

Winter 2014 COMM 233:
Human Communication Theory

Instructor: Dr. Iaroslav Pankovskyi
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Time: M W F 1:00pm – 1:50pm
Place: ARTS 246
Office Hours: M, T 11:00am – 12:00pm
or by appointment

Course Prerequisite:	None
Ethics Approval:	Not needed, no such projects involved
Community Service Learning component:	None

Course Description

This course explores different theories and perspectives on communication. Accordingly, the main question in this course is how scholars from different traditions approached the phenomenon of communication. Different theories allow us to study various aspects of communication with a higher precision while also opening us the doors to our own research in this unique and needed-at-all-times area.

Areas to be covered include: the semiotic tradition, the phenomenological tradition, the cybernetic tradition, the sociopsychological tradition, the sociocultural tradition, the critical tradition, and the rhetorical tradition. Through the prism of these traditions, we are also going to explore key notions for communication research such as the communicator, the message, the conversation, the relationship, the group, the media, the culture and society.

Course Objectives:

On the completion of the course you should:

- Learn the basic elements of theory construction in communications studies.
- Gain an understanding of particular scopes of different traditions in communication research.
- Be able to define confidently the perspective of each tradition on the key concepts in communication
- Reflect critically on the contribution of each individual tradition to our overall knowledge on communication.

Textbooks and materials:

Littlejohn, S. W., & Foss, K. A. (2011). *Theories of human communication* (10th ed.). Ill.: Waveland Press [required].

All additional materials are going to be available via Blackboard/Moodle.

The Use of Laptops and Other Devices:

Students are welcome to use their laptops to aid their learning. During class, it is unacceptable to engage in unrelated activities such as checking email, playing games, or accessing social networks. A silence mode should be used for cell phones. Cell phones and smart devices are prohibited during exams. “Audio or video recording of lectures, labs, seminars or any other teaching environment by students is allowed only with the prior written consent of the instructor or as a part of an approved accommodation plan. Recorded material is to be used solely for personal study, and is not to be used or distributed for any other purpose without prior written consent from the instructor” (Calendar 23.4e).

Grade Distribution:

Participation and attendance	15%	ongoing
Journal reflections, 3 @ 5%	15%	Sep. 29, Oct. 29, and Nov. 28
Mini tests, 2 @ 10%	20%	Oct. 15 and Nov. 14
Group project	20%	Nov. 24, 26, and 28
Final exam	30%	Dec. 15

Brief Description of Assignments:Participation and attendance - 15%

The course attendance is taken at the beginning of each class. Active participation in class discussions (based on the readings) is expected. Students are required to contribute to the blog. Contributions must be original, critical, and reflective. References to the course textbook and/or other materials are strongly encouraged to support your argumentation. At least 3 posts and/or comments (50-150 words each) are expected from every student during this course.

Journal reflections (3 @ 5%) – 15%

Journal reflections should summarize and critically assess course materials and relate these to the students' own experiences. Students are required to write three reflections of medium length (~500 words each).

Mini tests (2 @ 10%) - 20%

The mini tests are held in class. They are designed to check students' comprehension of basic communication theory notions and to prepare them for the final exam. These tests consist of three parts: a) 10 multiple choice questions; b) 5 questions which require brief, phrase-long answers; and c) 1 question requiring a short paragraph to answer.

Group project – 20%

The group project in this course is a presentation (with or without PowerPoint) which students do in small groups. Three separate classes are allotted to the group projects. The presentations should be about 10 minutes in length and are followed by a 5-minute discussion with other students. A list of suggested topics to choose from will be distributed in class.

Final exam – 30%

The objective of the final exam is to check students' comprehensions of the interpersonal communication concepts studied during the course. The exam is designed in a way which allows students to reflect critically on the key concepts. It consists of three parts: a) multiple choice questions; b) questions which require brief, phrase-long answers; and c) open-ended questions to reflect critically on the suggested topics (students can choose any two out of three suggested topics).

Policy on Late Assignments:

Students who would like to be granted an extension, must consult with the instructor, otherwise, assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of a grade (e.g. A- to B+) for each day late. In a case of a medical emergency or severe domestic affliction, students must give a written notice to the instructor within two days of the due date explaining why the assignment was not completed on time.

Attendance, Absences, and Missed Grade Components:

In a case of a medical emergency, domestic affliction, or other potentially excusable absence (sections 23.4.2 and 23.4.3 of the University Calendar), students must notify the instructor by e-mail

within two days. Unexcused absences result in partial or complete loss of the grade for any assignments that are not handed-in or completed as a result of absence, and for the “participation and attendance” component of the course.

Writing Skills Statement:

Please note that in this course, all written assignments including written exam responses are partly assessed on writing skills. Therefore, it is necessary to ensure that both surface structures (grammar, syntax, punctuation, etc.) and general structure (argumentation and clarity) of the assignments are properly kept.

Grading Scale:

Percentage	Letter Grade	Point Value	Descriptor
96 – 100	A+	4.0	Outstanding
90 – 95.99	A	4.0	Excellent
85 – 89.99	A-	3.7	Very good
80 – 84.99	B+	3.3	Good
75 – 79.99	B	3.0	
70 – 74.99	B-	2.7	
65 – 69.99	C+	2.3	Satisfactory
60 – 64.99	C	2.0	
55 – 59.99	C-	1.7	
53 – 54.99	D+	1.3	Failure
50 – 52.99	D	1	
0 – 49	F	0	

Required Notes:

Policy, about course outlines, is provided in Section 23.4(2) of the University calendar. The University Calendar is available online at <http://www.registrar.ualberta.ca/calendar>. “The University of Alberta is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the Code of Student Behaviour (online at www.governance.ualberta.ca) and avoid any behaviour which could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the University” (Calendar 23.4(2)c). All students should consult the “Truth-In-Education” handbook (<http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/TIE/>) regarding the definitions of plagiarism and its consequences.

Students with Disabilities:

Students who require accommodation due to a disability are advised to discuss their needs with Specialized Support and Disability Services (2-800 Students’ Union Building: <http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/SSDS/>).

Resources:

The Centre for Writers (1-42 Assiniboia Hall: <http://www.c4w.arts.ualberta.ca/>) and Writing Resources (2-300 SUB: <http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/academicsupport/writingresources.cfm>) provide writing assistance for both Canadian and international students. The Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) website is a very useful resource on style and the writing process in general:

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/>.

The University provides a free accompaniment service for anyone travelling on, or around campus at night, please contact Safewalk (0-22 SUB: <http://www.su.ualberta.ca/services/safewalk/>).

Course Schedule (subject to changes):

Date	Topics	Readings
Week 1 (Sep. 3,5)	Foundations of communication theory	Theories of human communication, pp. 19-42
Week 2 (Sep. 8, 10, 12)	Traditions of communication theories	Theories of human communication, pp. 43-76, article 1
Week 3 (Sep. 15, 17, 19)	The communicator 1: the sociopsychological, cybernetic, and sociocultural traditions	Theories of human communication, pp. 77-105, article 2
Week 4 (Sep. 22, 24, 26)	The communicator 2: the rhetorical and critical traditions The message 1: the semiotic and phenomenological traditions	Theories of human communication, pp. 106-135, article 3
Week 5 (Sep. 29, Oct. 1, 3)	The message 2: the rhetorical, sociocultural, and sociopsychological traditions	Theories of human communication, pp. 136-178, article 4
Week 6 (Oct. 6, 8, 10)	The conversation 1: the sociopsychological, sociocultural, and rhetorical traditions	Theories of human communication, pp. 179-209, article 5
Week 7 (Oct. 15, 17)	No class on Oct. 13. The conversation 2: the cybernetic and critical traditions	Theories of human communication, pp. 210-228
Week 8 (Oct. 20, 22, 24)	The relationships: the cybernetic, sociopsychological, rhetorical, sociocultural, and phenomenological traditions	Theories of human communication, pp. 229-262, article 6
Week 9 (Oct. 27, 29, 31)	The group: the sociopsychological, cybernetic, sociocultural, and critical traditions	Theories of human communication, pp. 263-292, article 7
Week 10 (Nov. 3, 5, 7)	The media: the semiotic, sociocultural, sociopsychological, cybernetic, rhetorical, and critical traditions	Theories of human communication, pp. 333-372
Week 11 (Nov. 10, 12, 14)	Culture and society 1: the semiotic, cybernetic, phenomenological, and sociocultural traditions	Theories of human communication, pp. 373-390, article 8
Week 12 (Nov. 17, 19, 21)	Culture and society 2: the critical and rhetorical traditions	Theories of human communication, pp. 391-422
Week 13 (Nov. 24, 26, 28)	Group projects	Group projects
Week 14 (Dec. 1, 3)	Review	---

The final exam is scheduled for Wednesday, **Dec. 15** at ARTS 246, at **11:00am**.