

COMMUNICATION 4114
CONTEMPORARY THEORIES OF HUMAN COMMUNICATION
SPRING 2014

Graham D. Bodie, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
gbodie@lsu.edu
126 Coates Hall
Office Phone: 578-6683

Class Days and Times: MWF, 10:30-11:20 (Coates 237)

Office Hours: Wednesday, 1:30-3:30 AND BY APPOINTMENT

TEXTS & EQUIPMENT

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

- We will be using select chapters from this book, and McGraw-Hill has created a version of this book for use in CMST 4114 this semester that is *substantially* cheaper. That version's ISBN-13 is 9781121360181.

Additional readings will be posted on Moodle.

OVERVIEW

Welcome to CMST 4114! This course is an overview of theory in the discipline of Communication Studies. As a student in a 4000-level course you are expected to handle somewhat abstract and complex material, to be able to synthesize this material, and to apply it to various relevant life situations. Indeed, the theories covered in this class involve abstract and complex ideas that you will be expected to remember, explain, apply, compare, critique, and integrate. Thus, you are likely to find that the course is challenging. At a minimum, good performance in the class will require regular attendance and participation and serious study throughout the semester.

Human communication is a tremendously rich phenomenon, and it would be impossible to cover all of its essential features even in a full semester. If you are interested in learning more about a topic not addressed by the current class, please let me know and I will attempt to direct you to relevant readings or course offerings (or to simply chat in office hours). Human communication has also been studied from a variety of theoretical perspectives. Though we will highlight key features of more “interpretive” theories, the lion’s share of this course will be devoted to examining social scientific theories of communication.

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY AND OTHER CURIOS

This section provides a general “what is expected of students” and “what you can expect from me as an instructor.”

First, students are expected to be self-motivated and enjoy learning. Self-motivated students will come to class and come prepared. This includes reading and thinking critically about the material assigned for each class period. It would not be advantageous for anyone if I stood in front of the class and lectured until you fell asleep. Thus, lectures will be used to highlight the more challenging aspects of your reading and introduce additional insight not explicitly covered in the text. In addition, I will do my best to bring these ideas to life with activities, group work, and other assignments designed to get you involved with the material.

Second, the metaphor for this class is to **treat it like a job**. While many of you will land a job that you enjoy out of college, many of you will simply land a J-O-B. In either case, you will need to take that job seriously and work hard. Similar to success in the workplace, coming to class and participating in all class activities and discussion will help you succeed in CMST 4114. On the other hand, if you arrive late, unprepared, unmotivated, or simply in a bad mood to work there are consequences. You could be written up. You could be demoted. You could be fired. Please don't get fired from COM 4114.

Finally, students are expected to treat the class and the members of the class (including the instructor) with respect. This class will be interactive, and you are encouraged to ask questions and express opinions (especially when they differ from something you read or something presented in lecture). Some people may have different opinions than you. Differences of opinion can be expressed without disrespecting other people. Indeed, there is a difference between agreement and understanding. Agreement, whether with instructors, students, or the texts, is not mandatory. Attempting to understand the variety of opinions, however, is.

Please keep this in mind during class discussion. Disruptive students may be asked to leave and not return. Respect also includes **TURNING OFF ALL CELL PHONES, PAGERS, AND OTHER NOISE MAKING DEVICES** that may interfere with student learning as well as **NOT USING YOUR LAPTOP TO CHECK FACEBOOK, PLAY GAMES, or ENGAGE IN OTHER NON CLASS-RELATED ACTIVITIES**. Newspapers and material for other courses should also be read outside of class time reserved for CMST 4114. If another class or Charlie Brown or what Paris Hilton ate for lunch is that much more important than CMST 4114, by all means go somewhere else and pay attention to it.

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 4114.

EVALUATION

Your performance in this class will be evaluated by means of class participation, a set of application essays, three exams, a theory in practice essay, and a final paper.

For all work completed outside of class time (e.g., essays), please include a cover page that includes your name and a title for the assignment. Start the content of your assignment on the next page, line one. Double space your paper, use 12-point Times New Roman font, and set your margins to 1-inch. If you turn in more than one page, staple them. Unstapled assignments will be returned to students ungraded. All citations should be formatted according to the 6th edition of the style guide published by the American Psychological Association and included on a separate page from the text with the title "References". So, for example, if an assignment requires a 1-2 page essay, you will turn in a total of 3-4 stapled pages (a cover page, 1-2 pages of text, and a reference page).

All assignments are due at the beginning of class period, no later than 10:31 AM. No exceptions without prior arrangement. Physical copies of all assignments are required unless otherwise specified.

Class Participation (20%)

This course will rely on a "seminar" style of teaching that emphasizes discussion over lecture. Students should come to class prepared to ask questions about and critique relevant readings. I reserve the right to give "pop-quizzes" on days when it appears students are not fully engaged or have not fully prepared.

Quizzes can:

- test you on the reading you were supposed to do prior to coming to class.
- test you on the material we have covered to date.
- occur at the end of a particular class and test you on the material covered in that class.
- test your retention of information presented by a classmate.

So, on each day of class you will be assigned a letter grade corresponding to your overall participation for that day. My judgment of this will be based on your participation in class discussions (see criteria below) and, if applicable, your score on any quiz given that day. In terms of your participation in class discussion, grades will be assigned as follows:

- F = not coming to class
- D = coming to class and dozing off, playing on an electronic device, doing a crossword puzzle, or otherwise doing something that is not directly relevant to class; if group work, not fully participating as a group member
- C = coming to class and sitting quietly, taking notes, and seeming to pay attention; if group work, being a participant but more of the silent type than of the "I have an opinion" type

- B = coming to class and fully participating in any group related activities
- A = coming to class and saying ONE interesting thing or asking ONE interesting question; if group work, fully engaging and presenting at least one of the ideas of the group when called upon, critiquing other groups' ideas, asking questions of other groups

Your final participation grade will be an average of all your daily participation grades. At any point in the semester if you have questions about where you stand with regard to participation, please see me.

Application Essays (20%)

For me, your ability to apply theory to a variety of life events is most crucial. Understanding and being able to regurgitate facts about a theory is only part of mastering material in this course. For this assignment, you are asked to apply theories discussed in class to your everyday life.

On a daily basis, you should stop and think about what you are learning and how it can help make sense of the world around you. When you turn on the TV, go to your favorite restaurant, go home for a weekend visit, attend a sporting event, talk to your best friend on the phone, or see an interesting exchange on or off campus ... whatever you are doing, see it through the course material. Continually ask yourself,

- “How can the theories we are currently discussing help me understand this?”
- “How can theories of human communication help me navigate this situation?”
- “What are these people trying to accomplish with their communicative choices?”
- “How did the ways in which these folks were raised influence their behavioral choices?”
- “How might this event look different if I viewed it from another theoretical perspective?”

The world is complex. Theory helps us see things more clearly. Use your theory-colored glasses to view your social world!

We will talk about several theories this semester. You are required to turn in a 1-2 page application paper for five of them. The five you choose are up to you, but do not wait until the end of the semester to complete the assignment! A theory is eligible starting the moment it is introduced in class and becomes off limits as of the sixth subsequent class period. So, if Theory X is introduced on Friday, January 17, an application paper that uses Theory X is due by Monday, February 3; because class is not held on MLK day, that is not counted against you.

Feel free to analyze “texts” of any sort, but make sure to provide enough of a description (and a copy of the artifact if one exists, like a magazine advertisement) so that I can see the connections you are making in your essay. So, open each paper with a brief description of what you are analyzing then provide a brief description of the application theory, detailing the relevant concepts and processes (if it is a complex theory you can simply detail the concepts and processes that are relevant to your application). Spend most of your written space (no less than half of what you write) applying the theory to the text.

You must have at least 1 page of text and no more than 2 pages of text. I will not read text after page two. Essays under 1 full page of text will be deemed inadequate and earn a D grade. For each essay, you should also cite at least 1 academic source that was not assigned as part of your normal class responsibilities.

Each essay will count 4% toward your total course grade for a total weighting of 20%. You may turn in more than 5 essays with your top five grades counting for your course grade and the others dropped from consideration. If you receive an A- or higher grade on all essays, you can use additional essays (essay 6, 7, etc.) as a replacement for 4% of another assignment. So for instance, if you turn in 6 essays and earn an A-, A, or A+ on all of them, you can use the 6th essay to replace 4% of Exam I on which you made a C; the C will count for 1% of that grade and the “A” will count for the other 4%. This is the closest you will get to “extra credit” in CMST 4114.

Exams (30%)

There will be three exams given at approximately equal intervals throughout the semester. Each exam will cover material between exams; however, the material we cover related to criteria for evaluating theory is likely to appear on each exam. Each exam will consist of 30-40 objective questions (i.e., multiple choice and true/false) and test both your general knowledge and your ability to apply that knowledge with greater emphasis on the latter. The tentative exam schedule is presented below.

Exam	Approx. Date	Percentage
1	02/17 – 02/21	5
2	03/24 – 03/28	10
3	04/28 – 05/02	15

Although exams become worth more as the semester progresses, it is not that material gets more important. Instead, this method is employed for your benefit: since this may be the first class you have had that focuses exclusively on theory or that you’ve had with this particular instructor, placing less weight on earlier exams gives you a chance to “figure out” the course and the teacher. Moreover, having a latter-half-of-the-semester-heavy scoring system keeps students motivated to learn throughout the semester. In my experience, this scoring method is most advantageous for students, especially those who take more time to acclimate to different material and instructors.

Theory in Practice Essay (10%)

Communication is important to all professions. People who are obtaining degrees in Business, Agriculture, Counseling, Education, and beyond all must be proficient communicators. It is, thus, not surprising that their programs often have specific skills training courses. One such course offered on this campus is *Counseling Skills and Interventions*, taught out of the Counselor Education program. As part of your course grade in CMST 4114 you will serve as a “client” who will meet with a training counselor 2-3 times during the course of the semester.

Your name will be provided to the course director, and you will be contacted and expected to fully participate. At the end of your sessions you will turn in a 2-3 page reflection paper about

the experience. The paper will analyze the experience through the lens of one or more social scientific communication theories. Although you may turn in your paper at any point after you have completed your sessions, all papers are due no later than Monday, April 28. No emailed assignments will be accepted unless prior arrangements have been made.

Your grade will be a function of the following:

- Attending and full participation in all sessions– 25%
 - Failure to attend one scheduled session will result in an F for the assignment
- 2-3 page reflection paper about the experience – 75%

The paper should be organized in a fashion similar to the smaller essays – open with the “event” describing your sessions in enough detail so I can understand the setting, briefly detail your theory or theories, and then analyze the event through the lens of the theory/theories.

Students in past classes have commented that keeping a journal in which you record your experience after each session is quite helpful.

Final Paper (20%)

Your final paper assignment asks you to choose a problem or issue relevant to human communication and propose a theoretical framework appropriate for understanding it better. This can be accomplished in one of several different ways. You can:

- Pose an interesting question and analyze different answers that you generate from different theories we have discussed in class;
- Develop the proposal for an empirical study, collect and analyze data, and write up your results;
- Write a series of blog posts or “self-help” entries for some other medium on a particular subject;
- Create a proposal for a self-help book;
- Generate content for a website that will help undergraduate students like you understand communication theory better;
- Produce an extended “application” paper whereby you integrate and synthesize a minimum of two theories then apply them to some aspect of your life (e.g., your career, your relationships).

For all but the last option, you may work in groups of up to 5 individuals. Students must discuss their particular option with the instructor no later than February 28 at 3:00 PM. Each student is responsible for making an appointment prior to February 21st at 1:20 PM for this purpose; failure to do so means failure to be able to turn in this assignment. I will not remind you of your responsibility.

Because this final assignment will differ based on our initial and subsequent conversations, your specific requirements will likely differ from some of your classmates’. In general, the final product should consist of 8-10 pages of text and include no fewer than five academic sources. The look and feel of your specific final product will be negotiated throughout the semester to fit your needs. Final papers are due on Friday, May 2.

Calculating Course Grades

The grade you EARN for this class will be based on a formula that weights the items listed above by their respective percentages. **For all assignments, you will earn a letter grade** that corresponds to the “meaning of grades” found below. These letter grades will correspond to a traditional 4.0 scale, where a 4.0 equals and grade of “A” as follows:

A+ = 4.33	C = 2.0
A = 4.0	C- = 1.67
A- = 3.67	D+ = 1.33
B+ = 3.33	D = 1.0
B = 3.0	D - = .67
B- = 2.67	F+ = .33
C+ = 2.33	F = 0.0

As an example suppose you earned the following grades:

Participation	B
Application Essays	A
Exams	B
Essay Assignment	A
Final Paper	B+

Your final grade would be calculated in the following manner:

$$(3.0)(.20) + (4.0)(.20) + (3.0)(.30) + (4.0)(.10) + (3.33)(.20) = 0.6 + 0.8 + 0.9 + 0.4 + 0.666 = 3.37 = B+$$

As always, if you have questions about where you stand in the class see me before it is too late.

As a rule grades will not be discussed until at least 24 hours has passed since grades have been acknowledged. During this time you are to review the material in an effort to figure out why you did better or worse than you anticipated. **The purpose of this rule is to encourage an intellectual rather than a strictly emotional discussion of your grade.**

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT AND THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973

If you have a disability that may have some impact on your work in this class and for which you may require accommodations, please see a Coordinator in the Office for Disability Services (112 Johnston Hall) so that such accommodations may be arranged. After you receive your accommodation letter, please meet with me to discuss the provisions of those accommodations.

THE MEANING OF GRADES

- A - Excellent work.** The student went above and beyond assignment expectations. Furthermore, the student has represented mastery of course material, both conceptually and pragmatically.
- B - Above average work.** The student completed the assignment with more effort than average. B work is good work, but still has room for improvement.
- C - Average work.** The student completed the assignment as specified by the assignment description. No more than “effort as expected” was achieved. Minimum requirements were met, minimum effort was put forth.
- D - Below average work.** The student seemed unsure of assignment specifics and did not complete said assignment in a satisfactory manner. There were both conceptual and pragmatic holes in the presentation.
- F - Poor/Failing work.** Student was not prepared for and/or did not execute the assignment properly. There are large holes or missing information.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Students are expected to attend class. Absenteeism hinders the learning process and creates difficulties in completing the requirements for course credit. This is particularly true because class discussion may not necessarily follow the book’s structure.

LSU’s attendance policy can be summarized by the following:

Class attendance is the responsibility of the student. The student is expected to attend all classes. A student who finds it necessary to miss class assumes responsibility for making up examinations, obtaining lecture notes, and otherwise compensating for what may have been missed. The course instructor will determine the validity of a student’s reason(s) for absences and will assist those students who have valid reasons.

An absence due to illness or other causes beyond a student’s control will be excused when the instructor is convinced that the reason for absence is valid. The University’s *Policy Statement 22* discusses approved trips, activities, and other instances of excused absences.

Instructors will excuse any student who is unable to attend or participate in class or an examination on a religious holiday supported by the student’s religious beliefs. It is the student’s responsibility to anticipate such conflicts and discuss this with the faculty member well in advance. *Policy Statement 31* discusses the University’s policy on observance of religious holidays in further detail.

There is no substitute for coming to class. Reading assignments will not be posted online and are not in print. **All reading assignments will be announced in class. If you don’t come, you won’t hear them.**

PLAGIARISM

In terms of plagiarism, my policy is simple: **DO NOT DO IT UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES**. As is the case for any other course taught at LSU, no form of academic misconduct will be tolerated. Students are advised to become familiar with the student code of conduct.

So you know where LSU stands ...

8.5. Academic Misconduct by Undergraduate Students

A. Assigning a grade when there is academic misconduct

1. Absent sufficiently mitigating circumstances, a student found responsible for academic misconduct will, at a minimum, be dropped from the course in which the academic misconduct occurred and a permanent grade of "F" must be assigned in the course. In no instance may the student receive credit for the assignment on which the violation occurred.
2. If a student is charged with academic misconduct and the case cannot be resolved prior to the final date for filing a semester grade, the student should continue to complete all work and the instructor referring the matter shall report an "I" grade in the course in which the alleged academic misconduct occurred. If the student is not found in violation, a permanent grade shall be assigned to remove the "I" grade on the basis of the quality of work done in the course. If the student is found in violation of academic misconduct, the instructor shall assign a grade that incorporates the sanction issued.

B. Non-grade related sanctions for academic misconduct

1. For the first offense, the minimum sanction, in addition to the grade related sanction, is disciplinary probation for a period of at least one year. Circumstances may warrant a lengthier period of probation or separation from the University. Particularly egregious violations may warrant expulsion (under certain circumstances, examples may include, but are not limited to, falsifying an academic record relating to grades, entering a building or office for the purpose of changing a grade or accessing an unadministered test, substituting for another person or permitting any other person to substitute for oneself to take a test, or taking or otherwise obtaining a test without authorization.)
2. For the second offense, the minimum sanction is separation for one full year. The maximum sanction is expulsion.
3. For the third offense, the sanction is expulsion.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE*

<u>Unit</u>	<u>Reading</u>
I. Course Overview	Syllabus
II. Definitions, Models, and “Good” Theories	Griffin (Chs. 1 & 2) “Thinking about Theory” (Moodle) Griffin Ch. 33 “You just don’t have the evidence” (Moodle)
III. Metatheoretical Commitments: Types and Traditions of Theorizing Communication	Griffin (Chs. 3 & 4)
IV. Theories of Basic Communication Processes	
A. What makes communication (in)competent?	“Competent and Incompetent Communication” (Moodle)
B. Constructivism as an Overarching Framework	Griffin (Ch. 8)
C. Speech Production	“A Primer on Message Production” (Moodle)
D. Listening	“A Constructivist Approach to Listening” (Moodle) “Listening and Message Interpretation” (Moodle)
E. Synthesis: How is it that when you speak, I tend to understand?	Griffin (Chs. 6, 32, & 25)
V. Theories of Relating	
A. Uncertainty Reduction Theory	Griffin (Ch. 10)
B. Social Penetration Theory	Griffin (Ch. 9)
C. Social Information Processing Theory	Griffin (Ch. 11)
D. Communication Accommodation Theory	Griffin (Ch. 30)
E. Relational Dialectics	Griffin (Ch. 12)

<u>Unit</u>	<u>Reading</u>
VI. Theories of Persuasion	
A. Social Judgment Theory	Griffin (Ch. 14)
B. Elaboration Likelihood Model	Griffin (Ch. 15)
VII. Theories of Group Decision Making	
A. Functional Perspective	Griffin (Ch. 17)
B. Structuration Theory	Griffin (Ch. 18)
VIII. Theories of Media Uses and Effects	
A. Cultivation Theory	Griffin (Ch. 27)
B. Uses and Gratifications	“Uses and Gratifications” (Moodle)
C. Agenda-Setting	Griffin (Ch. 28)
IX. Points of View and Communication Theory	
A. Face-Negotiation Theory	Griffin (Ch. 31)
B. Standpoint Theory	Griffin (Ch. 34)

*The “tentative” in front of “course schedule is quite literal. I reserve the right to change the order of theories, delete theories from this list, or add new theories as I see fit. Any changes I make will be announced in class, and I will be clear about what material will be covered on any given examination.