COMM 5302: Seminar in Communication Theory
Fall 2020…Section 001…Center for Instruction 126…Wednesdays 7:00pm – 9:30pm

Professor: Dr. Michael Sollitto, Ph. D.  
Email: michael.sollitto@tamucc.edu  
Office: 327 Bay Hall  
Credit Hours: 3  
Office Phone: (361) 825-2443  
Office Hours: Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday 2:00pm-4:00pm

TAMUCC Department of Communication and Media Mission Statement
“Our mission is to develop students who are effective and ethical communicators with the creative, critical, and collaborative skills necessary to succeed in a diverse global environment.”

Course Title and Description
Seminar in Communication Theory is a three credit course that provides an overview of the development and application of sets of systematic ideas about the process of communication. Special focus will be placed on application of theory in a variety of contexts including cognition/intrapersonal communication, interpersonal communication, family communication, intercultural communication, instructional communication, organizational communication, and media/mass communication.

Course Objectives
This course is in partial fulfillment of the following Communication & Media Department outcomes. Specifically, students should be able to perform the following by the conclusion of the Fall 2020 semester:

• Define communication theory.  
• Describe the link between theory, research, and practice.  
• Develop positions and clear arguments about theories that best explain communication in particular contexts.  
• Articulate the usefulness of theory in both academic and professional lives.  
• Develop and refine scholarly writing and research skills.

Recommended Texts


Required Readings
• Reading material for selected topics from a variety of sources will be placed in the “Required Readings” folder on Blackboard (See reference information for each source on pages 5-8 of this syllabus).

Attendance
Attendance and participation are required for this course, as they are the strongest predictors of success on assignments and for actual learning to occur. Absences are strongly discouraged.
Grading Procedure
Grades will be based on the following point values:
292-325 points = A  260-291 points = B  227-259 points = C  195-226 points = D  0-194 points = F

Grading
Grades are comprised of talking points, position papers, theory symposiums, and a final exam. The total amount of points possible for the course is 325. Assignments turned in late will receive a 10-percent deduction for every day it is late.

Talking Points
Beginning with the first class period on August 19, for each reading source, a series of questions will be posed to ensure foundational understanding and intellectual engagement with the course content. The answers to these questions should be thorough and showcase genuine understanding of the content and an ability to make intellectual connections between the reading sources and other topics covered in class. Answers will be evaluated based upon depth of understanding, spelling/grammar, and the ability to synthesize the readings. Each student will submit ten Talking Points during the semester, each worth 10 points, for a total of 100 points. They must be typed with Times New Roman size 12 font and physically submitted during the class session. No emailed Talking Points will be accepted. Further directions and rubric for the Talking Points will be distributed and discussed in class at the appropriate time.

Position Papers
There will be two position papers in this course, each worth 25 points, for a total of 50 points. The purpose of the Position Papers is to encourage reflection, critical thinking, and argumentative skills. Position papers allow students to learn about an issue in the communication discipline, take a stand on the issue, and then effectively argue their viewpoint with relevant supporting evidence. Grading will be based upon the quality of information presented to defend one’s viewpoint. Further directions and rubric for the Position Papers will be distributed and discussed in class at the appropriate time.

Theory Symposium
According to Engleberg and Wynn (2003, p. 13), a symposium is when people “present short, uninterrupted speeches on different aspects of a topic for the benefit of an audience.” Theory Symposiums will take place during each discussion of a particular context of communication theory and will involve groups of approximately three students individually providing brief overviews of each theory within that particular context. Therefore, to the extent possible, students will select one theory from three different contexts of communication theory to present about during the semester. Students should provide detail about the primary purpose, history, key scholars associated with, and application of each theory that they present. Presentations should be approximately ten minutes and include a one-page handout that provides useful detail about the theory to fellow students in the course. Grading will be based upon the quality and accuracy of information presented and the creativity and liveliness of the symposium. Each Theory Symposium is worth 25 points, for a total of 75 points. Further directions and rubric for the Theory Symposium will be distributed and discussed in class at the appropriate time.

Comprehensive Exam
There will be a comprehensive exam at the semester’s conclusion based on course reading sources, class discussion, in-class activities, and any supplemental information provided throughout the course. The comprehensive exam is designed to partially mimic the comprehensive exam exit requirement for the M.A. in Communication Program to help prepare students for that experience. The final exam will be a take-home exam distributed to the students after the November 11, 2020 class period consisting of several provocative questions intended to stimulate substantive and articulate answers about communication theory. The due date for the completed comprehensive exam will be December 2 at 11:59pm on Blackboard. The final exam is worth 100 points. Further directions and rubric for the Comprehensive Exam will be distributed and discussed in class at the appropriate time.
Academic Advising
Students pursuing the Master of Arts in Communication will be paired with a graduate faculty member advisor in their first semester. Students should contact their advisors within the first two weeks of a semester to arrange a meeting during which degree plans, tracks, and opportunities for professional development should be discussed. If there is any question regarding whom a student’s academic advisor is, the student should contact Dr. Stephanie Rodriguez, Interim Graduate Coordinator, for assistance (stephanie.rodriguez@tamucc.edu; 361-825-5753). To finalize your degree plan and register for graduation, you must also meet with the Graduate Student Academic Advisor in the Academic Advising Center for the College of Liberal Arts. This office is located in Driftwood 203E and can be reached at (361) 825-3466.

Dropping a Class
I hope that you never find it necessary to drop this or any other class. However, events can sometimes occur that make dropping a course necessary or wise. Please consult with your academic advisor, the Financial Aid Office, and me, before you decide to drop this course. Should dropping the course be the best course of action, you must initiate the process to drop the course by going to the Student Services Center and filling out a course drop form. Just stopping attendance and participation will not automatically result in your being dropped from the class.

Disabilities Accommodations
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 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 Appeals
As stated in University Procedure 13.02.99.C0.03, Student Grade Appeal Procedures, 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 Procedure 13.02.99.C0.03, Student Grade Appeal Procedures. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Dean’s office in the college in which the course is taught or the Office of the Provost. These documents are accessible through the University Rules Web site at: http://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/rules_procedures/assets/13.02.99.c0.03_student_grade_appeals.pdf.

Expectations of Graduate Students
1. Ability to contribute engaging and thoughtful discussion points during class.
2. Demonstrated completion of all assigned reading material prior to class.
3. Proficiency in academic writing and use of APA Style.
4. Focus on learning instead of focus on grades.

Student Conduct
1. **Know the syllabus:** Be informed on what is to be read, discussed, and submitted for each class meeting.
2. **Respect:** Be courteous of the professor and fellow students and refrain from talking amongst yourselves during lecture and discussion. This also means that proper professional communication is also required.
3. **Preparation:** Attend class ready to contribute and interact with material presented in class.
4. **Punctuality:** Please make best effort to arrive to the classroom before class begins.
5. **Electronic Devices:** All devices that distract from the learning process are prohibited.
6. **Listening/Feedback:** Devote attention during class sessions and heed advice and constructive instruction on assignments provided throughout the semester.
7. **Effort:** This class will be fun and enlightening yet challenging. Please put forth your best effort each day in the course.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Assignment Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wed Nov 18</td>
<td>No Class: NCA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed Nov 25</td>
<td>No Class: Thanksgiving Break</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed Dec 02</td>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td></td>
<td>Final Exam</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reference Information for all Required Reading Material (Continued on Next Page)


Campus Safety Measures

To promote public safety and protect students, faculty, and staff during the coronavirus pandemic, Texas A&M University has adopted policies and practices for the Fall 2020 academic term to limit virus transmission. Students must observe the following practices while participating in face-to-face courses and course-related activities (office hours, help sessions, transitioning to and between classes, study spaces, academic services, etc.):

- **Self-monitoring**—Students should follow CDC recommendations for self-monitoring. **Students who have a fever or exhibit symptoms of COVID-19 should participate in class remotely and should not participate in face-to-face instruction.**

- **Face Coverings**—Face coverings (cloth face covering, surgical mask, etc.) must be properly worn in all non-private spaces including classrooms, teaching laboratories, common spaces such as lobbies and hallways, public study spaces, libraries, academic resource and support offices, and outdoor spaces where 6 feet of physical distancing is difficult to reliably maintain. Description of face coverings and additional guidance are provided in the [Face Covering policy](https://www.tamucc.edu/fall-2020/face-coverings-faq/) and [Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)](https://www.tamucc.edu/fall-2020/face-coverings-faq/) available on the [Provost website](https://www.tamucc.edu/fall-2020/face-coverings-faq/).

- **Physical Distancing**—Physical distancing must be maintained between students, instructors, and others in course and course-related activities.

- **Classroom Ingress/Egress**—Students must follow marked pathways for entering and exiting classrooms and other teaching spaces. Leave classrooms promptly after course activities have concluded. Do not congregate in hallways and maintain 6-foot physical distancing when waiting to enter classrooms and other instructional spaces.

- **To attend a face-to-face class, students must wear a face covering (or a face shield if they have an exemption letter). If a student refuses to wear a face covering, the instructor should ask the student to leave and join the class remotely. If the student does not leave the class, the faculty member should report that student to the [Student Conduct office](https://www.tamucc.edu/studentconduct/) for sanctions. Additionally, the faculty member may choose to teach that day’s class remotely for all students.**

**TAMU-CC Face Coverings**
TAMUCC Face Coverings Policy and FAQs:
[https://www.tamucc.edu/fall-2020/face-coverings-faq/](https://www.tamucc.edu/fall-2020/face-coverings-faq/)

Rule and Procedure:
[https://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/rules_procedures/assets/34.99.99.c0.02_use_of_face_coverings.pdf](https://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/rules_procedures/assets/34.99.99.c0.02_use_of_face_coverings.pdf)