

Utah State University
Department of Languages, Philosophy and Communication Studies
COMST 5110: Advanced Interpersonal Communication

Spring, 2018
Tuesday and Thursday
1:30-2:45 p.m.
Old Main 119

Instructor: Dr. Kristina Scharp

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Description of Course

This course focuses on studies and theories in contemporary interpersonal communication. In addition to learning advanced interpersonal communication theory, there is a particular emphasis on **critical thinking** and critically consuming social scientific research. We will explore: (1) what makes a review of literature persuasive, (2) how to select an appropriate theory, (3) how to determine a corresponding method, (4) how to interpret results, and (5) what constitutes a compelling discussion section. We will explore multiple research perspectives and articles that apply both qualitative and quantitative methods.

Objectives of the Course

- To learn fundamental principles, generalizations, or theories
- To analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view

Required Materials

- Braithwaite, D. O. & Suter, E.A., & Floyd, K. (Eds.) (2017). *Engaging theories in family communication: Multiple perspectives*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. (Abbreviated **FCT**)
 - Make sure this is the second edition (the first edition is VERY different)
- Addition reading materials will be posted on Canvas:
 - Journal Articles (1-8) (Abbreviated **JA**)

Course Evaluation

Typically, I do not change grades unless there is a *mathematical error*. My reasoning is that applying subjective standards after the fact invalidates the standards applied to the entire class and is unfair to every student.

Points will be distributed as follows:

- **Class Attendance/Participation/Discussion: 60 points**
- **Theory Activity and Write-Up: 50 points**
- **Two Theory Essays: 100 points** (50 points each)
- **Three Exams: 160 points**
 - **Exam I:** Short Answers (40 points)
 - **Exam II:** Article Review (40 points)
 - **Cumulative Final Exam III:** Multiple Choice (80 points)
- **Three Learner Reflections: 30 points** (10 points each)

Total: 500 points

Grading Scale

A	94-100	B-	80-83	D+	68-69
A-	90-93	C+	78-79	D	63-67
B+	88-89	C	73-77	D-	62-60
B	84-87	C-	70-72	F	<60

Overview

Participation/Questions/Discussion

Participation: I will take attendance at the beginning of every class period. Class discussion will be graded based on the content of the discussion. In other words, it not only matters THAT you contribute but it matters WHAT you contribute. Because this is an advanced class, and so much of this class depends on our discussion, I take this portion of the class very seriously and grade rigorously.

You can earn a possible 60 points over the course of the semester. I will give you an update on that grade after each exam. In other words, you can earn up to 20 points by each exam. If you are unhappy with your first grade, you have time to improve!

20 points: You never miss class and regularly contribute meaningfully to class discussion

15 points: You hardly ever miss class and regularly contribute meaningfully to discussion

10 points: You hardly ever miss class and participate in discussions regularly

5 points: You miss multiple classes and sporadically participate in discussions

0 points: You miss multiple classes and rarely contribute to conversations

*If you miss more than three classes over the course of the semester, you will lose 1 percent of your final grade for each subsequent absence.

All assignments must be in APA 6th edition, are due at the beginning of class, in hard copy, and should be stapled.

- **Two Theory Essays**
 - These essays are due for the sections when you did not present your activity
 - These essays should be organized into three major subsections.
 - The first section should provide an overview of the claims advanced by the theory. This should be about ¼ of the paper.
 - In the second section, provide a review of two empirical research articles that tests the claims of the theory or, if interpretive/critical, illuminate research questions of interest. This should be ½ of the paper.
 - Note, the articles must be from communication studies journals
 - The conclusion of each essay should be your assessment of how this theory might be practically applied to your own life. Provide specific examples of how you see the theory and articles informing how you might approach one of your interpersonal relationships. This should be about ¼ of the paper.
 - Papers should be no longer than 6 pages of text, they should be in Times New Roman, 1-inch margins (excluding title page and references)
- **Activity and Write-Up** (see JA 2 for example)
 - Create an activity based on one of the theories from this unit
 - Your short write-up should include:
 - Title
 - Courses for which the activity could be used
 - Objectives for the activity
 - Theoretical rationale for the activity
 - Descriptions of the activity (including any preparation necessary)
 - A debriefing paragraph
 - An appraisal of the activity
 - All of this can be no longer than 2000 words
 - Must be in APA format
- **Exams:** There are three different exams, each with their own format.
 - **Short Answer:** You each will be given two short-answer questions
 - **Article Review:** You will review a short article on a theory we've discussed
 - **(Final) Multiple Choice:** This exam will be cumulative

Course Policies

- **Assignment Due Dates:** Late work will **NOT** be accepted. Any work that is not turned in on time will result in a zero for that assignment. In certain instances that are unavoidable, students may request an alternative due date. This must be negotiated **BEFORE** the assignment is due. Please do not ask for exceptions.
- **Learning Environment:** The classroom should be an environment where everyone feels comfortable sharing their experiences. Thus, it is my expectation that students actively listen to their peers and respect their experiences. We learn about ourselves when we communicate with others responsibly and you can expect the same from me.
- **Grade Management:** I will provide grades as quickly as possible but it is your responsibility to keep track of your grades. No grades will be shared via e-mail.
- **Extra Credit:** It is possible (but not guaranteed) that an opportunity for extra credit might arise. This opportunity will be research-related. In the event you do not qualify for the study, another opportunity will be made available.
- **Academic Misconduct:** Plagiarism is not tolerated in any course. Students are required to complete their own work and give credit (both in writing and orally) to any source used in completing an assignment. All citations should be APA 6th edition style. Instances of academic misconduct will be reported to the University and I will determine appropriate sanctions.
- **Computer/Technology:** Technology can be a great asset to learning but research suggests that students who don't use laptops consistently outperform their peers. Thus, this semester I am asking that you keep your laptops/iPads/other technology at home (or tucked away in your bags). Please take a minute to read this article for more explanation: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2014/12/30/this-year-im-resolving-to-ban-laptops-from-my-classroom/>
Or this one: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/wp/2014/09/25/why-a-leading-professor-of-new-media-just-banned-technology-use-in-class/>
*Special exceptions can be made (please contact me if you have a particular need to use a computer/certain technology)
- **Students with Disabilities:** Any student in this course who has a disability that may prevent him/her from fully demonstrating his/her abilities should personally contact me at the beginning of the semester or as soon as possible so that necessary accommodations can be made. Students are responsible for contacting Disability Resource Center and filing all necessary paperwork so that the disability can be properly documented.

Course Schedule

Week	Day	Session	Discussion Topic	Reading	Due	
1	T	01-09	Introduction	Syllabus		
1	TH	01-11	Becoming a Learner	BAL		
2	T	01-16	Meta-Theoretical Commitments	FCT 1 p.5-8	Reflection	
2	TH	01-18	Reading Journal Articles	JA 1, FCT 7		
3	T	01-23	Supportive Communication and Activity	JA 2		
3	TH	01-25	Social Exchange Theories and Activity	FCT 25		
4	T	02-01	Affection-Exchange Theory	FCT 2		
4	TH	02-03	Affection and Attachment (Hesse & Trask)	JA 3		
5	T	02-06	Activities Presentation Day		Activities	
5	TH	02-08	EXAM I (Biology and Economics)		Theory Essay	
6	T	02-13	Family Communication Patterns	FCT 13	Exam I	
6	TH	02-15	FCP and Conflict (Curran & Allen)	JA 4		
7	T	02-20	Multiple Goals Theories	FCT 18		
7	TH	02-22	Relational Turbulence Theory	FCT 23		
8	T	02-27	Theory Paper Work Day			
8	TH	03-01	RTT and MG (Mikucki-Enyart & Caughlin)	JA 5	Reflection	
9	TTH	SPRING BREAK				
10	T	03-13	Communicated Narrative Sense Making	FCT 6		
10	TH	03-15	Marginalized Family (EDH & Scharp)	JA 6		
11	T	03-20	Activities Presentation Day		Activities	
11	TH	03-22	EXAM II (Post-Positivism)		Theory Essay	
12	T	03-27	Communication Privacy Management	FCT 8		
12	TH	03-29	Jeff Child Guest Speaker	JA - TBD	Exam II	
13	T	04-03	Relational Dialectics Theory	FCT 22		
13	TH	04-05	Estrangement (Scharp & Thomas)	JA 8		
14	T	04-10	Communication Theory of Resilience	FCT 9		
14	TH	04-12	Theory Paper Work Day			
15	T	04-17	Intersectionality	FCT 16		
15	TH	04-19	Floating Work Day		Reflection	
16	T	04-24	Activities Presentation Day		Activities	
16	TH	04-26	Kristina's Last Class		Theory Essay	
17	TH	05-03	FINAL EXAM			