

COMMUNICATION STUDIES 20223: Communication Theory
MWF 10:00-10:50 AM, Moudy South 320, Class #30682

Syllabus, Spring Semester 2012

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Course Text: Em Griffin (2011), *A First Look at Communication Theory* (8th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Course Description

From TCU's course catalog: Applies communication theory and practice to a broad range of communication phenomena in intrapersonal, interpersonal and public communication settings.

You are about to embark on an exciting adventure through the world of communication theory. In some sense, you already inhabit this “world”—you communicate every day, and you may even be very good at it. But, if you're like me, sometimes you might find yourself wondering: *Why did she say that? Why did I say that in response? What there something that I could have said that would have been better? How could I communicate better with my friends? My parents? At school? At work?* If you've ever asked any of these questions—and it would be hard for me to believe that there is anyone who hasn't!—then this course is for you! By the end of our time together, I hope you will come to a deeper, fuller understanding of the power and mystery of human communication. For a list of communication questions we'll explore in this course, see the last page of the syllabus.

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

Course objective	How you'll demonstrate it to me
Explain the essential features of several important theories of human communication.	Discussion assignment; application log assignment; quizzes; exams
Articulate to an audience how a real-world or fictional example demonstrates a specific communication theory.	Discussion assignment
Apply communication theory to understand and evaluate your own communication behavior.	Application log assignment
Critique communication theory according to the standards appropriate for the theory's metatheoretical tradition (i.e., scientific, interpretive, or both).	Discussion assignment; application log assignment

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & POLICIES

1. **Class Attendance and Participation:** In college courses, I don't believe in awarding points based on attendance—your voluntary presence in college and enrollment in this course suggests to me that you have a passionate interest in learning this material! Why else would you (or someone else) be paying to come to college? However, I do believe that course attendance is the best and easiest way to learn the course material and thus earn a good grade in this course. As a teacher, I commit to making class time valuable for you as a student. Likewise, I hope you will feel that coming to class is a valuable use of your time!

For the good of others in the class, if you are engaging in any behavior that is disruptive to me or other students, I will ask you to stop such behavior. If you do not do so, you will be asked to leave the class for the day.

2. **Deadlines:** All written work is due **electronically** (uploaded via eCollege to the appropriate dropbox) by the start of class on the designated due date. To be clear, unless otherwise instructed, **DO NOT SUBMIT A HARDCOPY OF YOUR PAPER**. I will accept late work, but an assignment's tardiness will influence how I read and grade the assignment. As a general rule, assignments turned in within 24 hours of the due date will receive approximately half credit, and assignments submitted over 24 hours late will receive minimal or no credit.

I understand that legitimate situations arise when work cannot be submitted on time (such examples include serious illness, death of a family member or close friend, jury duty, cultural and religious holidays, and university-sponsored events such as participation on a sport team). If such a situation arises, please notify me **as soon as possible!** Specifically, for situations that can be anticipated in advance (e.g., a religious holiday), you should notify me sometime during the first week of class. My willingness to grant an extension will be based on (a) the legitimacy of the situation (including ability to document it upon request) and (b) your timeliness in notifying me of it.

3. **Writing Quality:** I strongly encourage you to think about self-presentation and impression formation as you put together your written and presentational assignments. Papers are expected to reflect university-level writing quality. In other words, spelling, organizational, and grammatical errors will **greatly reduce** your final grade. If you desire writing assistance, you may want to check out TCU's Center for Writing (<http://www.wrt.tcu.edu/>).
4. **Ethical Conduct:** TCU's mission is "to educate individuals to think and act as ethical leaders and responsible citizens in the global community." The ideals of ethics and responsibility are completely incompatible with academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating on tests, presenting someone else's assignment or paper as your own work, and not documenting papers with the source of word-for-word or paraphrased material. You can find a more extensive definition of academic misconduct at Texas Christian University at <http://www.catalog.tcu.edu/2009-2010/undergraduate/1411.htm>. The master syllabus also contains information about what constitutes plagiarism in this course and at TCU. In this course, paying money to another student currently in the course for information such as class notes, completed review sheets, and so forth is considered a form of academic misconduct.

If you have questions concerning what constitutes academic dishonesty, please discuss this with me. Not knowing the definition of academic dishonesty does not excuse you from the consequences. **In this course, any form of academic misconduct will result in automatic failure (i.e., grade of "F") for the relevant assignment(s) and recommendation to the academic dean that the offender be dropped immediately from the course with a grade of "F"**. TCU's undergraduate and graduate catalogs provide information about appeal procedures in cases of alleged academic misconduct.

5. **Turnitin.com:** Consistent with item #4 (Ethical Conduct), your discussion assignment paper and application log paper automatically will be processed through turnitin.com when it is uploaded to eCollege.

6. **Electronic Devices:** Use of electronic devices is permitted in this class as long as use does not interfere with my teaching or your peers' learning. You are especially encouraged to use technology in ways that enhance your learning or the learning of others. On exam days, and during the presentations of other students, use of any electronic devices is prohibited. This policy is **especially** enforced while other students are giving their presentations. If I notice you using an electronic device during a student-led presentation, you will lose 10 points from your own presentation grade.
7. **E-mail Availability:** During the weekday, I generally (though not always) check my e-mail frequently between the hours of 9 AM and 4 PM. I cannot guarantee a fast response to your e-mail outside of this timeframe.
8. **Question-asking and self-presentation.** Let me be crystal clear that I welcome your questions about this course and its content! My deep desire is for our classroom to be a place where you can freely ask questions. However, I also want to help you ask your questions in a way that communicates your identity in the best possible light. Toward this end, I hope you'll agree that there are some questions that may cast your self-presentation negatively. More specifically, such questions are those for which I have already given you an answer in the written materials associated with the course. Examples of such questions include:
 - "How many points are taken off for attendance?" (See #1 above.)
 - "Do I have to submit a hardcopy of my paper?" (See the assignment sheet.)
 - "Can you please increase my grade by 15 points?" (See #8 above.)
9. **Grade discussion and changes ("24/7 policy"):** If you have questions about any grade you receive in the course, I am more than willing to discuss your grade with you! However, I find that such discussion tends to be more effective after some time has passed since when you learned your grade—thus, I have a "24/7" grade discussion policy. Unless the issue is minor, I ask that you please refrain from discussing your grade with me until after 24 hours have elapsed after receiving the graded copy of your assignment. After that point, you have one week (7 days) to discuss your grade. After that week has elapsed, the grade is final and will not be changed for any reason. (For grade changes on assignments/exams at the end of the term, please see the note below.)

Grade changes for completed assignments are rare. Such changes only will occur when, with clear, logical argumentation, you can show me that the grade I assigned is inconsistent with the expectations laid out in the assignment sheet and rubric, the course materials (e.g., the readings), and your submitted work. **Grade changes will NEVER be given based on external circumstances (e.g., loss of scholarship money or ability to graduate), the amount of effort invested in the assignment (grades are assigned by the quality of the submitted work, not effort), or simple desire (e.g., wanting to earn a "B").**

Course Assessment

Exams (3 exams, 100 points each) – You will complete three exams. Each exam will contain a mixture of true/false, matching, and multiple choice questions.

Quizzes (10 quizzes, 10 points each) – At eleven unannounced times during the semester, you will have the opportunity to take a quiz on the day’s reading. I will drop the lowest quiz grade.

Discussion Assignment (80 points) – Working in groups of three, you will present an *artifact* (such as a video clip or a website) that serves as an example of a specific theory. See the assignment sheet for additional detail.

Application Log (100 points) – You will write a paper making specific application of a theory to your life. See the assignment sheet for additional detail.

Research Participation (or alternative) (20 points) – You will have the opportunity to participate in two research projects this semester (earning 10 points for participating in each). If you do not wish to participate in these projects, you may complete two alternative assignments available on eCollege.

Grading

There are 600 points possible, with the grade breakdown as follows:

<p>Excellent Work: A = 558-600 points A- = 540-557 points</p> <p>Good Work: B+ = 522-539 points B = 498-521 points B- = 480-497 points</p> <p>Satisfactory Work: C+ = 462-479 points C = 438-461 points C- = 420-437 points</p>	<p>Poor Work: D+ = 402-419 points D = 378-401 points D- = 360-377 points</p> <p>Failing Work: F = 0-359 points</p>
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Please note:

- “A”- and “B”-quality work goes above and beyond the formal requirements/expectations of an assignment; in other words, an “A” or a “B” is an above-average grade. “C”-quality work meets the expectations for the assignment; in other words, “C” is an average grade. “D”- and “F”-quality work fails to meet the expectations for the assignment; they are below-average grades. The master syllabus contains further information about departmental grading policies. For more information about the formal requirements/expectations for major course assignments, see the assignments sheets and grading rubrics posted on eCollege.
- The definition of “average” means that, for most courses, most students should receive a “C” grade.
- Because “A” and “B” grades are above-average, many students will not receive them. **Do not take this course with the expectation of an easy A or B.**
- After final grade assignment for a course, you cannot complete additional work in order to increase your grade.
- To be fair to all students, I will not round point totals up or down at the end of the semester. **In other words, the point breakdown listed here is the standard for determining grades for everyone in the course.** Please also note that grades are assigned by points, *not* by percentages.
- If you wish to discuss grades for work that was completed and graded at the very end of the course (e.g., the final exam), I am more than happy to do so; however, such discussion and review may have to wait for the start of the next major (i.e., Fall or Spring) academic term.

Tentative Course Schedule

(Presentation days are marked with an asterisk)

Date	Course Content	Assignments/Readings Due
<u>COMMUNICATION THEORY OVERVIEW</u>		
W 1/18	Syllabus discussion and course introduction	Syllabus
F 1/20	Course introduction; launching your study of communication theory	Griffin, Ch. 1
M 1/23	Launching your study of communication theory (cont.)	
W 1/25	Talk about theory	Griffin, Ch. 2
F 1/27	Weighing the words	Griffin, Ch. 3
M 1/30	Mapping the territory	Griffin, Ch. 4
<u>THEORIES OF INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION</u>		
W 2/1	Symbolic Interactionism (Mead)	Griffin, Ch. 5
F 2/3	Symbolic Interactionism (cont.) Expectancy Violations Theory (Burgoon)	
M 2/6	Expectancy Violations Theory (cont.)	Griffin, Ch. 7
W 2/8	Constructivism (Delia)	Griffin, Ch. 8
F 2/10	Social Penetration Theory (Altman & Taylor)	Griffin, Ch. 9
M 2/13	*Social Penetration Theory (cont.) Uncertainty Reduction Theory (Berger)	Griffin, Ch. 10
W 2/15	*Uncertainty Reduction Theory (cont.)	
F 2/17	Exam #1	
M 2/20	Social Information Processing Theory (Walther)	Griffin, Ch. 11
W 2/22	*Social Information Processing Theory (cont.) Relational Dialectics (Baxter & Montgomery)	Griffin, Ch. 12
F 2/24	*Relational Dialectics (cont.)	
M 2/27	Communication Privacy Management Theory (Petronio)	Griffin, Ch. 13
<u>THEORIES OF RHETORIC AND PERSUASION</u>		
W 2/29	*Communication Privacy Management Theory (cont.) Social Judgment Theory (Sherif)	Griffin, Ch. 15
F 3/2	*Social Judgment Theory (cont.)	
M 3/5	Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo)	Griffin, Ch. 16
W 3/7	*Elaboration Likelihood Model (cont.) Cognitive Dissonance Theory (Festinger)	Griffin, Ch. 17

F 3/9	*Cognitive Dissonance Theory (cont.)	Griffin, Ch. 17
M 3/12	The Rhetoric (Aristotle)	Griffin, Ch. 22
W 3/14	*The Rhetoric (cont.) Dramatism (Burke)	Griffin, Ch. 23
F 3/16	*Dramatism (cont.)	
M 3/19 thru F 3/23	SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS	
<u>THEORIES OF GROUPS AND ORGANIZATIONS</u>		
M 3/26	Functional Perspective (Hirokawa & Gouran)	Griffin, Ch. 18
W 3/28	*Functional Perspective (cont.) Exam review	
F 3/30	CSCA Convention – NO CLASS	
M 4/2	Exam #2	
W 4/4	Symbolic Convergence Theory (Bormann)	Griffin, Ch. 19
F 4/6	GOOD FRIDAY – NO CLASS	
M 4/9	*Symbolic Convergence Theory (cont.) Cultural Approach to Organizations (Geertz & Pacanowsky)	Griffin, Ch. 28
W 4/11	*Cultural Approach (cont.)	APPLICATION LOG DUE
<u>THEORIES OF CULTURE</u>		
F 4/13	Cultivation Theory (Gerbner)	Griffin, Ch. 29
M 4/16	*Cultivation Theory (cont.) Communication Accommodation Theory (Giles)	Griffin, Ch. 31
W 4/18	*Communication Accommodation Theory (cont.)	
F 4/20	Face-Negotiation Theory (Ting-Toomey)	Griffin, Ch. 32
M 4/23	*Face-Negotiation Theory (cont.) Genderlect Styles (Tannen)	Griffin, Ch. 34
W 4/25	*Genderlect Styles (cont.)	
F 4/27	Muted Group Theory (Kramarae)	Griffin, Ch. 35
M 4/30	*Muted Group Theory (cont.) Course evaluations	
W 5/2	Tying it All Together Final Exam Review	Griffin, Ch. 36
M 5/7	Final Exam: 8:00-10:30 AM	

COMMUNICATION QUESTIONS

Here are a few of the communication questions we'll explore together in this course. Notice that each question contains a form of the word *communication* or *message*—that's how you know these are communication questions in a communication course! Which of these most interest you?

1. How does language shape the self? (Symbolic Interactionism)
2. How do we react to nonverbal communication that we don't expect? (Expectancy Violations Theory)
3. How does the way we think influence how we communicate? (Constructivism)
4. How do we communicate to draw close to other people? (Social Penetration Theory)
5. How and why do people communicate to get information about other people? (Uncertainty Reduction Theory)
6. How does the nature of a communication medium change how relationships develop? (Social Information Processing Theory)
7. How does communication create and manage tension between people in relationships? (Relational Dialectics)
8. How do people communicate to control information about themselves? (Communication Privacy Management Theory)
9. What messages change attitudes? (Social Judgment Theory)
10. How do we process persuasive messages? (Elaboration Likelihood Model)
11. How do we respond to messages that produce a feeling of internal contradiction? (Cognitive Dissonance Theory)
12. By what means can a speaker communicate to persuade an audience? (The Rhetoric)
13. How does a speaker generate a sense of identification with an audience? (Dramatism)
14. How can groups communicate to best solve problems? (Functional Perspective)
15. How do groups communicate to generate a sense of cohesion? (Symbolic Convergence Theory)
16. How does communication create organizational culture? (Cultural Approach to Organizations)
17. How do television messages change the way viewers think? (Cultivation Theory)
18. How do we adapt our communication behavior to those with whom we're communicating? (Communication Accommodation Theory)
19. How do we communicate to manage our own and others' self-image? (Face-Negotiation Theory)
20. Why and how do men and women communicate differently? (Genderlect Styles)
21. How does the communication of a dominant group limit the communication of a marginalized group? (Muted Group Theory)