

INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNICATION THEORY
COMM 210
Fall 2008

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Course Objectives:

Not surprisingly, the aim of this course is to provide you with an introduction to the key theories in the study of human communication. We will read and discuss the critical concepts and research findings in the discipline, with an eye to gaining insight into the development of communication as an area of academic study. By the end of this course, you should:

- Be familiar with the basic theories in the various areas of study within the communication discipline (rhetoric, interpersonal, organizational, media, gender, and intercultural communication).
- Understand the linkages between the various areas noted above.
- Recognize how communication theories apply outside of the classroom (in your personal and professional life).
- Be prepared for further study in the discipline.

Textbook:

Griffin, E. (2009). *A first look at communication theory* (7th Ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Study aides are available at www.afirstlook.com. Chapter overviews, outlines and other helpful information about each theory are easy to access through the textbook website.

Course Policies:

1. Attendance will be taken every day (whether you see me do it or not). You are allowed **3** unexcused absences. Beginning with the fourth absence, you will lose **20** points from your final point total for each additional unexcused absence. I must be notified of excused absences through the College's absence notification system (corner of George & Glebe Streets). Late arrival and early departure will count as a half absence. If you do miss class, I should warn you that I hold you responsible for what takes place in class. In addition, I do not repeat course "lectures" and you are responsible for announcements or schedule changes made in class. Students with seven or more absences (excused or unexcused) will receive an "F" for the course.
2. You are responsible for assigned readings in the text, even if we do not cover those readings in class lectures. This material may appear on exams. You will also be responsible for reading any additional material that I provide in class over the term, and this material may appear on exams as well.
3. **No make-up exams or presentations will be allowed. No late work will be accepted without arrangements made in advance. Work that is turned after the class period it is due will be penalized 1 letter grade each day it is late thereafter.**

4. All written work submitted must be typed, double-spaced, and proofread. I do correct spelling, punctuation, and grammar.
5. Please turn off all cell phones, blackberries, etc., before entering class. If your cell phone rings more than once in my class, I will ask you to leave it at home. Laptops will be allowed for note-taking ONLY. You should have your laptop open to a word processing program – no surfing the web, email, etc.
6. Any student who, because of a disability, may require special arrangements to meet course requirements, should contact the professor as soon as possible, but no later than September 1, 2008.

Assignments:

Group Presentation -

*(1 presentation @ 40 points and
1 individual paper @ 10 points)* **50**

Quizzes

(5 quizzes @ 10 points each) **50**

Four Exams

(4 @ 100 points each) **400**

Total Possible Points **500**

Final Grade Points:

465 – 500 points = A
450 – 464 points = A-
435 – 449 points = B+
415 – 434 points = B
400 – 414 points = B-
385 – 399 points = C+
365 – 384 points = C
350 – 364 points = C-
335 – 349 points = D+
315 – 334 points = D
300 – 314 points = D-
299 points & below = F

Tentative Course Schedule*
Fall 2008**

- T – 8/26 Course Introduction, Name game
- R – 8/28 What is theory? What is Communication?
Have read for today:
Ch. 1 --- Launching your study of communication theory
- T – 9/2 Approaches to the Study of Communication
Choose Groups
Have read for today:
Ch. 2 --- Talk about theory
- R – 9/4 Approaches to the Study of Communication (continued)
Activity
- T – 9/9 Seven Traditions in Communication
Have read for today:
Ch. 4 --- Mapping the territory

Interpersonal Communication Theories

- R – 9/11 **Have read for today:**
Interpersonal Messages
Ch. 5 --- Symbolic Interactionism
- T – 9/16 **Have read for today:**
Ch. 7 --- Expectancy Violation Theory
www.afirstlook.com --- Interpersonal Deception Theory
- R – 9/18 Interpersonal Deception Theory (cont.)
Have read for today:
Relationship Development
Ch. 9 --- Social Penetration Theory
- T – 9/23 **Have read for today:**
Ch. 10 --- Uncertainty Reduction Theory
- R – 9/25 **Have read for today:**
Relationship Maintenance
Ch. 12 --- Relational Dialectics
- T – 9/30 **Have read for today:**
Ch. 13 --- Interactional View
- R – 10/2 **Exam # 1**

Rhetorical Theories

T – 10/7 **Have read for today:**
Public Rhetoric
Ch. 21 --- The Rhetoric of Aristotle

R – 10/9 **Have read for today:**
Ch. 23 --- Narrative Paradigm

T – 10/14 Fall Break!

Group and Organizational Communication Theories

R – 10/16 **Have read for today:**
Ch. 17 --- Functional Perspective on Group Decision Making
Ch. 19 --- Cultural Approach

T – 10/21 **Have read for today:**
Ch. 19 --- Cultural Approach (cont.)
Ch. 20 --- Critical Theory of Communication in Organizations

R – 10/23 **Exam # 2**

Media Theories

T – 10/28 Field trips!
Have read for today:
Ch. 24 --- Media Ecology

R – 10/30 Video
Have read for today:
Ch. 25 --- Semiotics

T – 11/4 Video
Have read for today:
Ch. 26 --- Cultural Studies

R – 11/6 **Have read for today:**
Ch. 27 --- Cultivation Theory

T – 11/11 **Have read for today:**
Ch. 28 --- Agenda-Setting Theory

R – 11/13 **Exam # 3**

Intercultural Communication Theories

T – 11/18 **Have read for today:**
www.afirstlook.com --- Anxiety/Uncertainty Management Theory
Ch. 31 --- Face Negotiation Theory

R – 11/20 Face Negotiation Theory (cont.)
Have read for today:
 Ch. 32 --- Speech Codes Theory

Gender and Communication Theories

T – 11/25 **Have read for today:**
 Ch. 33 --- Genderlects
 Ch. 34 --- Standpoint Theory

R – 11/27 Thanksgiving Break!!

T – 12/2 Standpoint Theory (cont.)

R – 12/4 **Have read for today:**
 Ch. 35 --- Muted Group Theory

R – 12/11 **Exam #4**
There is no “comprehensive final exam” in this course.

***** The professor reserves the right to change this syllabus and course schedule at any time.**

Group Project Assignment Guidelines – Comm 210 – Lacroix

You and your group will select one particular theory (from those we are covering as listed on the course schedule) to study and demonstrate. Presentations should be creative applications of a few **key concepts** of a particular theory and show how this theory applies in our everyday lives. Broad format suggestions include: game shows, team competitions, role-playing exercises, skits, debates, simulations, etc. You can show YouTube clips or DVDs, provide case studies or newspaper articles, facilitate an activity, etc. Please be sure that these presentations do not exclude or offend any class members. Your group's presentation should last 20 minutes.

As a group, you will be graded on the following criteria---two written components, and three performance components as noted below. **You are also required to meet with me as a group at least 2 class days (1 week) before you present.** Finally, you hand in an individual assessment of your group's performance.

Written:

List of Objectives: You will hand in one copy of the List of Objectives for the whole group which articulates clearly both **what** you intend to teach the class and **how** you intend to go about doing it. In other words, what are your goals for the class and how will you achieve them? Be very specific.

Student Handouts: You will provide a chapter handout to the class that will help them study for the exam (and will free them from having to take notes while you are presenting). This should be creative and clear...often successful groups tie their handout to the theme of their presentation.

Both of these documents should be free of errors, include all group members' names, and be handed in on the day of the presentation. I recommend that you produce this document as a group. I have many good examples in my office.

Performance:

Creativity: Design your presentation to be interesting, creative, and ideally, interactive. You do not have to frame this as a typical presentation; in fact, I prefer that you do something more creative than that...so you can do the whole presentation as a news broadcast, or as a debate, or as a talk show, or as an ethnography...etc. What you must do, though, is provide some example or activity that demonstrates the theory in "real life".

Presentation/Speaking Skills: I will write individual commentary to each of you on the basic public speaking delivery issues---volume, rate, fluency, eye contact, audience focus, preparedness, etc. As a group, you should balance the speaking time and responsibilities evenly among you. One of my top pet peeves is seeing the workings of the presentation during the presentation (when it is clear that members of the group are unsure what is happening and have to check with one another). Group members should dress appropriately...smart casual or professional (no flip-flops, shorts, etc.) **Begin your presentation with an attention-getter and appropriate introduction and be sure to end with a developed conclusion.**

Thought-Provoking Content: Your group must present the material in a thought-provoking way, helping the class to see how the theory applies to "real life." Remember that the class will have had to have read the chapter, and thus should be prepared to talk about the implications of the theory. It is always preferable for groups to generate some kind of discussion in the class as a part of their presentation. Seeking out additional sources (see suggested readings at the ends of the chapters) helps.

INDIVIDUAL ASSESSMENT: Due 2 class periods after your group presents.

Each member of the group will write an assessment of the group's performance---address the process the group engaged in to prepare for the presentation as well as the successes and failures in the group presentation itself. You should also address your own strengths and weaknesses as a group member and as a public speaker. What will you do differently in future group work and in-class presentations?