

Advanced Topics in Communication Theory Construction:

Paradigmatic Issues in Communication Theory and Research

CJT 751-001 Course Syllabus, Fall 2015

Monday 3:00-5:45 p.m., 113 Patterson Office Tower

INSTRUCTOR CONTACT INFORMATION

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This required doctoral seminar provides an intensive examination of selected topics important to the construction, development, and testing of communication theories.

This course is **required** for communication doctoral students and is designed for all graduate students who have an interest in paradigmatic issues related to communication theory construction.

GENERAL COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. *Students will be introduced to the process of paradigmatic thinking to provide a foundation and perspectives for theoretical concerns.*
 - a. Introduce the four major paradigms used in constructing communication theory (empirical/objectivist, interpretive/humanistic, systems, historical/critical).
 - b. Compare the methods and objectives of each paradigm in terms of real-world communication problems.
 - c. Identify with at least one of the major paradigms as a personal preference.
2. *Students will explicate the historical, logical, and cultural aspects of paradigmatic thinking.*
 - a. Place each paradigm in its historical context.
 - b. Understand how cultural and historical events interacted to produce such paradigms.
3. *Students will identify the major representatives of each paradigm in communication.*
 - a. Know specific examples of theoretical writing, both in communication and in general.
 - b. Understand the nature of the arguments advanced by specific advocates.
4. *Students will apply paradigmatic and theoretical concerns to a specific area of communication study that will constitute the first steps in defining a dissertation.*
5. *Students will be provided practice in constructing theory and writing theoretical material as related to larger philosophical and methodological issues.*
6. *Students will be familiar with the major issues in communication study and have a good sense of how paradigmatic approaches either help or hinder scholarly work in these issues.*

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS/HANDOUTS

- American Psychological Association. (2009). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.
- Dubin, R. (1978). *Theory building* (Rev. ed.). New York, NY: The Free Press.
- Guba, E. G. (1990). *The paradigm dialog*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Polkinghorne, D. (1983). *Methodology for the human sciences: Systems of inquiry*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Other readings as assigned, including *Plagiarism 101*.

RECOMMENDED REFERENCE BOOKS

Communication

- Berger, C.R., Roloff, M.E., & Ewoldsen, D. R. (Eds.). (2010). *The handbook of communication science* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE
- Knapp, M. L., & Daly, J. A. (2004). *A guide to publishing in scholarly communication journals* (3rd ed.). Austin, TX: International Communication Association.
- Schramm, W. (1997). *The beginnings of communication study in America: A personal memoir*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Writing

- Gopen, G. D. (2004). *The sense of structure: Writing from the reader's perspective*. New York: Pearson Longman.
- Kolln, M. J. (2007). *Rhetorical grammar: Grammatical choices, rhetorical effects* (5th ed.). New York: Pearson Education.
- O'Conner, P. T. (2009). *Woe is I: The grammarphobe's guide to better English through plain English* (3rd ed.). New York: Riverhead Books.

Methods/Statistics

- Field, A. (2013). *Discovering statistics using SPSS* (4rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Rubin, R. B., Palmgreen, P., & Sypher, H. E. (1994). *Communication research measures: A sourcebook*. New York: Guilford Press.

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGY

This course operates as a graduate seminar. This means that students are expected to come to class having *read and thought about* assigned readings and that everyone will participate in an active and informed manner in class discussions. In designing this course, I have worked with other faculty to identify appropriate course objectives, readings, and assignments and to design the course so that students will leave with an informed understanding of the major metatheoretical perspectives and the foundations and process of theory construction. At the end of this seminar, you should know which perspective you embrace and be able to competently defend that choice.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

Written Assignments

Graphical Model: You will prepare a graphical model for Dubin (1978), illustrating your understanding of the authors' depictions of theory construction and metatheoretical issues. Due October 5.

Personal Paradigm Statement: You will write a personal statement describing your paradigmatic position (i.e., you are putting your stake in the ground) and defending why you have adopted this position. Due October 26.

Research Problem Application: In teams, you will be assigned a major area of communication research in which you have expressed interest. Using the article from the *Journal of Communication* special issue as a starting point, identify a significant research problem in the area and then review the literature and determine the extent to which it has been investigated from the perspective of each of the four major paradigms. Write a summary of your findings, noting strengths and weaknesses of each paradigmatic approach as evidence in the research literature. Due November 2.

Theory Critique: For this assignment, you will identify a theory you think will be helpful in your dissertation research. You will review in detail the research that employs this theory, analyzing how the theory guides the research; identifying weaknesses, gaps, and contradictions; and discussing how you think the theory will guide you in your research and what modifications/extensions you believe will be necessary for your work and why. Due November 30.

In-Class Presentations

Research Problem Application: With your partner(s), you will take up to 20 minutes to present the findings from your literature review. Afterward, as a class, we will discuss how each perspective informs each of the research areas, the strengths/weaknesses of each perspective, and the extent to which the approaches may or may not be "compatible" with particular research questions. This is meant to be a creative, engaging, and (I hope) fun assignment.

Theory Critique: This will be the oral presentation of your theory critique paper. You will have 20 minutes to give a *polished* and *professional* presentation of your paper, and we'll have a Q&A session after each presenter. Presentations are scheduled for November 30 and December 7, but all papers are due November 30.

Class Discussion: Because good discussion is so important to the success of this course, I expect everyone to participate wholeheartedly. Although class discussion is not a presentation, per se, it is oral participation and will comprise a significant portion of your grade (see below).

COURSE EVALUATION

Written Assignments:	Graphical Model	50
	Personal Paradigm Statement	150
	Research Problem Application	150
	Theory Critique	250
In-Class Presentations :	Research Problem Presentation	75
	Theory Critique Presentation	125
	<u>Class Discussion</u>	<u>200*</u>
Total Points		1000

Final grades will be determined using the standard scale of 90-100% = A, 80-89% = B, 70-79% = C, <70%=E.

*During class, I will be paying close attention to everyone's participation in discussion, assessing not only quantity but also quality of participation. After each class, I will assign a grade for your participation on a plus/minus scale to reflect things like the significance of the issues you identified, the insightfulness of your observations, the questions you asked, and so forth. An "A+" will receive 100 points, an "A" will receive 95 points, an "A-" will receive 90 points, a "B" will receive 85 points, etc. These points will be averaged at the end of the semester and then doubled to determine the number of points you receive for class discussion. Participation will be graded for all classes except Day 1 (I am a reasonable person) and the classes in which you give your theory critique and research problem presentations.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

Attendance. I expect that you will attend class and be on time for each session. If you have a problem that prevents you from doing so, you should contact me before class begins. If you miss two or more classes, I will encourage you to withdraw from the course.

Writing Skills. I expect that you will demonstrate good writing skills. You should be able to compose grammatically correct sentences, write well-developed paragraphs, and express your ideas in a well-organized, coherent manner. (You also should be able to follow APA [6th edition], except don't bother with those insipid DOIs unless you really, really want to.) If you have trouble with spelling, grammar, or punctuation, I will point it out to you. I will do so in the most face-saving way possible, but it is my responsibility as your instructor to point out mistakes, so if you make 'em, I shall work with you to correct 'em. This way, you won't go through life mixing up "stationary" and "stationery."

Oral Skills. I also expect that you will demonstrate good oral communication skills. You will be making presentations and engaging in discussion of required course materials. You should be able to extemporaneously present your observations and arguments in a clear and concise manner. Your objective will be not only to create understanding with your audience but also to show the relevance of your observations and arguments. I expect that formal presentations will be polished and, if appropriate, include handouts. Problems with spelling and punctuation are difficult to discern in an oral presentation, but if you tend to make grammatical or pronunciation errors, I will point those out to you, as well. That way, you won't go through life sounding silly when you pronounce "segue" like it's a hedge, add "ir" to "regardless," say "in regards to," or—put a stake through my heart—use "me" as a subject.

Analytical Skills. I expect that you have some background in empirical research methods that will allow you to analyze the literature you will be reading. If your background is minimal, see me for some suggested readings.

Completion of Assignments. I expect that you will turn your assignments in on time. All written assignments are due at the beginning or end of class on the due date or by the designated time if the due date does not correspond with a regular class meeting. All assignments should be proofread carefully before being submitted. Work that is challenged at the level of grammar, spelling, or punctuation will be penalized up to 10 percentage points. Work that does not meet APA standards also will be penalized up to 10 percentage points. Late work will be reduced by 10 percentage points for each day it is late. Poor planning on your part does not constitute an emergency on my part OR a good reason for turning work in late. Also, please note that you are expected to complete reading assignments before due dates!

Academic Integrity. **I expect that you will do your own work.** Any student guilty of cheating or plagiarism as defined in the Students Rights and Responsibilities Code (<http://www.uky.edu/StudentAffairs/Code/part2.html>; especially sections 6.3.1 on plagiarism, and 6.3.2 on cheating) will be sanctioned with an E grade for the course.

Reasonable Accommodation Policy. If you have a special need that requires accommodation or assistance, let me know as soon as possible but no later than Wednesday, September 9. You need to provide documentation. Then we will work to make reasonable accommodation so we can ensure you have the opportunity to fully demonstrate your abilities and benefit from this course.

PERSONAL NOTE

I am looking forward to having you in class and getting to know you as we work through our semester together. My goal is for you to leave this seminar with a solid understanding of the knowledge claims and research methodologies of the major paradigms, which will allow you to become a stronger graduate student. The material in this course is challenging (to say the least). Don't become discouraged! Learning in this course is a process; it takes time for the process to work. To see that it does, I am committed to quality teaching. I will strive to make class time well organized, fully interactive, relevant, and intellectually stimulating. But I need you to commit to the course, as well! Come to class having read and thought about the week's readings. A class like CJT 751 works only if the instructor and students are fully committed to it. This can be a great experience. Please help me make it so! Along the way, if there is anything that I can do to make this course more relevant to you, your work, and/or your research interests, let me know. Take advantage of my office hours and e-mail. I have an open door policy, and I'm willing to help. Just ask!

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

August 31 Introduction, Background, Overview

Dubin, R. (1978). *Theory building* (Rev. ed.). New York, NY: The Free Press. (Preface, Introduction, Chapters 1-2)
Littlejohn, S. (2001). *Theories of human communication* (7th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth. [Chapter 1 (pp. 9-17 only) and Chapter 2]

September 14 Theory Construction: Units and Laws of Interaction

Dubin, R. (1978). *Theory building* (Rev. ed.). New York, NY: The Free Press. (Chapters 3-5)
Griffin, E. (2012). *A first look at communication theory* (8th ed.; pp. 125-130). New York: McGraw-Hill.

September 21 Theory Construction: Boundaries, System States, and Propositions

Dubin, R. (1978). *Theory building* (Rev. ed.). New York, NY: The Free Press. (Chapters 6-8)

September 28 Theory Construction: Empirical Indicators and Hypotheses

Dubin, R. (1978). *Theory building* (Rev. ed.). New York, NY: The Free Press. (Chapters 9-10)

October 5 Theory Construction: Research

Share Dubin graphical models

Dubin, R. (1978). *Theory building* (Rev. ed.). New York, NY: The Free Press. (Chapter 11)
Donohew, L., & Palmgreen, P. (2003). Constructing theory. In G. Stempel, III, D. H. Weaver, & G. C. Wilhoit (Eds.), *Mass Communication Research and Theory* (pp. 111-128). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
Bradac, J. J. (2001). Theory comparison: Uncertainty reduction, problematic integration, uncertainty management, and other curious constructs. *Journal of Communication*, 51, 456-476.
Brashers, D. E. (2001). Communication and uncertainty management. *Journal of Communication*, 51, 477-497.
Barbour, J. B., Rintamaki, L. S., Ramsey, J. A., & Brashers, D. E. (2012). Avoiding health information. *Journal of Health Communication*, 17, 212-229.

October 12 The Evolution of Positivism and the Original Debate

Polkinghorne, D. (1983). *Methodology for the human sciences: Systems of inquiry*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press. (Preface, Introduction, Chapters 1-3)
Passmore, J. (1967). Logical positivism. In P. Edwards (Ed.), *The encyclopedia of philosophy Vol. 5* (pp. 52-57). New York: Macmillan & Free Press.
Bostrom, R., & Donohew, L. (1992). The case for empiricism: Clarifying fundamental issues in communication theory. *Communication Monographs*, 59, 109-129.

October 19 Systems and Structure; Human Action; Phenomenology and Hermeneutics

Polkinghorne, D. (1983). *Methodology for the human sciences: Systems of inquiry*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press. (Chapters 4-6)
Dubin, R. (1978). *Theory building* (Rev. ed.). New York, NY: The Free Press. (Chapter 12)

October 26

Critical Theory

Share personal paradigm statements

Kellner, D. (1993). Critical theory today: Revisiting the classics. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 10(2), 43-60.

Deetz, S. (2005). Critical theory. In S. May & D. K. Mumby (Eds.), *Engaging organizational communication theory & research: Multiple perspectives* (pp. 85-111). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

November 2

Research Problem Application Presentations

Benoit, W. L., & Pfau, M. (2004). Introduction to the special issue: The state of the art in communication theory and research, part 1. *Journal of Communication*, 54(4), 588.

Anderson, J. A., & Baym, G. (2004). Philosophies and philosophic issues in communication, 1995-2004. *Journal of Communication*, 54(4), 589-615.

Plus one of the following:

Bryant, J., & Miron, D. (2004). Theory and research in mass communication. *Journal of Communication*, 54(4), 662-704.

Berger, C. R. (2005). Interpersonal communication: Theoretical perspectives, future prospects. *Journal of Communication*, 55(3), 415-447.

Nussbaum, J. F., & Friedrich, G. (2005). Instructional/developmental communication: Current theory, research, and future trends. *Journal of Communication*, 55(3), 578-593.

Parrott, R. (2004). Emphasizing "communication" in health communication. *Journal of Communication*, 54(4), 751-787.

Walther, J. B., Gay, G., & Hancock, J. T. (2005). How do communication and technology researchers study the Internet? *Journal of Communication*, 55(3), 632-657.

November 9

The Alternative Paradigm Dialog

Guba, E. G. (1990). *The paradigm dialog*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. (Foreward, Chapters 1-5)

November 16

Accommodation, Ethics, Goodness Criteria, Implementation

Guba, E. G. (1990). *The paradigm dialog*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. (Chapters 6-17)

November 23

Knowledge Accumulation, Methodology, Training, Values

Guba, E. G. (1990). *The paradigm dialog*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. (Chapters 18-29)

November 30

Theory Critique Presentations

No readings assigned. ☺

December 7

Theory Critique Presentations

No readings assigned. ☺

December 14

Toward Methodological Integration of Theory/Research

Polkinghorne, D. (1983). *Methodology for the human sciences: Systems of inquiry*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press. (Chapter 7)

Guba, E. G. (1990). *The paradigm dialog*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. (Chapters 30-32)