

Communication Theory

COMM

7/8321

Course Description

This course will survey ways of theorizing communication using Craig's (1999) meta-theoretical framework. Students will learn the philosophical underpinnings of communication theories, as well as how different theoretical traditions approach different aspects of communication studies (from individual communicators to culture & society), and how specific communication theories and models exemplify different theoretical traditions.

Textbooks and Readings

Littlejohn & Foss, *Theories of Human Communication, 10th ed.* (Waveland Press)

Craig & Muller, *Theorizing Communication: Readings Across Traditions* (Sage)

Other readings on eCourseware.

Assignments & Grading

Attendance & Participation (20% of final grade).

This is a once a week graduate seminar. Therefore, you are expected to come to each class prepared to discuss the week's readings. The material will be more or less familiar to you, depending on your background. It is important to focus on the big picture (major claims and arguments) and not to sweat the small stuff. We can work through the details together in class. I welcome questions and critiques of the assigned readings.

Wiki discussions (20% of final grade)

Each week, you should contribute to the week's discussion on the course wiki (<https://umwiki.memphis.edu/x/p4B3Ag>). Specific discussion questions will be posted each week, and everyone should contribute to the discussion (at least one comment, ~100-200 words) by no later than Monday at midnight.

Article Summaries and Discussion (20% of final grade)

Each student will be assigned a certain number of articles (tbd, based on enrollment) to briefly summarize and lead the class discussion. For each assigned article, you will summarize—in no more than 5 minutes—the major theoretical arguments from the article. *Please do not rehearse the contents of the article* (i.e., "First it talks about this, and then it talks about that, etc.). Then you will lead a discussion on the article, involving your classmates in a conversation (and/or other activities) on how the article exemplifies a specific theoretical tradition, how the theory contributes to knowledge in communication,

and/or how the theory can be applied to specific examples of communication data, artifacts, or contexts.

Final Paper (40% of final grade)

Your final paper will be a 20-25 page (double-spaced) literature review and/or application of a communication theory. This paper can (a) select a specific theory and review the scholarly literature developing and applying the theory; or, (b) select a specific theory, outline its details and relevant literature, and then (i) apply the theory to an analysis of some data, or (ii) apply it to a proposed research project.

Academic Honesty/Plagiarism

As graduate students, you are becoming producers, not just consumers, of knowledge in communication studies. Therefore, it is very important that you (a) properly acknowledge those who are responsible for the research and ideas that you are drawing upon and (b) do not inappropriately take credit for research and ideas that are not your own. Everyone makes honest mistakes, and I am willing to help correct these mistakes. However, deliberate efforts to represent others' words, ideas, and/or research as your own will not be tolerated. Cheating, academic dishonesty, and/or plagiarism (including submitting the same paper for more than one course without permission) may result in an F for the course and will be reported to the Office of Judicial Affairs. <http://saweb.memphis.edu/judicialaffairs/>

"Your written work may be submitted to Turnitin.com, or a similar electronic detection method, for an evaluation of the originality of your ideas and proper use and attribution of sources. As part of this process, you may be required to submit electronic as well as hard copies of your written work, or be given other instructions to follow. By taking this course, you agree that all assignments may undergo this review process and that the assignment may be included as a source document in Turnitin.com's restricted access database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism in such documents. Any assignment not submitted according to the procedures given by the instructor may be penalized or may not be accepted at all." (Office of Legal Counsel, October 17, 2005)

Students with Disabilities

Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with documented disabilities. For additional information, please see: <http://saweb.memphis.edu/sds/>

Other campus resources

- English Learning Center: <http://www.memphis.edu/esp/centers.php>
- Career & Psychological Counseling: <http://www.memphis.edu/cpcc/>

Weekly Reading Schedule

L & F = Littlejohn & Foss

C & M = Craig & Muller

Week 1 (1/18): Introductions/Syllabus

Week 2 (1/25): What is Communication (Studies)?

L & F, Ch. 1

Dance, F. E. X. (1970). The "concept" of communication. *Journal of Communication*, 20, 201-210.

C & M, Ch. 4

C & M, Ch. 30

Week 3 (2/1): What is Communication Theory?

L & F, Ch. 2

Bostrom, R., & Donohew, L. (1992). The case for empiricism: Clarifying fundamental issues in communication theory. *Communication Monographs*, 59, 109-129.

Frey, L. R. (1994). The naturalistic paradigm: Studying small groups in the postmodern era. *Small Group Research*, 25, 551-577.

Pavitt, C. (1999). The third way: Scientific realism and communication theory. *Communication Theory*, 9, 162-188.

Week 4 (2/8): Traditions of Communication Theory

L & F, Ch. 3

C & M, Ch. 5

Week 5 (2/15): Theorizing Communicators

L & F, Ch. 4

Social Psychological:

Beatty, M. J., McCroskey, J. C., & Heisel, L. D. (1998). Communication apprehension as temperament expression: A communibiological paradigm. *Communication Monographs*, 65, 197-219.

Cybernetic:

Babrow, A. S. (1992). Communication and problematic integration: Understanding diverging probability and value, ambiguity, ambivalence, and impossibility. *Communication Theory*, 2, 95-130.

Critical:

Gross, L. (2005). The past and the future of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender studies. *Journal of Communication*, 55, 508-52_.

Dow, B. J., & Condit, C. M. (2005). The state of the art in feminist scholarship in communication. *Journal of Communication*, 55, 448-478.

Week 6 (2/22): Theorizing Messages

L & F, Ch. 5

Semiotic:

C & M, Chs. 11 & 12

Phenomenological:

C & M, Ch. 17

Rhetorical:

C & M, Ch. 8

Sociocultural:

Joseph, J. E., Love, N., & Taylor, T. J. (2001). Austin on language as action. In *Landmarks in linguistic thought II: The western tradition in the twentieth century* (pp. 91-105). New York: Routledge.

Social Psychological:

O'Keefe, B. J. (1988). The logic of message design: Individual differences in reasoning about communication. *Communication Monographs, 55*, 80-103.

Week 7 (2/29): Theorizing Conversations

L & F, Ch. 6

Social Psychological:

C & M, Ch. 24

Sociocultural:

Ting-Toomey, S., & Kurogi, A. (1998). Facework competence in intercultural conflict: An updated face-negotiation theory. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 22*, 187-225.

Rhetorical:

C & M, Ch. 9

Cybernetic:

Pearce, W. B., & Pearce, K. A. (2000). Extending the theory of the coordinated management of meaning (CMM) through a community dialogue process. *Communication Theory, 10*, 405-423.

Critical:

Orbe, M. P. (1998). From the standpoint(s) of traditionally muted groups: Explicating a co-cultural communication theoretical model. *Communication Theory, 8*, 1-26.

Spring Break (3/5-11)

Week 8 (3/14): Theorizing Relationships

L & F, Ch. 7

Cybernetic:

C & M, Ch. 20

Social Psychological:

Koerner, A. F., & Fitzpatrick, M. A. (2002). Toward a theory of family communication. *Communication Theory, 12*, 70-91.

Sociocultural:

Baxter, L. A. (2004). Relationships as dialogues. *Personal Relationships, 11*, 1-22.

Phenomenological:

C & M, Ch. 16

Week 9 (3/21): Theorizing Groups

L & F, Ch. 8

Social Psychological:

C & M, Ch. 26

Bales, R. F., Strodtbeck, F. L., Mills, T. M., & Roseborough, M. E. (1951). Channels of communication in small groups. *American Sociological Review, 16*, 461-468.

Cybernetic:

Putman, L. L., & Stohl, C. (1990). Bona fide groups: A reconceptualization of groups in context. *Communication Studies, 41*, 248-265.

Sociocultural:

C&M, Ch. 29

Critical:

Meyers, R. A., et al. (2005). Understanding groups from a feminist perspective. In M. S. Poole & A. B. Hollingshead (Eds.), *Theories of small groups: Interdisciplinary perspectives* (pp. 241-276). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Week 10 (3/28): Theorizing Organizations

L & F, Ch. 9

Cybernetic:

Taylor, J. R., Cooren, F., Giroux, N., & Robichaud, D. (1996). The communicational basis of organization: Between the conversation and the text. *Communication Theory, 6*, 1-39.

Sociocultural:

Pacanowsky, M. E., & O'Donnell-Trujillo, N. (1983). Organizational communication as cultural performance. *Communication Monographs, 50*, 126-147.

Critical

C & M, Ch. 34

Week 11 (4/4): Theorizing Media

L & F, Ch. 10

Semiotic:

Fry, D. L., & Fry, V. H. (1986). A semiotic model for the study of mass communication. In M. L. McLaughlin (Ed.), *Communication yearbook* (Vol. 9, pp. 443-462). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Sociocultural:

C & M, Ch. 28

Social Psychological:

C & M, Ch. 25

Cybernetic:

Slater, M. D. (2007). Reinforcing spirals: The mutual influence of media selectivity and media effects and their impact on individual behavior and social identity. *Communication Theory, 17*, 281-303.

Critical:

Steeves, H. L. (1987). Feminist theories and media studies. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication, 4*, 95-135.

Week 12 (4/11): No class (Instructor at conference)

Week 13 (4/18): Theorizing Culture & Society

L & F, Ch. 11

Semiotic:

Joseph, J. E., Love, N., & Taylor, T. J. (2001). Whorf on language and thought. In *Landmarks in linguistic thought II: The western tradition in the twentieth century* (pp. 43-56). New York: Routledge.

Cybernetic:

Kim, Y. Y. (2006). From ethnic to interethnic: The case for identity adaptation and transformation. *Journal of Language & Social Psychology, 25*, 283-300.

Phenomenological:

Carbaugh, D., & Hastings, S. O. (1992). A role for communication theory in ethnography and cultural analysis. *Communication Theory, 2*, 156-165.

Sociocultural:

Philipsen, G. (1975). Speaking 'like a man' in Teamsterville: Culture patterns of role enactment in an urban neighborhood. *Quarterly Journal of Speech, 61*, 13-22.

Critical/Rhetorical:

McKerrow, R. E. (1989). Critical rhetoric: Theory and praxis. *Communication Monographs, 56*, 91-111.

Week 14 (4/25): Wrapping Up

SAMPLE