

COM 301: Communication Theory

Spring, 2014

Professor: Dr. Emily Langan
Email: Emily.langan@wheaton.edu
Phone: X 5070
Office: BGC 276
Office hours: Monday: 3:15- 4:30pm
Tuesday: 10:00 -1:30pm
Wednesday: 3:15- 4:30pm
Friday: 12:45- 1:45pm
"Dine with a mind" invitation gladly accepted!

TA: Jamie Walitsch (jamie.walitsch@my.wheaton.edu)



Welcome to COM 301!

This course is designed to acquaint you with different perspectives that shape, influence, and dictate our communication practices. The course will introduce you to the dominant paradigms as well as the essential theories in communication research. You will be encouraged to read carefully, think critically, and write effectively. I will do my best to facilitate your learning, but the ultimate responsibility for learning rests on you.

Here are my objectives for the course, but it is up to you to fulfill them. By the end of this semester, I hope you will have:

- An understanding of the essential, current theories that inform our understanding of communication processes including appropriate names and vocabulary
- A knowledge of the frameworks and paradigms that provide an integrative perspective on the interrelationships between theories, both highlighting points of overlap and of divergence
- An ability to research, analyze, and explain one specific theory to both an lay- and informed audience
- A developed capacity for applying theory to real-life situations outside of the classroom
- An raised consciousness of the ethical and theological implications of communication theory

Required Text

Griffin, E. (2011). *A first look at communication theory* (8th ed.). Chicago: McGraw-Hill.

- *The book is supported by an excellent website (<http://www.afirstlook.com>) that I encourage you to browse and use to the fullest. It offers chapter outlines, key terms, and other aids that you might find useful. In addition, there is an occasion where the material is not in the current edition of the text, but is available on the website.*

Blackboard

This course is supported by Blackboard which serves as a on-line "hub" for your classes and will be used to post readings, lecture materials, handouts, and class messages. As a requirement of the course, you MUST activate your account and regularly interact online. Please familiarize yourself with all the features by clicking on "Blackboard" once you are logged in to "MyWheaton."

COURSE POLICIES

Class Format

Although the format may vary, most days will be structured around a class discussion. The lectures will cover material *some* material from the text, but will frequently extend or amplify information. You will be tested on material that is discussed in the text **as well as** material from class discussions. Do **NOT** assume that merely attending class will suffice for a careful read of the material—it will not. You will need to engage with the material *before* and *during* our time together.

Participation & Attendance

Attending class—both your physical presence and tracking with the discussion—is essential to your mastering the course material. It also contributes to an overall climate of learning. I will note your attendance and involvement in the course and take these into consideration at the end of the term when making “close calls.” Please note: **Participating** in class does not mean saying **something, anything**. It means contributing to the discussion by carefully doing the reading, sharing informed opinions, and asking intelligent questions.

Deadlines

Quizzes and the final exam must be taken on the day they are given. A make-up for the final exam will only be permitted under extreme circumstances such as death or extreme illness and **formal documentation will be required**. The verification of your absence (i.e. hospital papers) must be presented before you make-up the exam and must clearly state why the emergency prevented you from attending on that date and time. Unless it is impossible to do so, you must notify me in advance if you cannot take the final exam on the scheduled day.

Late papers will result in a 5 point grade deduction for every day (*NOT every “class” day*) late. Be warned—this can add up very quickly! If you are having a problem, come to see me immediately. I can be much more helpful if you see me ahead of time. *Work obligations or plane tickets do not constitute an extreme circumstance*. Please schedule your plane ticket home after final exams as accommodations will not be made for you to take it at a *more convenient* time.

Academic Integrity

Students are responsible for the honest completion and representation of their work. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. You should conduct yourself in such a way so that you are above suspicion. **You cannot submit work for this class if you have received or will receive credit for it in another course**. Academic dishonesty of any kind will result in sanctions that may include failing the assignment or the course, being placed on probation, or dismissal from the College.

Academic dishonesty occurs when a student or any member of an academic community fails to truthfully represent the sources of their work, whether on tests, in papers, presentations and projects, or in any academic assignment. Academic dishonesty involves both stealing and lying, in that we steal the ideas and expressions of another contrary to their intent and, in representing them as our own we lie regarding their authorship. Academic dishonesty includes cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, any misrepresentation or deception related to assigned or voluntary academic work, any deliberate attempt to gain unfair advantage in completing requirements, and aiding the academic dishonesty of another student.

Such dishonesty is a violation of our obligation to follow Christ in moral obedience and a violation of our shared commitment to the Wheaton College Community Covenant. The College-wide policy on Academic Honesty is presented in the Student Handbook and in accord with that policy, incidents of academic dishonesty in this course will be dealt with decisively. All academic work involves engagement with and presentation of the ideas of others, and so students should not hesitate to use the work of others. It is how that work is used that matters and I am very willing to assist students in learning how to properly use and give credit for the work of others.

Incompletes, change of grade, grade appeals

All administrative tasks will be done in accordance with Wheaton's policies as stated in the 2013-14 College catalog. Please refer to it if you have questions or concerns.

Equal treatment & Accessibility

A principle of equal treatment of all students will be a fundamental guide in responding to requests for special consideration. No student will be given an opportunity to improve a grade that is not made available to all members of the class. This policy applies to requests for special treatment both before and after the course is completed. Examples of unacceptable opportunities for an individual include "extra credit" work, retaking an exam, taking an extra exam, or an extension of time on an assignment or exam.

Wheaton College is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. Any student with a documented disability needing academic adjustments is requested to contact the Academic and Disability Services Office as early in the semester as possible. Please call 630.752.5941 or send an e-mail to jennifer.nicodem@wheaton.edu for further information

Professionalism

Students are expected to be professional in terms of the quality of submitted assignments, the quality of the communicative interaction with classmates and the instructor, and general conduct. My experiences have resulted in some necessary ground rules:

- 🕒 Please arrive for class on time and plan to stay the entire time.
- 📞 If you carry a phone, please do so responsibly. Be sure it is in silent mode so as not to disturb class if you get a call. Do not text during class; I will notice and comment.
- 😊 In accordance with Wheaton College policy, for academic discourse, spoken and written, the faculty expects students to use gender inclusive language for human beings.
- 💻 Use your technology appropriately. Please do NOT think it won't be noticed if you aren't able to focus on what we are doing because you are using your computer. I reserve the right to ask you to turn it off if I deem it a distraction.
- 📧 I will make every effort to be available, but please realize that it may take me 24-48 hours to respond to you via phone or email.

If you have any questions concerning any of the course requirements, please talk to me. These descriptions provide preliminary information about the assignments and may not provide enough information for everyone or adequately answer your concerns. We all understand directions in our own way, so don't be afraid to ask me about the assignments or course content. Clarifying your questions is something you have to take the initiative on (and is to your advantage). Take some ownership of your education and it will serve you well!

ASSIGNMENT INFORMATION

Quizzes (10 quizzes @ 15 pts. = 150 possible pts., approx. 32% of final grade)

There will be thirteen 10-15 minute quizzes at the start of class (please calendar for schedule and exceptions). The quizzes will cover the readings, lectures, and discussions since the previous quiz. Your lowest three (3) quiz scores will be dropped; in other words, you may skip or disregard three (3) quizzes. Because of this flexibility, no make-up quizzes will be given. Unless otherwise listed, we will start the class period out with the quiz before moving to new material. Please be prepared to start the quizzes at 2:00 as our class time is an extremely precious resource.

Final Exam (100 possible pts., approx. 21% of final grade)

There is only one test in the course: the final exam. It is *cumulative* of the course and will be essay format. I will give you questions to prepare, and on the test day, I will select from those questions for you to answer. You will be allowed to bring in one 3" X 5" cheatsheet / notecard for each question.

Application Log (100 possible pts., 21% of final grade)

After you read a theory chapter describing a communication theory (Ch. 5-36), you are to write 1-2 paragraphs making a specific application of the theory *to your own life*. Assume for this assignment that the theory has practical value. What insight does it provide to help you understand previous communication behavior? What prediction does it make or advice does it offer for the future?

Typed Entries (20 possible pts/ submission)

Please type your entries with margins that leave room for my comments. Keep your whole collection of entries together in a folder and bring the entire batch to class every Monday beginning February 3rd. I will collect a group of logs at the start of class every Monday. You will be asked to submit your log four different times during the semester. **NOTE: If you know you will not be in class on a given Monday, it is YOUR responsibility to send your log with a classmate. I WILL not take them electronically nor will I take them early/late.**

The logs will provide an opportunity for you to show that you grasp the theories' practical implications and can apply them in specific situations. Sample application logs from students in previous classes are on the www.afirstlook.com website and included in the textbook chapters.

Second-chance/ On-line submission and discussion:

From your "unread" entries, you will post one (1) log on Blackboard to be read/ responded to (by classmates) and graded (by Dr. Langan). You should post once and respond (at least) once during A Quad and then again in B Quad. Each of your posts (2) or responses (2) are worth a possible 5 points for a total of 20 online possible points.

Research Project (total 125 possible pts., 26% total grade)

During the second class session (Jan. 15th), you will select one of the theories covered in class on which you will become an expert. Your selection should be informed by your personal interests, previous familiarity with the theoretical concepts, the 50-word abstracts in Appendix A, information from the website, and your position in the class lottery. The written paper, oral report, and co-teaching role will be based upon your research.

The intent of the project is that you discover information about the theory that is not presented in the text. Pursue one of the following options:

- a. Select an important proposition, construct, or variable within the theory and investigate this portion of the theory in greater depth or beyond the treatment in the text. No more than 20% of your paper's material should overlap with the textbook.
- b. Discover and describe an important part of the theory that is not included in the chapter. Make a case for its centrality and show its relationship to other components of the theory.
- c. Focus on recent (2003-2013) empirical or interpretive research that supports or casts doubt upon the theory's ideas, concepts, or assumptions.

For this project, draw upon the primary and secondary resources cited in the textbook, on <http://www.afirstlook.com> and your own bibliographic research of academic sources (principally, journal articles). I strongly suggest the use of the Communication and Mass Media Complete database. Not counting the time you spend reading about the theory in the text and the time you spend writing the paper, plan on invest 5-10 hours researching the theory you choose. Beyond the textbook, you will need to explore at least 5 research sources (Translation: **academic journal articles or books**, NO WEBSITES or textbooks beyond A First Look at Communication Theory).

Written Report (100 points possible)

You will submit a 7-10 page paper reporting your research at the end of class on the day the theory is assigned in the syllabus. (The only exception to this schedule is for those who choose one of the theories covered **BEFORE** Feb. 7th. These papers will be due one week after the date covered in class.) All bibliographic references should conform to APA style. You should only cite works that you've actually consulted. The paper will be evaluated on the basis of depth and breadth of research, organization, coherence of ideas, clarity of prose appropriate for a research report, accuracy of information and interpretation, and the extent to which your written presentation conforms to standard best practices of grammar, spelling, layout, and APA format. This research paper will be an important part of Communication majors' Senior Portfolio.

Co-teaching/ Oral Report (25 points possible)

At least one week prior to the date the theory is assigned, you MUST meet with me to discuss what you will present of the theory in class. As the student with more expertise on a theory than the rest of the class, you will be responsible to take a proactive part in teaching and will be assigned a concept, idea, or component of the theory. Your emphasis should be on creating understanding beyond that which covered in the text. Your presentation will be evaluated on the basis of the clarity and accuracy of ideas presented, adaptation to classmates' interest and level of knowledge, and presentation.

Your responsibilities might include explaining concepts you've uncovered in your research, responding to questions from your classmates, and/or providing examples that create understanding. In this co-teaching role, you share a responsibility with me to make the class time interesting and productive for those who have already read the text. While you will not be giving a formal speech, you should come to class that day professionally dressed and be ready to present your ideas orally to your classmates and to me. I would advise you to use audio-visual clips *sparingly*, know how the concept fits into the theory as a whole and other specific applications. Please note, you may only have 5-10 minutes to explain the concept so plan accordingly, practice what you're going to say. DO NOT just "wing it."

STANDARDS FOR EVALUATION & GRADING SCALE

Standards		Grading scale	
Quizzes.....	150 pts.	A 94 - 100%	447- 475 pts.
Final exam.....	100 pts	A- 90 - 93%	426- 446 pts.
Application logs:		B+ 87 - 89%	413- 425 pts.
Submitted entries.....	80 pts	B 84 - 86%	400- 412 pts.
Online entries and responses	20 pts	B- 80 - 83%	380- 399 pts.
Theory research:		C+ 77 - 79%	366- 379 pts.
Paper.....	100 pts	C 74 - 76%	352- 365 pts.
Co-teaching presentation	25 pts	C- 70 - 73%	333- 351 pts.
TOTAL = 475 pts		D 60 - 69%	285-332 pts.
		F below 60 %	below 284



A NOTE REGARDING TAKING THIS CLASS

Please understand that developing and expressing your ideas may take a significant amount of time. Success in this class largely depends on your ability and commitment to spend the necessary time. I want you to do well and get the best possible grade. During this term, you may want to reduce other significant time commitments (to work, campus activities, or hedonistic pursuits) for optimal success and needed time.















Please thoughtfully consider if you have the time and energy that this class requires. It is imperative that you read consistently and carefully, engage yourself with the concept and ideas, and are able to be here (both in body and mind) each day.

Section introductions


I encourage you to read section introductions as you come across them. They provide a context and a frame for the theories in that section. It defines the area in general and what aspects each theory will address. Think about like a jigsaw puzzle: Before you work with the pieces, you look at the picture on the box. The overviews are those boxtop glances.



<i>Read for class on...</i>	<i>Section</i>		<i>Page #s</i>
F Jan 24	Interpersonal Messages		pp. 52-53
W Feb 5	Relational Development		pp. 111-112
F Feb 14	Relational Maintenance		pp. 151-152
W Feb 26	Influence & Persuasion		pp. 192-193
W Mar 5	Group Communication		pp. 231-232
W Mar 5	Organizational Communication		pp. 259-260
W Mar 26	Communication & Gender		pp. 433-434
F April 4	Public Rhetoric		pp. 287-288
M April 7	Media & Culture		pp. 319-320
M April 14	Media Effects		pp. 355-356
F April 25	Intercultural Communication		pp. 392-393



Theory Calendar



Date		Topic/theory	Ch pt.	pp.	 Quiz Chpts covered	 Application Log Chpts
Jan	13	Intro/ Launching out	1			
	15	What is theory? Class Lottery!!!	2			
	17	Mapping the territory (History of the discipline)	4			
	20	Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday, No Classes				
	22	Evaluating communication theories	3			
	24	Symbolic Interactionism ** Post Your Application Log This Weekend For Feedback**	5	52-53	 1, 2, 4, 3	
	27	Coordinated Management of Meaning	6			
	29	More on CMM, start on Constructivism	8			
	31	Constructivism			 5,6, 8* at end	
Feb	3	Expectancy Violation Theory (EVT)	7			 5, 6, 8
	5	Social Penetration Theory (SPT)	9	111-112		
	7	More on SPT and Uncertainty Reduction	10		 7,9	
	10	Uncertainty Reduction Theory (URT)				 7, 9, 10
	12	Social Information Processing (SIP)	11			
	14	Relational Dialectics	12	151-152	 10, 11	
	17	President's Day... No Classes				
	19	More on Dialectics & Start CPM				 11, 12
	21	Communication Privacy Management (CPM)	13		 12, 13* at end	
	24	Interactional view	14			 12, 13
	26	Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM)	16	192-193		
	28	Social Judgment Theory (SJT)	15		 14, 16	
Mar	3	Cognitive Dissonance	17			 14, 16, 15
	5	Symbolic convergence theory (SCT)	19	231-232 259-260		
	7	Review/ Integration			 15, 17, 19	



Mar	10	Spring Break.... No Classes			
	12				
	14				



	17	Functional Theory	18			 17, 19
	19	Adaptive Structuration		.afirstlook.com Website		
	21	Communicative Constitution of Organizations		On Blackboard		



	24	Critical theory of communication/ org	21		 18, Web, Online	 18, Online, Web
	26	Standpoint Theory	35	433-434		
	28	Genderlect	34			

	31	Muted Group Theory	36		 21, 34,36	 21, 35, 34
April	2	More on Muted Group				
	4	Dramatism	23	287-288		

	7	Media Ecology	25	319-320	 36, 23	 36, 23
	9	Semiotics	26			
	11	Cultural Studies	27			

	14	Uses and Gratifications	28	355-356	 25, 26, 27	 25, 26, 27
	16	Cultivation Theory	29			
	18	Good Friday, No Classes				

	21	Agenda-Setting	30			 28, 29
	23	Narrative Paradigm	24		 28, 29, 30	
	25	Communication Accommodation Theory	31	392-393		

	28	Face Negotiation Theory	32			 30, 24, 31
	30	Speech Codes	33		 24, 31, 32, 33* at end	
May	2	Integration!	36			

Final Exam!!!
Tuesday, May 6th
1:30pm- 3:30pm

* Unless otherwise noted, quizzes take place at the beginning of class and include only the material listed on the calendar; generally quizzes cover only material from previous class periods, not the chapter covered that day.