

# Advanced Theories in Communication

## COMM 5300 | Fall 2019

Monday, 6-8:50 p.m.

Room TBA

### **Instructor: Dr. Erika Pribanic-Smith**

**Office:** 2114 Fine Arts Building

**Phone\*:** 817-272-2163

**Hours:** 12:30-1:30 p.m. T/Th or by appointment

**Email:** [epsmith@uta.edu](mailto:epsmith@uta.edu)

**Faculty Profile:** <https://mentis.uta.edu/explore/profile/Erika-Pribanic-Smith>

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.

**Course Description:** The purpose of this course is to introduce students to a variety of contemporary theories of communication. This includes some of the philosophical issues underlying the study of communication.

### **Learning Goals and Objectives:**

In addition to providing students with an overview of some communication topics and issues, this course is designed to accomplish the following:

- Develop students' capacity for theoretical thinking;
- Encourage students to develop and refine their research interests;
- Refine students' library research skills; and
- Develop students' ability to express their ideas through scientific writing, formal presentations, and informal class discussion.

### **Course Materials:**

- *Applying Communication Theory for Professional Life: A Practical Introduction* (Dainton & Zelley). **\*\* BRING YOUR BOOK TO CLASS EACH WEEK. We will work through some of the case studies in small groups. \*\***
- Journal articles provided through Blackboard.
- Students serious about research should consider purchasing a copy of the latest Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association.

### **Blackboard:**

Students will submit all course assignments and complete all exams on Blackboard (<http://elearn.uta.edu>). Assignments not submitted to the proper slot on time will not be graded.

The instructor also will post all necessary course materials to Blackboard, including the syllabus, course readings, and assignment information.

All grades for individual course assignments, including in-class work, will be posted to Blackboard, and course averages will be posted there periodically. 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.

## Course Policies

**Course Requirements:** Students' grades for this course will be based on participation in class discussion, exams, a research paper, and a research presentation.

### **Grade Calculation**

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>% of grade</u>	<u>Grading scale</u>
Literature review/presentation	50	A – 90-100 percent
Participation (incl. weekly reading briefs & discussion leadership)	30	B – 80-89 percent
Exams (10% each, midterm & final)	20	C – 70-79 percent
		D – 60-69 percent
		F – below 60 percent

### LITERATURE REVIEW

You will complete an essay applying a theoretical approach to examine a topic of your own choosing.

The essay should be approximately 10 pages (9-11 pages are acceptable). The essay will have a references section, but the page count does not include the references. (In your references section, your sources must be alphabetized by last name, with sources by the same author appropriately sorted. Use hanging indents. All of this falls under proper use of APA Style.)

The entire essay (references included) should be double spaced with standard margins (approximately 1 inch), in standard type size (11-12 points). Make sure to use proper APA Style. Not only should you be listing your references using APA Style citations, but you also should be using proper APA Style for in-text citations of your sources. If you don't have a recent style book, visit the [Purdue OWL APA site](#) for a basic guide.

Proper spelling, grammar, and organization are important as well.

Your essay should include the following:

- An introduction that provides a detailed explanation of the topic the student intends to examine and demonstrates its significance through a discussion of the topic's scholarly and, if applicable, practical value. Unless you change your topic, your topic proposal will work fine as an intro, considering any feedback I provide when I grade the proposal.
- A synthesis of the prior research on the topic itself. Discuss commonalities among the literature as well as differences. Sort your articles according to theme. For instance, if six articles made a similar argument, talk about those six articles together. You may (and likely will) refer to articles multiple times throughout the synthesis as you refer to various arguments, findings, and themes. Be sure to include methodological and theoretical approaches in your synthesis; it's important to discuss how prior scholars have examined the topic, not just what they've found.
- Analysis of previous research, including discussion of the weaknesses, missing links, and oversights. At the end of this section, you will explain what your paper adds to the literature that previous scholars have not accomplished.
- Discussion of the theory/ies YOU will use to study this topic. Include literature defining the theory/ies (seminal works are expected) as well as any literature demonstrating how the theory has been used to study topics similar to the topic you are studying; this may include articles you've discussed in your synthesis of prior research on the topic if they use the same theory you're using. Note that 30-50 percent of the literature you review

should be on the theory/ies you have chosen. That is, if you have 20 sources total, 6-10 should be works related to your theory. (***Our course textbook is NOT an appropriate source.*** However, it might point you to valuable literature if you're using a theory covered in the book.)

- JUSTIFICATION of the choice of theory/ies that you would use in examining the chosen topic. That is, you must systematically demonstrate how the theory/ies properly conceptualize the topic you want to study.
- End your paper with research questions and/or hypotheses for your study. Be sure to explain how prior research and especially your selected theory/ies inform your questions/hypotheses.

Your final literature review should have at least 15 sources. There is no maximum; just remember that the upper page limit for your essay is 11 pages, so be sure you can discuss all of your literature in the allotted space. Your sources should be ACADEMIC JOURNAL ARTICLES and SCHOLARLY BOOKS/BOOK CHAPTERS examining the topic you are interested in. They should NOT be popular media (newspapers, magazines, etc.) or websites.

DO NOT include any sources in your references that are not cited in your essay, and vice versa.

#### *Further explanation of the paper*

The goal of the paper is to demonstrate that you can use a theoretical approach to examine a topic of interest. In doing so you would justify why you chose a certain theory. This includes the assumptions about communication the theory makes. Another goal of the essay is to develop the ability to conduct research and synthesize existing literature on a topic and use that body of literature to generate new ideas. You are expected to review the original works of the theorist yourself rather than relying on what other scholars write about the original work.

A literature review introduces and defines important concepts or processes that are related to 1) the topic and 2) the selected theory. It describes the research that has been conducted in this area and seeks to integrate the work and arrive at meaningful conclusions.

The topic you select for your literature review should be well-defined. Try to narrow your topic as much as you can but don't make it so narrow that there isn't any research to review. You cannot do a literature review on "interpersonal research," for example, because this area is too broad. Likewise, you cannot do a literature review on "The effects of dating via Match.com on graduate students at the Department of Communication at UTA" because this topic is too specific. A more appropriate topic might be the "effects of online dating on young adults."

Literature reviews are selective. You should focus on the pieces that are relevant to your specific focus rather than describe all the relevant studies in a given area. You should aim at synthesizing the articles you believe are important so that you can arrive at a conclusion regarding the state of the literature.

Literature reviews tell the reader both what previous work has said and has NOT said about a given topic. In other words, they reveal weaknesses, missing links, and oversights in previous research. Presumably, your suggestions for future research will be designed to address these inadequacies.

Three milestones have been identified for you (see schedule of classes):

- 1) A statement proposing a topic for your lit review.

- 2) An annotated bibliography with at least 10 sources for your lit review. (TIP: Keep up with your annotating as you go along finding and reading sources, and this will be a simple assignment to complete. To adequately keep up, you should be reviewing two sources per week.)
- 3) A draft submitted for timely feedback.

### *Topic Proposal*

The proposal is a 1-2-page statement proposing a topic for your lit review. Provide a detailed description of the topic and explain its significance. Why should this topic be researched?

Note that this proposal ultimately will serve the first function for your literature review: Choose a topic that interests you and that you would like to examine conceptually and empirically. Problematize the topic (define it). Explain why we should pursue it. This does not mean why do you find it interesting, but why should we as scholars and communication professionals care about the topic? What academic and/or practical value does it have?

### *Annotated Bibliography*

For each of your 10 (or more) sources collected to this point, cite your source in proper APA Style, and explain in a brief paragraph under the citation what the source's main points are.

Remember: Your sources should be ACADEMIC JOURNAL ARTICLES and SCHOLARLY BOOKS/BOOK CHAPTERS examining the topic you are interested in. They should NOT be popular media (newspapers, magazines, etc.) or websites.

Each annotation should be 4-6 sentences discussing the primary argument, theoretical basis, research methods, and findings. These should be in YOUR WORDS based on READING AND PROCESSING of the article. If you just copy and paste the abstract of the article, you will receive no credit.

Make sure to include enough information in your annotation that you can successfully integrate all of the articles in your literature review without having to reread them.

The sources can be in any order; they don't have to be alphabetized. If it helps you to arrange them by topic or theme, feel free to do that, or you can just list them in the order you read them.

Note that the 10 sources in the annotated bibliography will not be ALL the sources for your review. I expect you'll keep looking for sources to strengthen your review, especially related to your theory. Although your final literature review will have literature related to your theory, you do not have to have a theory in place by the time you submit your bibliography. If one jumps out at you, great. If it doesn't, that's fine, too. Sometimes it takes reading a lot of material on the topic to identify a theory that will help explain the phenomenon you plan to study.

### *Drafts*

You will submit a COMPLETED draft of your literature review. The instructor will provide detailed feedback and arrange for 15-minute one-on-one meetings to go over what the student can do to obtain the best possible grade on the final review. Please note that "draft" does not mean sloppy work is acceptable. The draft is graded on the same rubric as the final review, so treat it like it's the final product.

### *Presentation of your papers*

Students will present in class an outline of their literature reviews. Students will present in a random order determined in an earlier class.

Your presentation should address the following:

- 1) What is your topic and why is it important?
- 2) What are the major themes found in prior research?
- 3) What are the strengths and weaknesses of prior research?
- 4) What will your work add to the literature?
- 5) What theory have you chosen and why?
- 6) What RQ's/H's do you have and why?

Your presentation will be 12-15 minutes (average for an academic conference). This means you must get through each of these points in 2-3 minutes; you cannot be very detailed, but don't just breeze through, either. Summarizing is key. I recommend that you practice to make sure you can hit each point within the time requirements.

You may use visual aids if you wish, but keep in mind that any handouts or electronic presentation tools should be limited to key words and/or images; do not expect the audience to read your whole presentation.

Be as formal or informal as you want, according to your comfort level. This is not a public speaking class; you will not be graded on form, only content.

If you're nervous about presenting before your peers, keep in mind that everyone has to do it, so the class empathizes with you. Relax! You're just telling your friends what you've learned.

### **PARTICIPATION**

This is a seminar course, meaning that it is not intended to be a lecture but a discussion among the instructor and students. To be prepared for that discussion, students are expected to read the assigned textbook chapter AND accompanying journal articles BEFORE coming to class each class Monday.

Students will be assessed in class based on their contribution to the discussion, including insightful comments and thoughtful questions. Students who do not contribute to discussion at all will receive a 0 for the day's in-class participation, which accounts for 10 percent of the student's total average in the course.

The following also contribute to the student's total participation grade in the class.

### *Weekly Reading Briefs*

By noon on each class day beginning Sept. 17, students must submit on Blackboard a reading brief that includes the following:

- Three critical observations that you have made while processing the readings (book chapter and journal articles). These may be about the theories themselves or about the use of the theories in research (methods, findings, etc.). Note that these should not be statements of fact from the reading but something new you are bringing to the table, in the form of critique (what is good or bad about the theory and/or research), comparisons/contrasts of theories, and/or examples from your own life to which the theories can be applied.
- Three questions that we might address in class. These may be questions that you have about the theory/research (something you don't understand or are curious about), or they may be questions intended to spark discussion among the class (something about which you'd like to hear your classmates' opinions/experiences). However, all questions must be specific to the material assigned for the week, not general questions.

### *Discussion leadership*

Each student will facilitate class discussion (20 minutes) of one journal article. You will pick your week the first day of class and select an article from that week's readings to discuss. Students must inform me one week ahead of time which article they chose and cannot change after that.

You should begin by offering a **brief** summary of the article, but please note that THIS IS NOT A PRESENTATION. It is, as the title of the assignment indicates, a leadership of discussion. Asking your classmates for their first impressions of the material is a good way to get discussion started, and asking if they can think of examples from their own lives can be helpful, too.

Your observations and questions from your weekly reading brief can serve as good discussion starters as well, provided they relate to the article you've chosen. By Monday afternoon, I also will send you a list of relevant questions/observations your classmates submitted in their briefs. These are not questions for YOU to answer but questions to pose to the class. In sum, the goal is to get your classmates talking as much as possible, not for you to stand in front of the class and talk to them.

### EXAMS

Students will take two exams, at the midpoint and end of the term. Exam questions require APPLICATION of theoretical concepts. Therefore, you should not merely memorize terms and definitions but be sure that you fully understand how the theories work and how they apply to communication situations. You should be reading the assigned articles carefully to engage with and learn from the material, take careful notes in class, and study by considering applications.

The midterm exam will consist of short-answer/essay questions of varying depth:

- 5-point questions will require just a sentence or two each to answer.
- 7- and 8-point questions will require 3-5 sentences each to answer adequately.
- 10-point questions will require 6-10 sentences each to answer adequately.

The final exam will consist solely of 10-point essay questions.

Types of questions you will encounter include the following:

- Applying concepts discussed on the first day of class to the theories we talk about in the succeeding weeks.
- Comparing and contrasting concepts from two or more theories (that may or may not have been discussed in the same week).
- Reading a provided scenario and explaining how a theory we've talked about applies to the scenario.
- Coming up with your own scenario (real or imagined) and explaining how it applies to a theory we've talked about.
- Discussing how a theory we've talked about could be applied to a research project.

Each exam will be administered on Blackboard and taken outside of class. The midterm will be open from midnight on Oct. 9 until 11:59 p.m. on Oct. 15; the final will be open from midnight on Nov. 20 until 11:59 p.m. on Nov. 28 (giving a couple extra days because of the Thanksgiving holiday). You can complete the exam whenever you want. It does not have to be completed in one sitting; you can save and come back. However, you will encounter the questions one at a time, in random order, and may not go back to a question once you've submitted your answer.

## ATTENDANCE EXPECTATIONS

At The University of Texas at Arlington, taking attendance is not required, but attendance is a critical indicator in student success. 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 (see below). While UT Arlington does not require instructors to take attendance in their courses, the U.S. Department of Education requires that the University have a mechanism in place to mark when Federal Student Aid recipients "begin attendance in a course." UT Arlington instructors also will report when students stopped attending a course as part of the final grading process. Specifically, when assigning a student a grade of F, faculty report the last date a student attended their class based on evidence such as a test, participation in a class project or presentation, or an engagement online via Blackboard. This date is reported to the Department of Education for federal financial aid recipients.

As the instructor of this section, my philosophy is that students are to treat the class like a job. Students are expected to attend every class and arrive on time. Each absence reduces opportunities to contribute to discussion, participate in small group activities, ask questions, and clarify issues related to coursework. Missing class reduces students' participation grade.

## LATE WORK

There are no make ups, and no late work is accepted. Consideration will be given for **extreme circumstances** (serious illness, debilitating injury, or death of a loved one) if the student provides documented proof of the circumstances.

## WORK EXPECTATIONS

Students will be conducting individual research as well as reading for class and writing weekly reading briefs. Effective time management is crucial. Beyond the time required to attend each class meeting, students enrolled in this course should expect to spend at least an additional 9 hours per week of their own time in course-related activities. If students are struggling with the material or the workload, they should see the instructor during office hours or arrange another meeting time outside of class to discuss it.

### **Institutional Policies and Additional Information**

UTA students are encouraged to review the below institutional policies and informational sections and reach out to the specific office with any questions. To view this institutional information, please visit the [Institutional Information](#) page, which includes the following policies among others:

- Drop Policy
- Disability Accommodations
- Title IX Policy
- Academic Integrity
- Student Feedback Survey
- Final Exam Schedule

**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 directly down the hall to the left. 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.

**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](#) by appointment, [drop-in tutoring](#), [mentoring](#) (time management, study skills, etc.), [major-based learning centers](#), [counseling](#), and [federally funded programs](#). For individualized referrals, students may call the Maverick Resource Hotline at 817-272-6107, send a message to [resources@uta.edu](mailto:resources@uta.edu), or view the information at [Resource Hotline](#)

**The English Writing Center (411LIBR):** The Writing Center offers **FREE** tutoring in 15-, 30-, 45-, and 60-minute face-to-face and online sessions to all UTA students on any phase of their UTA coursework. Register and make appointments online at the [Writing Center](#). Classroom visits, workshops, and specialized services for graduate students and faculty are also available. Please see [Writing Center: OWL](#) for detailed information on all our programs and services.

**Library & Research Assistance:** University-level research requires university-level sources. Contact the Library for personalized help in navigating research resources and locating the sources you need.

- Your librarian is **Diane Shepelwich**, [dianec@uta.edu](mailto:dianec@uta.edu). If you need help getting started with your research or have questions along the way, contact Diane for personalized assistance.
- [Research Coaches](#) are UTA students trained to help you frame your research questions, develop search strategies, understand citation styles, and select and evaluate relevant resources,
- Find library staff at the Service Zone, Central Library first floor, or at the branch libraries, by phone at (817) 272-3395, by text at (817) 727-8395, email at [AskUs@uta.edu](mailto:AskUs@uta.edu), or chat on the [library's homepage](#)
- *Research Consultation:* To set an appointment to meet with your librarian or research coach, go to the [appointment request form](#)
- For a list of useful guides to help you start your research, visit <http://libguides.uta.edu/>
- Library Tutorials: [library.uta.edu/how-to](http://library.uta.edu/how-to)



### **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*

**Schedule TBA**

### **Emergency Phone Numbers:**

In case of an on-campus emergency, call the UT Arlington Police Department at **817-272-3003** (non-campus phone), **2-3003** (campus phone). You may also dial 911. Non-emergency number: 817-272-3381.

