



School of Advertising & Public Relations
COLLEGE OF COMMUNICATION & INFORMATION
University of Tennessee Knoxville

Syllabus

CCI 540—Communication Theory

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Dates: Aug. 17–Dec. 1, 2016

Time: Tues., 5:45–8:35 p.m.

Location: Comm. 317

Communication Theory

Description

Kurt Lewin once said “There is nothing so practical as a good theory.” Indeed, Theory is what guides most professional activities, and many everyday activities, whether we are aware of it or not. Theory gets ships into space, keeps building and bridges from crumbling, helps parents raise their children, informs public health campaigns, helps educators develop course materials, helps advertising and public relations professionals create compelling messages, informs journalism and broadcasting activities, assists in romantic relationships, guides speeches and message design, and thousands of other things. Understanding the value of theories and how to use them in the real world might be the most important thing that you learn to do in graduate school.

Communication Theory will teach you to understand theory, how to apply it in various professional research and communication settings, how to critique theory, and how to build and test theory. Additionally, the course will focus on the major contexts and approaches that guide the use and application of theory within communication, and provide students with the skills needed to build, refine, test, and apply theory in various settings. Once you understand the basics of theory, you will be able to integrate any theory into your communication practices or research with very little effort.

Student Course Objectives

- Examine the nature of theory development in communication and related areas.
- Examine the major theoretical communication paradigms and associated models and theories.
- Become familiar with the critical thinking processes necessary for understanding and conducting theory-based research.
- Understand and apply major theoretical perspectives in communication and related fields.
- Compare and contrast theories across an assortment of theoretical contexts.
- Understand and apply theories across communicative contexts.
- Develop theory specific research questions and apply various theories to real world communication contexts.
- Become aware of the relationship between theory and research methods, and learn to conduct theory based communication research.

Course Expectations

Adapting to graduate school is a big transition for most students. The expectations of students are higher, the level of preparation for class is higher; and the assignments require a higher level of work and commitment than undergraduate activities. The assumption in

graduate school is that you enjoy learning, or at least have committed to putting the energy needed to excel. You are in a CCI graduate class because you are interested in advancing your professional understanding of communication related ideas and theories, and for academic or professional benefit. Thus, the work you put in should not be seen as a burden—you are not a “customer” but an intellectual on the path of enlightenment—nor should your professors be seen as sales people. My job is to give you the knowledge, information, and opportunity to succeed; your job is to make that happen. Two years, five years, or ten years down the road, if you did not learn something in this class that you needed to know, the fault is yours. So take advantage of the opportunities offered. I will work *with you* but not *for you*.

Class Format

Communication theory is a seminar style course in which you will be expected to come to class prepared to discuss the ideas contained in each week’s readings. Teachers cannot make students learn by talking to them, and simply requiring you to memorize concepts for exams that you do not really understand or embrace is an utter waste of your time and money. Seminar courses require collaboration in the knowledge and teaching process. The students and teacher work to co-create a unique reality and set of experiences, and when done well, I learn as much from you by talking about the theories again as you do from me.

My job is not to come in every class and lecture to you, but to help guide you in your journey of discovery and understanding. At the end of the semester if you do not believe that this class (and every other class that you took) was not the best class that you have taken, then you have not done *your* job. Do not blame your teachers if you did not learn enough. We live in an age of information and access. Throw away your technological distractions, your phones, TVs, etc. for the semester, and give yourself over to the experience. You will get a lot more out of being a student if you treat it like a fulltime job. Learning is a two-way street. If you do not like how a class is taught or want to know how to get more out of the course, take advantage of the opportunities to change things. Do more work. Come see me with questions. Visit your professors. But never walk away from the experience believing that someone else is to blame when you do not understand something.

Required Texts/Readings

Miller, K (2005). *Communication theories: Perspectives, processes, and contexts (second edition)*. Boston: McGraw Hill.

Littlejohn, S. W., & Foss, K. A. (2005 or 2008). *Theories of Human Communication (Ninth Edition)*. Belmont CA: Wadsworth.

American Psychological Association. (2009 or newer). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association (6th ed.)*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. **APA style is required on all papers.** Buy it from Amazon for \$15–28—spiral bound recommended, it is easier to use (www.amazon.com/dp/B00CPUBEBM).

See class reading schedule below for additional readings. The class readings will consist of articles and book chapters made available via Dropbox.com, or flash drives brought to class for you to copy. Most readings are also available through the UTK library.

Class Policies

- As graduate students, communication professionals, and future colleagues, my preferred mode of communicating with you is face-to-face. Come see me during office

hours or whenever I am there, and let's get lunch once in a while. I will of course pay, so make the time to come see me.

- Make an effort to spend time with each other outside of class in the flesh, not just on social media.
- Do your readings and come to class prepared to talk—if you are nervous about participating, come talk to me for some ideas about how to succeed. This is a seminar class so you should be talking, *a lot*, every class. Asking questions, giving answers, and advancing the dialogue.
- Laptops are fine for note taking only, or searching readings. No smartphones, tablets, headphones, or other technology, open, on *vibrate*, **secretly checked**, or accessible during class.
- Bring printed and marked up hard copies of class readings to each class. I often use the computer so I can search for key words in the readings, during discussions, but I already own the books and articles on paper, you should have your paper copies as well.
- Readings and assignments are due in class on the date indicated.
- **All assignments should be BOTH printed on single sided paper, and submitted electronically**, and will be automatically checked via *SafeAssign*. Please remind me if there is ever a missing dropbox.
- *Careful proofreading, spell checking, and APA style is required on all papers.*
- My vision is not what it used to be. Consequently, I prefer a very legible font like *Bookman Old Style* 11-point (not 12). **Do not use Times New Roman.** *I will provide Bookman Old Style to you if you need it. Alternatives: New Century Schoolbook, Palatino, Garamond, Bookman, Caslon, Baskerville.*
- If you intend to miss class because of a religious holiday, you need to tell me ahead of time (at the beginning of the semester), and make arrangements to make up for the missed class *before* you miss it.
- This is a graduate class, attendance is required or your final grade will be reduced. You get one class with no penalty, a second class with a letter grade reduction in your final grade, and if you miss a third class you will fail the entire class. Graduate students should never miss *any* classes.

Key Elements for Inclusion in Syllabuses and Student Resources

CCI Diversity Statement: CCI recognizes and values diversity. Exposing students to diverse people, ideas and cultures increases opportunities for intellectual inquiry, encourages critical thinking, and enhances communication and information competence. When all viewpoints are heard, thoughtfully considered, and respectfully responded to, everyone benefits. Diversity and fairness unite us with the wider professional and global community.

We are intellectuals. Consequently, we should respect diversity in all of its forms: race, sex, gender, age, religion, political orientation, country of origin, economic status, etc. Everyone in the U.S. (citizen or visitor) has a right to his/her opinion and should feel comfortable expressing their opinion. As citizens, we are under no obligation to agree with what other people believe, however, we must, as a civil society, support people's right to worship, act, look, and think, as they want. In this classroom, we will not tolerate any mistreatment of others because of how they look, what they believe, where they come from, or because of a

lack of knowledge or skills beyond their control. The only thing that we will not be tolerant of is a lack of ethical and moral fiber.

As Donald M. Erb said: “Do not be tolerant of misrepresentation, of superficiality, of the parading of false issues as though they were real issues. Tolerance does not extend to intellectual dishonesty or ineptitude” —*Erb Memorial Union, University of Oregon, 1990.*

Disability Accommodation Statement: If you have a disability that allows for accommodation, please contact me immediately. Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) in 2227 Dunford Hall at 865-974-6087, or by videophone at, 865-622-6566, to document their eligibility for services. ODS will work with students and faculty to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

University Civility Statement: Civility is genuine respect and regard for others: politeness, consideration, tact, good manners, graciousness, cordiality, affability, amiability and courteousness. Civility enhances academic freedom and integrity, and is a prerequisite to the free exchange of ideas and knowledge in the learning community. Our community consists of students, faculty, staff, alumni, administrators, and campus visitors. Community members affect each other’s being and have a shared interest in creating and sustaining an environment where all community members and their points of view are valued and respected. In affirming the value of each member of the university community, the campus asks that all its members adhere to the principles of civility and community adopted by the campus: <http://civility.utk.edu>.

Academic Integrity: “An essential feature of Tennessee, Knoxville is a commitment to maintaining an atmosphere of intellectual integrity and academic honesty. As a student of the university, I pledge that I will neither knowingly give nor receive any inappropriate assistance in academic work, thus affirming my own personal commitment to honor and integrity.”

Academic Dishonesty: This course adheres to the university’s Academic Standards of Conduct and Honor Statement, as presented in the student handbook *Hilltopics*. All students are expected to be honorable and to observe standards of conduct appropriate to a community of students and scholars. All work in this course should be the original work of the student. Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course, dismissal from the program and dismissal from the University. Since dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. Scholastic dishonesty includes plagiarism, which according to Webster is: “to take (ideas, writings, etc.) from (another) and pass them off as one’s own.” Therefore, handing in work that contains material written by someone else, whether it is a current or former student, or a secondary source and presenting it as your own efforts is a clear example of plagiarism.

APA Ethics Code Standard 8.11, Plagiarism: This course also adheres to the American Psychological Association’s ethics code regarding plagiarism and self-plagiarism (APA Publication Manual, 6th edition, pp. 15–16). “Just as researchers do not present the work of others as their own (plagiarism), they do not present their own previously published work as new scholarship (self-plagiarism)” (p. 16).

My Addendum: All work should be your own. Never cheat. Be aware that plagiarism by a graduate student is grounds for dismissal from the university. Cite whatever is not your own original ideas or writing (including prior papers from other classes). *Plagiarism will result in an F on the assignment and/or the class at my discretion, and will be reported as an academic integrity violation.* Note: Plagiarism detection software will be used for all assign-

ments. These products work *very well* and check the Internet, journals, books, previous class papers submitted to the system across the world, and bespoke papers that teachers have uploaded. Never risk your professional career or reputation over a lower class grade. Be sure to know the University of Tennessee's Academic Standards of Conduct and Honor Statement, in [Hilltopics](#). *I have caught several graduate students and many undergraduate students trying to cheat, please do not ever let it be you. There is never a good reason for it.*

Open Records

Public Law 93-380 requires me to protect the confidentiality of educational records for prospective, current, and former students. Grades cannot be discussed via e-mail, or with other people such as friends, parents, etc.

Grading

A 95-100, A- 90-94	C+ 77-79, C 73-76, C- 70-72
B+ 87-89, B 83-86, B- 80-82	D+ 67-69, D 63-66, D- 60-62
F: 0-59	

Assignments

Substantive Participation (includes research questions & notes)	15%
Exams (two essay based exams, 15% each)	30%
Theory Exploration Papers (3) (5-7 pp. d-spaced + Ref., 10% each)	25%
Final Paper (30%) (18-25 pp. of text, double-spaced, 18+ sources [1-source per-page is a standard average], APA style, and conference/article appropriate. Be prepared to submit to a top conference like NCA as a student paper. Write with a particular journal in mind).	30%
Total	100%

Assignment Details

Participations

Beginning week three, come in with 3 or more (typed and printed) research questions relevant to the theories examined that day, and relevant to your individual areas of study (mass communication, public relations, etc.). Additionally, come in with at least three substantive questions about the readings, and consider how individuals from different ethnic, racial, class, or gender membership, would critique each theory.

Exams

There will be two exams. Both exams will be essay based. You will need to know the readings, and have kept up with the readings to do well on the exams. **Exam I** will be an in-class exam, while Exam II will be a take-home exam and due before or during the final exam week (see calendar). For the in class exam, you will be given approximately ten essay questions to study a week before the exam, and then on the day of the exam, you need to be prepared to answer three of the questions when randomly selected during the exam period. The answer length is whatever it takes to answer the question but expect to write for about 1.5 hours. Answers should be original, and draw upon your own original thoughts, ideas, and support from the texts. Exam two will also be essay based and consist of several questions based on the class readings and your personal readings from your individual theory papers.

Theory Papers

For the theory papers, you may select any theory that interests you. However, two of the theories examined during the semester must be relevant to your academic home (Communication, Journalism and Electronic Media, Political Science, Public Relations, etc.), the third should come from another area, and the theories you explore in depth cannot be one of the theories we dealt with substantively in class readings. Thus, although we will briefly cover rhetoric, interpersonal communication, culture, etc., you could choose from 100 areas of rhetorical theory, but not the specific area discussed in the class readings.

For these papers, you will obtain three or more seminal/ovular articles or chapters (from different sources) on a particular theory. For example, you might pick three readings on the theory of ideological persuasion by McGee and Martin, Black, and Bitzer. Or you might select three articles on Hofstede's theory of cultural variability. You could read three articles on dialogic theory, social network theory, or feminist theory.

If you pick an older theory, make sure that at least one of the readings examined is from the last five years. Also, only scholarly sources count here, they should be well-referenced, and full article or chapter length. So, if you examined "research in brief" or "abstracts" you still need three substantive articles/chapters.

In terms of the content of the paper, you should write the papers like a literature review, setting up an area for an article, book chapter, professional report, etc. Begin with an overview of the assumptions of the theory, focusing on at least four of the issues from class (ontology, epistemology, axiology, philosophical assumptions, theoretical scope, what tradition the theory comes from, etc.). Next, discuss each of the readings separately, explaining what they tell us that is unique, how they are relevant to the "study" you might be conducting, etc. If you are not sure how this is done, examine a dozen literature reviews in journals.

Final Paper

The only requirements of the final paper are that the topic and research are original to you and this class, focus on theory, meet the length requirements, be written with a particular journal or conference in mind, and be submitted on time.

In terms of the content, your essay can extend, refine, or clarify, theory, criticism, practice, or pedagogy. Thus, the focus is on theory not the artifact/event/context studied. In other words, you cannot study a "gender" issue, but you can study a specific theory of gender communication. You cannot study something "rhetorically," but you can study a specific rhetorical theory. You cannot critique "culture in social media," but you could study a social media theory, or a specific theory of culture. Details will be provided as the semester progresses.

The point here is what matters is *the theory* not *the context*. If you belong to a particular ethnic group, are LGBTQ or cisgendered, are a person of size, are liberal or conservative, etc., I do not care. Communication theory is not about the object of study but the theory of study. You can study Dialogic theory, for example, by exploring trust, gender, mass communication, culture, or racial *contexts*, but in every case, you are not studying the context but the theory. The context is just a tool to advance our understanding of communication.

CLASS SCHEDULE

NOTE: You are intellectuals now. Although I hate saying this, be sure you read with a dictionary at your side and look up every word you do not know, even the words you “think” you know from the context. Theory is often *difficult* to understand even when you know the words, *impossible* if you are only guessing. I will ask you about technical and uncommon terms in class, and you should know them, or at least have the definitions written in the margins of your readings so you can consult them easily.

Date	Week	Readings/Assignment	Assignment Due
Aug. 23	1	<i>Introductions and Overview of Course Using APA Style Writing Research Questions Academic Journals vs Trade Journals, etc. Writing a Literature Review How to Analyze Theory.</i>	
Aug. 30	2	<i>What is Communication? Communication Theory & Scholarship</i> Read: Miller, pp. iv–82 Littlejohn & Foss, pp. vii–62. Note: Lookup words you don't know.	
Sept. 06	3	<i>Communicator, Message</i> Read: L&F, pp. 63–146	
Sept. 13	4	<i>Conversation</i> Read: L&F, pp. 147–193	Reaction Paper I
Sept. 20	5	<i>Relationship, Group</i> Read: L&F, pp. 194–250	
Sept. 27	6	<i>Organization, Media</i> Read: L&F, pp. 251–314	
Oct. 04	7	<i>Culture and Society</i> Read: L&F, pp. 315–355	
Oct. 11	8		Exam I, In Class
Oct. 18	9	<i>Interpersonal Theories</i> Read: Miller, pp. 145–206	Reaction Paper II
Oct. 25	10	<i>Symbolic, Information Processing</i> Read: Miller, pp. 84–144	
Nov. 01	11	<i>Organizational & Group</i> Read: Miller, pp. 207–247	
Nov. 08	12	<i>Media Processing, Effects, Society</i> Miller, pp. 248–289	
Nov. 15	13	<i>Culture</i> Miller, pp. 290–end Hofstede from Dropbox	Reaction Paper III
Nov. 22	14	<i>Rhetorical, Interpretive, Critical Theories</i> Read: Sproule: NMR; Kent, 2001; Kent, 1998, 2001.	
Nov. 29	15	TBA	Final Paper Due
Dec. 02, Friday		<i>Final Exam due in dropbox by midnight</i>	Exam II, Take Home