

CMN 5020 – Communication Theories

Summer 2019 – Online

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Catalog Description

This course examines the major philosophical foundations and theoretical paradigms found in the study of human communication. The course provides students with an examination of communication's epistemological foundations, the historical development of the field, and the role current theoretical paradigms play in the construction of theory and the conduct of research. Students will learn how communication theories are developed, analyzed, evaluated, and applied.

Course Description

This graduate seminar is designed to give you an overview of theoretical approaches and theories in communication across a variety of contexts. This course takes the approach that theory can be incredibly practical as well as intellectually edifying. Understanding and applying theory properly can help you in your lives—in understanding media, in personal relationships, groups, organizations and work, and in society in general. This course accomplishes several specific goals. First, it will help you map the various disciplinary trajectories common in our field and in our program (e.g., rhetoric, strategic communication, organizational communication, health communication, media, etc.). Second, it will help you think about those areas of communication research that interest you, so you can develop your own program of research that will be beneficial throughout your graduate work and beyond. Finally, it will orient you to life as a graduate student on a higher level—how to read, write, conduct research, and present academically.

Course Objectives

1. Students will understand major communication theories.
2. Students will understand the development of the communication discipline.
3. Students will analyze the processes of theoretical inquiry.
4. Students will compare and contrast major communication theories.
5. Students will evaluate strengths and limitations of communication theories.

Readings

The readings for this course vary in length, difficulty, and origination. In addition to primary texts from the pre-modern era, many readings are theoretical in nature and are drawn from journals and books in the fields of rhetoric and cultural studies. Due to the diverse nature of our texts, there will be some day-to-day variation in terms of your reading load. Most of the essays are complex and will challenge you. Realize that this challenge, and often the accompanying frustration, is a part of graduate school life. These texts invite you to think through nuanced and sophisticated concepts that may challenge the most seasoned scholar. With this in mind, you should plan to give yourself plenty of time to read carefully, take notes appropriately, and be prepared to ask questions as necessary.

It is required that everyone will approach this seminar with a willingness to engage the readings at a graduate level. While some readings will challenge you, don't give up on them. Read everything you are assigned and approach discussions with questions prepared. No one will have all the answers (including me!), and often the question you are hesitant to ask is on the mind of several of your colleagues. Ask questions and be prepared to grapple with the possible answers as a collective group.

Required Readings:

- Readings posted on D2L
- Craig, R. T. & Muller, H. L. (2007). *Theorizing Communication: Readings Across Traditions*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Littlejohn, S. W., Foss, K. A., & Oetzel, J. G. (2017). *Theories of Human Communication*. 11th edition. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press.

Accountability

You've probably already heard this: This is graduate school, and graduate school is a world away from being an undergrad! It is expected that you are here because you want to be here, that you want to learn, and that you are here to contribute to the learning environment of your peers. We will spend the bulk of our time discussing the ideas raised in the readings and in class and presenting arguments to one another. I will act primarily as facilitator and each of you will bear responsibility for the educational experience of the entire class. I expect graduate students to contribute in a meaningful way to *every class discussion*. There is absolutely no excuse for lack of preparedness.

Academic Integrity

It is expected that all students have read and understood the *University Student Conduct Code*. If you have misplaced your copy, please go to <http://www.eiu.edu/~judicial/code.html>. It is of utmost importance that you understand what is meant by cheating, facilitating academic

dishonesty, fabrication, plagiarism, etc. It is also important for you to understand your rights should I, or any other instructor, accuse you of academic dishonesty. Every graded assignment, unless otherwise indicated, requires you to do original, independent, and creative work. In addition to copying someone else's words or ideas, reusing your own work (from other courses) is considered academic dishonesty – you might be permitted to extend research from other classes, but you must clear this with your professors before proceeding with such research. Violation of the Code will result in swift and severe consequences (typically, failure for both the assignment **and** the course).

Disability Concerns

If you have a documented disability and wish to discuss academic accommodations, please contact the Office of Disability Services at 581-6583.

Booth Library

Located in the center of campus, Booth Library is the best place to do research, find expert help, or study in a calm, distraction-free environment. In addition to the many print resources, Booth provides access to high quality e-books, journals and scholarship not freely available on the Web. Stop by the Reference Desk or go to <http://library.eiu.edu> to explore library resources. Get expert help with your research by contacting the Booth Library reference librarians. Visit, call 581-6072, or go to <http://booth.eiu.edu/ask> to connect with a librarian.

The Student Success Center

Students who are having difficulty achieving their academic goals are encouraged to contact the Student Success Center (www.eiu.edu/~success) for assistance with time management, test taking, note taking, avoiding procrastination, setting goals, and other skills to support academic achievement. The Student Success Center provides individualized consultations. To make an appointment, call 217-581-6696, or go to 9th Street Hall, Room 1302.

Administrative Drop

According to the Office of the Registrar's Administrative Policy, students who have not contacted me during the first five days of the course, or have not signed into the course, will be administratively dropped.

Taking this seminar on-line

Taking CMN 5020 on-line allows you a great deal of freedom about when you will do your work, and when you will watch the PowerPoint lectures, post on discussion boards, watch your colleagues presentations, etc. There are, however, a few time related issues that you need to be aware of. **First**, be aware of what is due for each module and make sure that you complete those assignments before that module has expired. ***There will be no extensions allowed for***

any assignments. Second, you may be a night owl and like to do your schoolwork in the middle of the night, but that doesn't mean that I am, or that I'll be available to you at odd hours. If you need to speak to me, either by chat, Skype, or Facetime, it needs to be during daytime hours. **Third**, just as is the case with any face-to-face course, the Student Code of Conduct applies to this course. I strive to show respect and courtesy in all my communications with students, and I expect the same level of respect and courtesy from students. I will not tolerate rude, demanding, or disrespectful emails any more than I would tolerate this kind of communication in a face-to-face class. So if you're angry and tempted to fire off a flaming email or other communication, take a beat and a breath, and remember that there is a real live human being at the other end who is your professor. Repeated violations of the Student Code of Conduct will be reported to the Office of Student Standards, and under the authority given to me by the IGP 157.1, a repeat offender will be removed from the course.

MANY CLASS ANNOUNCEMENTS WILL BE MADE VIA EMAIL AND ON THE CLASS HOMEPAGE OF D2L. BE SURE TO CHECK BOTH DAILY.

Grading/Quality of Work

All grades will be in the form points that correspond to a letter grade and are weighted according to the demands of the assignment. In the end, your final grade will be accounted in the following manner:

A: Exemplary work or performance that goes well beyond the basic expectations of the assignment to the point of providing a model of excellence to others.

B: Commendable work or performance that not only meets all requirements but exceeds them, demonstrating depth, originality, and other marks of quality that give the work distinction.

C: Satisfactory work or performance that minimally meets all requirements competently and shows the ability to function as a graduate student.

D: Marginal work or performance that either (1) fails to meet all requirements though what is done is considered competent, or (2) meets all requirements but not at a basic level of competence or (3) both of the above but not poor enough to be considered failing.

F: Failing work or performance that falls significantly short of requirements or basic competence or both. And, of course, work not done.

Grading Scale:

360 – 400 = A

320 – 359 = B

280 – 319 = C

240 – 279 = D

0 – 239 = F

Assignments

Active Participation on Discussion Boards (100 points): For every tradition, I will open a discussion board on D2L and pose discussion questions. It is expected that you will engage each discussion thread at least once. Your responses should be thoughtful, and demonstrate that you have read your colleagues comments and added your own. A thoughtful comment is NOT “I agree with Bill,” or “Good comment Sally.” The questions I pose are designed to make you think. I’m not looking for anyone to electrify the Internet with their brilliance (although I don’t discourage that!). We are grappling with theoretical questions that don’t have easy answers and require communication. A good response will respond to the question in an original way that demonstrates critical thinking. An excellent response will likely be a series of comments—engaging the question prompt and fellow students’ comments. There are 100 points possible for participation and they are yours to lose. Each failure to thoughtfully comment on discussion boards will result in a 10-point deduction.

Reading Response Papers (2 due, total 100 points): You will see that for Module #2 your readings are organized so that you will read one chapter from *Theorizing Communication*, and one article that demonstrates a practical academic application of that theoretical tradition. You are required to write two response papers for any set of readings that you choose. “A” quality papers engage in higher level thinking, making connections between readings, and between readings and discussion threads, and make applications to issues in the world (NOT only your personal life). A truly excellent paper will also engage some of the optional readings that are provided for each tradition. Please note: Simply writing one paragraph and filling the rest of the page with “packing peanuts” (e.g., big heading, lots of white space) will earn a zero for the assignment, no matter how insightful that paragraph is. These papers should be 3-4 pages long, and written at the graduate level. There will a Dropbox for each paper, and it is up to you to keep track of how many papers you’ve written, and to deposit them in the appropriate Dropbox by the time Module #2 closes.

Artifact presentation & application (100 points): Module #3 will consist of PowerPoint, voice-over presentations that you will create using one of the theories that is discussed in the text *Theories of Human Communication*. These presentations are expected to be thorough, thoughtful, well-prepared, and interactive. That means that your presentation will be uploaded to a discussion board that I will create just for you. Everyone is required to view everyone else’s presentation AND provide comments. Failure to participate will result in zero credit for your own presentation. A full description of this assignment will be provided on D2L.

Final Exam (100 points): Module #4 will be your final exam. The exam will be comprised of short answer essay questions that will gauge your comprehension of the theories/theorists learned throughout the session. It is important that you keep up with the readings, take thorough notes on your readings and in class, and ask questions as necessary to ensure your preparedness for this exam. The module will open six days before the end of the session, and you will deposit your exam to a Dropbox set aside for the exam.

THC: *Theories of Human Communication*
TC: *Theorizing Communication*

Schedule

Module #1: Course Introduction, June 10th – June 14th

	Introductory Lecture	
Lecture #1:	What is communication?	THC: Ch. 1
Lecture #2:	What is communication theory?	THC: Ch. 2
Lecture #3:	History of the discipline (part 1)	TC: Unit 1
Lecture #4:	History of the discipline (part 2)	TC: Unit 2

Module #2: Theoretical Traditions, June 15th – June 30th

Lecture #5:	The rhetorical tradition	TC: Unit 3 “Introduction” D2L: Gorgias; Plato
	Example of rhetorical theory	D2L: Burke
Lecture #6:	The semiotic tradition	TC: Unit 4
	Example of semiotic theory	D2L: Kluch
Lecture #7:	The phenomenological tradition	TC: Unit 5
	Example of phenomenology	D2L: Vettenranta
Lecture #8:	The sociopsychological tradition	TC: Unit 7
	Example of sociopsychological tradition	D2L: Seate & Mastro
Lecture #9:	The critical tradition	TC: Unit 9
	Example of critical tradition	D2L: Amazeen

Module #3: Student Presentations, July 1st – July 13th

Readings will be from *THC*, and will be assigned for each presentation

Module #4: Final Exams, July 14th – July 19th

Final exam questions will be posted on the course homepage the morning of July 14th and will be due to the final exam Dropbox by July 19th at 11:59 p.m.

D2L READINGS—FULL CITATIONS

- Amazeen, M. A. (2014). The politics of memory: Contesting the “Convention Night” version of this historic day. *Media, Culture, and Society*, 36(5), 679-690.
- Burke, K. (1989). The Rhetoric of Hitler’s “Battle.” In J. R. Gusfield (Ed.), *On Symbols and Society* (pp. 211-231). Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Gorgias (2001). Encomium of Helen. In P. Bizzell & B. Herzberg (Eds.), *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present* (2nd ed.) (pp. 44-46). Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s.
- Kluch, Y. (2015). “The man your man should be like”: Consumerism, patriarchy, and the construction of twenty-first-century masculinities in 2010 and 2012 Old Spice campaigns. *Interactions: Studies in Communication & Culture*, 6(3), 361-377.
- Plato (1956). *Phaedrus*. (W. C. Helmbold & W. G. Rabinowitz, Trans.). New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.
- Seate, A. A. and Mastro, D. (2015). Media’s influence on immigration attitudes: An intergroup threat theory approach. *Communication Monographs*, 83(2), 194-213.
- Vettenranta, S. (2015). Crisis communication and the Norwegian authorities. *Nordicom Review*, 36(1), 51-64.