

Contemporary Theories of Communication

CMST 4114-02, 10:30-11:30, MWF, 236 Coates
Fall 2018

Dr. Jean “Renee” Edwards
Office Hours: MW 10:00-10:30, 1:00-2:00
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Overview

This course provides an in-depth study of theory (types and purposes) and multiple specific theories of communication. The class has no formal prerequisites but my assumption is that students have taken previous coursework (9-12 hours) in communication. Please let me know if you have not.

Catalog description: Current methods and theories of human communication; research literature; behavioral antecedents and consequences of messages and their variations; how messages interact with communicators to produce behavioral outcomes.

Objectives

1. To understand the role of theory and the two main types of theories in communication (assessed by exams and class participation)
2. To identify criteria for evaluating theories and apply them to specific theories (assessed using exams and class participation)
3. To understand the major traditions in the study of communication (assessed using exams)
4. To become expert in one or two theories of communication (assessed in theory presentation and paper)
5. To understand the major concepts and principles of additional theories (assessed using exams and class participation)
6. To compare and contrast theories of communication (assessed using exams and class participation)

Text (required)

Griffen, E., Ledbetter, A., & Sparks, G. (2015). *A first look at communication theory*. New York: McGraw Hill.

Evaluation

Exams ($n = 3$)	30%
Attendance and participation	20%
Theory presentation	20%
Paper	20%
Other assignments/quizzes	10%

Exams – 30% of the final grade

There will be three exams (including the final) over material from the textbook as well as any additional topics discussed in class. The format will be multiple choice, T/F, short answer, and possibly essay. You will need a small ScanTron if a computer classroom is not available.

Attendance and Participation – 20% of the final grade

My goal is for this to be a discussion-based class. You will be expected to read and study the assigned chapter before each class in the same way you would read a story before attending an English class. We will spend class time discussing the major concepts in the chapters (i.e., the theories) and then apply them to situations and compare/contrast them to other theories. Please pay particular attention to the “questions to sharpen your focus” at the end of each chapter.

Students are expected to attend and participate actively in class. Attendance will be taken every day, either by calling roll or passing a roll sheet. I know that emergencies happen – your car won't start, a friend needs your help, or you feel bad but not sick enough to need medical attention. *For reasons such as these*, you will be permitted 3 unexcused absences. Additional unexcused absences will result in a loss of 10 points per absence. These points will be deducted from this grade category at the end of the semester, which means they will not be factored into your “current course grade” in Moodle. Please keep a mental note of this when checking your grades. See PS 22 for information about excused absences

<https://sites01.lsu.edu/wp/policiesprocedures/files/2014/09/PS22-R04.pdf>.

Several times during the semester, I will record a percentage grade that reflects your level of participation in class discussions. Students who attend class but are distracted will earn “D” grades. Ds will also be assigned to students whose contributions do not show evidence they have done the assigned reading. Students who come to class, pay attention, and show evidence of reading the assignment but say very little will earn grades in the “C” range. “B” grades will be assigned to those who make contributions (including asking questions) that reflect their comprehension or curiosity about the assigned reading and who are able to make connections that go beyond the reading. These students also remain engaged when other students are speaking. Finally, students who participate fully, demonstrate understanding of the theory, make connections, compare and contrast theories, and engage with other students will earn “A” grades.

I want every student to participate at the highest level every day. For that to happen, each student must have the opportunity to make valuable and insightful contributions. When another student is speaking, you must practice and show evidence of good listening by looking at your classmate and giving nonverbal feedback. Try to analyze what your classmate says. Is it valid? Does the example fit? Is the comparison to another theory appropriate? In a successful discussion, comments will build on each other. Class participation is not a competition to see who can talk the most – students who attempt to dominate the conversation will not earn “A” grades.

A final note on participation: I understand that students have different learning styles, personalities, and needs. Consequently, there will be accommodations for students who are very uncomfortable with speaking in class. Please talk with or email me *as soon as possible* if you request this adjustment. You may post your comments, analyses, and questions on Moodle (due at 9:30 a.m. on the day of the required chapter) for us to use in class. You would still be expected to attend class and listen attentively to other students.

Theory Presentation – 20% of final grade

You will be responsible for “teaching” one of the theories to the class. You should create a 10-15 minute presentation in which you explain the theory and relate it to an example. You will also generate a list of questions and lead a class discussion for an additional 10-20 minutes.

Your choices include the following:

Ch.	Theory	Ch.	Theory
5	Symbolic Interactionism	18	Symbolic Convergence Theory
6	Coordinated Management of Meaning	19	Cultural Approach to Organizations
7	Expectancy Violations Theory	20	Communicative Constitution of Organizations
8	Social Penetration Theory	21	Critical Theory of Communication in Organizations
9	Uncertainty Reduction Theory	24	Narrative Paradigm
10	Social Information Processing Theory	28	Uses and Gratifications
11	Relational Dialectics	29	Cultivation Theory
12	Communication Privacy Management Theory	30	Agenda-Setting Theory
13	The Interactional View	31	Communication Accommodation Theory
14	Social Judgment Theory	32	Face-Negotiation Theory
15	Elaboration Likelihood Model	33	Speech Codes Theory
16	Cognitive Dissonance Theory	35	Standpoint Theory
17	Functional Perspective of Group Decision Making	36	Muted Group Theory

Paper – 20% of final grade

Option 1. Read and summarize research articles published in scholarly journals and/or chapters published in scholarly books (not textbooks) that explain or are based on a theory of your choice. This may be the same theory as for your presentation but could be different. You should read at least 3 papers (7-10 pp. not including title page or references).

Option 2. Using one of the theories, conduct an in-depth analysis of a text. Your analysis should include a discussion of strengths and weaknesses of the theory in understanding the particular text. This may be the same theory as for your presentation but could be different (7-10 pp. not including title page or references).

Option 3. Write a research paper, based on a project, that would be suitable for submission to the Theodore Clevenger, Jr., Undergraduate Honors Conference hosted by the Southern States Communication Association (10-15 pp. not including title page or references). It must be grounded in a particular communication theory but not necessarily the same one as for your presentation. This option, if done well, will earn bonus points by offsetting lower grades in other categories. Let me know early in the semester if you are interested in this option because you will need to submit additional paperwork if collecting data from human participants. **This option requires my written approval.**

For all options: Your paper should be written in a formal style with a cover page, internal citations, and a reference list. The most recent version of APA manual is the preferred style although MLA will be accepted. Purdue’s “Owl” Online Writing Lab provides formatting guidance and examples at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>. Except for Option 3, you do not need to include an abstract.

You should use Times New Roman font (12 point), 1-inch margins, and double-spaced text. The paper should be in your own words (i.e., avoid plagiarism) and you should use quotations very sparingly.

You will submit your paper via a “turnitin” assignment on Moodle, which will conduct an *Originality Check* to “ensure original work by checking submitted papers against other web pages, student papers and leading library databases and publications” (<https://grok.lsu.edu/article.aspx?articleid=17203>). You may also be asked to submit a hard copy or upload directly to Moodle.

Other Assignments – 10% of final grade

Throughout the semester, you will be given other assignments including (but not limited to) a 1-page summary of your selected theory, daily reading quizzes, an online assignment, peer evaluations, and an oral presentation of your paper.

Grading Scale

A+	97-100	A = Excellence ; Distinguished mastery of course material, exhibited by exceptionally well-prepared completion of assignments, demonstrating superior effort, and understanding of principles
A	93-96.99	
A-	90-92.99	
B+	87-89.99	B = Noteworthiness ; good mastery of course material, exhibited by above average preparation of assignments, demonstrating original application of course materials
B	83-86.99	
B-	80-82.99	
C+	77-79.99	C = Acceptability ; Sufficient mastery of course material, exhibited by satisfactory completion of assignments, demonstrating basic preparation and correct techniques
C	73-76.99	
C-	70-72.99	
D+	67-69.99	D = Deficiency ; Inadequate grasp of course materials, exhibited by incomplete preparation of assignments, significant tardiness, poor comprehension of material
D	63-66.99	
D-	60-62.99	
F	0-59.99	F = Unacceptability ; Failure to complete the assigned work during the scheduled time or to meet the academic standards of university-level work
Adapted from Mr. Kent Filbel, Department of Communication Studies, LSU		

Moodle

Grades will be recorded in Moodle - you should check it regularly to make sure it is accurate. You must notify me of any problem within three days of grades being recorded. Missing grades will count as “zero.”

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, on average, toward the successful completion of CMST 4114; exemplary performance will likely require additional time and/or effort.

Notice

The 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 Affairs (112 Johnston Hall) so that such accommodations may be arranged. After you receive your accommodation letters, please meet with me to discuss the provisions of the accommodations as soon as possible (at least a week before the first exam).

LSU Commitment to Community

Louisiana State University is an interactive community in which students, faculty, and staff together strive to pursue truth, advance learning, and uphold the highest standards of performance in an academic and social environment. It is a community that fosters individual development and the creation of bonds that transcend the time spent within its gates. To demonstrate my pride in LSU, as a member of its community, I will:

- Accept responsibility for my actions;
- Hold myself and others to the highest standards of academic, personal, and social integrity;
- Practice justice, equality, and compassion in human relations;
- Respect the dignity of all persons and accept individual differences;
- Respect the environment and the rights and property of others and the University;
- Contribute positively to the life of the campus and surrounding community; and
- Use my LSU experience to be an active citizen in an international and interdependent world.

The continued success of LSU depends on the faithful commitment by each community member to these, our basic principles.

CMST 4114 Schedule and Assignments

All topics and dates after Sept. 4 are tentative depending on theories chosen by students. Updates will be provided on Moodle.

		Topic	For this day, read or submit
M	Aug 20	Intro to class, text, each other	Syllabus
W	Aug 22	Intro to Theory, Communication	Chapter 1
F	Aug 24	Types of Communication Theories	Chapter 2
M	Aug 27	continued	ID theory preferences
W	Aug 29	Evaluating Theories.	Chapter 3

F	Aug 31	Traditions in Communication Theory	Chapter 4 1-page summary of your theory
M	Sept 3	Labor Day, no class	
W	Sept 5	Orphan theory (not selected by a student)	
F	Sept 7	Orphan theory	
M	Sept 10	Review for Exam 1	
W	Sept 12	Exam 1	Chapters 1-4 plus orphan theories
Theories of Interpersonal Communication			
F	Sept 14	Orphan theory	
M	Sept 17	No class; online assignment	
W	Sept 19	Flex day for individual meetings	
F	Sept 21	Student + theory	Some of the theories here and for the later dates may not have a student as presenter.
M	Sept 24	Student + theory	
W	Sept 26	Student + theory	
F	Sept 28	Student + theory	
M	Oct 1	Student + theory	
W	Oct 3	Student + theory	
F	Oct 5	Fall Holiday	
M	Oct 8	Student + theory	
W	Oct 10	Student + theory	
F	Oct 12	Student + theory	
M	Oct 15	Review for exam	
W	Oct 17	Exam 2	Chapters TBA
F	Oct 19	Student + theory	
Group Communication			
M	Oct 22	Student + theory	
W	Oct 24	Student + theory	
F	Oct 26	Student + theory	
Mass Communication			
M	Oct 29	Student + theory	
W	Oct 31	Student + theory	
F	Nov 2	Student + theory	
M	Nov 5	Student + theory	
Cultural Context			
W	Nov 7	Student + theory	
F	Nov 9	No class, work on paper	Submit paper update on Moodle
M	Nov 12	Student + theory	
W	Nov 14	Student + theory	
F	Nov 16	Student + theory	
M	Nov 19	Student + theory	
W	Nov 21	PAPERS DUE by 10:30 a.m.	Submit on Moodle
F	Nov 23	Thanksgiving break	papers
M	Nov 26	Paper presentations	papers
W	Nov 28	Paper presentations	papers
F	Nov 30	Review for final exam	Review
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 7, 10:00-NOON, FINAL EXAM.			

Graduate Students

1. Graduate students will take the same exams (30% of grade) as undergraduates.
2. For 10 theories, graduate students will list three recent articles that use or present the theory and write a 1-2 page, single spaced summary of one of the articles (15% of final grade).
3. Graduate students are expected to participate fully in class discussions about the theories and serve as role models for the undergraduate students. They should feel free to insert new information they garnered from their extra reading of articles. However, they must also be careful not to “drown out” undergraduates whose understanding is at a more basic level (15% of final grade).
4. Graduate students will write formal research papers. The papers should be 12-15 pages long, should thoroughly review the literature on a given topic rooted in a particular theory of communication. The paper should propose hypotheses or research questions (30% of grade). A data collection is desirable but not required
5. Graduate students will deliver a 20-minute lecture to the class on their paper and theory (10% of final grade).
6. Daily attendance is expected as a matter of course. Because your distribution of grades is different from undergraduates, your current course grade in Moodle will not be accurate.

HAVE YOU DECLARED YOUR MAJOR OR MINOR?

Business leaders and other professionals recognize the importance of communication skills and analysis. Alan Greenspan, for example, stated, “To succeed, you will soon learn, as I did, the importance of a solid foundation in the basics of education – literacy, both verbal and numerical, and communication skills.” We hope this course contributes to your success.

To learn more about communication, you may want to major or minor in the Department of Communication Studies. The program explores how people sustain and change, experience, and make sense of the world through symbolic action. Students develop conceptual skills to analyze written, oral, and visual messages. Students gain practical experience in such areas such as public speaking, group decision-making, performance, and film. Such skills are elemental to careers in business, government, law, social services, and the arts.

A major in Communication Studies requires 36 hours including 12 hours of core classes and 12 hours at the 3000 or 4000 level. A minor requires 15 hours with one core class and 6 hours at the 3000 level or above.

The Department of Communication Studies offers 6 Pathways of Study as guidance for students interested in taking CMST courses. These pathways include lists of courses that can be taken for students interested in the following areas within Communication Studies:

- *Public Discourse*
- *Art and Culture*
- *Professional Communication*
- *Communication in Human Relationships*
- *Visual and Mediated Communication*
- *Create your Own Pathway*

More information is available at www.lsu.edu/cmst or by contacting our undergraduate advisor Mr. Kent Filbel (kfilli@lsu.edu), whose hours are posted at his office, 135 Coates.