



## **COMS 2331-02: Communication Theory & Research Spring 2018**

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**Office:** DRCB 322E

**Sessions:** T/TH, 12:30-1:50 p.m., DRCB 326

**Office Hours:** T/TH 11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. & 3:30-4:30 p.m., and by appointment

### **Course Description and Student Learning Outcomes**

*“There is nothing so practical as a good theory.” ~Kurt Lewin*



This course is an introductory level course in our department's core curriculum. This course introduces you to theories of and perspectives on communication between and amongst actual people, including mass communication and communication-as-culture.

Our course is divided into five “units.”

- Unit 1, you will learn the basic vocabulary of metatheory, which enables critical thinking about and evaluation of theories of communication.
- Unit 2, you will learn about the communication research process.
- Unit 3, you will learn about several theories of *interpersonal* communication.
- Unit 4, you will learn about several theories of *mass* communication.
- Unit 5, you will learn about several theories of *cultural* communication.

In Units 3-5, you will go well beyond simply memorizing the theories; you'll be put in charge of developing and presenting practical and creative communication-related tools or advice based on the theories. In short, you'll learn how to demonstrate the “real world value” of theoretical perspectives on communication! You will also bring your semester's work to fruition. To hone both your oral and written communication skills, you'll publicly present your work.

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<sup>1</sup> “Theory” design by Marian Bantjes. Recognizable patterns emerge amongst chaos and unexpected connections.

What will you learn in this class? I have designed the readings, assignments, and sessions to promote the following “student learning outcomes.” Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

- understand and discuss theories of communication from multiple perspectives.
- assess communication problems/situations from multiple perspectives.
- translate theoretical assessments of communication problems/situations in nontechnical, practical, and creative ways.
- provide clear, effective recommendations for action in response to carefully assessed communication problems/situations.
- utilize excellent written, oral, and visual communication skills in the accomplishment of the above points.

### **Overview of Course Readings**

**Required Book** – The following book is required and available at the University Bookstore. Most online retailers also sell this book.



- Griffin, E., Ledbetter, A., & Sparks, G. (2015). *A first look at communication theory* (9th ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill. ISBN: 978-0-07-352392-7

*WARNING: There are older editions of the textbook available. The content is identical and they are incredibly less expensive than the newer version. Whichever version you use, please make sure your work corresponds to the chapters as outlined in the syllabus. I will not accept work that does not correspond with the assigned reading material.*

**Additional Required Readings** – Additional course readings are available to you in Portable Document Format (.pdf) on Blackboard.

### **Assignments and Grades**

**Final Course Grades and Assignment Points** – Your grade will be determined from the number of points you earn throughout the semester. *There are no extra credit opportunities.*

Final Course Grades, *500 total points*

- A. 450+ points
- B. 400-449 points
- C. 350-399 points
- D. 300-349 points
- F. < 299 points

Assignment Points

- *Exams*, 2 x 100 points for 200 total points
- *Quizzes*, 5 x 10 points for 50 total points
- *Discussion Leader Assignment*, 75 total points
- *Chapter Summary Forms*, 10 x 10 points for 100 total points
- *Annotated Bibliographies*, 2 x 25 points for 50 total points
- *APA Assignment*, 25 total points

Interpret letter grades on assignments and for the course as a whole according to this rubric:

- A. *Excellent*. The student's work and contributions to the class are exemplary.
- B. *Very Good or Above Average*. The student's work and contributions to the class are consistently and remarkably strong.
- C. *Acceptable or Average*. The student's work meets and sometimes exceeds expectations for undergraduate performance in courses of this nature.
- D. *Problematic or Below Average*. The student's work may sometimes meet expectations for undergraduate performance in courses of this nature, but is sometimes deficient or flawed.
- F. *Failing*. The student's work does not meet the expectations for undergraduate performance in courses of this nature.

**Exams** – 2 x 100 points for 200 total points. You will take two exams over the course of the semester. These exams will assess your understanding and mastery of the lecture material and assigned readings. The first exam will cover material from Units 1-3.

The second exam may cover material from any point during the semester, with an emphasis on material covered during Units 4 and 5. Exams may take any form (e.g., multiple choice, essay, short answer, blended formats). Dates of exams are listed in the course schedule in this syllabus. *There are no make-up exams.*

**Quizzes** – 5 x 10 points for 50 total points. There will be five unannounced quizzes given during the semester. You must be in attendance at the time the quiz is given. Each quiz will cover readings assigned for that class period and/or previous classes. *There are no make-up quizzes.*

**Discussion Leader Assignment** – 75 points. Each student will serve as the class “expert” on one theory or topic area related to a specific week's readings. The student's job is to briefly present the theory/topic to the class (5 minutes) by conducting a creative “real world” application of the theory or topic (25 minutes) AND lead an exciting class discussion (30 minutes). Students are expected to do some extra reading/research on the topic and **creatively** present the topic to the class. More importantly, students need to develop questions, exercises, or other class activities designed to **engage** the class in thinking critically about the concepts. The entire presentation, discussion, and activity should not exceed 60 minutes. Think about ways of using the time wisely. *There are no make-up presentations.*

Visual aids and creative approaches are required. PowerPoints/Prezis are not allowed. This is not a typical “teaching demonstration.” I do not want you to teach the class about the theory/topic in the traditional sense. Instead, I want you to foster interaction and discussion among students regarding the theory/topic. This is a much harder task to do, and as such should take you and your partners some time to come up with creative approaches. Think about experiences that you've had in the past or examples that have been used in other classes—what about them helped you better learn the material? These are the approaches that should be taken into consideration for this assignment.

Discussion Leader assignments will be assessed along these lines:

- *Theoretical Connection and Accuracy* – the degree to which your work connects logically with one of the reading options for Units 3-5, as well as the accuracy and specificity with which your work represents the selected theory.
- *Clarity and Effectiveness* – the degree to which your work effectively translates and applies theoretical principles to a specific practical communication problem.

- *User/Audience Centeredness* – the degree to which your work demonstrates consideration of and appropriateness for a specific user or audience.
- *Creativity* – the degree to which your work demonstrates unique thinking, unexpected connections, innovativeness, novelty, and/or expression outside of convention.
- *Writing and Design Quality* – your writing and design should be effective, organized, and free of errors; it should also present a clear, theoretically informed perspective on communication.
- *Presentation* – your oral presentation should be rehearsed, organized, precise, appropriate for an everyday audience, engaging and/or persuasive, supported as appropriate by thoughtfully crafted visual aids, and no longer than 60 minutes.

**Chapter Summary Forms** – 10 x 10 points for 100 total points. Starting with Chapter 7, you are expected to turn in a Chapter Summary Form for 10 designated theories/chapters (as designated in the course schedule in this syllabus). For each chapter, you will summarize relevant theories, including the theorists, key claims or propositions, applications, and significance. Filling out this form will help prepare you to successfully participate in class discussion. See separate handout on Blackboard for detailed instructions. Chapter Summary Forms are due at the beginning of class. *Late forms will not be accepted.*

**Annotated Bibliographies** – 2 x 25 for 50 total points. An annotated bibliography is an alphabetized list of citations to scholarly books, articles, and documents. The purpose of the annotation is to inform the reader of the relevance, accuracy, and quality of the sources cited. It is your job to paraphrase or sum up the general ideas of the work (an article, book, document, etc.) in about 300 words. An annotation of an academic source typically identifies its thesis, research questions, and/or hypotheses, its major methods of investigation, and its main conclusions. You will complete two annotated bibliographies that correspond to Communication Research (e.g., interpersonal communication, mass communication, and intercultural communication). Each bibliography must contain at least five (5) sources. Bibliographies are due in class on the dates listed in the course schedule. *Late assignments will not be accepted.*

**APA Assignment** – 25 points. With a partner, you will locate various academic sources and cite them using proper APA format. This assignment is due in class on the date listed in the course schedule in this syllabus. *Late assignments will not be accepted.*

### **Course Policies**

**Attendance Policy** – You are expected to attend every class session, unless otherwise stated in the syllabus or ahead of time by the professor. **Students with more than two unexcused absence will be docked 10 points per class.** Attendance will be taken each class. It is your responsibility to ensure that if you are present you are counted as such. If you participate in University activities, please see me immediately to discuss any classes that you will miss.

Along with attending class, I also expect you to **be in class on time**. I make an effort to begin and end class on time. I expect the same from you. If you are late, please make all efforts not to disturb the class. Excessive tardiness will result in a grade penalty.

*It is critical that you stay in touch with me by phone or e-mail when you are experiencing illness or difficulty. If you wait until your problems are over to talk to me, I may have no option but to fail you based on course policies. This is a communication course; communicate with me to discuss options.*

**Assignment Deadlines** – All written work is expected in class on the day it is due. I do not accept papers by e-mail, fax, left under my office door, left in my mailbox, or left with the main office. **Late assignments will not be accepted.** All presentations will only be accepted on the day you are assigned to present. If you do not show up on your presentation day your grade will result in a ZERO.

*Papers and assignments should be prepared in MSWord format, 12-point font, double-spaced, with one-inch margins on all sides, stapled in upper left corner, and follow current APA documentation format. Papers that do not meet these guidelines will receive less credit.*

**Cell Phone and Laptop Policy** – All electronic devices should be *put away (with cell phones turned off or set on “silent”)* while class is in session. My cell phone receives SHSU Safe Alerts, and I will keep it on so that we will be alerted in case of an emergency. **This policy means: No laptops; no mp3 players; no e-mailing; no chatting; no Snapping; no Tweeting; no YouTubeing; no Facebooking; no Instagramming.** If it runs on battery power and is not medically necessary, **turn it OFF and put it out of sight.** If a student is caught using his/her cell phone during class, points will be deducted from his/her FINAL COURSE GRADE.

**Classroom Climate and Student Conduct** – At all times, we will maintain a classroom learning environment that is respectful of and safe for a range of people and perspectives. Civility and tolerance of diversity are demanded of students in our class. I will not allow behavior that is violent, threatening, sexist, racist, or otherwise disparaging. Please speak with me immediately if you are uncomfortable with some aspect of your class experience.

Additionally, students should respect the presentation times of their classmates. Students who interrupt a speaker verbally or nonverbally (such as by walking in late during a classmate’s presentation or working on iPads, laptops, or cell phones) may lose points off their FINAL COURSE GRADE. Students who appear uninterested or uninvolved in a particular presentation (texting, working on a laptop, etc.) may be asked to provide a synopsis of the presentation once it is completed.

**Consultations** – My door is always open to students. E-mail is the most reliable way to reach me. If you cannot reach me, call the department office. Please do not wait until the week an assignment is due to realize that you are unsure of what is expected. It is my intention to do everything I can to help you learn the material of the course. If you do not understand an assignment, ask. Meet with me during my regular office hours or make an appointment. The excuse, “I didn’t know what was expected,” will not be accepted as justification of poor performance. *Remember, you are responsible for your end of this course: You get out of it what you put into it. If you are having a problem that impacts your performance, it is your responsibility to inform me.*

**Coursework Reuse Policy** – In this class, you may not reuse work (in part or as a whole) that you have submitted or developed for other classes (previous or concurrent). Any exception to this policy must be explicitly negotiated with me in advance. Violations of this course policy will be treated as violations of the Clemson Academic Integrity Policy.

**E-mail Accounts** – Students must activate their SHSU e-mail accounts to receive important messages related to this class. This is the only e-mail account I will use to contact you. Make sure it’s activated and you know how to use it! You are responsible for checking your SHSU e-mail account regularly for assignments and information.

**Incompletes or Withdrawals** – It is extremely unlikely that an incomplete will be assigned. Students requesting an incomplete must be passing the course, must still complete all of the assignments, quizzes, and exams allowable (not all can be made up if missed), must provide compelling evidence justifying an incomplete, and must sign an incomplete contract with the course instructor. Mid- to late-semester withdrawal requests are evaluated by the Dean's office on a case-by-case basis.

**Waiting Policy** – In the event that I am late for class, please wait 15 minutes. After that time, class will be considered cancelled. In such instances, please check for messages at your email account or elsewhere online (e.g., Blackboard).

### **University Policies**

**Academic Integrity (Plagiarism/Cheating)** – The University expects all students to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain complete honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary actions. No student shall engage in behavior that, in the judgment of the instructor, may be construed as cheating. This may include, but is not limited to, plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty such as the acquisition without permission of tests or other academic materials and/or distribution of these materials and other academic work. This includes students who aid and abet as well as those who attempt such behavior.

When you use any source for information in your research, you must give credit for the information, both visual and textual, to the author or creator, both in-text and on the reference page.

*If caught, a student will receive a ZERO for any assignment on which they plagiarized or failed to document ethically according to college and professional standards or cheated. The student will be referred to the Dean for disciplinary action. This may include receiving an "F" for the course.*

**Reasonable Accommodations** – It is the policy of SHSU that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance should register with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Lee Drain Annex (936.294.3512; [disability@shsu.edu](mailto:disability@shsu.edu)). They should then make arrangements with their individual instructors so that appropriate strategies can be considered and helpful procedures can be developed to ensure that participation and achievement opportunities are not impaired.

SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If you have a disability that may adversely affect your work in this class, I encourage you to register with the SHSU Services for Students with Disabilities and to let me know during the first week of class if you will need accommodations. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. NOTE: No accommodations can be made until you register with the Services for Students with Disabilities. For more information, visit: <http://www.shsu.edu/dept/disability/index.html>

**Observance of Religious Holiday** – Colleges and universities must recognize the mandatory observance of religious holy days for students. The university must permit students to celebrate religious holy days, including travel for the same purpose. Please notify the instructor in writing of any observed religious holidays during the course of the semester. The instructor will not only excuse absences resulting from religious holiday observances, but will also allow students to make up examinations and assignments. I need in writing from students their intention to miss class for the purpose of holy day observances prior to the planned absence.

**Visitors in the Classroom** – Unannounced visitors to class must present a current, official SHSU identification card to be permitted into the classroom. They must not present a disruption to the class by their attendance. If the visitor is not a registered student, it is at the instructor's discretion whether or not the visitor will be allowed to remain in the classroom. This policy is not intended to discourage the occasional visiting of classes by responsible persons. Obviously, however, the visiting of a particular class should be occasional and not regular, and it should in no way constitute interference with registered members of the class or the educational process.

**Course Schedule**  
(subject to change, if necessary)

Day	Reading	Notes	Assignment Due
1/18	Syllabus What is a Theory?		
<b>UNIT 1</b>	<b>Metatheory + Foundational Perspectives</b>		
1/23	Ch. 1 Ch. 2		
1/25	Ch. 3 Ch. 4		
<b>UNIT 2</b>	<b>Communication Research</b>		
1/30	Keyton Chs. 1-2	Posted on Blackboard	
2/1	Sparks Chs. 1-4	Posted on Blackboard	
<b>UNIT 3</b>	<b>Interpersonal Communication</b>		
2/6	APA Workshop		
2/8	APA Workshop (cont'd.)		
2/13	Ch. 7 - EVT Burgoon et al. (1988)	Posted on Blackboard	APA Assignment Chapter Summary Form
2/15	Ch. 8 - SPT Chen et al. (2009)	Posted on Blackboard	Chapter Summary Form
2/20	Ch. 9 - URT Knobloch et al. (2002)	Posted on Blackboard	Chapter Summary Form
2/22	Ch. 11 - Dialectics Hopson et al. (2007)	Posted on Blackboard	Chapter Summary Form
	Ch. 13 - Interactional Watzlawick et al. (1967)	Posted on Blackboard	Chapter Summary Form
2/27	Ch. 15 - ELM Polk et al. (2009)	Posted on Blackboard	Discussion Leaders
3/1	-----	-----	Annotated Bibliography #1
3/6		Midterm Review	
3/8		<u>Thurs., March 8, 2018</u> <u>12:30-1:50 p.m.</u>	<b>MIDTERM EXAM</b>
3/12-3/16	-----	Spring Break	-----
3/20	-----	NCMPR Conference	-----
<b>UNIT 4</b>	<b>Mass Communication</b>		
3/22	Ch. 26 - Semiotics Leonard (2013)	Posted on Blackboard	Discussion Leaders
3/27	Ch. 28 - Uses & Grats Urista et al. (2009)	Posted on Blackboard	Chapter Summary Form
3/29	Ch. 29 - Cultivation Quick (2009)	Posted on Blackboard	Discussion Leaders
4/3	Ch. 30 - Agenda-Setting Park et al. (2012)	Posted on Blackboard	Chapter Summary Form



Day	Reading	Notes	Assignment Due
4/5	-----	SSCA Conference	Annotated Bibliography #2
<b>UNIT 5</b>	<b>Intercultural Communication</b>		
4/10	Ch. 31 - CAT Buzzanell et al. (1996)	Posted on Blackboard	Discussion Leaders
4/12	Ch. 33 - Speech Codes Philipsen (1975)	Posted on Blackboard	<i>Chapter Summary Form</i>
4/17	Ch. 34 - Genderlect Tannen (1990)	Posted on Blackboard	<i>Chapter Summary Form</i>
4/19	Ch. 36 - Muted Group Burnett et al. (2009)	Posted on Blackboard	<i>Chapter Summary Form</i>
4/24		Final Review	
4/26		<u>Thurs., April 26, 2018</u> <u>12:30-1:50 p.m.</u>	<b>FINAL EXAM</b> Teaching Evaluation