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 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. A number of readings are available to help you understand each theory and how it is used in research.


Supplemental & Application Readings: Additional readings for each theory are available on blackboard.

Reserve: The following books have been placed on reserve in the library.

- 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: The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Corpus Christi Hall, Room #116.

If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance at (361) 825-5816.

Grade Appeal Process. Students who feel that they have not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in this class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, cla.tamucc.edu/students/studentinfo.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean.

Questions and Problems. If you have concerns about the class, please arrange to discuss them with me during my office hours or by appointment.
I. Theory Presentation & Discussion. Over the course of the semester, each student will present and lead discussion on two 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. They are intended to also help students prepare for comprehensive exams.

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.

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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>59% &amp; below</td>
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**TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE**

**WEEK 1**

Sept. 1  
Course & Assignment Overview  
Introduction to the Course  
Perceptions of Theory  

**WEEK 2**

Sept. 8  
Overview of Communication Theory  
Connecting Theory and Research  

**Readings:**  
Miller (2005)  
Infante, Rancer, & Womack (1997)  
Berger (1991)  
Burleson (1992)  
Proctor II (1992)  
(for more on the Chautauqua see Purcell, 1992 & Berger, 1992)


**WEEK 3**

Sept. 15  **Perspectives on Theory**

**Evaluating Theory**

*Readings:* Miller (2005)
Casmir (2004)
Miike (2007)

**WEEK 4**

Sept. 22  **Theories of Message Production**

- Action Assembly Theory
- Goals-Plans-Action Theory
- Attribution Theory
- Narrative Theories

*Readings:* Baxter & Schrodt chapters 2, 3, 5, 19

**WEEK 5**

Sept. 29  **Theories of Persuasion**

- Cognitive Dissonance Theory
- Social Judgment Theory
- Elaboration Likelihood Theory
- Inoculation Theory


**WEEK 6**

Oct. 6  **Theories of Discourse and Interaction**

- Problematic Integration Theory
- Speech Act Theory
- Coordinated Management of Meaning
- Expectancy Violations Theory

*Readings:* Baxter & Schrodt chapters 8, 12, & 16

*Assignment:* Topic & Theory Selection Due

**WEEK 7**

Oct. 13  **Theories of Identity and Face**

- Social Identity Theory
- Communication Theory of Identity
- Face Theory
- Politeness Theory

*Readings:* Braithwaite & Schrodt chapters 13, 17, & 20
TBD
**WEEK 8**

Oct. 20  
*Midterm Exam*

**WEEK 9**

Oct. 27  
**Theories of Communication in Developing Relationships**
- Social Penetration Theory
- Uncertainty Reduction Theory
- Social Exchange Theory
- Attachment Theory

*Readings:* Braithwaite & Schrodt chapters 29, 30, 24  
Miller (2005) pp. 166-185

**WEEK 10**

Nov. 3  
**Theories of Communication in Ongoing Relationships**
- Interpersonal Deception Theory
- Relational Dialectics Theory
- Family Communication Patterns Theory
- Communication Privacy Management Theory

*Readings:* Braithwaite & Schrodt chapters 21, 25 & 26  
Koerner & Fitzpatrick (2006)

*Assignment:*  **Theory Paper Outline Due**

**WEEK 11**

Nov. 10  
**Theories of Small Group & Organizational Communication**
- Systems Theory
- Functional Theory
- Structuration Theory
- Concertive Control Theory

Galvin, Dickson, & Marrow (2006)

**WEEK 12**

Nov. 17  
**Theories of Culture and Communication**
- Speech Codes Theory
- Communication Accommodation Theory
- Standpoint Theory & Muted Group Theory
- Anxiety/Uncertainty Management Theory

*Readings:* Braithwaite & Schrodt chapters 12 & 15  
Philipsen, Coutu, & Covarrubias (2005)  
Gudykunst (2005)
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*This schedule is tentative. Changes may be made throughout the semester.*

**REQUIRED READINGS**

**Required Readings** (Ordered by reading sequence)


