

COMM 4600: Communication Theory

Instructor: Dr. Melanie Conrad

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Office: HUM 218

Office Hours: M/W 8:30-9:30, 12:30-2:00
(other times by appointment)

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Course Description:

This course will explore a variety of theoretical approaches to human communication from multiple paradigms of thought, including selected theories of language, interpersonal communication, small group interaction, organizational communication, intercultural communication, race, gender, and persuasion.

Learning Outcomes:

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Explain what a theory is and how it differs from, but is related to, methods of inquiry.
- Identify the seven traditions in the field of communication that have produced existing communication theories.
- Differentiate between objective, interpretive, and critical paradigms.
- List and explain three communication theories in depth.
- Apply communication theory to a situation to critique and suggest ways of communicating effectively in a given context.

Textbook:

Understanding Communication Theory: A Beginner's Guide (1st ed.) by Stephen Croucher (2015). <https://www.routledge.com/Understanding-Communication-Theory-A-Beginners-Guide/Croucher/p/book/9780415748049>

Grades: Final grades will be based on a total of 450 points. Grades will be computed on a percentage basis such that 90- 100% = A, 80-89.9 = B, etc.

Quizzes:

This course will be divided into five units. There will be a quiz (taken in CourseDen) at the conclusion of each unit. The quizzes will be a combination of multiple choice and short answer questions. Each quiz is worth 30 points.

Assessments:

Discussions: For each unit students will write a discussion post in which they will describe one of the theories discussed in the unit, either in class or the textbook. They will apply this theory to an artifact of their choosing (personal experience, TV show,

movie, speech, news article, cartoon, social media post, etc.). They will critique, comment or extend on a classmate's post. When necessary, sources should be cited in the post. Each post/response is worth 20 points.

Research Paper: For this assignment each student will write an essay of 2000-2500 words applying a Communication theory to analyze a communication artifact in depth. The final essay will include an in-depth explanation of the theory, literature review, application of the theory, and interpretation of results. Students will present their research to the class. Portions of the paper will be turned in for a grade throughout the semester. They must be turned in on time to receive credit. These include the Idea/Rationale Statement, Annotated Bibliography, and Review of Literature. The point breakdown for this assignment is as follows:

- Idea/Rationale 25 pts
- Annotated Bibliography 25 pts
- Review of Literature 25 pts
- Presentation 25 pts.
- Final paper 100 pts

Class Rules:

- All assessments must be submitted on the date they are scheduled. If a conflict arises the instructor must be notified at least on day prior to the due date. No credit will be given for work missed without prior approval.
- Quizzes and most written assignments will be taken and/or submitted online. It is the student's responsibility to report any technical issues with submitting assignments within 24 hours of the due date to seek out an alternative channel for submission.
- Excessive absences (4 or more) will result in a lowering of the student's final grade by one full letter grade. A student with 6 or more absences will be dropped with an F. I do not make a distinction between excused and unexcused absences. Students who are tardy by 15 minutes or more will be counted as absent. If you are ill the absence still counts toward your total allowable absences regardless of whether you have an excuse from a doctor. The only exceptions to this rule are absences for religious holidays or those relating to university sanctioned activities. The student is responsible for contacting the instructor regarding absences.
- Unless they are being used for an in-class assignment or note-taking, all electronic devices (phones, laptops, tablets, etc.) must be put in the designated storage spot. If these devices are used inappropriately the student will be asked to leave and will be counted absent. You will never have a need to text, check social media, etc. while in class.

- Any student found guilty of plagiarism or cheating will fail the course. **NO EXCEPTIONS!** Plagiarism is defined as “an act of using or closely imitating the language and thoughts of another author without authorization and the representation of that author’s work as one’s own, as by not crediting the original author.”
<https://www.dictionary.com/browse/plagiarism>
- Extra credit will be offered on rare occasions. When it is offered it will be made available to everyone in the class. The points earned from extra credit will count towards the student’s overall point total.
- The official method for contacting the instructor is through UWG email.
- The instructor will abide by all student privacy laws. Further, the instructor will not release academic information or have discussions of a student’s academic progress or attendance issues with a parent or guardian. College students are adults and are expected to behave accordingly.
- For additional information regarding university policies please see:
https://www.westga.edu/administration/vpaa/assets/docs/faculty-resources/common_language_for_course_syllabi_v2.pdf

Schedule

This is a tentative schedule. Deviations may be necessary.

Unit/Date	Tasks	Due Dates
Unit 1: Introduction to Communication Theory 1/7-1/18	Read Ch. 1-4	Discussion: 1/18 Quiz: 1/18
Unit 2: Interpersonal and Small Group Communication Theory 1/21-2/8	Read Ch. 5 & 8	Idea/Rationale: 2/6 Discussion: 2/8 Quiz: 2/8
Unit 3: Organizational, Health, Mass Communication Theory 2/11-3/1	Read Ch. 6, 9, 10	Discussion: 3/1 Quiz: 3/1
Unit 4: Intercultural, Critical Cultural Communication Theory 3/4-3/29	Read Ch. 7 & 13	Ann. Bibliography: 3/6 Discussion: 3/29 Quiz: 3/29
Unit 5: Persuasion, Rhetorical Communication Theory 4/1-4/19	Read Ch. 11-12	Lit. Review: 4/3 Discussion: 4/29 Quiz: 5/6
Research Paper	Presentations: 4/22-29	Paper: 4/29