion leaders are expected to make their presentation and lead the seminar discussion for one-third to one-half of a class period. Discussion leaders are expected to hand out an outline to the entire class detailing what they cover in their presentation as well as a brief annotated bibliography of the articles reviewed for the presentation. Please note that the bibliography is to supplement the readings already on the syllabus for a particular topic. More specifically:

- The topics will be assigned on the first day of class but not later than the second week.
- One week before the assigned discussion leadership, you must provide your classmates and the instructor with a copy of one article or study that you feel best demonstrates how the topic we are covering can be used to understand diffusion theories. Keep in mind that your discussion should relate the readings you found to the assigned readings for the week.
- One week before the assigned discussion leadership, you should provide the instructor with a preliminary copy of the outline of your presentation, discussion questions, and the annotated bibliography.
- On the day of your presentation, you will distribute copies of your outline and the annotated bibliography.

### ***Research Paper***

Each student is required to write a 20 to 30 page research paper related to the course material (and ideally the student's research interests). This will usually be a summary and critical review of a particular concept, theory, or hypothesis as well as the research or studies pertaining to it. It could also be a (proposal for a) research project analyzing a diffusion process, or an empirical study such as the secondary analysis of existing data. The precise topic is to be determined between the student and the professor as early as possible during the semester. The goal is to write a paper of high quality (substantively and formally) that might be submitted to a conference or even a journal. A short, written proposal is due – at the latest – April 2. The completed paper will be presented and submitted on May 14. Students are encouraged but not required to submit a final draft of their paper some time before May 14 for comments and suggestions.

### ***Participation***

The seminar requires active participation of the students in class discussions. Students are expected to read the assigned readings before each session.

<b>Accommodations for Students with Disabilities</b>
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The University of Maryland is committed to making appropriate accommodations to individuals with disabilities that have been documented by the Disability Support Services (0126 Shoemaker Hall). If you wish to discuss academic accommodations for this class, please contact the instructor as soon as possible, and no later than the third week of the semester.

<b>Course Schedule</b>
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**1/29 Introduction****2/5 Origin, History, and Definition of Diffusion Research**

- Rogers, ch. 1-3 (pp. 1-130).
- Kinnunen, Jussi. 1996. "Gabriel Tarde as a Founding Father of Innovation of Diffusion Research." *Acta Sociologica* 39:431-442.
- Katz, Elihu. 1999. "Theorizing Diffusion: Tarde and Sorokin Revisited." *The Annals* 566: 144-155.
- Ryan, Bryce, and Neal C. Gross. 1943. "The Diffusion of Hybrid Seed Corn in two Iowa Communities." *Rural Sociology* 8:15-24.
- Cragan, John F., and Donald C. Shields. 1998. "Diffusion of Innovations Theory (DIT)" (Chapter 7). In *Understanding Communication Theory: The Communicative Forces For Human Action*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon (pp. 175-207).

**2/12 Scientific Methods: Mass Media Effects & Social Network Analysis**

- Gunter, Barrie. 2000. "Overview of Media Research Methodologies: Audiences." (Chapter 2) In *Media Research Methods: Measuring Audiences, Reactions, and Impact*. London: Sage (pp. 22-54).
- Wasserman, Stanley, and Katherine Faust. 1994. "Social Network Analysis in the Social and Behavioral Sciences" and "Social Network Data" (Chapters 1 & 2). In *Social Network Analysis: Methods and Applications*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (pp. 3-66).
- Weimann, ch. 3 (pp. 29-51).
- Fan, David P. 1985. "Ideodynamics: The Kinetics of the Evolution of Ideas." *Journal of Mathematical Sociology* 11:1-24.

**2/19 Generation of Innovations, Communication Channels, and the Innovation-Decision Process**

- Rogers, ch. 4-5 (pp. 131-203).
- Reardon, Kathleen K., and Everett M. Rogers. 1988. "Interpersonal Versus Mass Media Communication: A False Dichotomy." *Human Communication Research* 15:284-303.
- Chaffee, Steven H. 1982. "Mass Media and Interpersonal Channels: Competitive, Convergent, or Complementary?" In *Inter/Media: Interpersonal Communication in a Media World*, ed. Gary Gumpert and Robert Cathcart. New York: Oxford University Press (pp. 57-77).
- Chaffee, Steven H., and Diana C. Mutz. 1988. "Comparing Mediated and Interpersonal Communication Data." In *Advancing Communication Science: Merging Mass and Interpersonal Processes*, ed. Robert P. Hawkins, John M. Wiemann, and Suzanne Pingree. Newbury Park: Sage (pp. 19-43).

## **2/26 Innovations and their Adoption**

- Rogers, ch. 6-7 (pp. 204-280).
- Rogers, Everett M. et al. 1995. "Communication and Community in a City Under Siege: The AIDS Epidemic in San Francisco." *Communication Research* 22:664-678.
- Dearing, James W., et al. 1996. "Social Marketing and Diffusion-based Strategies for Communicating with Unique Populations: HIV Prevention in San Francisco." *Journal of Health Communication* 1:343-363.

## **3/5 Opinion Leaders**

- Rogers, ch. 8-9 (pp. 281-370).
- Weimann, ch. 1-6 (pp. 3-105) & ch. 14-16 (pp. 239-286).

## **3/12 Networks**

- Coleman, James S., Elihu Katz, and Herbert Menzel. 1957. "The Diffusion of Innovation Among Physicians." *Sociometry* 20:253-270.
- Rice, Ronald E. 1993. "Using Network Concepts to Clarify Sources and Mechanisms of Social Influence." In *Progress in the Communication Sciences XII*, eds. William D. Richards and George A. Barnett. Norwood, NJ: Ablex (pp. 44-62).
- Valente, Thomas. 1995. "Threshold Models of Diffusion" and "Critical Mass Models of Diffusion" (Chapters 5 & 6). In *Network Models of the Diffusion of Innovations*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press (pp. 63-90).
- Albrecht, Terrace L., and Bradford Hall. 1991. "Relational and Content Differences between Elites and Outsiders in Innovation Networks." *Human Communication Research* 17:535-561.
- Burt, Ronald S. 1999. "The Social Capital of Opinion Leaders." *The Annals*, 566:37-54.
- Valente, Thomas W., and Rebecca L. Davis. 1999. "Accelerating the Diffusion of Innovations Using Opinion Leaders." *The Annals*, 566:55-67.

## **3/19 Spring Break (no class)**

## **3/26 Organizations**

- Rogers, ch. 10 (pp. 371-404).
- Strang, David, and Sarah A. Soule. 1998. "Diffusion Organizations and Social Movements: From Hybrid Corn to Poison Pills." *Annual Review of Sociology* 24:265-290.
- Barker, James R., Craig W. Melville, and Michael E. Pacanowsky. 1993. "Self-Directed Teams at Xel: Changes in Communication Practices During a Program of Cultural Transformation." *Journal of Applied Communication Research* 21:297-312.
- Albrecht, Terrance L., and Bradford J. Hall. 1991. "Facilitating Talk about New Ideas: The Role of Personal Relationships in Organizational Innovation." *Communication Monographs* 58:273-288.
- Weenig, Mienieke W. H. 1999. "Communication Networks in the Diffusion of an Innovation in an Organization." *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 29:1072-1092.
- Gupta, Ashok K., and Arvind Singhal. 1993. "Managing Human Resources for Innovation and Creativity." *Research & Technology Management* 36:41-48.
- Tjosvold, Dean, and Leonard T. McNeely. 1988. "Innovation Through Communication in an Educational Bureaucracy." *Communication Research* 15:568-581.

#### 4/2 Health Communication

- Weimann, ch. 10 (pp. 183-193) & 13 (pp. 219-236).
- Perlof, Richard M. 1991. "Effects of an AIDS Communication Campaign." *Journalism Quarterly* 68:638-643.
- Kohler, Hans-Peter. 1997. "Learning in Social Networks and Contraceptive Choice." *Demography* 34:369-383.
- Gantz, Walter, Michael Fitzmaurice, and Euisun Yoo. 1990. "Seat Belt Campaigns and Buckling Up: Do the Media Make A Difference?" *Health Communication* 2:1-12.
- Kopfman, Jenifer E., and Sandi W. Smith. 1996. "Understanding the Audiences of a Health Communication Campaign: A Discriminant Analysis of Potential Organ Donors Based on Intent to Donate." *Journal of Applied Communication Research* 24:33-49.
- Schooler, Caroline, June A. Flora, and John W. Farquhar. 1993. "Moving Toward Synergy: Media Supplementation in the Stanford Five-City Project." *Communication Research* 20:587-610.
- Hertog, James K., and David P. Fan. 1995. "The Impact of Press Coverage on Social Beliefs: The Case of HIV Transmission." *Communication Research* 22:545-574.

#### 4/9 Culture & Marketing

- Weimann, ch. 7 & 8 (pp.109-157).
- Kotler, Philip, and Gerald Zaltman. 1971. "Social Marketing: An Approach to Planned Social Change." *Journal of Marketing* 35:3-12.
- Lopes, Paul. 1999. "Diffusion and Syncretism: The Modern Jazz Tradition." *The Annals*, 566:25-36.
- Crane, Diana. 1999. "Diffusion Models and Fashion: A Reassessment." *The Annals*, 566:13-24.
- Woods, Gail B. 1993. "Merchandising Malcolm X: Melding Man and Myths for Money." *Western Journal of Black Studies* 17:44-51.
- Bass, Frank M. 1980. "The Relationship between Diffusion Rates, Experience Curves, and Demand Elasticities for Consumer Durable Technological Innovations." *Journal of Business* 53:51-67.
- Mahajan, Vijay, Eitan Muller, and Frank M. Bass. 1990. "New Product Diffusion Models in Marketing: A Review and Directions for Research." *Journal of Marketing* 54:1-26.
- Sultan, Fareena, John U. Farley, and Donald R. Lehmann. 1990. "A Meta-Analysis of Diffusion Models." *Journal of Marketing Research* 37:70-77.

#### 4/16 News Diffusion

- DeFleur, Melvin L. 1987. "The Growth and Decline of Research on the Diffusion of the News, 1945-1985." *Communication Research* 14:109-130.
- Miller, Delbert C. 1945. "A Research Note on Mass Communication: How Our Community Heard About the Death of President Roosevelt." *American Sociological Review* 10:691-694.
- Deutschmann, Paul J., and Wayne A. Danielson. 1960. "Diffusion of a Major News Story." *Journalism Quarterly* 37:345-355.
- Funkhouser, G. Ray, and Maxwell E. McCombs. 1971. "The Rise and Fall of News Diffusion." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 35:107-113.
- Basil, Michael D., and William J. Brown. 1994. "Interpersonal Communication in News Diffusion: A Study of Magic Johnson's Announcement." *Journalism Quarterly* 71:305-320.
- Kubey, Robert W., and Thea Peluso. 1990. "Emotional Response as a Cause of Interpersonal News Diffusion: The Case of the Space Shuttle Tragedy." *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* 24:69-76.
- Mayer, Michael E., William B. Gudykunst, Norman K. Perrill, and Bruce D. Merrill. 1990. "A Comparison of Competing Models of the News Diffusion Process." *Western Journal of Communication* 54:113-123.
- Rosengren, Karl E. 1987. "Conclusion: The Comparative Study of News Diffusion." *European Journal of Communication* 2:227-255.
- Zelitzer, Barbie. 1995. "Journalism's 'Last' Stand: Wirephoto and the Discourse of Resistance." *Journal of Communication* 45:78-92.

#### 4/23 Politics & Policy Diffusion

- Weimann, ch. 9 (pp.159-182).
- Studlar, Donley T. 1999. "Diffusion of Tobacco: Control in North America." *The Annals*, 566:68-79.
- Mooney, Christopher Z., and Mei-Hsien Lee. 1999. "Morality Policy Reinvention: State Death Penalties." *The Annals*, 566:80-92.
- Durfee, Mary. 1999. "Diffusion of Pollution Prevention Policy." *The Annals*, 566:108-119.
- Mintrom, Michael, and Sandra Vergari. 1998. "Policy Networks and Innovation Diffusion: The Case of State Education Reforms." *Journal of Politics* 60:126-148.
- Soule, Sarah A. 1997. "The Student Divestment Movement in the United States and Tactical Diffusion: The Shantytown Protest." *Social Forces* 75:855-882.
- Soule, Sarah A. 1999. "The Diffusion of an Unsuccessful Innovation." *The Annals*, 566:120-131.
- Hays, Scott P. 1996. "Influences of Reinvention During the Diffusion of Innovations." *Political Research Quarterly* 49:631-650.
- Grattet, Ryken, Valerie Jenness, and Theodore Curry. 1998. "The Homogenization and Differentiation of Hate Crime Law in the United States, 1978 to 1995: Innovation and Diffusion in the Criminalization of Bigotry." *American Sociological Review* 63: 286-307.

#### **4/30 New Technologies & Participation**

- Carey, John, and Mitchell L. Moss. 1985. "The Diffusion of New Telecommunication Technologies." *Telecommunication Policy* 6:145-158.
- Neuendorf, Kimberly A., David Atkin, and Leo W. Jeffres. 1998. "Understanding Adopters of Audio Information Innovations." *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 42:80-92.
- LaRose, Robert, and Jennifer Mettler. 1989. "Who Uses Information Technologies in Rural America?" *Journal of Communication* 39:48-60.
- Jeffres, Leo, and David Atkin. 1996. "Predicting Use of Technologies for Communication and Consumer Needs." *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 40:318-330.
- Hölmov, P. G., and Karl-Eric Warneryd. 1990. "Adoption and Use of Fax in Sweden." In *Modelling the Innovation: Communications, Automation, and Information Systems*, eds. M. Carnevale, M. Lucertini, and S. Nicosia. Amsterdam: Elsevier (pp. 95-108).
- Leonard-Barton, Dorothy. 1985. "Experts as Negative Opinion Leaders in the Diffusion of a Technological Innovation." *Journal of Consumer Behavior* 11:914-926.
- O'Sullivan, Patrick B. 1995. "Computer Networks and Political Participation: Santa Monica's Teledemocracy Project." *Journal of Applied Communication Research* 23:93-107.
- Schmitz, Joseph, Everett M Rogers, Ken Phillips, and Donald Paschal. 1995. "The Public Electronic Network (PEN) and the Homeless in Santa Monica." *Journal of Applied Communication Research* 23:26-43

#### **5/7 Campaigns & Consequences of Innovations & Miscellaneous Topics**

- Valente, Thomas W., Patricia R. Poppe, and Alice P. Merritt. 1996. "Mass-Media-Generated Interpersonal Communication as Sources of Information about Family Planning." *Journal of Health Communication* 1:247-265.
- Valente, Thomas W., and Walter P. Saba. 1998. "Mass Media and Interpersonal Influence in a Reproductive Health Communication Campaign in Bolivia." *Communication Research* 25:96-124.
- Krendal, Kathy A., Beth Olson, and Richard Burke. 1992. "Preparing for the Environmental Decade: A Field Experiment on Recycling Behavior." *Journal of Applied Communication Research* 20:19-36.
- Rogers, ch. 11 (pp. 405-442).
- Ayres, Jeffrey. 1999. "From the Streets to the Internet: The Cyber-Diffusion of Contention." *The Annals*, 566:132-143.
- Fan, David P., and Jennifer Ostini. 1999. "Human Rights Media: Coverage in Chinese East Asia." *The Annals*, 566:93-107.
- Weimann, ch. 11 (pp. 195-205).

#### **5/14 Presentation of Papers**