COMM 510 – Communication Theory
Elena C. Strauman, Ph.D.
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Office Hours: I am generally here at North Campus by 5:30 on T/R. My main campus office hours are T/R 1:30-3. Other meeting times can be arranged by appointment.
Office location: 7 College Way, Rm. 102

Required Texts:


Recommended: If you do not already own a copy, I strongly suggest you purchase The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (5th ed).

Course Maxim: Nothing is as practical as a good theory.

Course Description:
This course offers a survey of the main theoretical currents informing contemporary communication studies. The axiological, epistemological, methodological, and ontological underpinnings of the critical-cultural, cybernetic, rhetorical, phenomenological, semiotic, socio-cultural, and socio-psychological approaches to understanding human communication will be explored in relation to communication contexts ranging from interpersonal to mass mediated. Students will also learn how to report communication research in accordance with the conventions of APA style.

Course Goals:
After taking this course, students should:
■ understand the nature of theory building,
■ possess a working knowledge of the paradigmatic assumptions, methods, goals, and values of humanistic and social scientific communication inquiry,
■ demonstrate an advanced knowledge of the main theoretical traditions in communication studies,
■ possess and array of research strategies for accessing and assessing classic and contemporary peer reviewed academic journal articles,
■ exhibit facility in informal discussions of, and formal presentations about, communication theory.
Conferences

While I am unsure as to how the office hours situation really manifests itself at North Campus, please rest assured that I will work to find a situation that is agreeable to all of us. My goal is to be as available as you need me to be to facilitate a successful graduate course. To that end, if the hours listed are not ideal or the situation we find ourselves in is not working, please let me know and we can find alternate options.

Expectations

Graduate work is hard. I fully understand that people have lives, jobs, and families outside of school. That said, I also understand that you wish to achieve an advanced degree in the field of communication. What this means is that I expect you to be in class as a fully participating member. I expect you to turn work in on time at the beginning of class, as I do not accept late work. I expect you to come prepared to talk about the readings and engage in healthy, collegial debate on the ideas of the day. I expect that your work be well thought out and well prepared. I expect that your assignments will be of high quality -- clear, concise, fully supported, and documented.

From me, you can expect that I will provide you substantive feedback on your work. I will work to facilitate meaningful class periods, combining lecture as well as discussion and application. Feedback will be given in a timely manner. If you have questions or concerns, you should certainly feel free to contact me. I am happy to discuss your projects and will provide feedback on drafts.

Criteria for evaluation.

A = 92-100
A- = 90-91.99
B+ = 88-89.99
B = 82-87.99
B- = 80-81.99
C+ 78-79.99
C = 72-77.99
C- = 70-71.99
D+ = 68-69.99
D = 62-67.99
F = <62

Recommended Text:

If you are unfamiliar with the style manual of the American Psychological Association, you should definitely get a copy. APA Style is the standard for the field of communication for research and publishing. It is the citation style expected and required for all work for this course. You can expect that papers which do not adhere to APA style will receive a significantly lower grade.
Attendance

While I don’t expect this to be an issue in a graduate class, the attendance policy is as follows. You should be here. I understand that, at times, life gets in the way. However, if you intend on missing more than one class this semester, you should consider whether or not this is the class for you.

Assignments

Participation (5%): For me, participation involves more than being a body in a desk. Be here and be engaged.

Midterm Exam (25%) Date: 10/7
Final Exam (25%) Date: TBA

Short Paper Assignments (15% each):

Paper #1 (Due: 9/23): You have read about the history and traditions of the field of communication. Explain where you see yourself fitting in these traditions and discuss the significance of this area to the field as a whole as well as to your life, career choices, and research as a graduate student. For this discussion, you will cite the sources we studied in class. The assignment assumes that you will look beyond class readings into the specific theories and ideas. All material (including course readings) should be properly cited according to APA style.

Paper #2 (Due: 10/21): Application exercise. Using one theory or theoretical category that we have discussed thus far this semester, explain how that theory adequately (or inadequately) describes or explains a particular communication instance or phenomenon. You will draw from course readings and outside materials to support your claims. All material (including course readings) should be properly cited according to APA style.

Paper #3 (Due 12/2): Literature review. Choose a theory or theoretical category and conduct a systematic and carefully written review of that theory and its practical applications. Your review should draw from substantive scholarly, peer reviewed work and address the scope of the theory, relevant research using the theory, and future directions and limitations for the use of the theory.
Criteria for evaluation.

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Schedule:

**Week 1**

8/26   Introduction to the Course

**Week 2**

9/2   The Field of Communication (Dues & Brown; WS 1; LS 1-3)

**Week 3**

9/6   Identity (WS 2; LF 4; W – Mead)