

CMST 7910: SEMINAR IN INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION THEORY
Messages and Message Processing

Fall, 2016, Wednesday, 3:30-6:30, 153 Coates

Dr. Renee Edwards
124 Coates Hall, 225-578-6724 (office), 225-439-6297 (cell)
Office Hours: Wed, 1:00-3:00
edwards@lsu.edu

This seminar examines messages, message processing, and elements of messages. From a communication perspective, our attention will be messages and what receivers do with them rather than message production. As a result of this seminar you should be able to

1. Summarize and analyze major theories and perspectives on message processing
2. Draw connections between major theories and perspectives
3. Summarize and analyze features of messages
4. Summarize, propose, and justify relationships between features of messages
5. Conduct an investigation related to messages and/or message processing

Catalog Description: CMST 7910. Current theoretical approaches to interpersonal communication, including developmental approaches, cognitive and relational theories.

Required Readings will be posted on Moodle or available online

This seminar will revolve around three foci, although our attention to them will not always be in sequential order. Focus 1 examines conceptualizations and theories of messages and message processing. Focus 2 drills down to specific elements of messages such as equivocation and politeness that have been the objects of research. Because time will not permit us to address every possible element, we will concentrate on those of greatest interest to you. Focus 3 will be research projects. An important goal is for each student to come out of the class with a paper that is ready (or nearly ready) to submit for a convention. However, I will work with you on an alternate type of assignment depending on your personal goals.

Focus 1: What are messages? What is message processing? What theories guide our understanding?

1. Messages
2. Message effects
3. Understanding and misunderstanding
4. Conversational implicature
5. Communicative goals
6. Schema theory
7. Dual process models
8. ELM
9. EPPM

Focus 2: What variables are associated with messages and message processing?

1. Equivocation
2. Politeness
3. Fear appeals
4. Humor
5. Deception
6. Story/narrative processing
7. Persuasion
8. Memorable messages
9. Message design logic
10. Other?

Focus 3: Research projects

1. Selection of topics
2. Connections between topics (formation of teams, development of hypotheses and research questions)
3. Data collection, analysis, and interpretation
4. Paper (drafts, final paper)
5. Reports of process

Assignments and Activities

1. Reaction Papers. For three meetings with assigned readings, you will write a 1 page, single-spaced paper in which you summarize major points of one or more readings, discuss strengths and weaknesses, compare and contrast ideas, and/or ask questions. So that not everyone is writing reaction papers for the same topics, students will be distributed across them. You will not write a reaction paper for the topic you present.
2. Individual paper. You will write a paper (10-12 pp.) in which you review the literature on a message element or theory. No more than ½ page should be devoted to an introduction. The bulk of the paper will likely define and summarize past research (including theoretical and methodological approaches) on the topic but you should devote some attention at the end of the paper (2-3 pages) to a critical assessment of the state of research and/or propose directions for future research. This paper will be due at the end of the semester but specific elements are due sooner. Each of these documents should have sufficient information for review by a classmate and me.
 - a. Definitions of key concepts (~1 page, single-spaced, using bullet points, with cites, direct quotations okay)
 - b. Theoretical underpinnings (~1 page, single spaced, paragraph style, with cites)
 - c. Measurement approaches (~1 page, single spaced, list or paragraph style, with cites)
 - d. Reference list (APA for all students in Interpersonal Communication)
 - e. Overall outline, single spaced

- f. First draft, double spaced
- g. Final paper, double spaced. Abstract is not necessary.

Two hard copies should be turned in on the due dates. I will evaluate one copy and a classmate will review the other.

3. Peer review. You will receive a copy of one classmate's written documents (a-f above) and should provide feedback. For a, b, and c, do you understand the concept, the theory, and the measurement based on the documents? Does the reference list appear thorough and use proper citation? Is the outline reasonable? Does the draft accomplish its goals? What is the most important thing the author should do to improve it? Can the writing style be improved? What are the most important needs? The reviews for a-e will likely be a paragraph or two. The review for f may be a couple of paragraphs. Alternatively, you may make comments directly on the author's documents.
4. Topic presentations. You will be the presenter and discussion leader for one message element or theory (presumably the same topic as your individual paper). Your task will be to
 - a. Develop a list and provide PDFs for three to five important readings on your topic to post on Moodle (due one to two weeks before your assigned day)
 - b. Prepare and deliver a 20-30 minute talk about your topic (use of PowerPoint or Prezi is optional)
 - c. Create a list of 5 discussion questions based on the readings (must be shared with the class by noon on Monday before your presentation)
 - d. Lead a 20-30 minute discussion of your topic
5. Team paper. As noted above, a goal is for you to generate a research-based paper that can be submitted for presentation at a convention. My expectation is that the class will divide into several teams and that papers from the research projects will be co-authored (let me know if you want to work individually). I am hopeful that the teams will include a mix of senior and junior students. My further expectation is that the projects will entail examining relationships among topics drawn from your individual papers. Thus, what you learn from writing individual papers will be used in group papers (and, indeed, sections of the final papers may overlap). My role will be to serve as a consultant to the teams, working most closely with a team leader (I am also happy to meet with the full team). As the semester progresses, I will ask for regular updates of your progress concerning the development of hypotheses, method, data collection, data analysis, and drafts of the paper (we will use oral updates unless it seems necessary to move to written reports).
6. Each team member will submit a description of the process used to complete the project and summarize his or her own contributions to the final document.
7. Team presentation. The team will make a 10-15 minute oral report, similar to a convention presentation. The presentation will be followed by 10-15 minutes of q&a.

8. Final Exam. Most of the previous assignments have strengthened your “depth” of knowledge and analytical prowess for a few topics (the one chosen for your individual paper and presentation, the one or two relevant to your team project). The “breadth” of your understanding of individual topics should have been enhanced by the reaction papers and the peer review. The final exam will ask you to take a step back and think theoretically (again) about messages, message processing, and theoretical approaches. Sample questions for the final (or actual questions) may be provided in advance.

Grading

Assignment	Overall Value	Breakdown
Reaction Papers	10%	3.33% each
Individual paper	30%	25% for the final paper, 5% for the rough draft, 1% each for the other assignments
Peer review	5%	2.5% for the rough draft, .5% each for the other assignments
Individual presentation	10%	8% for the talk and discussion leadership, 1% each for the other parts
Team Project	30%	20% for the paper, 5% each for process report and oral presentation
Final Exam	15%	
<p>Note: It is important that you turn in <i>*all*</i> of the minor assignments such as elements of the individual paper and peer reviews. If you do not turn in a paper element, you will not get one to review and thus earn zero on two items rather than one. Zeros on those assignments would quickly lower your course grade. Please be conscientious in keeping up with the assignments.</p>		

Grading Scale

96-100 = A+	87-89 = B+	77-79 = C+	67-69 = D+	59.9 and below = F
93-95 = A	83-86 = B	73-76 = C	63-66 = D	
90-92 = A-	80-82 = B-	70-72 = C-	60-62 = D-	

Workload. Students are expected, in addition to time spent in class, to spend a minimum of an additional 6 hours per week reading and thinking about material and putting forth effort toward the completion of course assignments. Thus, students are expected to devote at least 9 hours per week toward the successful completion of CMST 7910; exemplary performance will likely require additional time and/or effort.

Accommodations. The Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973: If you have a disability that impacts your work in this class and for which you may require accommodation, please see a Coordinator in the Office for Disability Affairs (112 Johnston Hall). After you receive your

accommodations letter, please meet with me to discuss the provisions of those accommodations as soon as possible.

Tentative Schedule. Readings posted on Moodle.

Date	Topics	Presenter	Reaction Papers
Aug 24	Introduction to the seminar and each other. Individual goals and aspirations. Preliminary discussion (and selection?) of topics. What are messages?		
Aug 31	Messages and Message Effects		
	Understanding and Misunderstanding Selection of individual topics		
Sept 7	TBA		
Sept 14	TBA		
Sept 21	TBA		
Sept 28	TBA		
Oct 5	TBA		
Oct 12	TBA		
Oct 19	TBA		
Oct26	TBA		
Nov 2	TBA		
Nov 9:	No class, NCA convention. Work on individual and team papers. Those who attend NCA will attend one or two sessions (as a group if possible) about message processing. Those who do not attend will read copies of papers from a session.		
Nov 16	Individual papers due; Workshopping for Team Papers.		
Nov23	No class, Thanksgiving break		
Nov 30	Team Presentations. Team papers due		
Dec 6	Tuesday, 3:00-5:00, Final Exam		