

## Proseminar in Communication Theory

CJT 651: Fall 2014

*Meets Mondays, 6-8:30 p.m., LCLI 301*

*"Theories contain instructions for reading the world and acting in it." (Anderson, 1996)*

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This required graduate seminar provides an examination and critical analysis of the major theories of communication processes, including systems theory, structural theories and semiotics, behaviorism, symbolic interactionism, theories of the social construction of reality, and other theoretical approaches to the study of communication. As such, this course involves the excavation, critical analysis, and where necessary, deconstruction of the philosophical building blocks and metatheoretical assumptions that form the foundations of various approaches to the construction of theories, methods, and arguments used to support claims to truth in the study of communication. The course will be framed with discussions of the differences and/or similarities among these approaches in terms of their take on epistemology, ontology, and axiology. First, we will answer questions such as, "What is a theory?" and "How are theories that explain or predict elements of the phenomenal world, created?" Once we have the tools to examine and evaluate these theories, we will investigate the history and development of theoretical work in mass communication, interpersonal communication, and other applied communication contexts.

### Learning Outcomes

After completing this course, you will be able to:

1. Discuss the importance of communication theory from multiple philosophical perspectives including the specific influences of various epistemic traditions and schools of thought on the development of theories used in communication research.
2. Trace the historical development, conceptual framework, and current status of several key communication theories in multiple contexts (e.g., interpersonal, mass, health, group, organizational, cultural) from major philosophical perspectives.
3. Relate theory and research methods, including standards for evaluation and analysis of theories through discussion and critique of current communication theories.
4. Utilize the vocabulary of and ethics regarding the study of communication theory.
5. Analyze and critique theory at a high level, using appropriate criteria.
6. Utilize resources such as electronic databases to find appropriate research and evaluate that research.

## Readings

American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

*All other readings provided through the UK Libraries or on Blackboard. Whenever possible, these files will be PDFs so that you can view them on a laptop, iPad, etc. It's your choice whether or not to print the readings but you should have access to all of them during class time.*

## Recommended Readings

Although not required, you are highly encouraged to have access to at least one communication theory textbook. Such textbooks are handy for providing an initial overview of a theory, a refresher of a context, or an alternative explanation when an article's language becomes unwieldy. Some textbooks that I have found helpful are:

Griffin, E. (2011). *A first look at communication theory* (8th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill. (any of the last few editions of this book would be fine as a reference)

Littlejohn, S. W., & Foss, K. A. (20XX). *Theories of human communication*. Long Grove, IL: Waveland. (any of the last few editions of this book would be fine as a reference – generally you can find an older edition for under \$5)

West, R. & Turner, L. H. (2007). *Introducing communication theory*. New York: McGraw-Hill. (the third or fourth edition would be fine as a reference)

## Course Structure

Our time together will be spent exploring various aspects of communication theory. You are expected to complete readings prior to class so that our time together can be spent extending the readings and deepening our understanding. As a foundational course in the graduate curriculum, we do have a wealth of information to process. To do this, there will be discussions and activities designed to enhance your learning, but it is not a fully seminar-style course. Be curious, be interested, and be engaged and you will get much out of the class.

## Grading

Final grades reflect the culmination of the semester's work and are calculated based on the weight of each assignment. Final grades will be based on the following scale, without rounding:

90.00-100%	A
80.00-89.99%	B
70.00-79.99%	C
60.00-69.99%	D
Below 60.00%	E

## Assignments

Foundations Assessment Midterm	10%		Final Essay Exam	10%
Engagement/participation	10%		Theory Integration	10%
Article Abstract 1	5%		Theory Project	40%
Article Abstract 2	10%		Theory Project Presentation	5%

### Foundations Assessment Midterm (10%)

You will complete a series of short answer and essay questions near the midpoint of the semester that will test your understanding of the foundational topics for communication theory. These questions will be focused on the foundational aspects of theory and will require application of these aspects to theories. You will have at least one week to complete the assignment. Your final responses should be typed and will be submitted via Blackboard.

### Engagement/participation (10%)

Every student is required to read and critically process each of the required readings for the week and to be prepared to actively participate in meaningful class discussions. In order to achieve the goals of the course, students must actively participate in the class discussions of required course material. Participation in class is one important key to learning the skills necessary to be a communication scholar. Your participation should always seek to improve on silence! Your comments, questions, and analysis during class discussion will be used to evaluate participation.

### Theory Integration (10%)

For an assigned week (determined based on your interests), you will prepare a one-page document that summarizes, analyzes, and integrates that week's readings, in addition to generating discussion questions surrounding the readings. The one-page document will be submitted to Blackboard and available for all classmates so that you may collectively build a repository of knowledge. Additional details are provided in the assignment description.

### Article Abstracts

To help you as you embark on reading academic literature, you will be responsible for completing two article abstracts this semester.

- **Article Abstract 1 (5%):** Early in the semester, you will be assigned an article to summarize and critique based on its utilization of theory. Additional details are provided in the assignment description.
- **Article Abstract 2 (10%):** You will complete an additional abstract on an article of your choice that is related to your theory project. Additional details are provided in the assignment description.

### Theory Project (40%)

Throughout the semester, you will work on the relationship between a theory and a

context (your choice). Your paper will include a detailed critical review of literature that presents the origins and traces the development of a prominent communication theory. Your chosen theory must have been tested and published in literature specifically associated with the communication discipline. The paper should address (in an order that is logical for your topic):

- The foundations of the theory and how it has evolved
- The context of interest to you
- One or more research questions that explore the connection between your theory and context; the question(s) should be explicitly connected to the literature you reviewed
- A summary (1-2 paragraphs) of methods that could be used to address the question(s), based predominantly on how this theory and/or context have been explored before.

You will complete this project in stages. First, you will write a brief (2-3 page) proposal that outlines the topic and theory you have chosen. Second, you will have an individual meeting with Dr. Gaffney to discuss your project. You are also required to submit a rough draft that fulfills the length and content requirements for the project. Finally, you will submit the full paper late in the semester. Your final paper should be appropriate for presentation at the meetings of a national, regional, or state communication association.

While there are not specific points associated with the project checkpoints (proposal, roundtable, draft), these assignments are an important part of the project's development. Failure to meet these checkpoints will likely have an impact on your final grade, as you are missing out on valuable opportunities to garner feedback. Checkpoints submitted late may not receive feedback due to time constraints.

There are no firm requirements pertaining to length. Typically, in order to address all of the above materials, you will need at least 15 pages of text, formatted to match APA standards, in addition to a reference list. You should have at least 15 academic sources.

### **Final Project Presentation (5%)**

At the end of the semester, you will be asked to make a presentation to the class regarding your theory project. This presentation will be your opportunity to share what you have learned about your theory and context as well as an opportunity for you to practice your academic presentation skills. More details will be available closer to that time.

### **Final Essay (10%)**

At the end of the semester, you will be asked to complete a final essay that asks you to tie together what you have learned. More details will be available closer to that time.

## Other course information

### Background Knowledge

Students come into this course with a wide variety of backgrounds. If you have a strong background in communication theory, some of the content will seem familiar; if you have no experience with communication theory, the material may be overwhelming. If you are overwhelmed or even just a little confused, you (and you alone) are responsible for seeking assistance. As a graduate student, you need to take responsibility for your own learning, which includes reading above and beyond the requirements for a course, consulting with faculty and peers, and asking questions. It is assumed that you have some background in empirical research methods that will allow you to analyze the research literature you will be reading on a weekly basis. If your background remains minimal, please see me for some suggested readings.

### Completion of Assignments

It is assumed that you will turn your assignments in on time. All written assignments are due by the beginning of class on the due date. All assignments should be proofread carefully before turning them in, and late work will result in a reduction of assignment grade. As a rule, late work will be reduced at least one letter grade for each day (or partial day) late. Yes, even being a few hours past the deadline is still late. Excessively late work will not be accepted. Poor planning on your part does not constitute an emergency on my part, nor is it a good reason for turning work in late. Also, please note that you are expected to complete reading assignments before due dates!

### Grade Questions or Concerns

You may contact your instructor to appeal assignment grades *no earlier* than 24 hours after receiving your grade and *no later* than two weeks after receiving your grade. To appeal a grade, you must set up an appointment with your instructor and bring evidence to support your argument. We will discuss your concerns; you should not expect an immediate answer. You will be informed of the outcome of the grade appeal within one week of the appointment.

### Absences

I anticipate that you will be in class for each of our meetings. However, I do recognize that circumstances beyond your control may interfere with your attendance. The short version of the attendance policy: come to class and contact me as soon as possible when you do need to miss class; plan to submit work early if necessary.

Students need to notify the professor of absences prior to class when possible. S.R. 5.2.4.2 defines the following as acceptable reasons for excused absences: (a) serious illness, (b) illness or death of family member, (c) University-related trips, (d) major religious holidays, and (e) other circumstances found to fit "reasonable cause for nonattendance" by the professor. Students anticipating an absence for major religious holiday are responsible for notifying the instructor in writing of anticipated absences due to their observance of such holidays no later than the last day in the semester to add a class. Information regarding

dates of major religious holidays may be obtained through the religious liaison, Mr. Jake Karnes (859-257-2754). Students may be asked to verify their absences in order for them to be considered excused. Senate Rule 5.2.4.2 states that faculty have the right to request “appropriate verification” when students claim an excused absence because of illness or death in the family. Appropriate notification of absences due to university-related trips is required prior to the absence.

Students are expected to withdraw from the class if more than 20% of the classes scheduled for the semester are missed (excused or unexcused) per university policy; for a class that meets weekly, that means that if you miss more than 3 classes, you are over 20%.

### Email

As a graduate student, you should consider professionalism in all of your communication, including email. Some guidelines that will help you communicate your questions or concerns are:

- Give your email a descriptive subject
- Use a greeting
- Use standard grammar and punctuation
- Be clear in what you are asking, but not demanding
- Be respectful in your writing
- Sign your email with your first and last name

In return, I will also uphold these guidelines in my electronic communication with you. Emails that provide me with a clear communication of your needs will be responded to promptly, generally within 24 hours. Remember that if I cannot understand what you are asking, I cannot give you a clear answer. Additionally, be sure to check Blackboard and the syllabus before asking a question—often the answer to a question is available to you.

### Incompletes

Periodically, students ask to take an incomplete in a course in order to have additional time to complete course requirements. As a general rule, I do not give incompletes. However, extenuating circumstances (e.g., a serious illness in the last week of the semester) may warrant an exception, although incompletes will still be a last resort and will come with a very specific timeline for completion. These exceptions must be discussed with the instructor and should not be presumed to be available. Failure to complete assignments or to take advantage of opportunities for assistance throughout the semester does not warrant an incomplete.

### Academic Integrity

Per university policy, students shall not plagiarize, cheat, or falsify or misuse academic records. Students are expected to adhere to University policy on cheating and plagiarism in all courses. The minimum penalty for a first offense is a zero on the assignment on which the offense occurred. If the offense is considered severe or the student has other academic offenses on their record, more serious penalties, up to suspension from the university may be imposed.

Plagiarism and cheating are serious breaches of academic conduct. Each student is advised to become familiar with the various forms of academic dishonesty as explained in the Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities. Complete information can be found at the following website: <http://www.uky.edu/Ombud>. A plea of ignorance is not acceptable as a defense against the charge of academic dishonesty. It is important that you review this information as all ideas borrowed from others need to be properly credited.

Part II of *Student Rights and Responsibilities* (available online <http://www.uky.edu/StudentAffairs/Code/part2.html>) states that all academic work, written or otherwise, submitted by students to their instructors or other academic supervisors, is expected to be the result of their own thought, research, or self-expression. In cases where students feel unsure about the question of plagiarism involving their own work, they are obliged to consult their instructors on the matter before submission.

When students submit work purporting to be their own, but which in any way borrows ideas, organization, wording or anything else from another source without appropriate acknowledgement of the fact, the students are guilty of plagiarism. Plagiarism includes reproducing someone else's work, whether it be a published article, chapter of a book, a paper from a friend or some file, or something similar to this. Plagiarism also includes the practice of employing or allowing another person to alter or revise the work which a student submits as his/her own, whoever that other person may be.

Students may discuss assignments among themselves or with an instructor or tutor, but when the actual work is done, it must be done by the student, and the student alone. When a student's assignment involves research in outside sources of information, the student must carefully acknowledge exactly what, where and how he/she employed them. If the words of someone else are used, the student must put quotation marks around the passage in question and add an appropriate indication of its origin. Making simple changes while leaving the organization, content and phraseology intact is plagiaristic. However, nothing in these Rules shall apply to those ideas which are so generally and freely circulated as to be a part of the public domain (Section 6.3.1).

**Please note:** Any assignment you turn in may be submitted to an electronic database to check for plagiarism.

### Special Situations

If you have a documented disability that requires academic accommodations, please see me as soon as possible during scheduled office hours. In order to receive accommodations in this course, you must provide me with a Letter of Accommodation from the Disability Resource Center (Room 2, Alumni Gym, 257-2754, email address: [jkarnes@email.uky.edu](mailto:jkarnes@email.uky.edu)) for coordination of campus disability services available to students with disabilities.

Even if you do not think you will need to take advantage of accommodations, it is better to make the arrangements in advance and not need them; last minute requests for

accommodations may not be met. Furthermore, these accommodations cannot be provided retroactively.

### Fairness Policy

The University of Kentucky is committed to social justice. I concur with that commitment and expect to maintain a positive learning environment based upon open communication, mutual respect, and non-discrimination. UK does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, or disability. Any suggestions as to how to further such a positive and open environment in this class will be appreciated and given serious consideration.

### Schedule

*This schedule is tentative. All changes will be announced in class and via Blackboard.*

Week/Date	Topic	Assignments due
1: 9/1	<b>No class - Labor day</b>	
2: 9/8	Foundations of theory and of communication	
3: 9/15	Metatheoretical assumptions and theory evaluation	
4: 9/22	Applications of theory	Abstract 1
5: 9/29	Uncertainty, expectations, and violations	Topic proposal due
6: 10/6	Dialectics, Privacy, and Accommodations	
7: 10/13	No class <i>individual meeting during this week</i>	Midterm due
8: 10/20	Groups and Society	Abstract 2 due
9: 10/27	Persuasion - health contexts	
10: 11/3	Media effects	
11: 11/10	CMC and new technologies	
12: 11/17	Organizational communication	
13: 11/24	Intercultural communication	
14: 12/1	Instructional communication & other new horizons	
15: 12/8	Presentations	Project due
Exam week: 12/15	Final essay	



## Readings

*This list is tentative and subject to change. All changes will be announced in class and posted to Blackboard.*

### Week 2: Foundations of Theory and of Communication

- Berger, C. R., Roloff, M. E., & Roskos-Ewoldsen, D. R. (2009). What is communication science? In C. R. Berger, M. E. Roloff, & D. R. Roskos-Ewoldsen (Eds.). *The Handbook of Communication Science*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE. **\*\*ebook via library\*\***
- Bryant, J., & Pribanic-Smith, E. (2009). A historical overview of research in communication science. In C. R. Berger, M. E. Roloff, & D. R. Roskos-Ewoldsen (Eds.). *The Handbook of Communication Science*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Miller, G. R. (1966). On defining communication: Another stab. *Journal of Communication*, 16, 89-98. **\*\*pdf on Bb\*\***

### Week 3: Metatheoretical Assumptions and Theory Evaluation

- Anderson, J. A., & Baym, G. (2004). Philosophies and philosophic issues in communication, 1995–2004. *Journal of Communication*, 54, 589–615.
- Berger, C. R. (1991). Communication theories and other curios. *Communication Monographs*, 58(1), 101-113.
- Metatheory. (2009). In S. W. Littlejohn & K. A. Foss *Encyclopedia of Communication Theory*, Vol. 1. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Reference. **\*\*ebook via library\*\***
- Evaluating communication theory (2009). In S. W. Littlejohn & K. A. Foss (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Communication Theory*, Vol. 1. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Reference. **\*\*ebook via library\*\***

Skim:

- \*Huesmann, L. R. (1986). Psychological processes promoting the relation between exposure to media violence and aggressive behavior by the viewer. *Journal of Social Issues*, 42(3), 125-139.
- \*Suglia, S. F., Solnick, S., & Hemenway, D. (2013). Soft drinks consumption is associated with behavior problems in 5-year-olds. *The Journal of Pediatrics*, 165, 1323-1328.

### Week 4: Applications of Theory

- Bormann, E. G. (1982). The symbolic convergence theory of communication: Applications and implications for teachers and consultants. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 10, 50-61.
- Bormann, E. G., Knutson, R. L., & Musolf, K. (1997). Why do people share fantasies? An empirical investigation of a basic tenet of the symbolic convergence communication theory. *Communication Studies*, 48, 254-276.
- Delia, J. G. (1977). Constructivism and the study of human communication. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 63, 66-83.

### Week 5: Uncertainty, expectations, and violations

- Berger, C. R., & Calabrese, R. J. (1975). Some explorations in initial interaction and beyond: Toward a developmental theory of interpersonal communication. *Human Communication Research, 1*, 99-112. **PDF on Blackboard**
- Burgoon, J. K., & Hale, J. L. (1988). Nonverbal expectancy violations: Model elaboration and application to immediacy behaviors. *Communication Monographs, 55*(1), 58-79.
- Knobloch, L. K., & Solomon, D. H. (2002). Information seeking beyond initial interaction: Negotiating relational uncertainty within close relationships. *Human Communication Research, 28*, 243-257.
- Sunnafrank, M. (1986). Predicted outcome value during initial interactions A reformulation of uncertainty reduction theory. *Human Communication Research, 13*(1), 3-33.

### Week 6: Interpersonal communication – dialectics, privacy, and accommodation

- Baxter, L. A. (1990). Dialectical contradictions in relationship development. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 7*, 69-88.
- Petronio, S. (2010). Communication privacy management theory: What do we know about family privacy regulation? *Journal of Family Theory & Review, 2*, 175-196.
- Street, R. L., & Giles, H. (1982). Speech accommodation theory: A social cognitive approach to language and speech behavior. In M. E. Roloff & C. R. Berger (Eds.) *Social Cognition and Communication* (pp. 193-226). Beverly Hills, CA: SAGE. **PDF on Blackboard**

### Week 7: Midterm due – no regular class

*No readings!*

### Week 8: Groups and Society

- Burt, R. S. (2000). The network structure of social capital. *Research in Organizational Behavior, 22*, 345-423.
- Putnam, L. L., & Stohl, C. (1990). Bona fide groups: A reconceptualization of groups in context. *Communication Studies, 41*(3), 248-265.
- Scheufle, D. A., & Moy, P. (2000). Twenty-five years of the spiral of silence: A conceptual review and empirical outlook. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research, 12*(1), 3-28.
- Spence, P. R., Lachlan, K. A., & Burke, J. A. (2011). Differences in crisis knowledge across age, race, and socioeconomic status during Hurricane Ike: A field test and extension of the knowledge gap hypothesis. *Communication Theory, 21*, 261-278.

### Week 9: Persuasion in health contexts

- Haider, M., & Kreps, G. L. (2004). Forty years of diffusion of innovations: Utility and value in public health. *Journal of Health Communication, 9*, 3-11.
- Petty, R. E., & Cacioppo, J. T. (1984). Source factors and the elaboration likelihood model of persuasion. *Advances in Consumer Research, 11*(1), 668-672.
- Witte, K. (1992). Putting the fear back into fear appeals: The extended parallel process model. *Communication Monographs, 59*(4), 329-349.

### Week 10: Media Effects

- Gerbner, G. (1998). Cultivation analysis: An overview. *Mass Communication & Society*, 1, 175-194.
- McCombs, M. E., & Shaw, D. L. (1972). The agenda-setting function of mass media. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 36, 176-187.
- Perloff, R. M. (2009). Mass media, social perception, and the third-person effect. In J. Bryant and M. B. Oliver (Eds.), *Media Effects: Advances in Theory and Research*, 3rd Ed. (pp. 252-268). New York: Routledge. **PDF on Blackboard.**
- Rubin, A. M. (1993). Audience activity and media use. *Communication Monographs*, 60(1), 98-105.

### Week 11: CMC and New Technology

- Dennis, A. R., & Kinney, S. T. (1998). Testing media richness theory in the new media: The effects of cues, feedback, and task equivocality. *Information Systems Research*, 9(3), 256-274.
- Kietzmann, J., Hermkens, K., McCarthy, I., & Silvestre, B. (2011). Social media? Get serious! Understanding the functional building blocks of social media. *Business Horizons* 54, 241-251.
- Tidwell, L. C., & Walther, J. B. (2002). Computer-mediated communication effects on disclosure, impressions, and interpersonal evaluations: Getting to know one another a bit at a time. *Human Communication Research*, 28, 317-348.
- Walther, J. B., Anderson, J. F., & Park, D. W. (1994). Interpersonal effects in computer-mediated interaction: A meta-analysis of social and antisocial communication. *Communication Research*, 21, 460-487.

### Week 12: Organizational Communication

- Deetz, S. A. (1982). Critical interpretive research in organizational communication. *Western Journal of Speech Communication*, 46(2), 131-149.
- Lee, M., & Barnett, G. A. (1997). A symbols-and-meaning approach to the organizational cultures of banks in the United States, Japan, and Taiwan. *Communication Research*, 24(4), 394-412.
- Pacanowsky, M. E., & O'Donnell-Trujillo, N. (1982). Communication and organizational cultures. *Western Journal of Speech Communication*, 46(2), 115-130.
- Putnam, L. L., Bantz, C., Deetz, S., Mumby, D., & Van Maanan, J. (1993). Ethnography versus Critical Theory Debating Organizational Research. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 2(3), 221-235.

### Week 13: Intercultural

- Houston, M., & Kramarae, C. (1991). Speaking from silence: Methods of silencing and resistance. *Discourse & Society*, 2, 387-399.
- Kim, M., Wilson, S. R., Anastasiou, L., Aleman, C., Oetzel, J., & Lee, H. (2009). The relationship between self-construals, perceived face threats, and facework during the pursuit of influence goals. *Journal of International & Intercultural Communication*, 2(4), 318-343.
- Ting-Toomey, S., & Kurogi, A. (1998). Facework competence in intercultural conflict: An updated face-negotiation theory. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 22, 187-225.

**Week 14: Instructional Communication and Other New Horizons**

- Frisby, B. N., Veil, S. R., & Sellnow, T. L. (2014). Instructional messages during health-related crises: Essential content for self-protection. *Health communication, 29*(4), 347-354.
- McCroskey, J. C., Valencic, K. M., & Richmond, V. P. (2004). Toward a general model of instructional communication. *Communication Quarterly, 53*, 197-210.
- Mottet, T. P., Frymier, A. B., & Beebe, S. A. (2006). Theorizing about instructional communication. In T. P. Mottet, V. P. Richmond, & J. C. McCroskey (Eds.) *Handbook of Instructional Communication: Rhetorical and Relational Perspectives* (pp. 255-282). Boston: Pearson. **PDF on Blackboard**