

Communication Theory

COMM 2315 | Spring 2018

Tues./Thurs., 9:30-10:50 p.m.

FAB 258

Instructor: Dr. Erika Pribanic-Smith

Office: 2114 Fine Arts Building

Hours: Tues./Thurs., 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. or 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.

Text and Class Materials

Griffin, E. (2014). *A First Look at Communication Theory* (9th ed.). New York: McGraw Hill.

Scantron Form NO. 882-E (five) and a number 2 pencil for 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 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	35%
Group Quizzes	25%
Team Presentation	15%

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.

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. A majority of participation points will come from group exercises submitted at the end of each class.

Quizzes: Students will take a total of three quizzes over the lecture and reading material. Each quiz will contain 25 multiple choice and true/false questions. These quizzes are not simple. They require full understanding of the theoretical concepts we cover in class so that you can apply them to situations expressed in the quiz 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 5-6 students to work with for the entire semester.

Class starts at 9:30 a.m., and quizzes will be handed out immediately. Students will have 30 minutes to complete the quiz individually. Students should remain quietly in their seats with their Scantron flipped over if they finish early. Immediately after the individual quiz is collected, the team will have 45 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 for each quiz to decide who will bring the 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 arrangements to make up the quiz. Students will not be permitted to make up quizzes without official documentation of one of those three reasons. 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 team quiz score as well. Students who arrange for a make-up quiz and do not show up for the make-up will receive a 0.

Team Presentations: Students will be responsible for one team presentation during the semester, discussing how a Hollywood film illustrates concepts from a theory not covered in class. Teams will consist of 5-6 members; the same groups in which students will take their team quizzes. 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.

Because we are not discussing presentation theories in class, students will need to do a bit of research to learn about the theory. They should become intimately familiar with the theory BEFORE watching the film. Carefully reading the relevant chapter in the textbook would be a good start, though other resources are available online that you may find helpful. PDF chapters for theories not included in the 9th edition of the textbook are available at the [textbook website](#). Of course, feel free to discuss your theory with the instructor if you're having trouble.

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

1. Introduction (About 4 minutes total)
 - a. A **BRIEF** description of the plot and characters. Do not delve into great detail; tell just enough for your peers to understand the clips.

- b. Brief overview of the theory. This should include a brief definition of the theory and what its purpose is.
2. Discussion of specific concepts with film examples. (About 10 minutes total; no more than 5 minutes should be clips)
 - a. Define 2-3 specific concepts from the theory that your team saw at work in the film. **ONLY DISCUSS CONCEPTS FOR WHICH YOU ARE SHOWING AN EXAMPLE.**
 - b. For each concept you define, show a relevant movie clip and explain how the clip demonstrates the concept from the theory. **MAKE SURE YOU CAN GET TO THE RELEVANT SCENES QUICKLY.** Any time spent hunting for the scenes counts as part of your presentation times.
3. Conclusion (About 3 minutes total):
 - a. A summary of how communication theory helps better understand why people communicated the way they did in the film.
 - b. A thoughtful 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.

All presentations should be **no less than 15 minutes but no longer than 17 minutes in length**. Teams that go under 15 minutes or over 17 minutes will be penalized.

All students must be involved in the preparation for the presentation. Though delegation is natural, this should be a true team effort, in which all team members know what the others are doing, help each other as needed, and keep each other accountable. The result should be a cohesive presentation. By developing a team perspective, preparing and rehearsing as a team, and executing the presentation as a team, the outcome should appear as if it were put together by one person. (See this article titled "[Multiple Speakers, One Message](#)" for tips.)

By 11:59 p.m. on the day of the team's presentation, students will submit peer- and self-evaluations (see additional information on Blackboard) that assess team members contributions to the preparation for and delivery of the presentation. The average of these peer evaluations will account for 20 percent of each individual's presentation grade. The other 80 percent will be the grade the team earned on the presentation, as assessed by the rubric found on Blackboard.

All team members must be present and involved on presentation day, but not all team members have to speak. You may choose to have a designated AV person, for instance. 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.

STUDENTS WHO ARE NOT ON THE PRESENTING TEAM will have an online evaluation form to fill out in class after each presentation. Therefore, students should be sure to have a sufficiently-charged, WiFi or data-enabled electronic device (Smartphone, laptop, or tablet) on hand for all presentations. 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 completed.

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.

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. Please note, all absences will result in a 0 on Blackboard, but two will be dropped at the end of the semester.

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 leave early miss the end-of-class discussion 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 tardiness or early departures, or I will invite you for a discussion in my office.

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.

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>).

Disability Accommodations: UT 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)*, *The Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act (ADAAA)*, and *Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act*. 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 disability. Students are responsible for providing the instructor with official notification in the form of **a letter certified by the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD)**. Only those students who have officially documented a need for an accommodation will have their request honored.

Students experiencing a range of conditions (Physical, Learning, Chronic Health, Mental Health, and Sensory) that may cause diminished academic performance or other barriers to learning may seek services and/or accommodations by contacting OSD. Information regarding diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining disability-based academic accommodations can be found at www.uta.edu/disability or by calling OSD at 817-272-3364.

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) is also available to all students to help increase their understanding of personal issues, address mental and behavioral health problems, and make positive changes in their lives. (www.uta.edu/caps; 817-272-3671)

Non-Discrimination Policy: *The University of Texas at Arlington does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, disabilities, genetic information, and/or veteran status in its educational programs or activities it operates. For more information, visit uta.edu/eos.*

Title IX Policy: The University of Texas at Arlington (“University”) is committed to maintaining a learning and working environment that is free from discrimination based on sex in accordance with Title IX of the Higher Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in educational programs or activities; Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VII), which prohibits sex discrimination in employment; and the Campus Sexual Violence Elimination Act (SaVE Act). Sexual misconduct is a form of sex discrimination and will not be tolerated. *For information regarding Title IX, visit www.uta.edu/titleIX or contact Ms. Jean Hood, Vice President and Title IX Coordinator at (817) 272-7091 or jmhood@uta.edu.*

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 [the University College website](http://theuniversitycollegewebsite).

The IDEAS Center (2nd Floor of Central Library) offers **free** tutoring to all students with a focus on transfer students, sophomores, veterans and others undergoing a transition to UT Arlington. To schedule an appointment with a peer tutor or mentor, email IDEAS@uta.edu or call (817) 272-6593.

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>.

Campus Carry: Effective August 1, 2016, the Campus Carry law (Senate Bill 11) allows those licensed individuals to carry a concealed handgun in buildings on public university campuses, except in locations the University establishes as prohibited. Under the new law, openly carrying handguns is not allowed on college campuses. For more information, visit <http://www.uta.edu/news/info/campus-carry/>

Final Review Week: A period of five class days prior to the first day of final examinations in the long sessions shall be designated as Final Review Week. The purpose of this week is to allow students sufficient time to prepare for final examinations. During this week, there shall be no scheduled activities such as required field trips or performances; and no instructor shall assign any themes, research problems or exercises of similar scope that have a completion date during or following this week *unless specified in the class syllabus*. During Final Review Week, an instructor shall not give any examinations constituting 10% or more of the final grade, except makeup tests and laboratory examinations. In addition, no instructor shall give any portion of the final examination during Final Review Week. During this week, classes are held as scheduled. In addition, instructors are not required to limit content to topics that have been previously covered; they may introduce new concepts as appropriate.

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 across 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.

Course Schedule & Due Dates

As the instructor for this course, I reserve the right to adjust this schedule in any way that serves the educational needs of the students enrolled in this course. –Erika J. Pribanic-Smith

Week	Dates	Topics/Assignments (Book chapter from 9 th ed.)
1	Jan. 16	Course Overview and Introduction/Team Selection
	Jan. 18	Defining Communication/Team Presentation Assignment
2	Jan. 23	Defining, Building, and Testing Theories
	Jan. 25	An Early Communication Theory
3 <i>Jan. 31: CENSUS DATE</i>	Jan. 30	Symbolic Interactionism (Ch. 5)
	Feb. 1	Coordinated Management of Meaning (Ch. 6)
4	Feb. 6	Social Exchange/Social Penetration (Ch. 8)
	Feb. 8	Quiz 1/Team Meetings
5	Feb. 13	Social Information Processing (Ch. 10)
	Feb. 15	Relational Dialectics (Ch. 11)
6	Feb. 20	Comm. Privacy Management (Ch. 12)
	Feb. 22	Social Judgment Theory (Ch. 14)
7	Feb. 27	Elaboration Likelihood (Ch. 15)
	March 1	Cultural Approach to Organizations (Ch. 19)
8	March 6	Critical Theory of Comm. in Orgs. (Ch. 21)
	March 8	Quiz 2/Team Meetings
	March 13	NO CLASS
	March 15	NO CLASS
9	March 20	Dramatism (Ch. 23)
	March 22	Narrative Paradigm (Ch. 24)
10 <i>March 31: LAST DAY TO DROP</i>	March 27	Media Ecology (Ch. 25)
	March 29	Uses & Gratifications (Ch. 28)
11	April 3	Agenda-Setting (Ch. 30)
	April 5	Communication Accommodation (Ch. 31)
12	April 10	Face-Negotiation Theory (Ch. 32)
	April 12	Quiz 3/Team Meetings
13	April 17 & 19	Group presentations
14	April 24 & 26	Group presentations
15	May 1 & 3	Group presentations