

COM 7410: Communication Theory, Winter 2019

Instructor: Rahul Mitra, Ph.D.
Office: 541 Manoogian
Class Time & Place: 6:00 – 8:30 Wednesday, 201 Manoogian Hall
Office Hours: Wednesdays 3-5 pm; and by appointment.
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Course Description:

This class is an introduction to several theories within the discipline of communication studies. The course also provides an overview of the role of theory in empirical communication research. The course is not designed to offer you a great deal of depth on any one topic area; instead, a wide range of research areas and communication theories are introduced. You will also notice that while the class modules are arranged as per specific “themes,” these themes often bleed into each other, so that multiple issues, perspectives, and theories may often be apparent within a single reading. We will be reading both theory and empirical* research.

* “Empirical” means that your research paper should be based on, concerned with, or verifiable by observation or experience rather than purely on theory or logical reasoning.

Learning Outcomes: By the end of this course, you should be able to:

- 1) Identify the value and importance of communication theory
- 2) Critically evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of major theoretical approaches to communication studies
- 3) Incorporate theoretical perspectives into your own scholarly research agenda
- 4) Apply communication theories to explain events in your own life

The course format will be discussion-based rather than lecture-based. Thus, for it to be a meaningful experience, you will need to attend class every day, complete all assigned readings, submit assignments on time, and participate actively in class discussions.

Required Texts/Materials:

Littlejohn, S.W., Foss, K.A., & Oetzel, J.G. (2017). *Theories of human communication (11th ed.)*. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press.
 Carbaugh, D., & Buzzanell, P.M. (Eds.). (2010). *Distinctive qualities in communication research*. New York: Routledge.

In addition, we will be using various academic articles for this course (see schedule). All articles will be available through Blackboard.

Recommended Resources:

1. 6th edition of the American Psychological Association Style Manual: American Psychological Association (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association (6th ed.)*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
 - For a quick guide, you can look up:
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/1/>

- Wayne State University Library Communication Guide:
<http://guides.lib.wayne.edu/content.php?pid=72657&sid=538050>

Assignments:

Your grade in this class will depend on the following assignments.

- Participation in the COM Research Participation System: 10 pts.

An insightful way of getting familiar with communication research and the research process is participating in an actual empirical study. With this objective in mind, you should participate in an ongoing study conducted by the researchers at the Dept. of Communication, through the online Research Participation System (RPS). Study participation usually varies in length, depending on the requirements of the study, but for the purpose of this class each completed 30-minute (0.5 credit) study counts for 5 points.

You may create an account and login to this site to participate in ongoing research projects: <https://waynecomm.sona-systems.com/Default.aspx?ReturnUrl=/> Please be sure to enter the name of THIS class (COM 7410) when prompted by the RPS site, so that your participation can receive the extra credit. Each study will provide a receipt of some type after the study is complete. Ultimately, you are responsible for proving that you participated in one of these studies. For more information on the RPS, see http://comm.wayne.edu/research_participation.php

This assignment satisfies learning outcome 1.

- Class Participation & Weekly Essays: 10+20=30 pts.

I expect you to attend each and every class, barring major emergencies and/or illness, in which case you should notify me via email before class. (Please note that **more than 2 absences will result in a ½ grade drop**; please see “Policy Statements” below for more details.) I expect engaged discussions during class, so that you must participate actively, both asking and answering questions. Please also make sure that you are on time for each class. You should also be highly motivated and engaged in your group activity for the final paper, and do well in terms of both quantity and quality of your assigned work. 10 points are allotted on the basis of the professor’s impression of your general engagement and participation in class. A further 20 points will be allotted on the basis of ANY FIVE weekly response essays submitted (5X4=20 pts). Your essay should be 2 pages (Times New Roman, font size 12, double-spaced), and analyze the key points of the readings assigned for that week. **You might critique, extend, or apply the readings; you should try to connect the response essays and readings to the central theme of the week.** Your weekly comments are due in hard copy at the start of class.

This assignment satisfies learning outcomes 1, 2, 3, & 4.

- Theory Discussion Leadership: 10+10=20 pts.

Since this is a survey/introductory course, we might not be able to examine the latest versions of different communication theories in class, or see how they are applied empirically. With this in mind, your task is to identify an empirical research article, published within the last 10 years in a list of approved journals (see below), using and/or

extending one of the theories included in that week's readings, and leading a discussion session. Please note that the article chosen should not be among those profiled in detail by any of the textbooks for this class.

This is a paired assignment, with two students signing up for a particular week on the first day of classes (discussions will be slated for the weeks starting 1/23 through the end of the semester). Your responsibilities include: 1) preparing a 2 page (front-and-back) summary and explanation of the article (i.e., what is happening in the article, and why is it important?), explaining how it pertains to the theories/material discussed in class that day, and posing 5-6 discussion questions toward the end (10 pts.), 2) facilitating a 20-30 minute class discussion (e.g., introducing the article briefly, posing questions, facilitating discussion) (10 pts.).

You should have your chosen article approved by me *beforehand*, so please bring 3-5 choices to me during the class AT LEAST ONE WEEK before your discussion leadership is scheduled. (You should also indicate what communication theory/theories the article is using, and how it ties with the readings scheduled for that week.)

This assignment satisfies learning outcomes 2, & 3.

4. Midterm Exam: 40 pts.

The midterm will consist of 2-3 essay type questions based on material covered in class during the previous weeks. **More details will be provided closer to the scheduled date.**

This assignment satisfies learning outcome 1, 2, 3, & 4.

5. Final Exam/Paper: 50 pts.

The final exam will be a take-home paper, which will require you to apply a particular communication theory (or theories) to a specific context, and come up with a research question for a study that you might conduct or write a sophisticated theoretical/analytical piece. **More details will be provided closer to the scheduled date.**

This assignment satisfies learning outcome 1, 2, & 3.

Grading:

To review, your course grade will be determined by:

1. RPS Participation: 10 pts.
2. Class Participation & Weekly Essays: 30 pts.
3. Theory Discussion Leadership: 20 pts.
4. Midterm Exam: 40 pts.
5. Final Exam: 50 pts.

TOTAL: 150 pts.

You will be graded on the following parameters:

- Engaged and active participation
- Clarity of meaning and presentation (including spelling, grammar, and punctuation)
- Effective and ethical data gathering
- Effective and ethical organizing of material

- Persuasiveness of your arguments/analysis
- Adherence to APA style (e.g., citations, 12 size Times New Roman font, double-spaced)
- Adherence to specified assignment guidelines

Final grades will be assigned according to a standard scale:

139 – 150	A	93%+
135 – 138	A-	90%+
130 – 134	B+	87%+
125 – 129	B	83%+
120 – 124	B-	80%+
116 – 119	C+	77%+
105 – 115	C	70%+
101 – 104	D+	67%+
95 – 100	D	63%+
90 – 94	D-	60%+
93 and below	F	below 60%

Incompletes: Incompletes are reserved for extraordinary circumstances such as personal emergencies that can be documented. An incomplete is granted when in the judgment of the instructor a student can successfully complete the work of the course without attending regular class sessions. Incompletes, which are not converted to a letter grade within one year, will automatically revert to an F (failing grade).

Withdrawing from Class: Students who withdraw from a course after the end of the 4th week of class will receive a grade of WP, WF, or WN.

- WP will be awarded if the student is passing the course (based on work due to date) at the time the withdrawal is requested
- WF will be awarded if the student is failing the course (based on work due to date) at the time the withdrawal is requested
- WN will be awarded if no materials have been submitted, and so there is no basis for a grade

Please be advised that withdrawing from a class has severe consequences; for this reason, please treat it as a matter of last resort and consult me before you withdraw.

For more information, please refer to:

<http://finaid.wayne.edu/receiving/withdrawing.php>

Students must submit their withdrawal request on-line through Pipeline. The instructor must approve the withdrawal request before it becomes final, and students should continue to attend class until they receive notification via email that the withdrawal has been approved. Students who stop attending but do not request a withdrawal, will receive an automatic F (failing grade).

Make-up Work and Extra Credit: There is no extra credit for this class. All work must be submitted on time by the set deadline. There is no provision for “make-up work” unless there are very strong extenuating circumstances.

Grade Appeals: The college policy for appealing a final grade can be found at:
<http://www.cfpc.wayne.edu/files/FinalGradeAppeal.pdf>

Policy Statements

Attendance: You are expected to attend and participate actively in class. **Missing more than 2 classes will result in a ½ grade drop** from your initially calculated final grade, which will make it difficult for you to pass the class, so that I encourage you to re-examine your course plan for the semester. Excused absences include a university-sanctioned absence (paperwork in advance) or medical emergencies. For medical emergencies, please notify me before such an absence or as soon as possible after. I encourage you to consider the 2 absences without final grade impact as insurance for those times that illness and competing demands may take place.

No cell phone use in class, unless approved by the instructor beforehand. If you are using tablets and/or laptops, I expect you to be only using them for classwork, and not distract anyone else.

Canvas: Readings for this class will be posted on Canvas, so please look up the course page regularly. Call C&IT at (313) 577-4778 if you have problems accessing Canvas.

Disabilities: If you have a documented disability that requires accommodations, you will need to register with Student Disability Services (SDS) for coordination of your academic accommodations. The Student Disability Services (SDS) office is located at 1600 David Adamany Undergraduate Library in the Student Academic Success Services department. SDS telephone number is 313-577-1851 or 313-577-3365 (TDD only). Once you have your accommodations in place, I will be glad to meet with you privately during my office hours to discuss your special needs. Student Disability Services' mission is to assist the university in creating an accessible community where students with disabilities have an equal opportunity to fully participate in their educational experience at Wayne State University.

Please be aware that a delay in getting SDS accommodation letters for the current semester may hinder the availability or facilitation of those accommodations in a timely manner. Therefore, it is in your best interest to get your accommodation letters as early in the semester as possible.

Plagiarism/Academic Dishonesty: Plagiarism is a form of academic dishonesty at Wayne State University and is considered a serious offence with equally serious consequences. On discovering such an instance, an instructor at WSU may give a failing grade on the assignment or for the course. Definition of **Plagiarism**: to take and use another's words or ideas as one's own. Examples of plagiarism include: Failure to use appropriate referencing when using the words or ideas of other persons; Altering the language, paraphrasing, omitting, rearranging, or forming new combinations of words in an attempt to make the thoughts of another appear as your own; Using work that was substantively done or is being done for other classes (i.e., self-plagiarisms); and Copying and pasting information from the Web, then submitting this as if it were your own. If you are suspected of plagiarism, I will ask to meet with you in my office, where I will present what I discovered. Then we will discuss the issue and any consequences which range from failing the assignment to being reported to the Dean of Student's office. Students have a right to appeal any grades or issues regarding suspected plagiarism. The University Due Process Policy can be found at: <http://www.doso.wayne.edu/judicial/index.htm>.

Religious Observances: It is Wayne State's policy to respect the faith and religious obligations of students, faculty and staff. Students with exams or classes that conflict with their religious observances should notify me well in advance so that we can work out a mutually agreeable alternative.

Other Policies: Since this is a graduate seminar, I encourage and expect the active participation of all class members. Please keep in mind the need to respect the diversity of opinions and values that may be expressed in class, and the ensuing need for civil and respectful discussions.

CLASS SCHEDULE

1/9 Welcome; Introductions

1/16 Foundations

LFO Chapters 1&2: Foundations of Communication Theory; Frameworks for Organizing Theories

What is distinctive about communication research? (C&B, Ch. 1)

Craig, R.T. (1999). Communication theory as a field. *Communication Theory*, 9, 119-161.

1/23 Self/Other Identity; Literature Review Sourcing Workshop

LFO Chapter 3: The Communicator

Hecht (C&B, Ch. 4)

Allen, B. (1996). Feminist standpoint theory: A black woman's (review of organizational socialization. *Communication Studies*, 47, 257-271.

1/30 Message Design

LFO Chapter 4: The Message

Capella & Hornick (C&B, Ch. 5)

Barbour, J.B., Gill, R., & Barge, J.K. (2018). Organizational communication design logics: A theory of communicative intervention and collective communication design. *Communication Theory*, 28, 332-353.

2/6 Media and Media Effects

LFO Chapter 5: The Medium

Walther, J. B. (2011). Theories of computer-mediated communication and interpersonal relations. In M. L. Knapp & J. A. Daly (Eds.) *The handbook of interpersonal communication* (pp. 443-479). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Papacharissi, Z., & de Fatima Oliveira, M. (2012). Affective news and networked publics: The rhythm of news storytelling on #Egypt. *Journal of Communication*, 62, 266-282.

2/13 Nature and Materiality

LFO Chapter 6: Beyond Human Communication

Treem, J.W., & Leonardi, P.M. (2012). Social media use in organizations: Exploring the affordances of visibility, editability, persistence, and association. *Communication Yearbook*, 36, 143-189.

Mitra, R. (2018). Natural resource management in the U.S. Arctic: Sustainable organizing through communicative practices. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 32, 398-430.

***** Final Paper Topic Selection (Please come with specific ideas) *****

2/20 Interpersonal & Relational Communication

Guest Scholar: Elizabeth Dorrance Hall (Michigan State University) at 6 pm

LFO Chapter 7: The Relationship

Baxter (C&B, Ch. 2)

Dorrance Hall, E. (2018). The communicative process of resilience for marginalized family members. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 35, 307-328.

2/27 Midterm Prep-shop**Literature Review Organization Workshop******* Please come with specific questions and doubts for clarification. *******3/6 MIDTERM EXAM DUE 11.59 PM**

3/11-3/16 Spring Break

3/20 Groups & Organizations

LFO Chapters 8&9: The Group; The Organization

Cooren, F., Matte, F., Benoit-Barne, & Brummans, B.H.J.M. (2013). Communication as ventriloquism: A grounded-in-action approach to the study of organizational tensions. *Communication Monographs*, 80, 255-277.

Dougherty, D.S., Baiocchi-Wagner, E.A., & McGuire, T. (2011). Managing sexual harassment through enacted stereotypes: An intergroup perspective. *Western Journal of Communication*, 75, 259-281.

3/27 Health and Risk; Final Paper Introduction Drafts Due

LFO Chapter 10: Health Contexts

Dutta, M.J. (2012). Hunger as health: Culture-centered interrogations of alternative rationalities of health. *Communication Monographs*, 79, 366-384.

Harrison, T.R., Yang, F., Morgan, S.E., Wendorf Muhamad, J., T, Eaton, S.A., Niemczyk, N., ... Kobetz, E. (2018). The invisible danger of transferring toxins with bunker gear: A theory-based intervention to increase postfire decontamination to reduce cancer risk in firefighters. *Journal of Health Communication*, 23, 999-1007.

Special Notice: March 28, 2019: Dept. of Communication Brock Lecture – Dr. Cara Finnegan (University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign) at Manoogial Hall Rm. 91, 6-7.30 pm; “Barrack Obama and the Age of Social Media.”

4/3 Culture, Difference, Belonging

LFO Chapter 11: Culture

Gerry Philipsen (C&B, Ch. 6)

Chávez, K.R. (2010). Border (in)securities: Normative and differential Belonging in LGBTQ and immigrant rights discourse. *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*, 7, 136-155

4/10 Communication and Society

LFO Chapter 12: Society

Stan Deetz (C&B, Ch. 3)

Shome, R. (2003). Space matters: The power and practice of space. *Communication Theory*, 13, 39–56.

4/17 Final Paper Workshop; Drafts Due

Reflections on Distinctive Qualities (C&B, Ch. 7)

4/24 Final Papers and Peer Evaluations DUE via Canvas

Have a wonderful Summer!

List of approved journals for Theory Discussion assignment

Wayne State University Library has a Communication Guide at:
<http://guides.lib.wayne.edu/content.php?pid=72657&sid=538050>

NCA Journals (<http://www.natcom.org/journals.aspx>)

1. Communication & Critical-Cultural Studies
2. Journal of International & Intercultural Communication
3. Journal of Applied Communication Research
4. Quarterly Journal of Communication
5. Communication Monographs
6. Communication Education
7. Critical Studies in Media Communication
8. Text & Performance Quarterly

ICA Journals (<http://www.icaheadq.org/page/Journals>)

1. Journal of Communication
2. Human Communication Research
3. Communication Theory
4. Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication
5. Communication, Culture & Critique

Other relevant Communication journals

1. Management Communication Quarterly
2. New Media & Society
3. Environmental Communication
4. Journal of Communication Inquiry
5. Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media
6. Health Communication
7. Journal of Health Communication
8. Science Communication
9. Public Relations Review
10. Journal of Public Relations Research
11. Public Relations Inquiry
12. International Journal of Business Communication
13. Political Communication
14. Rhetoric & Public Affairs
15. Rhetoric Review
16. Feminist Media Studies
17. Women's Studies in Communication
18. Journal of Family Communication
19. Communication Research
20. Communication Studies (CSCA – regional)
21. Communication Quarterly (ECA – regional)
22. Western Journal of Communication (WSCA – regional)

23. Southern Communication Journal (SSCA – regional)