

COMM 306 - Communication Theory
T / TH: 9:30-10:45 Room: PSY 203

Instructor: Dawn Kelsey
Office: AS 374
Office Hours: T: & TH: 11-12; (Advising hours: AS 316. T: Noon-5 and TH Noon-1:30)
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COURSE GOALS: This course is designed to introduce selected theories in the study of human communication. Throughout the semester, we will discuss some of the most enduring and important contributions of social scientists to the study of human communication behavior. Specifically, this course will focus on communication as a social science discipline, an introduction to social scientific research methods, and a review of several of the most prominent and enduring communication theories and their applications in contemporary society.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Students completing this course should be able to demonstrate an understanding of:

- ✓ The essential features of enduring theories that seek to cast light on communication processes
- ✓ The role of theory in social science/empirical research
- ✓ The utility of deductive and indicative logical reasoning within the “traditional model of science”
- ✓ Terminology used in social science research

Students completing this course should be able to demonstrate the ability to:

- ✓ Analyze theoretical perspective which drive much of the empirical research in our discipline
- ✓ Apply scientific criteria in critically evaluating communication theory and research
- ✓ Evaluate theory in your own lives and experiences
- ✓ Read, summarize and critique empirical research
- ✓ Design a research proposal that argues deductively from theory to an original hypothesis
- ✓ Reference and cite evidence in the APA style format

Course Evaluation:

| Assignment | Points Possible | Grade Values |
|------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| Exams (2 @40 pts) | 80 points | 180 – 200 = A |
| Attendance and Participation | 10 points | 160 – 179 = B |
| Empirical Article Analysis | 10 points | 140 – 159 = C |
| Feature Film Application | 40 points | 120 – 139 = D |
| Research Paper | 60 points | Below 120 = F |
| TOTAL | 200 points | |

Required Text:

Griffin, E. (2014). *A first look at communication theory* (10th ed.). Boston: McGraw Hill.

Required Resource:

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html (APA Formatting Guide)

ASSIGNMENTS:

Attendance and Participation: Attendance is required and counted every class meeting. The success of your learning experience, and of meeting the course objectives, depends upon your active presence and participation in the classroom. Participation is VERY important in this class. It is the best means for me to assess your understanding of the readings and the lectures and a perfect opportunity for you to clear up questions and for us to further discuss concepts. This grade will be determined by percentage of time in class and participating. For example, if you are in class 90% of the semester, you will earn 90% of the points, if you are in class 50% of the semester, you will earn 50% of the points, etc. How much you participate will also influence this percentage.

Exams: One midterm and one final exam. Both exams will include multiple choice and true/false items. Exams will cover material from lectures and assigned readings.

Empirical Article Analysis: As an individual assignment, you will choose one article from the past five years (that is relevant to the topic you might write about for your research paper) from any communication journal you choose, to read thoroughly, highlight important points and present to the class in an informal 5 minute presentation. You will include such information as the IV and DV, the hypothesis of the study, the theory or theories that underlie the study, and what the researchers found. *You will also be asked to come up with a communication question that relates to a 'potential idea' that would extend the theory and justify a need for a research question and explains why it is a question worth asking.* The class will be split into groups and will present the 3rd week of class. **Turn in a copy of the article and a one-page paper including aforementioned information. The purpose of this assignment is to familiarize you with the concepts: independent variable, dependent variable and hypothesis in context, as well as theory**

Feature Film Application: Working in pre-assigned trios, your group will be assigned a theory and feature film to review which will ask you to make connections, inferences and judgments between that film and the week's corresponding theory. This exercise is designed to encourage students to work with concepts contextually, rather than merely memorizing and regurgitating them. What insight does the theory provide to help you understand previous communication behavior? What does it predict or advise for the future? You will choose three or four scenes from a designated film, explain the situation (what is transpiring) before and after the scene you have chosen, and talk about how it relates to the theory in question. I will briefly re-highlight the some of the principal concepts of the theory after each presentation. You will present your film analysis to the class in a thoughtful, insightful and well-organized manner. Dates will be assigned once the roster is set and a more detailed assignment description will be provided.

Research Paper/Project Worksheet: A detailed description will follow in a few weeks. Develop an original research study using any theory discussed throughout this course of the semester or in another communication course as the theoretical underpinning for your study. You will argue to an original research hypothesis with two variables (one of which must be a *communication* variable) using the theory and relevant empirical research articles. Begin by doing a literature search on your topic using our library databases to find at least five relevant empirical research articles (one should include your theory) that addresses your topic. The majority of your articles must be from communication journals. Drawing on the theory and articles you've gathered and read, you will then justify the importance of your study and develop a logical argument leading to an original hypothesis of your creation. You will be required to follow the research paper/project worksheet that includes 2 separate due dates throughout the semester.

**For your research paper assignment, you may choose to complete it alone or with a partner. We will discuss the assignment further in class and additional descriptions and materials to help you complete the assignments will be available on BeachBoard.

You are **strongly encouraged** to stop by my office hours for early feedback on your papers. Students who do so typically receive higher grades than students who do not.

For assistance with research, you can also reach out to Tiffini Travis at Tiffini.travis@csulb.edu and/or use the library guides for COMM 306. <https://csulb.libguides.com/commclasses/comm306-307> Tiffini's workshops for all COMM classes will also be updated on the library guides link.

Course Requirements/Policies:

Reading and Participation: Read all the assigned material BEFORE you come to class, and be prepared to discuss it in class. In lecture and discussion, I will not cover all the material in the assigned text chapters. It is important that you ask questions on topics that are unclear to you. If you must miss class, you are accountable for the information covered in the missed class meeting. Do not email me asking for the notes you missed, instead please reach out to a classmate.

After each class, look over the assigned readings and your notes AGAIN. This takes very little time, and it will assist you in learning more efficiently so you won't have to cram for the exams.

Technology: If you have an important reason for leaving your phone on, please use silence mode. Otherwise, please turn them off. Use common sense and courtesy when using technology. For instance, don't use class time for text messaging and only use your computer for note taking and other class related issues.

Make-ups: No make-up exams or presentations will be given unless you have a verifiable excused absence (see the university catalogue). According to University policy, excused absences include: 1) illness or injury to the student, 2) serious illness of an immediate family member, 3) religious reasons, 4) jury duty or government obligation or 5) university sanctioned activities. If you are absent for one of the above reasons, you must turn in a verifiable excuse for the absence to be accepted for any make-up exams, paper due dates or presentations. An unexcused late paper will receive a 5-point grade reduction for each day it is late

(including weekends). This policy is firm; please do not ask for any exceptions. See each assignment for points.

Academic Honesty: Academic dishonesty encompasses both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes looking at another's exam answers and other forms of copying. Plagiarism involves submitting the works of others as your own and includes improper source citation, no source citation, using materials prepared by another student, and using fictitious sources. The penalties for academic dishonesty range from receiving an "F" on the assignment or exam, to receiving an "F" in the course. Your papers will be checked for originality by the instructor using anti-plagiarism software (see instructions for using "Turnitin" on Beachboard).

BeachBoard: You will want to access BeachBoard regularly for updates, handouts, exam scores and other important information regarding this class. You will greatly benefit from making sure your BeachBoard account is up as soon as possible. Make a habit of checking for announcements and handouts several times a week – you are responsible for accessing this information. Lastly, you are required to submit all of your written assignments to the dropbox on Beachboard. **Failure to submit your written work to "Dropbox" on Beachboard by the set deadlines may incur in failing grade for the entire assignment.**

Office Hours/Email: Email should be reserved for *minor* questions or for relaying *brief* necessary information to me, such as information about an unforeseen emergency which necessitates missing class or a scheduled appointment. More complex questions pertaining to issues such as clarity of a class discussion or an assignment should be reserved for scheduled office hours. I would also appreciate students following this **email protocol** for asking questions: 1) Look at your syllabus for the answer, 2) Look on Beachboard for the answer, 3) Ask one of your peers for the answer, and if you still cannot find the answer you need, 4) email me. **Also, please note:** If at any time in the semester you would like me to look over your papers and give you feedback, **please come to my office hours; do not email me your papers and ask me to look at them.** In addition, please come with specific questions because I may not have time to read the entire paper, but rather give you feedback on areas you have questions about. **Final note: No assignments will be accepted over e-mail, nor will grades for assignments, or for the course, be communicated over e-mail.**

University Withdrawal Policy:

Students who find it necessary to withdraw from a class after enrolling for any academic term are required to follow the university's official withdrawal procedures. Failure to follow formal university procedures may result in the assignment of failing grades in the course. Information on withdrawal procedures is available online at the Enrollment Services/Beach Central website.

Students with Disabilities: Students who have documented disabilities and who wish to discuss academic accommodations within this course should contact me as soon as possible after the beginning of the course.

Student Comportment: According to the CSULB policy # 03-09, "the University has a professional, cultural, and ethical commitment to provide a climate that enables each individual to realize his/her potential for excellence and that nurtures academic growth and professional development. Diversity is both an ideal and an imperative." As such, students in this class are expected to comport themselves as professionals engaged in a serious intellectual pursuit while remaining respectful of differing perspectives. Therefore, the instructor reserves the right to ask any student to leave the class who is not comporting themselves in a professional

manner and/or disrupting the learning of other students. You should therefore familiarize yourself with University policies pertaining to disruptive classroom conduct, the Freedom from Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation policy, etc. as outlined in University publications, and conduct yourself accordingly.

The Principle of Equal Opportunity and Access – CSULB Policy Statement 03-09: If, during the course of the semester, you discover that you are not earning the kinds of grades you would like to receive, then you should contact me before it is too late. In accordance with the principle of equal opportunity and access, **I cannot offer you special opportunities that I do not make available to the rest of the class.** This policy is not intended to exclude reasonable accommodation of verified student disability or circumstances beyond the student's control. Examples of unacceptable opportunities for an individual include: additional extra credit work, extensions on assignments, re-writing papers, re-taking exams, and the like. Asking for special treatment is unfair to your classmates and puts your professor in an awkward position; please refrain from making such requests. Instead, if you want your grade to improve, you should take advantage of the numerous opportunities that are available to everyone, prior to taking exams or turning in assignments. For example, I can discuss study strategies, you can (and should) attend Tiffni's workshops, work with the tutoring center; work with our GA, review information that is confusing, etc. It is always better to be proactive, rather than reactive. My goal is to help EVERYONE succeed in this class!

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

| DATE | TOPIC | READINGS/DUE |
|-------|--|--------------|
| 8/23 | Syllabus & Course Information/Introductions | |
| 8/25 | Launching Your Study of Comm Theory/Journal Article Analysis | Chps. 1 |
| 8/30 | Talk About Theory/Weighing the Words | Ch. 2 & 3 |
| 9/1 | Paper Assignment/Project Worksheet | |
| 9/6 | In-class Journal Article Analysis Session | |
| 9/8 | Intro to chapter 5 & Film Application Assignment and Groups | Ch. 5 |
| 9/13 | Symbolic Interactionism | Ch. 5 |
| 9/15 | Expectancy Violations theory (Burgoon) | Ch. 7 |
| 9/20 | Social Penetration Theory (Altman & Taylor) | Ch. 8 |
| 9/22 | Uncertainty Reduction Theory (Berger) FFA#1 | Ch. 9 |
| 9/27 | Relational Dialectics FFA#2 | Ch. 11 |
| 9/29 | Social Judgment Theory (Sherif) Part 1 of Research Paper Due | Ch. 14 |
| 10/4 | Social Information Processing (Walther) FFA#3 | Ch. 10 |
| 10/6 | Media Multiplexity Theory | Ch. 13 |
| 10/11 | How to Write a Review of Literature | |
| 10/13 | Midterm Exam | EXAM |
| 10/18 | Review Paper Requirements/In Class Workshop | |
| 10/20 | Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo) FFA#4 | Ch. 15 |
| 10/25 | Cognitive Dissonance Theory (Festinger) FFA#5 | Ch. 16 |
| 10/27 | Creating Testable Hypothesis | |
| 11/1 | Media Ecology (Marshall McLuhan) | Ch. 25 |
| 11/3 | Cultivation Theory (Gerbner) | Ch. 29 |
| 11/8 | Narrative Paradigm (Walter Fisher) FFA#6 | Ch. 24 |
| 11/10 | Agenda Setting Theory (McCombs and Shaw) FFA#7 | Ch. 30 |
| 11/15 | Uses and Gratifications | Ch. 28 |
| 11/17 | Genderlect Styles (Deborah Tannen) FFA#8 | Ch. 31 |

Fall 2022

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| 11/22 | ~FALL BREAK~ | |
| 11/24 | ~FALL BREAK~ | |
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| 11/29 | Research Paper/Hypothesis Workshop | |
| 12/1 | Papers Due | |
| ----- | | |
| 12/6 | Face Negotiation Theory (Stella Ting-Toomey) FFA#9 | Ch. 35 |
| 12/8 | Wrap up and Final Exam Review | |
| 12/13 | Final Exam - Tuesday, December 13th 10:15-12:15 | Final Exam |