COM 710

Survey of Interpersonal Communication Theory

Required text and course materials
Additional readings posted on WebCampus (http://webcampus.nevada.edu) & accessible through UNLV libraries (http://www.library.unlv.edu/)

Course overview

Course description
Regardless of your intentions for your MA degree, strong knowledge of theory is a necessary component to graduate work. Thus, the purpose COM 710 (one of four required courses for an MA in Communication Studies) is to introduce you to theory broadly and communication theories from a breadth of metatheoretical perspectives. The end result of this course is an increased ability to use communication theory to inform and guide research and to ask critical questions regarding theory.

Course goals & learning objectives
By the end of this course, I expect you to:
- Define interpersonal communication theory,
- Explain the 3 primary metatheoretical paradigms, their assumptions, and be able to situate the theories according to their meta-theoretical assumptions,
- Critique theories according to their appropriate criteria
- Understand, explain, and use interpersonal communication theories to guide and inform scholarship
- Develop your critical thinking, integration, and writing skills.

Successful completion of this course will aid your achievement of the Learning Objectives for an MA in Communication Studies, including to:
- Define communication in interpersonal contexts;
- Analyze and evaluate messages and interaction in interpersonal settings;
- Identify and discuss historical developments and key theories in interpersonal communication;
- Recognize and explain self-reflexivity in interpersonal contexts;
- Read critically and analyze productively published research articles;
- Recognize and explain multiple perspectives in interpersonal communication theory; and
- Identify and assess features of ethical and unethical interpersonal communication.

Course prerequisites
You must be of graduate standing (or have permission of the course instructor). Access to computers, email, WebCampus, and UNLV library (the actual building and online resources) are necessary.

Course format
Class days will consist of lectures, discussions, and presentations. These will be based on the readings and assignments you are to have prepared prior to class attendance. Your success and the success of this course are dependent on your preparation and participation. Therefore, I do expect you to be actively engaged throughout class time. You are responsible for all information discussed in class and covered in readings. It is your responsibility to achieve the goals of this course through the opportunities provided to you.
The subject matter of this course can be complex and challenging. Therefore, it is essential that you provide feedback, ask questions, and be involved in discussions in order to indicate what you are struggling with, test your understanding, and obtain additional information and clarification. This will provide a more rewarding experience for everyone. This course may be rigorous and time consuming for many students. It is vital that you keep up with readings, assignments, lectures, and contribute to class discussions in productive ways.

- The best way to make sure you understand material is to participate in discussions and come to class prepared. Participation does not mean talking a lot. Providing valuable insights and helping others do the same is absolutely necessary for participation. Participation also includes being polite, courteous, and respectful in your responses to others’ ideas. Any time you have concerns or questions about someone’s conduct in class, or if you have other issues you would like to discuss, please feel free to contact me.

- You may use your computer; however, cell phones, iPods, etc. are not permitted. If at any time your technology use becomes a distraction to you, your peers, or the instructor (e.g., Facebook is open, text messaging, taking pictures, etc.), you will be told to put it away and may lose the privilege to have electronic devices in class. If there is an emergency for which you are expecting a phone call or text message (e.g., your father is in the hospital), notify Dr. McManus at the beginning of the class session. Otherwise, all phone calls are subject to being answered or text messages responded to by Dr. McManus (i.e., turn off your phone and put it out of eye sight during class time).

- Arrive to class on time. Missing even small portions of class is unacceptable in graduate school. Additionally, it hampers your opportunity to learn and interrupts others’ ability to concentrate.

- The more you expose yourself to research, the more you understand and appreciate theory and research. Therefore, in addition to attending Comm Studies Brown Bags, I encourage you to attend GUA College Colloquia and Scholar Series presentations throughout the year.

### Policies and procedures

#### Academic conduct

- Academic integrity is a legitimate concern for every member of the campus community; all share in upholding the fundamental values of honesty, trust, respect, fairness, responsibility and professionalism. By choosing to join the UNLV community, you accept the Academic Misconduct Policy. Students enrolling in UNLV assume the obligation to conduct themselves in a manner compatible with UNLV’s function as an educational institution. When faced with difficult choices, I encourage you to always take the ethical path.

- One example of academic misconduct is plagiarism. Plagiarism is using the words or ideas of another, from the Internet or any source, without proper citation of the sources.

- Academic misconduct also may include, but is not limited to, “cut and copy”-ing from original work, cheating on an examination, stealing or having unauthorized possession of examinations, substituting one person for another at an examination, submitting another person’s work, submitting your own work that you submitted in another course, facilitating acts of dishonesty by others, falsifying data, fabricating citations, and tampering with the academic work of other students.

- For more information, see the [Student Academic Misconduct Policy](#) (approved December 9, 2005).

#### Copyright

UNLV requires all members of the University community to familiarize themselves and to follow [copyright and fair use requirements](#). You are individually and solely responsible for violations of copyright and fair use laws. UNLV will neither protect nor defend you nor assume any responsibility for employee or student violations of fair use laws. Violations of copyright laws could subject you to federal and state civil penalties and criminal liability, as well as disciplinary action under University policies.
Attendance

Class attendance is mandatory. Attendance is critical for keeping up with this course, mastering the material, and participation. A missed class will have detrimental consequences on your final grade (5% deduction for each class missed). Tardiness is equally unacceptable. A late arrival and/or leaving class early (regardless of how late or early) is the same as an absence. This holds for mid-class session breaks. Should you miss class, it is your responsibility to notify Dr. McManus and to obtain the information missed from a class member.

Any student missing class quizzes, examinations, or any other class or lab work because of observance of religious holidays shall be given an opportunity during that semester to make up missed work. The make-up will apply to the religious holiday absence only. It shall be the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor within the first 14 calendar days of the course for fall and spring courses (excepting modular courses), or within the first 7 calendar days of the course for summer and modular courses, of his or her intention to participate in religious holidays which do not fall on state holidays or periods of class recess. For additional information, review the Religious Holidays Policy.

Late work and incompletes

All work is due at the time and date specified on the course schedule. Additional time will not be provided. Late work is not accepted. Incompletes will not be awarded (except in extreme circumstances). An inherent part of any course is to prepare you for real life circumstances outside the student role (e.g., convention presentations, future graduate work, and professional employment). Late submissions, if accepted, will result in a substantial grade deduction (10% per day, not class period). If you arrive late on the day of the exam, you have only the remaining class time to complete the exam.

Written work

All written work must be submitted as a .doc or .docx and follow APA 6th edition standards for formatting and citations. Work submitted in any other format will be not be graded. Work must be uploaded to the appropriate WebCampus assignment dropbox by the time specified on the syllabus. If it is submitted in the wrong dropbox, via email, or any other method, it will be considered “not submitted”. The only exception to this policy is the weekly discussion questions, which may be submitted in the body of an email.

University Resources

Title IX

Title IX maintains that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and support applied to offenses against other protected categories (e.g., race, national origin, etc.). This may take place on campus or off campus with university affiliated individuals. If you (or someone you know) has been harassed or assaulted because of sex or gender and feel this hurts your ability or opportunity to a fair and equitable educational experience, please speak with someone. UNLV provides several Title IX resources, and you may talk with a Title IX Coordinator.

Rebelmail

E-mail is appropriate for brief questions that need short responses. It is not a substitute for office hours. I make every effort to respond to email within 24 hours, but I do not guarantee a response in 24 hours.

By policy, faculty and staff should e-mail students’ Rebelmail accounts only. Rebelmail is UNLV’s official e-mail system for students. It is one of the primary ways students receive official university communication such as information about deadlines, major campus events, and announcements. All UNLV students receive a Rebelmail account after they have been admitted to the university. Students’ e-mail prefixes are listed on class rosters. The suffix is always @unlv.nevada.edu. Emailing within WebCampus is acceptable.
Disability Resource Center (DRC)
The UNLV Disability Resource Center (SSC-A 143, 702-895-0866) provides resources for students with disabilities. If you feel that you have a disability, please make an appointment with a Disabilities Specialist at the DRC to discuss what options may be available to you. If you are registered with the UNLV Disability Resource Center, bring your Academic Accommodation Plan from the DRC to me during office hours so that we may work together to develop strategies for implementing the accommodations to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. Any information you provide is private and will be treated as such. To maintain confidentiality, do not approach me during class to discuss your accommodation needs.

UNLV Libraries
Students may consult with a librarian on research needs. For this class, the subject librarian is Susie Skarl. UNLV Libraries provides resources to support students’ access to information. Discovery, access, and use of information are vital skills for academic work and for successful post-college life. Access library resources and ask questions at https://www.library.unlv.edu/.

The Academic Success Center (ASC)
Information can be found at http://www.unlv.edu/asc.

UNLV Writing Center
Information can be found at http://writingcenter.unlv.edu/.

Transparency in Learning & Teaching
Information can be found at https://www.unlv.edu/provost/teachingandlearning and https://www.unlv.edu/provost/transparency

Assignments
Discussion responses (10%)
Each week, you are to submit 2 to 3 in-depth, thoughtful discussion questions/responses about the week’s assigned readings. Submit responses via email by 11:59pm the Wednesday evening before class. Discussion questions (1) help determine your general understanding of the readings; (2) prompt discussion as needed during class time; and (3) help you start integrating ideas across the week’s readings throughout the course (and other courses, too). For the week that you are assigned to peer-review classmates’ final papers, your peer-reviews will count as discussion questions (peer reviews are required discussion question responses).

Your 10 best will be used to calculate your overall discussion questions grade. Discussion questions are graded using a “✔” system (i.e., not letter grades). For instance, all “✔” will equate a B letter grade (i.e., 3.00) at the end of the semester; all “✔+” will equate an A letter grade (i.e., 4.00) at the end of the semester.

Theory Introduction presentation (10%)
Each week, 2 students individually will expand our exposure to theories explaining that week’s communication phenomena by briefly introducing one theory not included on the syllabus. The presentation (10 minutes) will (a) briefly explain the theory, it primary constructs, and relationships, (b) its metatheoretical assumptions and paradigm, (c) discuss the theory’s utility, and (d) discuss how it overlaps with and differs from other theories covered the course. The presentation should be informative and extemporaneous. You will select a theory (and presentation day) from a list provided by Dr. McManus early in the semester. Talk to Dr. McManus as you prepare as needed. An outline with reference list must be submitted to Dr. McManus 24 hours prior to your presentation.
Research project (50%)
The final project will present an explanation of a phenomenon in which you are interested followed by an in-depth exploration of three theories (covered in this course) that are useful tools for examining the phenomenon. You will work on this paper in stages throughout the semester to help you be successful on the final paper. Both drafts and the final paper must be submitted via WebCampus. You are encouraged to meet with Dr. McManus throughout the process of developing this paper.

During the final class session, you will give a conference-style presentation overviewing the in-progress research paper. All students are expected to be active and engaged audience members by providing useful feedback during the presentations.

In-house comprehensive final exam (30%)
Similar to the MA Comprehensive Exam cumulating experience, a comprehensive in-house final exam during finals week will be administered. The exam will consist of several essay questions, and you will have some limited choice in which questions to answer. Questions will test your breadth and depth of understanding and mastery of the material covered throughout the semester and your achievement of course goals and learning objectives. To prepare, know each of the theories covered; be able to apply, define, explain, evaluate, and justify a theory’s use and metatheoretical assumptions.

***Dr. McManus reserves the right to submit any of your work to TurnItIn if she suspects inauthentic, dishonest, or unoriginal work.

### Grades

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### Grading philosophy

- My grading philosophy is that students earn grades through their demonstration of skill and knowledge of course material in a manner fitting the course requirements. As such, to earn a certain grade, it is the students’ responsibility to demonstrate their competencies with the material via the opportunities provided. Dr. McManus only indicates where each student’s work falls in comparison to the University’s, Department’s, and course’s standards and expectations.
- In addition to assessing whether submitted work meets the minimum requirements for that particular assessment, all work for this course will be assessed according to the following criteria:
(1) accuracy of information presented;
(2) knowledge of the topic demonstrated;
(3) depth of information presented;
(4) scope and focus;
(5) conciseness and clarity of writing;
(6) proper use of APA 6th edition (2nd printing) formatting, editing, and citation guidelines (e.g., 1 inch margins, 12 point Times New Roman font, parenthetical citations).

Simply attending class and satisfactorily completing work constitutes a “B-” grade (the lowest passing grade in our graduate program). A “B” grade is earned through surpassing basic expectations. An “A” grade is earned by performing exceptionally and far exceeding expectations. Keep in mind that baseline expectations for “satisfactory” or “B-” grade are elevated compared to what you experienced as an undergraduate student.

Grades are a personal matter (and are protected by federal law – FERPA). Do not discuss your grades with others or request your classmates to share their grades with you. Do not feel obliged to share your grade with someone who asks. I will not discuss grade details outside of a scheduled one-on-one, face-to-face meeting.

Grade availability
Grades will be recorded on WebCampus. If there is difference between what is posted and your records, please speak to me privately to rectify the discrepancy. I do my best to return grades within 1 week of the assignment’s due date, but major assignments may take up to 2 weeks to return. All grades are returned at the same time; no one receives grades earlier than anyone else in the class.

Contesting grades
- If you have questions about your assignments, please talk to me. I cannot help you achieve your goals or improve performance if you do not ask. To help you carefully think about your questions:
  - Assessments will not be discussed within the first 24 hours after they are returned. Take time to read and digest the feedback provided.
  - If you have questions after a day’s reflection, email me to schedule an appointment. Discussion must occur in person and in private.
- Email me if you would like to contest an assessment. In your email, include:
  - Why you disagree with the grade assigned and your argument for why you feel you earned a different grade. This will help us both ensure we are prepared to address those issues in detail.
  - Request to schedule an appointment to discuss the grade in person. This meeting must take place within seven days (one week) of receiving the evaluation. We cannot accurately discuss specific details of the assignment weeks after it was completed. Also, you cannot apply the lessons learned to the next paper if you wait to ask.

Tentative Daily Schedule

“Teachers open the door, but you must enter by yourself.”

Chinese Proverb
Week 1: Course Overview (Introductions, Defining IPC, & History of IPC)

Suggested additional readings:

Week 2: Understanding theory (I): Exploring theoretical worldviews (Meta-theoretical assumptions & Meta-theoretical paradigms)

Week 3: Understanding theory (I): Defining & distinguishing the concept of “theory”

Suggested additional readings:

Week 4: Cognitive theories of communication (II)
Action Assembly theory

Planning theory of Communication
to know what to do? Communication Monographs, 59, 368-387. doi: 10.1080/03637759209376278

Suggested additional readings:

Week 5: Cognitive theories (II)
Draft 1 (Phenomenon explanation) due

Imagined Interaction theory

Attribution theory

Suggested additional readings:

Week 6: Interaction adaptation theories
Politeness theory
Communication Accommodation theory
Gasiorek, J. (2013). “I was impolite to her because that’s how she was to me”: Perceptions of motive and young adults’ communicative responses to underaccommodation. *Western Journal of Communication, 77*, 604 – 624. doi: 10.1080/10570314.2013.778421


Suggested additional readings:


**Week 7: Relational development theories (I)**

**Narrative theories**
Koenig Kellas, J. (2015). Chapter 19 (pp. 253 – 266). In Braithwaite & Schrodt (Eds.).

**Investment model**
Stafford, L. (2015). Chapter 30 (pp. 403 – 416). In Braithwaite & Schrodt (Eds.).

Suggested additional readings:

**Week 8: Relational development theories (II)**

**Affectionate Exchange theory**
Floyd, K., Hesse, & C., & Generous, M.A. (2015). Chapter 23 (pp. 309 – 320). In Braithwaite & Schrodt (Eds.).
**Attachment theory**

**Suggested additional readings:**


**Week 9: Information regulation theories**
Draft 2 (Phenomenon explanation + 1 theory) due

**Communication Privacy Management theory**

**Multiple Goals**

**Suggested additional readings:**

**Week 10: Uncertainty theories**

**Relational Turbulence Model**
Knobloch, L.K. (2015). Chapter 28 (pp. 377 – 388). In Braithwaite & Schrod (Eds.).
Theory of Motivated Information Management

Suggested additional readings:

**Week 11: NCA**
***Work on Final Paper***

**Week 12: Influence & compliance gaining theories**

Theory of Planned Behavior

Goals: Plan Action theory
Dillard, J.P. (2015). Chapter 5 (pp. 63 – 74). In Braithwaite & Schrodt (Eds.).

Suggested additional readings:

**Week 13: Happy Thanksgiving!**

No class. Enjoy.
Week 14: Critical theories

Overview

Standpoint theory

Muted Group theory

Suggested additional readings:

Week 15: Paper presentations

Paper presentations in class
Peer reviews of 2 classmates’ papers
Tying up loose ends
Last minute questions about Final Paper
Final Exam questions, etc.

Week 16: Final exam
See the full final exam schedule

Week 16: Final paper due