

COM 231.01: INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNICATION THEORY AND RESEARCH  
SYLLABUS, FALL 2009  
MWF 10:00 – 10:50 Room CB320

*Course Description*

This course is an introduction to theory and research in the field of communication with an emphasis on interpersonal and family communication. Students prepare reviews of literature as well as scholarly abstracts. Credit 3.

*Instructor*

Dr. Richard Bello  
Office: 322B Dan Rather Communications Building  
Office Hours: 11:00-12:00 MWF; also by appointment  
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*Course Objectives*

- To provide students with an introductory understanding of several key communication theories.
- To prepare students to evaluate communication theories effectively.
- To enable students to apply communication theories to their own lives within a number of varying contexts, especially interpersonal and family situations.
- To introduce students to the systematic study and research of communication.
- To improve students' abilities to analyze and synthesize communication research articles.

*Required Textbooks*

Griffin, E. (2009). *A first look at communication theory* (7th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Rubin, R. B., Rubin, A. M., & Piele, L. J. (2005). *Communication research: Strategies and sources* (6th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

These required readings will serve both as bases of classroom lectures and discussions as well as a supplement to them. Do not always expect an exact relationship between what goes on in class and what you read in the book, but do note carefully the reading assignments on the course outline that follows.

*Class Meetings and Attendance*

If poor attendance prevents you from being exposed to theory and research about communication through classroom lectures and discussions, then it is difficult to develop the understanding necessary to truly improve your ability to analyze and apply the theories. In addition, your

participation in class discussions is an aid to improving your fellow classmates' understanding.

Therefore, attendance is so important that students who accumulate four unexcused absences will have their class participation grades lowered by one letter grade. In addition, for every unexcused absence beyond four, class participation will be lowered another letter grade.

### *Class Procedure*

The class roll will be called promptly at the start of every class period, so students are expected to be on time. A variety of methods will be used to conduct class, including lecture, informal student discussions, and more formal classroom exercises. These exercises are experimental in nature, designed to test or demonstrate concepts raised in discussions and lectures and to stimulate thinking about communication theory. Plenty of opportunity will be given for students to ask questions about material encountered in class or read in the textbook.

### *Exams, Projects, and Grading Policy*

The final grade will be based primarily on two major exams, a midterm and a final, with the possibility of a few announced and unannounced quizzes. These exams and quizzes will count for 65% of the final grade.

Also significant to your grade will be an abstract of a scholarly article and a literature review of several scholarly articles. These articles must be pieces of original research that appear in scholarly journals related to human communication. The abstract will count for 10% of the final grade and the literature review for 20%.

Class participation and attendance will count for 5% of the final grade. Part of that grade will be based on adherence to the general class policies outlined below.

### *General Class Policies*

A. Be on time. If you arrive **after the roll is called** or **leave early**, you are considered absent. If you happen to arrive late, see me after class so that the absence can be changed to a tardy (three such tardies count as one absence). Student Absences on Religious Holy Days: Students are allowed to miss class and other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. Students remain responsible for all work.

B. Don't "leave" early, that is, pack up books, stand up, etc. near the end of class. The class period is over when the allotted time is completely up or when the instructor dismisses class.

C. In class, turn off all cell phones, iPods, Blackberries, or other electronic communication devices. Use of laptop computers in the classroom is allowed only for the purpose of taking lecture notes.

D. Listen carefully as well as courteously and take thorough notes. Students are expected to assist in maintaining a classroom environment that is conducive to learning. Students are to treat other students and faculty with respect. Under no circumstances are cell phones or any electronic

devices to be used or seen during times of examination. Students may tape record lectures provided they do not disturb other students in the process.

E. Arrive to class rested and ready to participate. Be open and receptive to new ideas--you will hear a lot of them this semester. Questioning your assumptions is the basis of learning.

F. Written assignments will be accepted up to one class period after they are originally due. However, such late assignments will be given less than full credit. No assignments will be accepted more than one class period after the due date, except in the most extenuating of circumstances and at the discretion of the instructor. Exam makeups and late papers will be allowed with no penalty only if the student can present evidence of a legitimate reason for having missed the due date. These reasons are: illness requiring a doctor's visit, required presence in court or other legal proceedings, and death in the immediate family. Students who miss exams or papers without a legitimate, documented reason will receive a zero on these assignments unless, at the discretion of the instructor, extenuating circumstances warrant a makeup penalized by at least one letter grade.

G. Plagiarism or cheating on exams will result, at a minimum, in a zero for those assignments. In addition, depending on the circumstances, the instructor will consider reporting the case to the student's academic dean for further disciplinary action or assigning a failing grade for the course. Any and all available means for detecting plagiarism of papers will be used, including electronic services.

H. If you have a documented disability that requires assistance, please contact the Chair of the Committee for Continuing Assistance for Disabled Students at 294-1720.

Notice: You will find online a more detailed description of these policies at <http://www.shsu.edu/syllabus/>

### *Course Outline*

1st Week: Introduction to Theory (Chapters 1-4, *CT*; 1, *CR*)

- A. Overview of the Communication Discipline
- B. The Theory of Theory
- C. Traditions in Communication Theory
- D. Testing Theory

2nd Week: Introduction to Research in Communication (Chapters 2 & 3, *CR*)

- A. Literature Search Strategies
- B. Using Electronic Databases
- C. Application

Labor Day Holiday: Monday, September 7th.

3rd Week: Symbolic Interactionism (Chapter 5, *CT*)

4th Week: Sources and How to Access Them (Chapters 5 & 6, *CR*)

- A. General Sources
- B. Tools for Accessing Sources
- C. Application

5th Week: Theory of Coordinated Management of Meaning (Chapter 6, *CT*)

6th Week: Specific Types of Sources (Chapters 7 & 8, *CR*)

- A. Communication Periodicals
- B. Gleaning Information From Compilations
- C. Application

7th Week: Expectancy Violations Theory (Chapter 7, *CT*)

8th Week: Doing Communication Research (Chapters 9-11, *CR*)

- A. The Basic Process
- B. Designing Research Projects
- C. Writing About Communication
- D. Application and **Mid-term Exam**

9th Week: Interpersonal Deception Theory (Handout)

10th Week: Theory of Constructivism; Polishing Your Writing (Chapter 8, *CT*; 12, *CR*)

11th Week: Uncertainty Reduction Theory (Chapter 10, *CT*); **Abstracts Due**

12th Week: The Interactional View (Chapter 13, *CT*)

13th Week: Social Judgment Theory (Chapter 14, *CT*)

14th Week: The Culture of Organizations (Chapter 19, *CT*)

Thanksgiving Holiday: November 25th, 26th, and 27th.

15th Week: Genderlect Styles (Chapter 33, *CT*); **Lit. Reviews Due**

16th Week: Communication Accommodation Theory (Chapter 30, *CT*)

Last Date to Drop without Grade of F and Last Class Day: Friday, December 11th.

17th Week: **Final Exam**