

Introduction to Communication Theory

COM 351 Course Syllabus ~ Fall 2014

Course Website: <http://elearning.uky.edu/>

A theory is “a set of systematic, informed hunches about the way things work” (Griffin, 2015); “a generalization about a phenomenon that explains how or why the phenomenon occurs” (Frey, Botan, & Kreps, 2000); “a set of interrelated constructs (concepts), definitions, and propositions that present a systematic view of phenomena by specifying relations among the variables, with the purpose of explaining and (or) predicting the phenomena” (Kerlinger, 1986), “a tentative solution to a problem” (Kaplan, 1964).

“There is nothing so practical as a good theory.” (Kurt Lewin, 1951)

COURSE INFORMATION

COM 351-001 Class meets: 2:00 - 3:15 p.m. Tuesday and Thursday McVey 072

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Derek R. Lane, Ph.D.

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Office: 859.257.9538

Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 3:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Wednesday: 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. (And by appointment)

Office Location: 310A LCLI Little Library

Communication Department Office: 859.257.3622

COURSE DESCRIPTION & OBJECTIVES

Introduction to Communication Theory considers various theoretical perspectives on communication processes. In this course, we will examine the foundation of theoretical inquiry (including the nature and development of theory), selected approaches to theorizing, applications of theory, and ethical implications of theory in a number of communication contexts. The primary objectives of this course are to (a) explicate the nature of theory in general and of communication theory in particular, (b) trace the development of theoretical inquiry in the field of communication, (c) evaluate the utility of theory by applying specific criteria and standards, (d) distinguish among metatheoretical assumptions and various approaches to communication theory, (e) examine communication processes in a variety of contexts, (f) apply communication theory in the development of an original research project, and (g) hone individual writing skills.

REQUIRED READING

American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

Griffin, E., Ledbetter, A. & Sparks, G. (2015). *A first look at communication theory* (9th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Additional readings will be available electronically on the Blackboard website for the course.

In addition to the required textbook and the 6th Edition of the Publication Manual of the APA you will need to become familiar with the communication resources available in the W.T. Young Library in order to secure the necessary references required for the “Theory at a Glance” assignment, and the literature review for your final paper.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

ATTENDANCE: Attendance is required. Students are required to provide official written documentation for excused absences. Excuses for university-sponsored activities must be presented **in advance** of the absence and arrangements for work missed for such activities must be made prior to such absences. No excuses or documentation will be accepted more than two weeks after the absence. **Your final grade will be lowered 50 points (i.e., by 1/2 letter grade, or 5%) for each absence above two.** The University code for classroom behavior and academic misconduct will be enforced in this course.

MISSED OR LATE EXAMS OR ASSIGNMENTS: By definition, late assignments are below average. Missed or late assignments create major time and scheduling conflicts, and are unfair to those who are prepared. For these reasons, any late assignment will have **10 percent** deducted from the score as a penalty for each day it is late (including weekends). An assignment is considered late when it is submitted after the stated deadline, and deductions will be taken beginning with the missed deadline. For example, if an assignment is due in class on Thursday, deductions will begin immediately following the conclusion of class. The only exception to this policy will be documented and university accepted excuses (see Students Rights and Responsibilities Code). No make up work is available for in-class exercises or exams unless prior arrangements are approved by the instructor.

EXPECTATIONS ABOUT READINGS AND PARTICIPATION: Expect to be challenged. This course will be conducted in a seminar format, which requires a higher level of accountability from each student. Some material will be presented in lecture format, but much of our time will be spent in **activities** and **discussion**. For this course to be successful, and for you to optimally benefit from enrollment, assigned readings must be completed before class. I expect students to be well prepared to make thoughtful, respectful contributions to class discussion.

CLASSROOM CIVILITY: I want to build a classroom climate that is comfortable for all. In a communication class, it is *especially* important that we (1) display respect for all members of the classroom – including the instructor and fellow classmates, (2) pay attention to and participate in all class sessions and activities; (3) avoid unnecessary disruption during class time (e.g., having private conversations, reading the newspaper, doing work for other classes, receiving cell phone calls, etc.); and (4) avoid racist, sexist, homophobic or other negative language that may unnecessarily exclude members of our campus and classroom. This is not an exhaustive list of behaviors; rather, they represent the minimal standards that help make the classroom a productive place for all concerned.

E-MAIL & COMPUTER WORK: All assignments *must* be submitted in paper copy. However, I may use electronic mail for on-line discussions and class updates. Please read your mail regularly (at least twice per day) so you can keep up-to-date on upcoming assignments. If you do not already have these skills, you will need to acquire them quickly. They will not only be useful now, but for virtually any job you take after you leave UK. Let me know if you need help with this. I encourage you to download Endnote X7 for Mac OS X or EndNote X7 for Windows from download.uky.edu and learn the software. It will save you hours! I will also maintain a Blackboard site for our class.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY (INTELLECTUAL DISHONESTY): Intellectual dishonesty is a fancy term for cheating. Unless otherwise explicitly stated by the instructor, all work must be the original product of the student, and all materials taken from others must be properly cited. Cheating and plagiarism in any form, regardless of any justification, will not be tolerated. Any student whom the instructor has sufficient evidence to believe has cheated or plagiarized in the course will receive an automatic "E" (failure) in the entire course. There will be no exceptions. Additional penalties may involve suspension, dismissal, or expulsion from the University. As you can see, these are extreme measures for academic offenses that we believe are serious. Policies related to cheating/plagiarism (as well as excused absences, withdrawal, incompletes, final exams and common exams) can be found in your copy of Student Rights and Responsibilities. As students and faculty in the University of Kentucky, we are all responsible for adhering to these policies. You should be particularly familiar with Senate Rules 6.3.1 and 6.3.2, which are available online at www.uky.edu/StudentAffairs/Code/part2.html.

IF YOU VIOLATE THIS CODE, YOU RISK A FAILING GRADE IN THE COURSE AND POSSIBLE SUSPENSION.

If you suspect that someone else in the class is cheating or plagiarizing, please report it to me immediately. You may report such incidents anonymously at

<http://comm.uky.edu/surveys/contactus/cheating.html>.

WRITTEN WORK AND PRESENTATIONS: While it should go without saying, I'll say it anyway – students must use correct spelling and grammar in all written assignments and oral presentations. In-class activities and exams may be handwritten. All other submitted work must be typed. All written assignments must conform to guidelines established in the Sixth Edition of the American Psychological Association's (APA) Publication Manual.

WRITING REQUIREMENT: This is a **writing-intensive** course, approved to fulfill the upper tier of the graduation writing requirement. Thus, to enroll in this course, you must have successfully completed the first-year writing requirement (ENG 104 or its equivalent) and have completed at least 30 hours of coursework. To receive the writing credit (W) for this course, students must submit formal written work that (a) **demonstrates the student's ability to present evidence in support of an argument**, (b) **utilizes documentation that conforms to APA format**, (c) **goes through a draft, review, and revision process**, and (d) is **free of mechanical errors**. According to the University Senate Guidelines, students must earn a grade of C or higher on all formal assignments to pass the course, and **any major assignment that receives a D or below must be revised to reflect competency and resubmitted** (the instructor may limit the number of revision attempts and set time restrictions on revisions).

IN RETURN: You may expect the following of me: I will be present and prepared every class except in cases of serious illness, emergency, or pre-arranged professional obligations. I will treat you with respect. I will evaluate your work fairly according to explicit criteria. I will be available to meet with you outside of class during office hours and scheduled appointments. If you have a special need that requires academic accommodation, please see me as soon as possible, and I will work with you to facilitate your participation in the course. If you feel I am not upholding these standards, please do not hesitate to let me know.

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION POLICY: Any student in this course who has a disability that may prevent him or her from fully demonstrating his or her abilities should contact me personally as soon as possible (but **no later than the end of the second class period**) so we can discuss accommodations necessary to ensure full participation and facilitate your educational opportunities.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

EXAMS: Four Unit Tests will be given upon completion of each of the major units of the textbook. Unless otherwise noted, the Unit Tests will not be cumulative. There will be no cumulative Final Exam but we will meet during the scheduled final exam time to complete presentations. The Unit Tests will be composed of multiple-choice, true-false, matching, short answer, or essay items, and cover material from lectures, readings, and assignments. Study guides for each exam will be posted on the course web page and the Blackboard site for the course.

THEORY AT A GLANCE COMMUNICATION CONTEXT BLOG: One of the primary goals of this class is to enhance your ability to read, understand, explain and critically evaluate theories that are discussed in the textbook and reported in scholarly journals. The *TAG Blog* is designed to help you do just that. A complete description of this project is available on the course blackboard site.

THE ORIGINAL COMMUNICATION RESEARCH PROJECT asks you to examine a particular aspect of communication within a specific context, to review how communication theory has been used in previous scholarly studies, and then to design and carry out your own original research study. This project will result in a final written document that will include a title page, abstract, introduction and rationale, review of literature, research hypotheses/question(s), methods, results, discussion, references, tables, and appendices as needed.

GRADING CRITERIA

There are no optional assignments. Course completion is accomplished when all necessary assignments have been finished.

Your grade in this course is a function of the following:

		Points
Unit Tests		350
• Exam 1 (Metatheoretical Foundations) 9-11-14	50 points	
• Exam 2 (Interpersonal Contexts) 10-02-14	100 points	
• Exam 3 (Organizational and Public) 10-21-14	100 points	
• Exam 4 (Mass and Cultural Contexts) 11-13-14	100 points	
Theory at a Glance Context Blog Due 9-25-14	100 points	100
Final Original Communication Research Project		<u>550</u>
• Project Idea (9/18/14)	25 points	
• Article Abstracts (10/09/14)	50 points	
• Rationale (10/30/14)	75 points	
• Literature Review (due 11/25/14)	125 points	
• Final Written Project (due 12/09/14)	175 points	
• Oral Presentation (due 12/09/14)	100 points	
TOTAL		1000

The University of Kentucky College of Communications and Information Studies faculty do not use the “plus/minus” system. Based on student input, the university uses less sensitive, but more traditional, “straight” letter grades. Final letter grades will be assigned based on the following point distribution:

Grade	Point Range	Quality Points (GPA)
A	900-1000	4.0
B	800 – 899	3.0
C	700 – 799	2.0
D	600 – 699	1.0
E	Below 600	0.0

HOW TO STUDY AND EARN AN “A” IN THIS COURSE

The following guidelines are offered as the best way to master the material in this course and earn an “A.”

- Come to class, listen actively, and participate. This means taking good notes and participating in the discussions and in-class exercises. Be certain that your comments improve on the silence.
- Participate in the on-line discussions and make use of web resources:
<http://www.uky.edu/~drlane/com351> (and the Blackboard website)
- Take notes as though you will be explaining the content to a friend who missed it.
- Communicate with your instructor – about possible absences, late assignments, or anything else that will affect your performance in class.
- Ask questions if you don’t understand something. Just because others aren’t asking questions doesn’t mean they understand everything being said. If something isn’t clear to you it may not be clear to your classmates. Do them a favor and raise your hand—or ask it in an e-mail.
- Summarize, re-write, or otherwise review your notes between classes. Don’t wait for the night before an exam to re-familiarize yourself with the material covered. Mental preparation is similar to physical exercise. A little bit every day will make you stronger gradually. A strenuous workout after a long layoff will only leave you sore.
- Read the assigned readings twice (including the discussion questions at the end of chapters). Don’t wait for the last minute to read! There’s no reason you can’t read ahead.
- Take some action to personalize the material. Develop your own set of reading notes, summarize each reading, or write out what you think would be a likely essay question.
- Don’t simply highlight the readings with a marker (This can be a trap - it *isn’t* true that “to highlight is to know.”).
- Think about your written assignments *before* you write them. Create a detailed outline before you begin to write any assignment. Plan on at least two—and preferably more—drafts of your work (ideally written at different sittings).
- DON’T PROCRASTINATE!
- Work with Dr. Lane outside of class as needed.

SYLLABUS REFERENCES

Frey, L. R., Botan, C. H., & Kreps, G. L. (2000). *Investigating communication: An introduction to research methods* (2nd ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Griffin, E., Ledbetter, A., & Sparks, G. (2015). *A first look at communication theory* (9th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.

TENTATIVE DAILY SCHEDULE

Following is a tentative, preliminary list of topics I hope to cover. However, the actual schedule may vary, depending on the needs of the class. You will be responsible for knowing from week to week what we are actually covering in class.

WEEK	DATE	TOPIC	CHAPTER	ASSIGNMENTS
#1	8/28/14	Introduction & Overview		
#2	9/02/14	Defining Theory and Metatheoretical Assumptions	1-2	TAG Theory Assigned
	9/04/14	Theory Evaluation and the Seven Traditions	3-4	
#3	9/09/14	In-class Writing Workshop		
	9/11/14	EXAM #1 - Foundations	1-4	Unit Test #1 (50 points)
#4	9/16/14	Interpersonal – Symbolic Interactionism (TAG Workshop)	5	
	9/18/14	Interpersonal – Social Penetration, Relational Dialectics	8,11	Project Idea Due (25 points)
#5	9/23/14	Interpersonal- Communication Privacy Management	12	
	9/25/14	Interpersonal – Uncertainty Reduction Theory	9	TAG Due (100 points)
#6	9/30/14	Interpersonal – Constructivism, ELM	HO,15	
	10/02/14	EXAM #2 – Interpersonal Context		Unit Test #2 (100 points)
#7	10/07/14	Organizational – Cultural Approach to Organizations	20	
	10/09/14	Organizational – Critical theory of Communication (Deetz)	21	Article Abstracts Due (50 points)
#8	10/14/14	Public – Rhetorical – Aristotle’s Rhetoric	22	
	10/16/14	Public – Rhetorical – Narrative Paradigm	24	
#9	10/21/14	EXAM #3 – Organizational and Public Contexts-Midterm		Unit Test #3 (100 points)
	10/23/14	Mass – Uses and Gratifications	28	
#10	10/28/14	Mass – Cultivation, Agenda Setting	29, 30	
	10/30/14	Mass – Spiral of Silence		Rationale Due (75 points)
#11	11/04/14	Culture – Communication Accommodation Theory	31	
	11/06/14	Culture – Face Negotiation Theory, Politeness Theory	32	
#12	11/11/14	Gender - Genderlect, Standpoint Theory	34,35	
	11/13/14	EXAM #4 – Mass and Cultural Contexts		Unit Test #4 (100 points)
#13	11/18/14	Writing Workshop – Peer Review		
	11/20/14	NATIONAL COMMUNICATION ASSOCIATION 16-20		
#14	11/25/14	Writing Workshop – Peer Review		Final Literature Review (125 pts)
	11/27/14	THANKSGIVING BREAK (26-29) (NO CLASS)		
#15	12/02/14	Writing Workshop - Peer Review – Revisions		
	12/04/14	Writing Workshop – Peer Review - Revisions		
#16	12/09/14	Presentations		Final Papers due (125 points)
	12/11/14	Presentations (last day of semester is 12-12-14)		Presentations (50 points)
	12/18/14	Presentations conclude on date of final exam (10:30 – 12:30)		

THEORY AT A GLANCE COMMUNICATION CONTEXT BLOG:

One of the primary goals of this class is to enhance your ability to read, understand, explain and critically evaluate theories that are discussed in the textbook and reported in scholarly journals. The TAG Blog is designed to help you do just that. A complete description of this project is available below.

Each student will be randomly assigned to a specific theory **during the second week of the semester** (9-02-2014) and prepare a multimedia Blog page in Blackboard that provides the following information: (1) the name of the theory (2) a matchbook definition of the theory (with brief explanation and graphical representation of the theory); (3) the original theorist(s) (with date of origin); (4) the primary journal reference (where the theory was first published); (5) individual interpretations of the theory (including a discussion of the tradition and the metatheoretical assumptions appropriate to the theory); (6) specific details about how the theory is tested (with specific survey /interview/observation details); (7) a brief application of the theory using a YouTube video clip that serves as an example of the theory (with a description of how/why the theory is appropriate); (8) a critique which assesses the merits and shortcomings of the theory; (9) a minimum of three additional references testing the theory which are no older than 2010; and (10) the location of where the theory is discussed in several primary theory textbooks.

Specific details will be provided in class (9-02-14) and the final wiki page is **due 9/25/2014**.

Theory Name:

Matchbook Definition (SUMMARY OF THE THEORY):

Brief explanation of the theory in your own words:

Graphical Representation of the theory:

Theorist(s):

Date:

Primary Reference:

Individual Interpretations:

Craig's Tradition AND Metatheoretical Assumptions:

Application (EXPLANATION OF THE EXAMPLE):

Example: – Embedded YouTube video clip

Description of how the theory explains/describes the communication in the video clip:

(RELATE THE THEORY AND THE EXAMPLE)

Measurement:

Critique: (ASSESS THE THEORY)

Additional Relevant Research:

Location in Primary Communication Theory Textbooks:

PLEASE NOTE: Each student is required to submit one original wiki entry but it must be approved by me in advance and different than other student taking the cohort.

ORIGINAL COMMUNICATION LITERATURE REVIEW

This project requires each student to conduct an original communication literature review and write a 10-15 page research paper. Your task is to address a significant communication problem, topic, or issue and conduct a literature review that synthesizes the literature and builds an argument for a specific set of questions and/or hypotheses. **The project will be evaluated based on quality, not on effort.**

PROJECT IDEA (2.5%). To begin your project, you are asked to select a topic of interest. Describe your general research idea, explain why you are interested in the topic, and discuss why this topic is worthy of study as a communication issue. Construct a *preliminary* reference list including at least 10 scholarly articles that are relevant to your topic of interest. For each article, provide a *brief* annotation (4-5 sentences) describing how the article can inform your research. In addition, for each entry, include 2-3 sentences explaining the search process by which you obtained the article. Recommended length: 4-6 pages.

ARTICLE ABSTRACTS (5.0%). In this stage of your research project, you are asked to prepare an abstract for at least 10 scholarly articles relevant to your topic of interest. (These do not need to be the same articles you submitted in your project idea—but they must be articles that will be reviewed in the final literature review.) For each article, provide a brief summary **in your own words** that describes (a) what topic the study examined, (b) how the authors studied the topic (method), and (c) what the main findings were. Be sure to provide enough information for a reader to understand what the study was about, but do not get bogged down in too much detail. One goal of this part of the project is hone your skill at *summarizing* something in a way that is both accurate and concise. **Include a copy of the author abstract for each of the articles summarized.** Recommended length: 5-7 pages.

RATIONALE (7.5%) For this part of the project, you are asked to explicitly *link your topic to a specific communication theory*. Identify the question, issue, or problem you have chosen to study, and support an argumentative thesis about the topic. Provide a **theoretical rationale** for conducting a communication research study to examine the specified question, issue, or problem. Introduce the concepts and constructs that are important to any investigation of the chosen topic. **Describe how a particular communication theory provides an appropriate framework to guide your study.** Introduce original research questions or hypotheses that follow from the introductory knowledge on the topic and theory you have thus far acquired. Recommended length: 5-7 pages.

LITERATURE REVIEW (12.5%). In this part of the project, you are asked to review the literature on your chosen topic. In this paper, summarize, synthesize, and critically analyze extant research on your topic. The literature review should make reference to at least **15 scholarly articles**. Discuss the strengths as well as the limitations of existing scholarship (e.g., What do we know so far? What do we need to know?). Remember that even though you are describing what other scholars have found, you are ultimately **making an argument for why it is important to study what you are proposing to study**. **DO NOT BEGIN** each paragraph with the author(s) names. Build your argument that will lead to the research questions/hypotheses. Conclude the literature review with research questions or hypotheses that you plan to investigate. Recommended length: 8-10 pages.

FINAL WRITTEN PROJECT (17.5%). This is the polished version of your original communication research project, which should include the following components: title page, abstract, rationale, literature review, research questions or hypotheses, references, and any tables, figures, or appendices. **Please submit two copies of this paper; one copy should include your name, and the other should include only your student ID number (there should be no identifying information about the student, instructor or course).** Recommended length: 10-15 pages.

ORAL PRESENTATION (10%) You are asked to deliver an engaging presentation to your classmates in which you summarize your final written project. Recommended length: 8-10 minutes.