Course Overview

Course Description. This course represents an advanced treatment of theory in the communication discipline. Theoretical traditions and theories discussed in this course are used by scholars to explain and/or interpret communication processes in various communication settings.

Student Learning Outcomes. At the conclusion of the course, students should be able to:

- explain the role of theory in communication inquiry.
- demonstrate an understanding of the communication field according to its theoretical traditions.
- demonstrate an understanding of prominent theories, theorists, and issues and debates related to theory in the field.
- compare and contrast major communication theories.
- evaluate the strengths and limitations of communication theories.
- identify and critique scholarly research that uses theory.
- illustrate how theory is used to understand and test communication processes.

Course Materials

Required:

Additional required readings are available through blackboard. You are expected to have a copy (either paper or digital) in class on the assigned day.

Optional:

Additional supplemental readings are available through blackboard. These are not required, but may help you further understand the theories and prepare for presentations and exams.

The following books have been placed on reserve in the library. These are not required, but may help you further understand the theories and prepare for presentations and exams.


- *The Encyclopedia of Communication Theory* Volumes 1 & 2 by Littlejohn & Foss is also available in the Reference section of the library.

**COURSE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

**Attendance.** Attendance is required for participation in this course. At the graduate level, students are expected to attend every class. Only work missed due to extreme illness, a family emergency, a religious holiday, or an excused university activity can be made up. Provide documentation of excused absences prior to planned absences and within a week of unplanned absences to make arrangements for missed work. Work missed due to unexcused absences may not be able to be made up. Additionally, students are responsible for obtaining the information covered in class.

**Late Work.** All assignments are due at the beginning of class time on the assigned day. If I do not have the assignment by the beginning of class that day, the assignment is late. Each calendar day that the assignment is late will generally result in a one-letter-grade reduction.

**Media.** When class is in session, *laptops* may be used *only* to take notes and reference class readings and materials. Students may *not* access unrelated web pages, instant messaging programs, email, facebook or any similar programs during class unless otherwise instructed to do so. Similarly, *mobile phones* should be turned off. Students who are using laptops or mobile phones inappropriately will no longer be allowed to bring them to class.

**Communication.** This course will rely on blackboard and islander email accounts to communicate electronically with students outside of class. Students need to be sure to check both regularly.

**Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct.** Students are responsible for the honest completion and representation of their work for the appropriate citation of sources, and for the respect of others’ academic endeavors. Academic misconduct will be monitored in this course. Plagiarism, turning in papers which are not one’s own, utilizing a previous paper, and collaborating on papers will not be tolerated and will result in the reduction of one’s grade and/or immediate failure in the course.

**Notice to Students with Disabilities:** Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act in making reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. If you suspect that you may have a disability (physical impairment, learning disability, psychiatric disability, etc.), please contact the Services for Students with Disabilities Office, located in Driftwood 101, at 825-5816. If you need disability accommodations in this class, please see me as soon as possible.

**Grade Appeal Process.** As stated in University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, and University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures. These documents are accessible through the University Rules Web site at http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules
For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Office of Student Affairs.

**Questions and Problems.** If you have concerns about the class, please arrange to discuss them with me during my office hours or by appointment.

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**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

I. **Theory Presentation & Discussion.** Over the course of the semester, each student will present and lead discussion on three different theories. At the beginning of the semester, students will have an opportunity to select which theories they will present. Students may not present more than one theory per class period. This assignment involves several components. See assignment sheet for full description.

II. **Exams.** Two exams will be given this semester. Exams will cover readings, discussions, and presentations. Exams may be composed of short answer and/or essay questions. The exams are designed to assess both students’ understanding of the theories and course content as well as their ability to apply course information.

III. **Theory Paper.** Students will write a paper comparing any two theoretical approaches to a topic of your choosing. See assignment sheet for full description.

IV. **Participation.** Critical discussion is an essential component of a graduate seminar. Students are expected to arrive to class having read all of the assigned class material and be prepared to discuss all of the readings for that day. Students may also be asked to turn in informal assignments and responses, which will count towards their participation grade.

Good discussion at the graduate level includes several important components: listening to and respecting others’ opinions, sharing ideas and thoughts, posing questions to classmates, responding to and building off of others’ comments, making connections between disparate thoughts and concepts, and encouraging others to share their ideas. Questions, comments, and answers should not be directed to the instructor. Instead, good critical graduate-level discussion involves actively listening to and engaging other students in the classroom. Monopolizing conversations, disrespecting or criticizing others, and creating a discordant atmosphere are unacceptable participation techniques. As a courtesy to others, please turn off mobile phones and put away computers during discussion.

To prepare for class discussion, consider the following questions when reading the course materials:

- Who developed the theory? Was the theory developed by communication scholars or by those in some other discipline? How might that affect the content of the theory?
- What are the main components of the theory?
- What does the theory tell us about communication processes? How can it be used to understand and study communication processes?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the theory?
- What issues or points did you find particularly compelling or problematic?
- How does this theory connect to other theories?
- What are some directions for future research using or advancing the theory?
Assignment Summary.

<table>
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<th>Points</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>My Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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**COURSE EVALUATION**

**Evaluation.** Grades are based on demonstration of mastery of course material. Work that meets the minimum requirements of an assignment, is done on time, and displays average involvement with the course content is deserving of a 'C.' Higher grades are awarded to work that goes above and beyond the minimum standards to produce products that reflect superior intellectual effort, excellence in critical analysis, and overall creativity in the approach to any given assignment.

**Grading Scale.** Use the following percentages as a guide for determining your grade.

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<td>80-89%</td>
<td>398-447</td>
<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>70-79%</td>
<td>348-397</td>
<td>C</td>
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<td>60-69%</td>
<td>298-347</td>
<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td>59% &amp; below</td>
<td>below 197</td>
<td>F</td>
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**TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE* **

**WEEK 1**
Aug. 22  
Course Overview and Introduction  
Introductions  
Perceptions of Theory

**WEEK 2**
Aug. 29  
Defining Theory  
Overview of Communication Theory  
Connecting Theory and Research  
*Readings:* Miller Chapters 1 & 2  
Infante, Rancer, & Womack (1997)  
Berger (1991)  
Burleson (1992)  
Proctor II (1992)  
(for more on the Chautauqua see Purcell, 1992 & Berger, 1992)
WEEK 3
Sept. 5 Perspectives on Theory
Evaluating Theory
Readings: Miller Chapters 3-5
Casmir (2004)
Miike (2007)

WEEK 4
Sept. 12 Theories of Message Production
- Constructivist Theory
- Action Assembly Theory
- Planning Theory
- Goals-Plans-Action Theory
- Attribution Theory
Readings: Miller Chapter 6 pp. 89-92
Miller Chapter 7
Supplemental Readings TBA

WEEK 5
Sept. 19 Theories of Message Processing
- Cognitive Dissonance Theory
- Social Judgment Theory
- Elaboration Likelihood Theory
- Inoculation Theory
- Problematic Integration Theory
Readings: Miller Chapter 8
Supplemental Readings TBA

WEEK 6
Sept. 26 Theories of Discourse and Integration
- Speech Act Theory
- Coordinated Management of Meaning
- Communication Accommodation Theory
- Expectancy Violation Theory
Readings: Miller Chapter 9
Supplemental Readings TBA
## WEEK 7

**Oct. 3**  
**Theories of Communication in Developing Relationships**  
- Social Penetration Theory  
- Uncertainty Reduction Theory  
- Social Exchange Theory  
- Attachment Theory  

**Readings:**  
- Miller Chapter 10  
- Stafford (2008)  
- Guerrero (2008)  
- Supplemental Readings TBA

## WEEK 8

**Oct. 10**  
**Midterm Exam**

## WEEK 9

**Oct. 17**  
**Theories of Communication in Ongoing Relationships**  
- Relational Communication Theory (aka Relational Patterns of Interaction)  
- Relational Dialectics Theory  
- Family Communication Patterns Theory  
- Privacy Management Theory  

**Readings:**  
- Miller Chapter 11  
- Petronio & Durham (2008)

## WEEK 10

**Oct. 24**  
**Theories of Small Group Communication**  
- Systems Theory  
- Functional Theory  
- Symbolic Convergence Theory  
- Structuration Theory  

**Readings:**  
- Miller Chapter 13  
- Galvin, Dickson, & Marrow (2006)  
- Supplemental Readings TBA

## WEEK 11

**Oct. 31**  
**Theories of Organizational Communication**  
- Weick’s Theory of Organizing (aka Process of Organizing Theory)  
- Text and Conversation of Organizing (aka Co-orientation Theory of Organizations)  
- Concertive Control Theory (aka Organizational Control Theory)  

**Readings:**  
- Miller Chapter 12  
- Supplemental Readings TBA
**Week 12**  
**Nov. 7**  
**Theories of Culture and Communication**  
- Speech Codes Theory  
- Politeness & Face Theories  
- Standpoint Theory  
- Muted Group Theory  
**Readings:** Miller Chapter 16  
Supplemental Readings TBA

**Week 13**  
**Nov. 14**  
**Theories of Media Processing and Effects**  
- Social Cognitive Theory (aka Social Learning Theory)  
- Uses and Gratifications Theory  
- Media Systems Dependency Theory  
- Agenda Setting Theory  
**Readings:** Miller Chapter 14 & 15 (pp. 269-276)  
Supplemental Readings TBA  
**Assignment:** Theory Paper Due

**Week 14**  
**Nov. 21**  
**Theories of Media & Society**  
- Spiral of Silence Theory  
- Cultivation Theory  
- Narrative Theories  
- Critical Feminist Theories  
**Readings:** Miller Chapter 15 & 6 (pp. 92-96)  
Wood (2008)  
Supplemental Readings TBA

**Week 15**  
**Nov. 28**  
**Future of Communication Theory**  
**Paper discussions**

**Finals Week**  
**Dec. 12**  
**Final Exam 4:30-7:00 PM**

*This schedule is tentative. Changes may be made throughout the semester.*
SUPPLEMENTAL READINGS

(Ordered by reading sequence)


