

Advanced Topics in Communication Theory Construction:

Paradigmatic Issues in Communication Theory and Research

CJT 751-001 Course Syllabus, Fall 2011

Monday 1:00-3:30 p.m., 223 Grehan Building

“A theory is a set of interrelated constructs (concepts), definitions, and propositions that present a systematic view of phenomena by specifying relations among the variables, with the purpose of explaining and (or) predicting the phenomena” (Kerlinger, 1986).

“The primary goal in studying communication theory should be the discovery of common patterns of thought that will provide broader and more useful theoretical structures. Behavior can be both understood and improved through systematic study. Theory is a tentative explanation invented to assist in understanding some small or large part of the ‘reality’ around us. Ideally, theoretical concepts are measurable and propositions testable and therefore subject to refutation. A theory comes into prominence when it is noticed and pursued by the scientific community, and it passes into history when better explanations are found” (Donohew & Palmgreen, 2003).

A paradigm can be viewed as a set of basic beliefs (or metaphysics) that deals with ultimates or first principles (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). It represents a worldview that defines, for its holder, the nature of the “world,” the individual’s place in it, and the range of possible relationships to that world and its parts. A paradigm in a scientific field (in this case, a social science field as embodied by communicological, psychological, and cognitive science perspectives) is a coherent set of concepts, principles, assumptions, and basic axioms that have come to be accepted by a sufficiently significant number of researchers or practitioners in the field (Kuhn, 1962, 1970).

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

American Psychological Association. (2009). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

Polkinghorne, D. (1983). *Methodology for the human sciences: Systems of inquiry*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Other readings as assigned.

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*. New York: Riverhead Books.

Methods/Statistics

Field, A. (2009). *Discovering statistics using SPSS* (3rd 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 Models: You will prepare graphical models for Dubin (1978) and Polkinghorne (1983), illustrating your understanding of the authors' depictions of theory construction and metatheoretical issues. Dubin is due September 26; Polkinghorne is due October 10.

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 November 7.

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 14.

Research Problem Application: Each of 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 brief summary of your findings, noting strengths and weaknesses. Due November 28.

Final "Examination": Think of this assignment as the "take home exam that almost was." That is, after much contemplation, I have decided I am no longer requiring you to complete this assignment. With that said, I still hope you will "take" the exam. It covers important terms, important scholars, and the major metatheoretical issues we will be covering in class. It distills the essence of this course into one concise document. If you complete it, you will have a handy guide that will be useful to you now and in the future.

In-Class Presentations

Theory Critique: This will be the oral presentation of your theory critique paper. You will have 12-15 minutes to give a *polished* and *professional* presentation of your paper.

Research Problem Application: This will be an informal presentation of the findings from your literature review. 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.

Class Discussion: Because good discussion is so important to the success of this course, I expect everyone to participate wholeheartedly. While 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 Models (2 X 50)	100
	Personal Paradigm Statement	150
	Theory Construction Proposal	250
	Research Problem Application	125
In-Class Presentations :	Theory Critique Presentation	125
	Research Problem Application	50
	<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 the extent of 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 multiplied by 2 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].) 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," or say "in regards to."

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 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 turned in. 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 7. 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 29 Introduction(s), 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 5 Labor Day – No Class

September 12 Theory Construction

Dubin, R. (1978). *Theory building* (Rev. ed.). New York, NY: The Free Press. (Chapters 3-5)

September 19 Theory Construction

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

September 26 Theory Construction

Share graphical models

Dubin, R. (1978). *Theory building* (Rev. ed.). New York, NY: The Free Press. (Chapters 9-12)
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.

October 3 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.
Pavitt, C. (1999). The third way: Scientific realism and communication theory. *Communication Theory*, 9, 162-188.

October 10 Systems and Structure; Explanations and Accounts of Human Action Phenomenology / Interpretation

Share graphical models

Polkinghorne, D. (1983). *Methodology for the human sciences: Systems of inquiry*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press. (Chapters 4-6)

October 17 Perspectives on Theory Development

Babrow, A. S. (2001). Guest editor's introduction to the special issue on uncertainty, evaluation, and communication. *Journal of Communication*, 51, 453-455.
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.
Hines, S. C. (2001). Coping with uncertainties in advance care planning. *Journal of Communication*, 51, 498-513.
Goldsmith, D. J. (2001). A normative approach to the study of uncertainty and communication. *Journal of Communication*, 51, 514-533.
Hammer, M. R., Wiseman, R. L., Rasmussen, J. L., & Brusckie, J. C. (1998). A test of anxiety/uncertainty management theory: The intercultural adaptation context. *Journal of Communication*, 51, 309-326.

October 24 Criticism / Postmodernism / Deconstruction

Kellner, D. (1993). Critical theory today: Revisiting the classics. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 10(2), 43-60.
31.

DeSantis, A. D. (1997). From Modernity to Postmodernity: Recontextualizing communication theory. In J. L. Owen (Ed.), *Context and communication behavior* (pp. 59-77). Reno, Nevada: Context Press.

Darling-Wolf, F. (2004). On the possibility of communicating: Feminism and social position. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 28, 29-46.

Wood, J. T. (1995). Feminist scholarship and the study of relationships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 12, 103-120.

**October 31 Alternative Theoretical Bases for the Study of Human Communication
Halloween: Costumes Optional (☺)**

Pearce, W. B. (1977). Metatheoretical concerns in communication. *Communication Quarterly*, 25, 3-6.

Berger, C. R. (1977). The covering law perspective as a theoretical basis for the study of human communication. *Communication Quarterly*, 25, 7-18.

Monge, P. R. (1977). The systems perspective as a theoretical basis for the study of human communication. *Communication Quarterly*, 25, 19-29.

Cushman, D. P. (1977). The rules perspective as a theoretical basis for the study of human communication. *Communication Quarterly*, 25, 30-45.

Delia, J. G. (1977). Alternative perspectives for the study of human communication: Critique and response. *Communication Quarterly*, 25, 46-62.

Hawes, L. C. (1977). Alternative theoretical bases: Toward a presuppositional critique. *Communication Quarterly*, 25, 63-68.

Rossiter, C. M. (1977). Models of paradigmatic change. *Communication Quarterly*, 25, 69-73.

November 7 Alternative Theoretical Bases 20 Years Later *Share personal paradigms*

Trent, J. D. (1998). Perspectives in communication theory: Taking the helm in the twenty-first century. In J. S. Trent (Ed.), *Communication views from the helm for the 21st century* (pp. 1-2). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Monge, P. R. (1998). Communication theory for a globalizing world. In J. S. Trent (Ed.), *Communication views from the helm for the 21st century* (pp. 3-7). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Cushman, D. P. (1998). Visions of order in human communication theory. In J. S. Trent (Ed.), *Communication views from the helm for the 21st century* (pp. 8-12). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Berger, C. R. (1998). Big questions and communication theory: Finding the cure for communication. In J. S. Trent (Ed.), *Communication views from the helm for the 21st century* (pp. 13-17). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Cronen, V. E. (1998). Communication theory for the twenty-first century: Cleaning up the wreckage of the psychology project. In J. S. Trent (Ed.), *Communication views from the helm for the 21st century* (pp. 18-38). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

November 14 Critiques of Major Communication Theories *Theory critique presentations*

No readings assigned. ☺

November 21 Communication “Theory Debate” Chautauqua

- Berger, C. R. (1991). Communication theories and other curios. *Communication Monographs*, 58, 101-113.
- Burleson, B. R. (1992). Taking communication seriously. *Communication Monographs*, 59, 79-86.
- Redding, W. C. (1992). Response to professor Berger's essay: Its meaning for organizational communication. *Communication Monographs*, 59, 87-93.
- Purcell, W. M. (1992). Are there so few communication theories? *Communication Monographs*, 59, 94-97.
- Berger, C. R. (1992). Curiouser and curiouser curios. *Communication Monographs*, 59, 101-107.
- Craig, R. T. (1993). Why are there so many communication theories? *Journal of Communication*, 43, 26-33.

November 28 Future of the Discipline 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.
- 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.

December 5 Has Communication Research Made a Difference?

- Timmerman, E. C. (2009). Forum introduction: Has communication research made a difference. *Communication Monographs*, 76, 1-3.
- Condit, C. M. (2009). You can't study and improve communication with a telescope. *Communication Monographs*, 76, 3-11.
- Seeger, M. (2009). Does communication research make a difference: Reconsidering the impact of our work. *Communication Monographs*, 76, 12-19.
- Harwood, J. (2010). A difference we can call our own. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 38, 295-298.
- Kahl, D. H. (2010). Making a difference: (Re)connecting communication scholarship with pedagogy. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 38, 298-302.
- Sherry, J. L. (2010). The value of communication science. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 38, 302-06.
- Keyton, J., Beck, S. J., Messersmith, A. S., & Bisel, R. S. (2010). Ensuring communication research makes a difference. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 38, 298-302.

December 12 Toward Methodological Integration of Theory/Research

- Polkinghorne, D. (1983). *Methodology for the human sciences: Systems of inquiry*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press. (Chapter 7)
- Daly, J. A. (1998). If communication matters so much, why don't we get the attention we deserve? In J. S. Trent (Ed.), *Communication views from the helm for the 21st century* (pp. 204-209). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.