

FALL 2011	CSS 3310: Communication Theory
	Professor: Lacy McNamee, Ph.D. Office: Castellaw 144 Office Hours: Wednesday 2:30-4:30 p.m. (or by appt) Email: Lacy_McNamee@baylor.edu Phone: (254) 710-4698 <i>(email is the most effective channel of communication)</i>

“There is nothing so practical as a good theory.”
Kurt Lewin

OVERVIEW Theories help us to make sense of the world around us. Some theories are “grand” (think ideologies) while others are more narrow (think particular economic or scientific theories – like the theory of relativity). But regardless of their scope, all theories shape how we make judgments about reality, relationships, circumstances, and decisions in our lives. This course exposes you to theories of communication, both large and small, with the intention of better equipping you to make sense of the communicative aspects of your world.

COURSE GOALS The overarching goal of this course is to think about and analyze communication in a systematic way (i.e., in a theoretical way!). Sub-goals in line with this aim include:

- A. Comparing the field of communication studies with other social sciences and understand its varied contributions to the knowledge/practice of human interaction.
- B. Analyzing communication phenomenon from different perspectives (both general theoretical views and specific theories).
- C. Recognize and explain major communication theories
- D. Applying knowledge of communication theories to “real world” issues.

COURSE OBJECTIVES To accomplish the aforementioned goals, you will engage in the following:

1. Read about major communication theories / research processes and demonstrate understanding of ideas in these readings by taking *short, objective quizzes* (Goals B&C).
2. Demonstrate abilities to critically analyze communication issues by participating in taking *3 unit exams* and participating in *class discussions/activities* (Goals A, B, & D).
3. Demonstrate abilities to systematically examine specific communication phenomenon by writing *3 short essays* and participating in *class discussions/activities* (Goal D).
4. Relate your understanding of a specific communication theory by *delivering a 45-minute (partnered) presentation* (Goals C & D).

MATERIALS
AND
RESOURCES

Required text:

Griffin, E. (2012). *A first look at communication theory* (8th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Additional readings:

In addition to required text readings, supplemental readings will be included in writing assignments and unit exams. It is your responsibility to obtain these if you miss class.

Blackboard:

Blackboard will be used to access additional readings, supplemental learning resources (including PowerPoints), and grading/attendance records - you will also submit some assignments via Blackboard. Specifically, we will use the following Blackboard tools:

- *“Course Documents”* - There are folders containing “Assigned Readings”, “Assignment Prompts,” and “Writing Resources” to help with written assignments.
- *“Tools”* - There are links to your grade book (“My Grades”) and attendance (“Online Attendance”) located under this tab. Grades/attendance are posted in a timely manner so that you can monitor your own success in the course. You can also email your professor and classmates using the “Send Email” link.
- *“Assignments”* - You will use this tab to submit an electronic version of all of your written assignments (see subsequent section on “Written Assignments”).

Writing resources:

All written assignments must be formatted according to standards of the American Psychological Association’s (APA) 6th edition manual. Copies are available in Moody Library or you may consult Purdue’s “Owl” Online Writing Lab for formatting guidance/examples at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>.

Need help with written assignments? Here’s some options for assistance:

- (a) The “Writing Resources” folder on Blackboard (under Course Documents) has information on crafting, editing, and formatting your written work.
- (b) I will happily look over an assignment if you’ll provide a draft at least 1 class day prior to the due date.
- (c) The English Department’s Writing Center offers daily tutoring sessions to assist students of all majors in crafting, formatting, and proofreading written assignments. Call 254-710-4849 to schedule an appointment.

Learning accommodations & resources

BU offers assistance in many aspects of your learning process including:

- *Documented Disabilities:* The Office of Access and Learning Accommodations (OALA) is an excellent resource for students who experience learning/physical disabilities (e.g., dyslexia). I am happy to accommodate any documented disabilities.
- *Physical/Mental Wellbeing:* The Baylor Counseling Center provides a variety of services designed to help student with stress management, relaxation, depression, anxiety, and other aspects of mind/body wellbeing. See the Center’s website (http://www.baylor.edu/counseling_center/) for further information.

POLICIES & PROCEDURES Attendance, Participation, & Absences

Per BU's College of Arts & Sciences policy, your presence is required in at least 75% of the scheduled class dates listed on your course calendar (i.e., failure on the 11th absence). Students who fail to meet this attendance requirement will receive an F in the course. [Excused absences still count toward your 75% requirement; thus, I only mark "A" (absent) or "P" (present) on Blackboard attendance.]

Beyond the minimum attendance requirement, you are expected to come prepared to class and actively participate. This level of participation accounts for 10% of your grade in this course (NOTE: participation during student presentations and group activities are particularly crucial to this grade).

Grading Policies / Logistics

The specific grading criteria and assignments included in this course are clearly outlined for you in this syllabus. From this point forward, your academic achievement relies on your level of personal responsibility and willingness to fulfill the requirements of each assignment and adhere to the following standards and procedures regarding:

1. *Submission Format* - I do **NOT** accept assignments via email (see "Written Assignments" below).
2. *Late Assignments* - Unless otherwise indicated, assignments are due in class on the date indicated in your Course Calendar. Assignments submitted after this point will incur a 10-point deduction per day for up to 3 days. For example, an assignment due on Monday will receive a 10-point deduction if it is turned in on Tuesday but will not be accepted if it is submitted after Thursday at 5 p.m.
3. *Missed Assignments* - I do not allow make-ups unless they are due to university excused absence (i.e., illness, university-sponsored travel, family emergency). In the event of university sponsored travel, students must provide documented notice 1 week prior to the travel date. In the event of illness or family emergency, students must provide documentation (e.g., doctor's note) within 1 week of the absence. If you comply with these policies, upon returning to class you have 1 week to reschedule the exam and/or submit the assignment for credit.
4. *Grading Disputes* - You may discuss a grade within 1 week of it being posted on Blackboard. Grades will not be discussed during regular class time - you must arrange a time outside of class to visit.
5. *Extra Credit* - While this is not guaranteed, there may be opportunities for extra credit announced periodically. In the event that extra credit is awarded during an in-class activity and you are absent, you are not eligible to earn this credit unless your absence is excused according to the guidelines set forth under "Missed Assignments."

Written Assignments

All written assignments are due in **2 formats**, electronically and hardcopy. Electronic formats are submitted to Turnitin.com via your Blackboard website under the Assignments tab (Note: Assignments, including any references, must be submitted in 1 single word document). Hardcopy formats are due in class (see “Grading Policies/Logistics” for further guidelines). As a student of this course you agree to the following university policy:

*"Students agree that by taking this course, all required papers, exams, class projects or other assignments submitted for credit may be submitted to **turnitin.com** or similar third parties to review and evaluate for originality and intellectual integrity. A description of the services, terms and conditions of use, and privacy policy of turnitin.com is available on its web site: <http://www.turnitin.com>. Students understand all work submitted to turnitin.com will be added to its database of papers. Students further understand that if the results of such a review support an allegation of academic dishonesty, the course work in question as well as any supporting materials may be submitted to the Honor Council for investigation and further action."*

Written Assignments

Unless otherwise instructed, written assignments should be formatted as follows:

- Length: 2 single spaced pages (not including references)
- Type in 12-point Times New Roman font with 1-inch margins.
- Staple document and include a header (with your name) on all pages.
- Any citations/references should be formatted in APA style.

Ethical Integrity

Throughout this course you will be expected to incorporate scholarly research into your work and properly cite any such material in your speaking and writing. Additionally, all assignments in this course are to be completed individually unless otherwise indicated by your professor. Unauthorized collaboration (i.e., cheating) and failure to cite proprietary information (i.e., plagiarism) will be considered a violation of Baylor’s Honor Code Policy and will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity. Students who commit academic dishonesty are subject to sanctions including (1) assignment penalty/failure, (2) course failure, or (3) probation, suspension, or expulsion from the university. See <http://www.baylor.edu/honorcode/index.php?id=44060> for a complete description of the Honor Code Policy & Procedures.

GRADING SCALE

A	90-100%	Superior (exceeds all standards)
B+	87-89%	Excellent (exceeds most standards)
B	80-86%	Strong (exceeds some standards)
C+	77-79%	Above average (meets all standards)
C	70-76%	Average (meets standards)
D	60-69%	Below Average (does not meet some standards)
F	Below 59.5%	Failing (does not meet minimum standards)

GRADING CRITERIA	Unit Exams	30%
	Quizzes	20%
	Written Assignments	15%
	Attendance & Participation	15%
	Theory Presentation & Activity	20%

UNIT EXAMS

Three exams will be administered, collectively worth 30% of your final grade. Exam 1 will focus broadly on research and practice in the communication field while Exams 2 and 3 will focus on specific theories and approaches to research and practice. Exams may include multiple choice, T/F, and short answer questions.

QUIZZES

Short quizzes will be administered throughout the semester (collectively worth 20% of your final grade). They will test your knowledge of assigned readings and understanding of issues/concepts discussed in class.

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

There will be several written assignments completed throughout the semester requiring you to synthesize communication theory and research and apply this knowledge to real-life issues in research and practice (collectively worth 15% of your final grade). Writing must conform to the syllabus guidelines; specific requirements for each assignment will be announced during class.

ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION

Beyond the minimum 75% attendance requirement, I expect you to actively contribute to classroom discussions and activities. This 15% component can either be a grade “booster” or “killer” – it’s up to you!

THEORY PRESENTATION & ACTIVITY

In either Unit 2 or 3 you (& a partner) will be responsible for facilitating a class that showcases a specific communication theory. During this time you will be responsible for (a) explaining the major tenets of the theory, (b) applying the theory to real-life situations, (c) discussing how the theory informs research and practice, and (d) engaging your classmates in an interactive way to enhance our understanding of the theory. Specific requirements for this assignment will be provided sometime during the third or fourth week of class.

My hope is that this course will provide a foundation for future communication courses, but more importantly, that it will help you to understand how communication shapes and is shaped by the world around you. So long as you attend class regularly and are conscientious about completing your assignments, this should be an enjoyable, relevant, and insightful experience.

UNIT 1: Defining Comm. Studies		Tentative Reading Schedule / Assignments	
Aug 22-26: Defining and investigating communication	Chapter 1: Launching your study of communication theory Chapter 4: Mapping the territory		
Aug 29-Sept 2: Approaches to theory	Chapter 2: Talk about theory		
Sept 5-9: Using and evaluating theories <i>(Mon. Sept 5 - Labor Day holiday)</i>	Chapter 3: Weighing the words BB Reading: Applying theory to research and life Writing Assignment #1 / Sign-up for theory presentations		
UNIT 2: Objectivist Theory & Application		Tentative Reading Schedule / Assignments	
Sept 12-16: Unit introduction	Unit 1 Exam BB Reading: Introduction to quantitative research		
Sept 19-23: Objectivist theories	Chapter 10: Uncertainty reduction theory Chapter 7: Expectancy violations theory Quiz #1		
Sept 26-30: Objectivist theories <i>(class will not meet Fri. Sept 30)</i>	Chapter 15: Social judgment theory Chapter 16: Elaboration likelihood model Quiz #2		
Oct 3-7: Objectivist theories <i>(class will not meet Mon. Oct 3)</i>	Chapter 31: Communication accommodation theory Chapter 32: Face negotiation theory Quiz #3		
Oct 10-14: Objectivist research/practice <i>(Fri. Oct 14 - Fall Break holiday)</i>	BB Reading: Creating hypotheses & testing relationships BB Reading: Surveys/questionnaires		
Oct 17-21: Objectivist research/practice	BB Readings: Experimental design / Writing Assignment #2		
UNIT 3: Interpretive Theory & Application		Tentative Reading Schedule / Assignments	
Oct 24-28: Unit introduction	Unit 2 Exam BB Reading: Introduction to qualitative research		
Oct 31 - Nov 4: Interpretivist theories	Chapter 19: Symbolic convergence theory Chapter 5: Symbolic interactionism Quiz #4		
Nov 7-11: Interpretivist theories	Chapter 33: Speech codes theory Chapter 12: Relational dialectics theory Chapter 13: Communication privacy management theory		
Nov 14-18: Interpretivist theories <i>(no class Fri. November 18)</i>	Quiz #5 BB Reading: Your role & ethical issues		
Nov 21-25: Interp. research/practice <i>(Thanksgiving)</i>	BB Reading: Interviews & focus groups		
Nov 28-Dec 2: Interp. research/practice	BB Reading: Ethnography / Writing Assignment #3		

Mon., December 5 - Last day of class (review for Unit 3 Exam, to be administered during the final exam period)