COMM 5308-Seminar Comm Theories (Seminar)
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Course Description:

This course is designed to introduce students to popular theories frequently used in academic research in the communication discipline. In this course, we will discuss various topics, ranging from media and technology to misinformation, explore the underlying theories and their foundations (including the assumptions, key concepts, and development of theory), and learn about the practical applications of these theories by reading academic papers.

As an asynchronous online class, you can learn the content at your own pace. However, to ensure you participate in weekly discussions and submit assignments on time, I recommend completing one module per week. All reading materials and online videos will be accessible at least two weeks in advance, and a recording of the in-person session will be available after each Thursday as an additional learning resource. Please refer to the class schedule table for details.

Student Learning Outcomes: By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1) Explicate the nature of theory in general and communication theory in particular.

2) Identify and explain several fundamental communication theories.

3) Apply the knowledge of communication theories to "real world" situations.

4) Generate preliminary research ideas

Course Requirements and Recommends

1. Floyd, K., Schrodt, P., Erbert, L. A., & Scharp, K. M. (2022). *Exploring communication theory: Making sense of us*. Routledge.
2. Weekly reading
3. Online videos
4. In-person class video record (optional)

Evaluation and Grade Calculation

Assignments	Percentage of Final Grade
Weekly reading reflection	30%
Weekly discussion	15%

Research Proposal	15%
Mid-term exam	15%
Final exam	15%
Attendance and In-class Participation	10%

Percent	Letter Grade
90% - 100%	A
80% - 89%	B
70-79%	C
60-69%	D
59% and below	F

1. Weekly reading reflection (30%)

   Starting from week 3, students are required to write a 600-word reading reflection each week, which will be worth 3 points. Each reflection should include a summary of the assigned reading and the student's thoughts on the materials. Additionally, students must apply one theory from the week's content to explain a recent real-world event that happened in the past three months. Reading assignments will be uploaded to Canvas every Thursday, two weeks in advance. Reflection papers must be submitted by Tuesday of the week. The format needs to follow APA style. **Peer review** is required. Please follow the rubric to provide detailed comments (minimum 100 words) to two peers each week. Comments must be submitted by Wednesday of the week and will account for 20% of the grade.

2. Discussion Board (15%)

   As a seminar, discussion is a crucial approach to exchange ideas and inspire new thoughts. Starting in Week 2, I will post a discussion question each week, and each student is required to lead a discussion on the week's readings or theories on the Canvas discussion board by Wednesday. Additionally, students must reply to all the discussion questions posted by the professor and their peers by Sunday of the same week (minimum 50 words for each discussion).

3. Research Proposal (15%)

   Students are required to write a **2,000-word** research proposal, covering the sections of introduction, literature review, research questions, research questions and hypotheses, **methodology, and research design**. In week 15, each student will submit a video of **20-minute** presentation with slides, and the due date of submission is 4/28. To ensure that proposal development stays on track, students are required to meet with the professor— either online or in person—at least once by Week 13. This meeting will account for 10% of the final grade.

4. Mid-term exam (15%)

   This is a take-home exam. The questions will be uploaded on Canvas on Feb. 27, and the students have the whole week 8 to answer the questions. The answers need to be submitted by 3/7.

5. Final exam (15%)

   This is a take-home exam. The questions will be uploaded on Canvas on 4/24, and the students have the whole week 15 to answer the questions. The answers need to be submitted by 5/2.

6. Canvas participation (10%)

   Active participation on Canvas is essential for this course. Each week, you are expected to spend at least 2 hours engaging with course materials, discussions, and assignments on Canvas. This includes reading lecture content, contributing to discussion boards, replying to peers, and completing weekly activities. Your participation time will be tracked to ensure you meet this requirement, as it is crucial for staying engaged in an asynchronous learning environment.

Classroom Policies and Expectations

A. Work hard - learning requires constant reading, researching, thinking, discussing, and working with your classmates and me. Everyone has something important to contribute. My job is to present new information and prepare a climate in which you can contribute your own special knowledge. Your job is to be prepared to contribute.

B. Participate – you must be an active part of the course to succeed. You will also have to give effort outside of class.

C. Treat each other with respect and display common classroom courtesies.

   1. You are responsible for your attitude and how you treat others. I will not tolerate name calling, fighting, students belittling each other for differing opinions, etc. I expect you to act like adults, show each other respect, and to challenge yourself and each other to learn/understand opinions you may not agree with. If you are not treating individuals with respect or are causing a distraction, you will be asked to leave the classroom.

D. Grading – The grading process begins with the assumption that the work is good, which earns a grade within the range of a "B." To earn an A, you must show exceptional understanding of the material, utilizing additional sources, examples, and original thought. This means going beyond stating the obvious, the simple answer, or what Google says. Additionally, poor organization, not following assignment instructions, grammar/spelling, lack of depth and thought, failing to illustrate an understanding of the material, etc. will result in your grade being lowered.

E. I use Canvas and email to communicate, post assignments and readings, present feedback and provide a space for you to communicate with your classmates. I expect you to check both daily and stay aware of what is coming up.

   1. It is highly recommended that you download the Canvas application and adjust your settings to allow for notifications.

F. Communicate - If you have a problem with anything throughout the semester… getting an assignment in on time, needing to be absent from a class, getting your book, checking out equipment, or anything I'm doing as a professor… talk to me about it. I cannot help you or fix the problem if I am unaware of it.

G. Hold me to the same standards and expectations that I hold you to.

Attendance Policy

A. Students are expected to attend class during each scheduled meeting. If you miss a meeting, it is your responsibility to make up anything you may have missed outside of meeting times, such as completing in-class activities at home, getting any material that may have been handed out during class, and ensuring you are aware of anything that may have been assigned or discussed. Additionally, if you miss a class and want lecture notes, you are responsible for getting these from a classmate (with the exception of special accommodations set up through the university). I will not be recording lectures or utilizing zoom at all this semester.

B. See the current UT Tyler catalog for the university's policy on student responsibility for missed classes and assignments. Be familiar with the university's drop policy. Students who anticipate being absent from class due to religious observance or university-sponsored activities should inform the instructor by the second course meeting.

Assignment Policy

A. Assignments do have deadlines and these deadlines need to be met. It is your responsibility to utilize time outside of class in an effective manner so you can ensure that you submit each assignment before the due date and time.

   a. For many assignments, **not all,** the submission folder will stay open for one week after the due date. Any assignments turned in after the due date will receive a deduction in points. Specific point values that will be deducted each day can be found on the assignment overviews on Canvas. It is your responsibility to know when the assignment is due for full credit, when the assignment closes, and the number of points that will be deducted each day for late submissions. Assignments will not be accepted after this final date.

B. Assignments and due dates may be changed at the instructor's discretion with fair notice to students.

C. I will not accept assignments via email unless there are issues with Canvas and the email includes your assignment and a screenshot of the Canvas malfunction.

D. Merely completing all assignments does not guarantee that you will pass the course. You must put forth effort and show an understanding of the material to earn a satisfactory grade.

E. You are required to utilize APA (American Psychology Association) format for any assignment that requires the utilization of outside sources and AP (Associated Press) format for all photo captions/journalistic stories.

F. I will not accept screenshots of assignments. Unless otherwise indicated, all assignments must be typed, formatted to be a .DOC .,DOCX, PPT, PPTX (Pages, Google Drive, and other online word processors must be exported to this specific format), and submitted via Canvas.

G. Assignments will be discussed in class, students will be given a course schedule, Canvas includes a syllabus function that outlines upcoming due dates, due dates can be seen listed on each assignment under the assignment tab in Canvas, assignment due dates can be added to your Canvas calendar, and each due date will be listed in the course modules. There are SEVERAL ways to determine what is coming up due in class. It is your responsibility to be aware of what is coming up due and to stay on top of your assignments.

H. Students will adhere to the highest standards of academic honesty. Plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated. **A student who is caught doing either will earn a "0" for that assignment and will be subject to academic and disciplinary action. If a student is caught a second time, they will automatically fail the course.**

   a. In addition to UT Tyler's Student Conduct and Discipline policy, plagiarism/cheating includes the use of materials previously submitted in my classes or other professors' classes. I expect you to submit original work created specifically for this class during this semester.

   b. All work (written, photos, videos, etc.) will be examined utilizing plagiarism detection software.

   c. **Artificial Intelligence Statement**
   UT Tyler is committed to exploring and using artificial intelligence (AI) tools as appropriate for the discipline and task undertaken. We encourage discussing AI tools' ethical, societal, philosophical, and disciplinary implications. All uses of AI should be acknowledged as this aligns with our commitment to honor and integrity, as noted in UT Tyler's Honor Code. Faculty and students must not use protected information, data, or copyrighted materials when using any AI tool. Additionally, users should be aware that AI tools rely on predictive models to generate content that may appear correct but is sometimes shown to be incomplete, inaccurate, taken without attribution from other sources, and/or biased. Consequently, an AI tool should not be considered a substitute for traditional approaches to research. You are ultimately responsible for the quality and content of the information you submit. Misusing AI tools that violate the guidelines specified for this course (see below) is considered a breach of academic integrity. The student will be subject to disciplinary actions as outlined in UT Tyler's Academic Integrity Policy.

For this course, I encourage you to explore using artificial intelligence (AI) tools, such as ChatGPT, for all assignments and assessments. Any such use must be appropriately acknowledged and cited, following the guidelines established by the APA Style Guide, including the specific version of the tool used. However, you cannot simply copy and paste answers from AI. The process of training AI and improving answers is required to share. The submitted work should include screen-shots to show the exact prompt you used to generate the content and the AI's complete response as an appendix. Because AI-generate content is not necessarily accurate or appropriate, you must assess the validity and applicability of any submitted AI output. You will not earn full credit if inaccurate, invalid, or inappropriate information is found in your work.

APA Style Citation Information

Course Schedule

Date	Agenda	Due
Week 1 Course Overview		
NA	Course Introduction • Syllabus • Schedule • Assignments	
Week 2 *Theory Overview* **Why are there so many comm theories?** **What is the relationship between the vast number of comm theories?**		
	Mapping the Landscape of comm theories	-Weekly reading -Discussion participation
Week 3 *Media and Social Media* **How do media or social media influence us and society?**		
NA	Lecture: Cultivation Theory Agenda Setting Theory Uses and Gratifications Theory Two-step flow of communication	-Weekly reading -Reading reflection -Discussion participation
Week 4 *Technology* **How do emerging technologies (Internet, AR/VR, AI) impact our lives as tools for communication?**		
NA	Lecture: Diffusion of Innovations Theory Computer-Mediated Communication Theory Narrative transportation theory Technology Acceptance Model	-Weekly reading -Reading reflection -Discussion participation

	Week 5 *Culture* **How do cultural backgrounds influence communication styles?**	
NA	Lecture: Cultural Studies Face-Negotiation Theory Cultural Cognition Theory High-context and Low-context communication	-Weekly reading -Reading reflection -Discussion participation
	Week 6 *Interpersonal* **How do we build relations with others offline and online?**	
NA	Lecture: Uncertainty Reduction Theory Social Exchange Theory Communication Accommodation Theory Parasocial relations	-Weekly reading -Reading reflection -Discussion participation
	Week 7 *Identity* **Does identity matter?**	
NA	Lecture: Social Identity Theory Social Categorization Theory Genderlects Standpoint Theory	-Weekly reading -Reading reflection -Discussion participation **-Mid-term exam uploaded on Canvas (2/27)**
	Week 8 *Mid-Term Exam*	
NA	Mid-term exam	-Mid-Term Exam submission (3/7)
	Week 9 *Persuasion* **Why does persuasion succeed or fail?**	
NA	Lecture: Cognitive Dissonance Theory Elaboration Likelihood Model Social Judgement Theory Framing theory	-Weekly reading -Reading reflection -Discussion participation
	Week 10	
	Spring Break	
	Week 11 *Behavior* **How can communication influence behavior change?**	
NA	Lecture: Theory of Reasoned Action Theory of Planned Behavior Social Cognitive Theory Attribution theory	-Weekly reading -Reading reflection -Discussion participation
	Week 12 *Health/Science/Environment* **Why do some people distrust vaccines?**	

NA	Lecture: Construal level theory Health belief model Third-person effect Confirmation bias theory	-Weekly reading -Reading reflection -Discussion participation
Week 13 *Misinformation, polarization, and Politics* How has politics contributed to global polarization?		
NA	Lecture: Gatekeeping Theory Propaganda Model Selective Exposure Theory Spiral of silence theory	-Weekly reading -Reading reflection -Discussion participation
Week 14 *Organizational* Understanding organizational crisis		
NA	Lecture: Organizational Culture Theory Deetz's Multiple Stakeholder Theory Situational crisis management theory	-Weekly reading -Reading reflection -Discussion participation
Week 15 Research Presentation		
NA	Final Presentation Video Submission	**-Theory presentation slides submission (4/24) -Final exam uploaded on Canvas (4/24)**
Week 16 *Final*		
NA	No class content	**-Final Proposal (4/28) -Final Exam submission (5/2)**

NOTE: The instructor reserves the right to adjust the syllabus according to the needs of the class.