
	<b>University of North Carolina at Wilmington</b> <b>Department of Communication Studies</b> <b>COM 340-02: Communication Theory</b> <b>Summer I 2006</b>	
<b>Course Information</b>		
<b>Professor:</b> Rick Olsen	<b>Office:</b> 231 Lakeside Hall	
<b>Phone:</b> 962-3710	<b>Office Hours:</b> Monday through Thursday 10:15-Noon	
<b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:olsenr@uncw.edu">olsenr@uncw.edu</a>	Feel free to drop by or arrange an appointment as well	
<b>Class Time:</b> Mon.-Thur.: 8-10:05 am	<b>Class Location:</b> LH 141	

**theory** (noun): 1. an idea or plan of the way to do something. 2. a systematic statement of principles involved. 3. a formulation of apparent relationships or underlying principles of certain observed phenomena which has been verified to some degree. 4. that branch of an art or science consisting in a knowledge of its principles and methods rather than in its practice. 5. popularly, a mere conjecture, guess, etc. (*Webster's New World Dictionary*, 1964).

“The great masters do not take any Model quite seriously as the rest of us. They know that it is, after all, only a model possibly replaceable.” *C. S. Lewis*

**Course Completion and Gateway Requirements:** Classes typically coded “COM Majors ONLY” may occasionally be opened to PCOM majors or all students. This may most commonly occur during Summer terms. Please be aware, however, that to become a full-status COM major, you **MUST** complete the gateway courses (COM 105 and COM 200) **SUCCESSFULLY**, i.e., with a grade of “B” or higher in each. If you do **NOT** successfully complete those two courses, you cannot earn full COM major status, even if you complete one or more COM classes apart from the gateway courses.

## Syllabus

**Course Description:** The ability to communicate through the intentional use and interpretation of symbols allows us to make sense of our world, build meaningful relationships and encourage others to join with us on issues important to us. This ability has made possible society, commerce, and virtually everything that is distinctly “human.” This class provides an introduction some of the theories that describe, explain, predict and guide human communication that have emerged from the social scientific efforts in our field. A key rationale for this course is that your *practice as communicators should be guided by the theories* that have emerged from the systematic study of communication: **Theory informs practice!**

This class moves quickly. There will be a heavy amount of reading in order to grasp the ideas we must master during our short time together. Some of the text will be discussed in class. However, you are responsible for all the readings as assigned. Readings **and** lecture material are fair game for quizzes. Please come in with questions from the reading! What does it mean? How does it apply? How do we do it? What does it look like? These are all good questions and will help make the class meaningful for you.

**Course Objectives:** After completing this course the successful student will:

1. demonstrate knowledge of core concepts (master vocabulary);
2. demonstrate ability to apply course concepts,
3. demonstrate ability to carry out secondary research,
4. demonstrate ability to write effectively within formal academic context

**Course Policies:** You are expected to attend every class period. However, since life happens, you are allowed one absence without automatic penalty as a personal day. Use it wisely if at all.

Number of Absences Recorded	Highest Grade You Can Earn (regardless of grades earned on assignments)
No absences up to one absence	A
Two absences	B
Three Absences	C
Four absences	D
More than four	F

No make-up quizzes will be given unless there are unique circumstances and those circumstances are handled responsibly by the student. Any plagiarism will result in failure for the course.

**Honor Code:** “It shall be the responsibility of every faculty member, student, administrator and staff member of the university community to uphold and maintain the academic standards and integrity of the University of North Carolina at Wilmington” (1997-1998 *Student Handbook and Code of Student Life* p. 91). All student work and conduct must in accordance with the academic honor code and other codes informing the university community.

**Text:** Griffin, Em *A First Look at Communication Theory*. 6<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2006.

You are strongly encouraged to visit his website: <http://www.afirstlook.com/> and the textbook company website: [www.mhhe.com/griffin](http://www.mhhe.com/griffin) (the website will link to the 5<sup>th</sup> edition resources but will still help you prepare for quizzes, etc.)

. . . This issue illustrates a trend by some people to claim “everything is communication.” Certainly communication is pervasive, but is it everywhere, all of the time? There is an old saying that if something is everything, it is nothing. Such exuberance in staking out territory is not necessary. If we consider communication to occur *when humans manipulate symbols to stimulate meaning in other humans*, enough territory is claimed to justify a field of study.

Infante, Rancer and Womack: Building Communication Theory (1990) page 9

**Assignments and Grading:** There are 325 points available for the course. I will be using a modified plus/minus system. 92% and above is an A. 90% is an A minus. 87-89% is a B plus, 84-86% is a B, 80-83% is a B minus. For instance, earning 320 points from the points available below will result in a B. The assignments are as follows:

Assignment	Point Value
12 Quizzes @ 10 points each	120
Film Analysis	50
Journal Article Abstract (5 pt. source check, 25 point abstract)	30
Example Discussion	25
Final Exam	100
Class participation	Will be used at times to determine plus/minus

A word to the wise: Read the book on time and always be asking yourself how this applies to your *understanding and practice* of communication.

**Portfolio Artifacts:** One of the culminating experiences of a communication studies degree is the completion of COM 490 *Discipline Capstone*, a course that may include the preparation of a personal portfolio to organize and showcase your abilities. I encourage you to retain items from this class, whether produced independently or in groups, for inclusion as portfolio artifacts. Beyond the *Capstone* class, your portfolio may prove a valuable tool as you seek entry into a graduate program or employment in your areas of specialization.

## Assignment Descriptions

*I offer these assignments all at once not to cause overload but so that you can manage your time as you need to. I realize that this may not be the only course you are taking and want you to be able to take the lead in owning your education and managing your coursework. If you have questions about any of these assignments be sure to ask them. Really, go ahead and ask.*

**Quizzes:** Quizzes are designed to see that you've read the text with comprehension. The quizzes will consist of 3-4 T/F and 2-3 multiple choice along with a short essay question. They can be taken in teams of up to three people.

**Film Analysis:** Pick a movie that can be analyzed through at least one of the theories from our text. Offer a two-page discussion that *specifically* connects theory with plot/dialogue of film. Discuss how the theory provides deeper insight into film and how film fosters better understanding of the theory. You are encouraged but not required to do this assignment in teams of two or three.

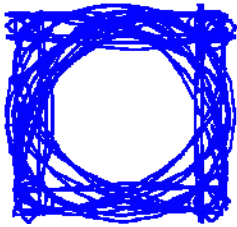
**Academic Journal Article Abstract:** Theories and research are closely related. For this assignment you will take a significant communication theory and do the following: 1) identify THREE primary sources that explore, critique, or apply that theory. 2) abstract ONE of those sources. The format for the abstract should be as follows: 1) Student and Class information, 2) Perfect APA or MLA citation of the journal article you are abstracting, 3) Summary of key ideas and concepts. If it is a theoretical article summarize the argument being made. If it is an empirical study for which data was collected be sure to identify the research question and/or hypothesis and discuss *key* findings. 4) Offer your assessment of the article in the final paragraph by addressing strengths or weaknesses of the article

and any insights or connections it generated for you. The abstract should be **1 page single-spaced** with either 10 or 12 point font and 1 inch margins. Please photocopy the **first pages** of ALL THREE PRIMARY SOURCES and attach them to your abstract. (See Appendix C of our text for a list of potential journals to explore.)

**Final Exam:** There will be a comprehensive final exam. You will be allowed one page of notes. The exam will have some objective questions but will focus on personal application. Hints: 1) A big part of growing as a scholar is knowing who the authors of central theories are, 2) A big part of growing as a communication scholar is making judgments about which theories you agree with and knowing why.

**Example Discussion:** You will team up with two or three others to bring an example of your assigned theory to the class and lead a brief presentation and discussion on it for the class. For instance, you may show a short film clip (five minutes or less), you might reenact a situation that actually happened to you. You might bring in advertisements or Cosmo quizzes or just about anything that allows you to help us gain an understanding of a theory or concept. I will grade on preparation, insight, creativity and polish of presentation.

**Class Participation:** Participation is a factor of two things: Did you attend class? Was the class better in some respects due to your membership? In the answer to these two questions lies your participation.



"I came late to the conclusion that definitions of communication aren't really that important after all. In fact, defining communication is incredibly simple. But understanding communication is considerably more complex. It is infinitely more important to understand what the definition does or does not imply, what the definition considers to be or not to be crucial properties" (B. Aubrey Fisher, *Perspectives on Human Communication*, 1978, p. 10).

## You, Yes YOU, Can Keep Up With Your Grades

Assignment	Points Earned	Total possible
Quiz One		10
Quiz Two		10
Quiz Three		10
Quiz Four		10
Quiz Five		10
Quiz Six		10
Quiz Seven		10
Quiz Eight		10
Quiz Nine		10
Quiz Ten		10
Quiz Eleven		10
Quiz Twelve		10
Article Abstract		25
Film Analysis		50
Class Presentation		25
Final Exam		100
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>320</b>

You may keep up with your grades by dividing the points available so far by the points you've earned. The result will be a number corresponding to your percentage. For instance, after two quizzes and a probe, you have had the opportunity to earn 45 points. Let's assume your actual scores when added up come to 37. If you divide 37 by 45 you get .82, which is a B-minus.

<b>Schedule of Sessions</b>			
<b>Date</b>	<b>Readings Due for Class</b>	<b>Homework Due</b>	<b>Class Session</b>
Thursday 5-18	(Some of my lecture will come from chapter 2)	Welcome back!	Course Overview and Discussion of worldview and research traditions relate to our understanding of Communication Theory Sign up for example presentations
Monday 5-22	1 and 3	Bring in one “artifact” of communication (ad, song, pamphlet, etc.) that you think is effective and bring in TWO research questions that deal directly with communication (COM 200 Flashback!).	Quiz (Chpt. 1 & 3), Discuss readings and class activities with artifacts and questions. Be sure to come in with comments and questions from the readings!
5-23	5 and 6	Read and prepare for quiz  Look through table of contents for possible theories for abstract.	Quiz (Chpt. 5 & 6), Discuss article abstract and how to look up sources in communication studies. Discuss readings.
5-24	8 and 9	Read and prepare for quiz	Quiz (Chpt. 8 & 9) Discussion of readings including alternate metaphors for self-disclosure and interviews. <b>Peer Examples</b>
5-25	11 and 12	Read and prepare for quiz  Look through appendix B and find theory of interest	Quiz (Chpt. 11 & 12). Discuss readings and take RCQ exercise at end of class to prepare for chapter 13 <b>Peer Examples</b>
<b>Memorial Day: No Class Monday 6-29</b>			
5-30	13	Read and prepare for quiz  Have sources for abstract photocopied or written out in perfect APA citation format	Quiz (Chpt 13) Discussion of reading. <b>Peer Examples</b>  <b>Source check</b> (pass/fail). Review game Discussion of academic abstract Assignment of theories for in-class movie analysis.
5-31	Review	Review theory you are assigned	Movie TBA
6-1	14 and 15	Read and prepare for quiz	Quiz (Chpt. 14 & 15) Discussion of chapters and mini-lecture on 16 <b>Peer Examples</b>
Monday 6-5	17 and 18	Read and prepare for quiz	Quiz (Chpt. 17 & 18) Discussion of readings and probes. <b>Peer Examples</b>
<b>Don't procrastinate on the movie analysis project: Find a partner, pick a movie, make it fun!</b>			

6-6	20-21	Read and prepare for quiz. Write down one metaphor you've heard a boss use to describe the organization	Quiz (Chpt. 20& 21) Discussion of readings and mini-lecture on 19 and metaphors of organizing and organizations <b>Peer Examples</b>
6-7	25 and 26	Bring in some significant artifacts worthy of analysis. If songs, be sure to have lyrics on paper	Quiz (Chpt. 25 & 26) Discussion of readings Analysis exercise <b>Peer Examples</b> Decide on readings
6-8	27 and 28	Read and prepare for debate and quiz	Quiz (Chpt. 27, 28 and 29) Discussion of readings. Media effects debate. Be ready to debate: reasons and evidence, not just opinion! Documentary
Monday 6-12	Online McLuhan chapter and chapter 29	Work on article abstract	Discussion of readings <b>Abstract Due.</b> Discuss abstracts in topic groups and then as a class Q and A regarding final exam, etc.
6-13	31 and 32	Read and prepare for quiz	Quiz (Chpt. 31 and 32) Discussion of readings. Bring in personal or TV examples that illustrate Philipsen's two cultures. Are there others? <b>Peer Examples</b> Assign chapters for Feminist theory readings
6-14	33 and <b>either</b> 34 or 35		Quiz (Chpt. 33, 34 and 35) Discussion of readings and on sex differences in communication <b>Peer Examples</b> Assign ethics sections
6-15	Ethics sections as assigned	Revise movie analysis paper	<b>Movie Analysis papers due.</b> Discussion of ethics and communication
Monday 6-19		Read 36 and Appendix B	Review activities—a real Dr. takes YOUR questions!
6-20	ALL	Study for Exam	Final Exam: You will have 2 hours.

## A Friendly Reminder

My team enthusiastically presents an interesting and insightful example of the communication theory discussed in chapter \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_ Day \_\_\_\_\_ Month \_\_\_\_\_ Day \_\_\_\_\_. YES!!!