

Communication Theory

COMM 2315 | Summer 2015

Mon.-Thurs., 8-10 a.m.

Room TBA

Instructor: Dr. Erika Pribanic-Smith

Office: 2114 Fine Arts Building

Hours: 10-10:30 a.m. Mon.-Thurs., & by appt.

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Note: Because of other department and university duties, office hours occasionally will be cancelled. Cancellations will be posted on the office door and, when possible, announced in class and/or via email.

Required Text and Class Materials

Griffin, E. (2011). *A First Look at Communication Theory* (8th ed.). New York: McGraw Hill. NOTE: One chapter we will cover is from the 9th edition; it will be posted on Blackboard. You are welcome to get the 9th edition if you'd prefer. The 7th edition is OK, but it will not have a few of the chapters we're going to cover.

Poll Everywhere student response software registration (free; see page 5 of the syllabus)

Scantron Form NO. 882-E (five) and a number 2 pencil for weekly quizzes

Course Description

This course is designed for students who are new to the field of communication theory. Throughout the course, I aim to show you that communication theories, as well as the process of theorizing, are interesting and relevant to everyday life. The course is organized to provide you with foundations for understanding theorizing and opportunities to explore and apply those foundations in relation to particular theories. You will be encouraged to think critically and integratively about theories while you explore the connections between theories and reflect on how claims of one theory relate to those of other theories.

Course Objectives.

Although everyone is a theorist, not everyone is equally skilled at theorizing. Like any other activity, theorizing can be done well or poorly. Effective theorizing is based on knowing what theories are and how to evaluate their validity and value. In this course, you will learn how to test and assess theories. In turn, this will allow you to theorize more effectively about communication in your life. Thus, you will enlarge your ability to understand and control your interactions with others.

In sum, this course aims to help you do the following:

- Discover the power of theory to enhance your understanding of communication and your effectiveness as communicators.
- Develop your ability to think theoretically and critically.
- Enlarge your appreciation of multiple and complex ways in which communication is part of your everyday lives.
- Develop an awareness of and appreciation for diversity in social life.

Requirements and Grading

Your performance in the course will be evaluated as follows:

Assessment	Grading
Class Participation	25%
Individual Quizzes	25%
Group Quizzes	25%
Team Presentation	25%

Scale:

A = 90-100

B = 80-89

C = 70-79

D = 60-69

All grades will be posted to Blackboard (<http://elearn.uta.edu>). Please log in regularly to check grades and announcements. No grade information will be emailed. Students are expected to keep track of their performance throughout the semester on Blackboard and seek guidance if their grade drops below satisfactory levels. **Make sure that you are checking your grades every week** and contact me immediately if you notice an issue. Adjustments will not be made for grades more than one week old.

Class Participation: This will be a highly interactive course, with class time divided among lecture, discussion and group activities. Discussion and group work is intended to help students process and absorb the lecture/reading material. Participation will be evaluated based on asking insightful questions and contributing informed, thoughtful comments. Students who sit silently and contribute nothing will receive a zero for participation.

We also will have individual response activities during class using Poll Everywhere. Starting on the second day of class, five points of **extra credit** toward the class participation grade will be given to students who record a response to the **first question** posed on **lecture days**—which will be sometime during the first five minutes of class). **Students who answer 10 or more extra credit questions during the semester will be able to drop ONE individual quiz grade** (see below).

Quizzes: Each week, students will take a quiz over the lecture and reading material covered that week. Each quiz will contain 20 multiple choice and true/false questions. Students first will complete the quiz individually. Students then will complete the same quiz in teams. At the start of the semester, students will choose a team of three students to work with for the entire semester.

Class starts at 8 a.m., and quizzes will be handed out immediately. Students will have 30 minutes to complete the quiz individually. Immediately after the individual quiz is collected, the team will have 50 minutes to take the same quiz.

PLEASE BRING A SCANTRON FORM NO. 882-E AND A NO. 2 PENCIL FOR EACH INDIVIDUAL QUIZ. The team quiz also must be completed on one Scantron, provided by the team. Make arrangements each week to decide who will bring that week's team Scantron.

Those who arrive within the 30-minute individual quiz time will be allowed to take the quiz, but they will have only whatever time remains of that 30 minutes. For instance, if the student arrives 15 minutes late, he/she will have only 15 minutes to take the quiz. (See the attendance policy on page 4 for tardiness decorum.) All students must put down their pencils and pass forward their quizzes when time is called. Students are not to continue filling out the Scantron while the instructor collects the quizzes.

Students who arrive after the team quiz begins will not be permitted to join their teams and benefit from the work of their peers, who will be better prepared to discuss the answers because they have already taken the individual quiz. The tardy student will be permitted to take the quiz individually at that time (in the hallway, so the student will not be privy to discussions occurring in the classroom), with the same 30-minute limit afforded to the rest of the class for the individual quiz. The student will receive a 0 for the team quiz.

A student who misses a quiz due to extreme illness, severe injury, or death in the family must present official documentation excusing the absence AT THE NEXT CLASS SESSION he/she attends and make up the quiz within 24 hours of returning to class. Make-up quizzes will be an alternate version of the quiz taken in class, and the student's individual grade on that quiz will constitute the entire quiz score. Students will not be permitted to make up quizzes without documentation of one of those three reasons.

Team Presentations: Each week (beginning week 2), teams will make presentations discussing how a Hollywood film illustrates concepts covered in class and in the textbook. Presentation teams will be the same as the three-person quiz teams chosen on the first day of class.

On the third day of class, quiz teams will be assigned randomly the theory that the team will cover. The team then will be given a list of films that exemplify the theory and will select one film from the list.

It would be wise to select a film to which one of the team members has easy access, if possible. Otherwise, films may be obtained from a local library or online. If students choose to watch the film online, be aware that teams must be able to present relevant clips of the film in class. (Other students have accomplished this through YouTube.)

Students should become intimately familiar with the theory involved BEFORE watching the film. Carefully reading the relevant chapter in the text would be the best way to accomplish this.

In the presentations, students must include ALL of the following:

1. INTRO: A **BRIEF** description of the plot and characters. Do not delve into great detail; tell just enough for your peers to understand the clips. This should be a minute part of the project.
2. Summary of key concepts from **YOUR ASSIGNED THEORY ONLY**.
3. Relevant scenes from the movie. These should be on DVD or online and take no more than half of the presentation time (i.e., no more than 10 minutes for a 20-minute presentation). **MAKE SURE YOU CAN GET TO THE RELEVANT SCENES QUICKLY**. Don't leave "dead air;" any time spent hunting for the scenes counts as part of your movie and overall presentation times.
4. Explanation of how the theoretical communication concepts are illustrated in each scene.
5. CONCLUSION**: 1) A summary of how communication theory helps better understand why people communicated the way they did in the film **AND** 2) an explanation of how the assigned theory helps derive a deeper understanding of communication in everyday life by applying the relevant concepts to **real-life** situations and communication examples that are similar to the film.

**** NOTE:** A lot of teams fail to present a complete conclusion. Don't neglect this segment. Teams should not only summarize what they just discussed but present a thoughtful explanation of how the examples in the film can be generalized to real life. Discussing real-life situations during the presentation is not sufficient (though you may also do that); you **MUST** include a recap and thoughtful conclusion at the end.

All presentations should be **no less than 20 minutes but no longer than 25 minutes in length**. Teams that go under 20 minutes or over 25 minutes will be penalized.

By 8 a.m. on the day after the presentation, EACH member of the team will submit to Blackboard a set of peer evaluation forms indicating the extent to which each individual contributed to preparation for the presentation. This quantitative measure of the teammates' participation will be averaged and counted as 20 percent of each student's individual presentation grade. **Peer evaluations will not be accepted late**. Students who fail to submit them by 8 a.m. on the day after the presentation will receive a 0 for that 20 percent of the presentation grade, regardless of how their peers evaluate their contribution.

ALL GROUP MEMBERS MUST BE PRESENT FOR THE PRESENTATION. If a student is going to miss the presentation day due to extreme illness, severe injury, or death in the family, the student must contact his/her teammates AND the instructor BEFORE CLASS and present official documentation excusing the absence AT THE NEXT CLASS SESSION he/she attends. The rest of the team will be expected to present without the missing member. If the absent student follows the above procedure, that student will be given a make-up writing assignment. If not, the student will receive a zero. Teammates still must complete a peer evaluation for that student.

STUDENTS WHO ARE NOT ON THE PRESENTING TEAM will have an evaluation question to answer via Poll Everywhere for each presentation. Evaluations will be submitted at the conclusion of each presentation. Students who arrive late will not be permitted to enter the room during a presentation and must wait in the hall until the evaluations for that presentation have been submitted. The instructor will alert students when they are permitted to enter. A classmate leaving the room does not indicate that it is okay to enter.

In addition to serving as participation/attendance points for presentations days, evaluations are a measure of the extent to which teams aided or impeded classmates' understanding of theoretical concepts, which will factor into the team's presentation grade. Therefore, teams must be sure to understand their theories well before presenting to ensure their classmates gain from the experience.

Behavior expectations

Students are learning to be communication professionals and are expected to model professional behaviors in class and refrain from engaging in non-class-related activities during class time. **Students WILL be asked to leave the class if they are inattentive or disruptive.** Students who are asked to leave will receive a 0 for that day's participation.

NOTE: We will be using electronic devices in class for Poll Everywhere, but that is not an invitation for you to use the device for non-class purposes. Please keep your device handy but upside-down when not in use for class, and ALWAYS keep it silent.

Attendance Expectations

At The University of Texas at Arlington, taking attendance is not required. Rather, each faculty member is free to develop his or her own methods of evaluating students' academic performance, which includes establishing course-specific policies on attendance.

As the instructor of this section, my philosophy is that students are to treat the class like a job; they are expected to attend every class and arrive on time. Work completed in class weighs heavily on the student's grade; therefore, failure to come to class will affect students' grades adversely.

Absences from lecture and presentation days (when your team is NOT presenting) are neither excused nor unexcused; students receive two free absences to use at their own discretion over the course of the term for which they will not be penalized. Otherwise, students will receive a 0 for participation on days they are absent.

FREE ABSENCES CANNOT BE USED FOR QUIZZES OR YOUR TEAM'S PRESENTATION. Please see the sections about presentations and quizzes for absence policies on those days.

***** Do not arrive late or leave early *****

Class runs from 9:30-10:50 a.m. Students are expected to be in their seats participating in class during that entire time span unless dismissed early. After all, you or someone you know paid for this time.

Arriving late and/or leaving early has the following effects:

- It presents a distraction to the instructor and fellow students (especially those you have to climb over).
- It causes you to miss valuable information.
- It affects your grade detrimentally in the following ways:
 - On lecture days, students who arrive late miss the start-of-class question, and those who leave early miss the end-of-class participation exercise.
 - On quiz days, students who arrive late will not be given extra time to complete the individual quiz and will receive a 0 for the team quiz if they arrive after the individual quizzes have been collected or leave before the team quiz is submitted.
 - Students who are tardy or leave early on a presentation day will receive points only for the presentations they are present to evaluate.

In short, respect the instructor, respect your classmates, and respect yourself (or whoever is paying your tuition), and be present the whole class. In return, I promise to put my best effort toward making you WANT to be here.

If arriving late is unavoidable, please be courteous by making sure the door doesn't slam behind you, taking the closest available seat at the end of a row, and making as little noise as possible settling in.

Students who arrive on time should leave end-of-row seats open. Do not sit on the steps; that is against fire code.

If you know you must leave early, seek permission from me ahead of time, sit at the end of a row near the front of the classroom, and be as quiet as possible when you leave.

Please don't make a habit of either; I will invite you for a discussion in my office if you do so.

DO NOT, under ANY circumstances, leave in the middle of a student presentation. If you must leave early on a presentation day, leave between presentations. **Students who break this rule will receive a 0 for participation that day regardless of how many presentation evaluations they submitted.**

A note on course lectures:

I will not be regurgitating the textbook to you. I often explain the concepts differently from how the textbook authors describe them. This is not intended to confuse you but to provide another way to think about the concepts and, in some cases, to provide explanation that I believe is easier to understand. My lectures also encompass examples and illustrations not present in the textbook, and they incorporate individual and group response activities that aid in understanding.

I use Power Points to present key terms and concepts. Stripped down versions of the Power Points are available to you on Blackboard as a study aid, but they are not intended to replace the classroom experience. Furthermore, the Power Points contain only key words, and merely memorizing them will not help you on the quizzes. I recommend taking notes in class. By taking notes, I do not mean copying down the words on the Power Point but jotting down definitions and examples that I provide.

Poll Everywhere

We will be using Poll Everywhere every class period (except during quizzes). I will be using it for extra credit and participation points; to earn these points, you first need to be registered with my instructor account.

To register with my account, visit this link: <https://www.polleverywhere.com/register?p=3hrd5-ucg6&u=2MJpMH4G>

Please provide your UTA email address and your name **as it appears on the course roster.**

If you're going to respond by SMS text, make sure to provide your mobile phone number, and certify it by texting CERTIFY to 22333. [If you change your number during the term, you must change it on Poll Everywhere and re-certify.]

If you're going to respond via Twitter, make sure to sync the Twitter account you will use to your Poll Everywhere account.

NOTE: Your information is protected, and Poll Everywhere never will share it with any third party.

REGISTER BY THE SECOND DAY OF CLASS. If you are going to respond via the Poll Everywhere app, I'd recommend that you download it to your device (free; Apple App Store or Google Play) before coming to class the second day. If you are going to respond on your Smartphone, tablet, or laptop via web browser, bookmark PollEv.com/drpsuta

Make sure to have your device with you and adequately charged when you come to class each day. If you do not have access to a device, please see me.

IMPORTANT: I ONLY CAN GRADE THE RESPONSES I RECEIVE. In order for your responses to be attached to your name for grade purposes, you need to follow these guidelines:

- If you're going to respond via SMS text, make sure to do all of the following:
 - Text from the phone number you have certified.
 - Text DRPSUTA to 22333 at the start of class to join my session.
 - Make sure you pay attention to what you're supposed to be texting. Sometimes it's a full word or phrase; sometimes it's just a letter or number.
- If you are going to respond via app or web browser, MAKE SURE YOU ARE LOGGED IN and pointed to PollEv.com/drpsuta
- If you are going to respond via Twitter, make sure you use the Twitter account that is synced to your Poll Everywhere account, AND make sure you pay attention to how you're supposed to answer (full words/phrases, letter, number, etc.)
- Regardless of how you answer, you must post before I close the poll. Answer immediately, and do not be long-winded on free-write responses (such as for presentation responses).

Responding by app or browser has the lowest potential for problems, so I would recommend responding that way if possible—just remember to log in and go to the right place to answer.

Students will not be awarded points for answers that do not register due to user error. If you experience a legitimate technological issue, see me immediately at the end of class.

If you do not have a working device with you, you may write down your answers and give them to me at the end of class.

If you have any questions, please contact me. You also can visit <http://www.polleverywhere.com/user-guide>.

Department, College, and University Policies

Drop Policy: Students may drop or swap (adding and dropping a class concurrently) classes through self-service in MyMav from the beginning of the registration period through the late registration period. After the late registration period, students must see their academic advisor to drop a class or withdraw. Undeclared students must see an advisor in the University Advising Center. Drops can continue through a point two-thirds of the way through the term or session, as noted in the syllabus schedule. It is the student's responsibility to officially withdraw if they do not plan to attend after registering. **Students will not be automatically dropped for non-attendance.** Repayment of certain types of financial aid administered through the University may be required as the result of dropping classes or withdrawing. For more information, contact the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships (<http://www.uta.edu/ses/fao>).

Americans with Disabilities Act: The University of Texas at Arlington is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of all federal equal opportunity legislation, including the *Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)*. All instructors at UT Arlington are required by law to provide "reasonable accommodations" to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. Any student requiring an accommodation for this course must provide the instructor with official documentation in the form of a letter certified by the staff in the Office for Students with Disabilities, University Hall 102. Only those students who have officially documented a need for an accommodation will have their request honored. Information regarding diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining disability-based academic accommodations can be found at www.uta.edu/disability or by calling the Office for Students with Disabilities at (817) 272-3364.

Title IX: The University of Texas at Arlington is committed to upholding U.S. Federal Law "Title IX" such that no member of the UT Arlington community shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity. For more information, visit www.uta.edu/titleIX.

Student Support Services: UT Arlington provides a variety of resources and programs designed to help students develop academic skills, deal with personal situations, and better understand concepts and information related to their courses. Resources include tutoring, major-based learning centers,

developmental education, advising and mentoring, personal counseling, and federally funded programs. For individualized referrals, students may visit the reception desk at University College (Ransom Hall), call the Maverick Resource Hotline at 817-272-6107, send a message to resources@uta.edu, or view the information at www.uta.edu/resources.

Electronic Communication: UT Arlington has adopted MavMail as its official means to communicate with students about important deadlines and events, as well as to transact university-related business regarding financial aid, tuition, grades, graduation, etc. All students are assigned a MavMail account and are responsible for checking the inbox regularly. There is no additional charge to students for using this account, which remains active even after graduation. Information about activating and using MavMail is available at <http://www.uta.edu/oit/cs/email/mavmail.php>.

Student Feedback Survey: At the end of each term, students enrolled in classes categorized as lecture, seminar, or laboratory shall be directed to complete a Student Feedback Survey (SFS). Instructions on how to access the SFS for this course will be sent directly to each student through MavMail approximately 10 days before the end of the term. Each student's feedback enters the SFS database anonymously and is aggregated with that of other students enrolled in the course. UT Arlington's effort to solicit, gather, tabulate, and publish student feedback is required by state law; students are strongly urged to participate. For more information, visit <http://www.uta.edu/sfs>.

Emergency Exit Procedures: Should we experience an emergency event that requires us to vacate the building, students should exit the room and move toward the nearest exit, which is located at the end of the hallway in either direction from the classroom. When exiting the building during an emergency, one should never take an elevator but should use the stairwells. Faculty members and instructional staff will assist students in selecting the safest route for evacuation and will make arrangements to assist individuals with disabilities.

Academic Integrity: All students enrolled in this course are expected to adhere to the UT Arlington Honor Code:

I pledge, on my honor, to uphold UT Arlington's tradition of academic integrity, a tradition that values hard work and honest effort in the pursuit of academic excellence.

I promise that I will submit only work that I personally create or contribute to group collaborations, and I will appropriately reference any work from other sources. I will follow the highest standards of integrity and uphold the spirit of the Honor Code.

Instructors may employ the Honor Code as they see fit in their courses, including (but not limited to) having students acknowledge the honor code as part of an examination or requiring students to incorporate the honor code into any work submitted. Per UT System *Regents' Rule* 50101, §2.2, suspected violations of university's standards for academic integrity (including the Honor Code) will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. Violators will be disciplined in accordance with University policy, which may result in the student's suspension or expulsion from the University.