

COMMUNICATION THEORY

RHET 2350, SPRING 2023



WHY ARE THERE SO MANY
DIFFERENT COMMUNICATION
THEORIES?

AND WHY ARE THERE SO MANY
DIFFERENT DEFINITIONS OF WHAT
COMMUNICATION IS ALL ABOUT?



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Course Description:

A study of communication theories, systems, models, formulations, and measurements; new dimensions in speech criticism and research methodology; critical study of published reports in the contemporary literature of the field. Prerequisite: RHET 1110.

Textbook: Griffin, Em; Andrew Ledbetter and Glenn Sparks. *A First Look at Communication Theory*. 11th edition. McGraw Hill.

The bookstore has the printed, loose-leaf edition of the textbook. Feel free to purchase/rent the electronic copy or the printed copy - whichever works easiest for you.

There will also be several other readings that you'll find in Georgia View.

Course Objectives: What should you learn by the end of the semester?

This course is designed to introduce you to a variety of theories within the realm of communication, including relational communication, mass communication, and rhetoric.

1. You should be able to identify several key theories within each of the communication traditions (relational, mass communication, and rhetorical theory)
2. You should be able to critique theories through an understanding of their strengths and weaknesses.
3. You should be able to apply theories to particular communication situations and artifacts.
4. You should be able to understand the relationships between various communication theories.

Additional Objectives: What do you want to get out of this class?

Major Assignments and Grade Weighting:

Theory Explanations (Example Sets)	20%
Theory Application (Rhetorical Criticism)	20%
Case Study #1	20%
Case Study #2 (Final Exam)	20%
Class Participation	20%

Theory Explanations:

You'll note that there are quite a few theories that we'll discuss in this class, and there will be lots of ways in which you'll be demonstrating your knowledge of the theories. There will be a place in Georgia View where you'll submit various examples relating to the various theories. We'll then wrap these up in a "book" of sorts where you'll be able to walk away with a variety of different illustrations from you and your colleagues. Since there are 13 of you, and my goal is to have at least 2-3 examples per theory, my hope is that we'll have around 150 or so different examples of how the theories apply in everyday life. So here's how it'll work:

After every 5-6 theories (this will essentially mean you'll turn these in 6 different times during the semester), I'll have due the examples for that particular group of theories. So after we finish social information processing, which is the sixth theory we'll cover, you'll turn examples related to at least 1, but no more than 5 of the theories. If your example is pertinent and relates to the theory, you get credit. You won't have to do 5 theories every time. If you want a perfect score for this part of the class, you'll do roughly 3/4 of the theories. (Yes, this is a different amount than last semester, in case anyone asks. I realized that this portion of the class was a little easier than expected.) If you want a B, that comes out to 2/3 of the theories. Here's the exact breakdown: you'll essentially decide what grade you want for this portion of the class.

- A = 25 out of 33 theories have pertinent, easy to follow examples
- B = 22 out of 33
- C = 19 out of 33
- D = 16 out of 33

Major Assignments and Grade Weighting:

Theory Application Paper (Rhetorical Criticism)

You'll analyze a speech, speaker, movement, or a particular rhetorical artifact (for example, one could use something like the the AIDS quilt, or a monument), and apply a rhetorical theory to that particular situation. This won't be a full-blown rhetorical analysis much like you'd have in the Rhetorical Criticism course, but rather a chance to "get your feet wet" and do that kind of analysis. It'll be a 2-3 page paper (roughly), and we'll discuss more in class how to do the paper.

I'll use the rubric listed later to evaluate the paper.

Case Study #1 and #2:

Case Study #1 will involve your taking a theory or at most two theories, and demonstrate how you would teach those theories to a club, organization, for-profit work group, or non-profit organization.

Your case study consists of three parts:

1. Identifying the particular communication problem you wish to solve.
2. Explaining which theory (theories) you've chosen to use, and why they're appropriate.
3. Outlining (this part does NOT have to be word-for-word) how you would go about teaching a more appropriate way of handling the situation.

Example: you are a community assistant in the residence halls. Several people on your floor have issues with conflict management because they run to you to solve their conflict instead of working it out themselves. You're getting tired of trying to solve every roommate problem on the floor. (And you wouldn't mind not seeing another sticky note with "Put away your trash" on it!)

You would pick an appropriate theory or theories. Then you would put together an outline for how you would teach those on your floor a better way to handle their conflict besides passive-aggressive sticky notes!

I would guess that most of the papers will be roughly a couple of pages for the first two parts, then followed by the outline itself.

Case study #2 will serve as the final exam for the course, and presentations will take place during the final exam period. We'll talk about that case study more closer to the end of the semester. You can expect it to be reflective, and more geared toward what you've learned for the entire semester.

THE SECRETS TO DOING WELL IN THIS CLASS... EVERYTHING YOU WANT TO KNOW CAN BE FOUND HERE!*

Frequently Asked Questions:

1. Is it true that your jokes start off bad and only get worse?

Those of you who've had me already know the answer. If not, you'll soon find out.

2. Do I need to show up for class every day?

I'd strongly encourage you to do so, because much of what we do isn't in the textbook. If you're big on the "so what" questions like I am, you'll want to come to class. You'll better be able to do the assignments you'll have if you come to class. But don't come if you're sick or have another legitimate reason not to come. But if you skip regularly, you probably won't get an A for participation.

3. Is it true that we won't have tests in this class?

We will have various opportunities for you to demonstrate that you both know the theories as well as how to apply them.

4. In other words, I don't have to do the readings.

I didn't say that. You cannot not do the readings if you want an A in this class. Besides, when it comes to readings and discussion, chances are, you hate pop quizzes. So do I. As long as y'all come to class prepared to discuss and have done the readings, I don't feel I have to give you pop quizzes. Now, if y'all don't do the readings, I reserve the right to change the syllabus and offer pop quizzes.

5. Wait: isn't "cannot not" a double negative?

Just wanted to make sure you were paying attention. :)

6. What will classes be like?

Discussion and application are the primary components of our class sessions. I promise not to regurgitate the text to you.

7. Are we really going to get through the whole book this semester?

I plan on it.

8.Uffda. There are a LOT of theories in the book. So why do I need to know them?

Y'all know that there are a variety of ways of looking at communication. What I want you to take away from the class is a general understanding of the range of approaches to communication, and how different theories can be helpful in understanding different types of communication problems.

9. Why did you use the word "Uffda?"

Sorry. Former Minnesotan in me. "Uffda means everything and nothing in Minnesota and other parts of the Upper Midwest where it's a stereotypical expression. The phrase is used to express surprise, annoyance, relief, exhaustion, disappointment, astonishment, exasperation and dismay. People use the word when things are good and when things are bad." (*Fillmore County Journal*, August 30, 2021).

10. So how are you going to test us on all of these theories?

We'll use a case study approach for the most part. What I'm most interested in is seeing how you can apply the theories. It'll be clear from our class discussion and in the individual assignments. You'll have to know the theories in order to do well.

11. Now that you mention it, how do I get an A in this class?

- Make good, well-supported arguments (through your insights and research) and show me you know how to apply what you've learned.
- Show me that you've read and grappled with the material you've read and discussed, and have thought about its implications.
- Come to class prepared to discuss and learn.

12. You mean, that's it?

More details on the assignments and grading are on the preceding page. But, essentially, if you do the three things above, you'll do well.

13. I hate discussing in class. What can I do?

Never fear. There will be ways of demonstrating that you've read and interacted with the course material. I know not all communication majors like speaking in class or public. But our numbers are relatively small.

14. What else should I know?

- Don't wait until the last minute to do assignments. That stresses you and me out.
- If you're going to be absent, let me know.
- Don't be a stranger. The more I know about you and how you learn, the better I can help you.

15. What if you didn't answer my question on this page?

Then let's chat. See the footnote below.

***BECAUSE COLLEGE SHOULDN'T BE A GUESSING GAME!**

Rubric for assignments....

	Outstanding	Good	Fair	Poor
	4	3	2	1
Explanation of issues	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated clearly and described comprehensively, delivering all relevant information necessary for full understanding.	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated, described, and clarified so that understanding is not seriously impeded by omissions.	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated but description leaves some terms undefined, ambiguities unexplored, boundaries undetermined, and/or backgrounds unknown.	Issue/problem to be considered critically is stated without clarification or description.
Evidence Selecting and using information to investigate a point of view or conclusion	Information is taken from source(s) with enough interpretation/evaluation to develop a comprehensive analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are questioned thoroughly.	Information is taken from source(s) with enough interpretation/evaluation to develop a coherent analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are subject to questioning.	Information is taken from source(s) with some interpretation/evaluation, but not enough to develop a coherent analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints of experts are taken as mostly fact, with little questioning.	Information is taken from source(s) without any interpretation/evaluation. Viewpoints of experts are taken as fact, without question.
Influence of context and assumptions	Thoroughly (systematically and methodically) analyzes own and others' assumptions and carefully evaluates the relevance of contexts when presenting a position.	Identifies own and others' assumptions and several relevant contexts when presenting a position.	Questions some assumptions. Identifies several relevant contexts when presenting a position. May be more aware of others' assumptions than one's own (or vice versa).	Shows an emerging awareness of present assumptions (sometimes labels assertions as assumptions). Begins to identify some contexts when presenting a position.
Student's position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis)	Specific position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) is imaginative, taking into account the complexities of an issue. Limits of position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) are acknowledged. Others' points of view are synthesized within position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis).	Specific position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) takes into account the complexities of an issue. Others' points of view are acknowledged within position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis).	Specific position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) acknowledges different sides of an issue.	Specific position (perspective, thesis/hypothesis) is stated, but is simplistic and obvious.
Control of syntax and mechanics	Uses graceful language that skillfully communicates meaning to readers with clarity and fluency, and is virtually error-free.	Uses straightforward language that generally conveys meaning to readers. The language used has few errors.	Uses language that generally conveys meaning to readers with clarity, although writing may include some errors.	Uses language that sometimes impedes meaning because of errors in usage.

Georgia College Official Policies...

Religious Observance Policy

Students are permitted to miss class in observance of religious holidays and other activities observed by a religious group of which the student is a member without academic penalty. Exercising of one's rights under this policy is subject to the GC Honor Code. Students who miss class in observance of a religious holiday or event are required to make up the coursework missed as a result from the absence. The nature of the make-up assignments and the deadline for completion of such assignments are at the sole discretion of the instructor. Failure to follow the prescribed procedures voids all student rights under this policy.

Assistance for Student Needs Related to Disability

If you have a disability as described by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504, you may be eligible to receive accommodations to assist in programmatic and physical accessibility. The Student Disability Resource Center can assist you in formulating a reasonable accommodation plan and in providing support in developing appropriate accommodations to ensure equal access to all GC programs and facilities. Course requirements will not be waived, but accommodations may assist you in meeting the requirements. For documentation requirements and for additional information, we recommend that you contact the Student Disability Resource Center located in Russell Library 109 at 478-445-5931.

Student Rating of Instruction Survey

Given the technological sophistication of Georgia College students, the student opinion survey is being delivered through an online process. Your constructive feedback plays an indispensable role in shaping quality education at Georgia College. All responses are completely confidential and your name is not stored with your responses in any way. In addition, instructors will not see any results of the opinion survey until after final grades are submitted to the University. An invitation to complete the online opinion survey is distributed to students near the end of the semester. Your participation in this very important process is greatly appreciated.

Academic Honesty

The integrity of students and their written and oral work is a critical component of the academic process. The submission of another's work as one's own is plagiarism and will be dealt with using the procedures outlined in the GC Catalog. Remember that allowing another student to copy one's own work violates standards of academic integrity.

Student Use of Copyrighted Materials

As a student your ability to post or link to copyrighted material is governed by United States copyright law. The law allows for students to post or link to copyrighted materials within the course environment when the materials are pertinent to course work. Students are expected to adhere to the stipulations of the Georgia College Honor Code, which addresses plagiarism. Violations are subject to disciplinary action. Policy recognizes that exclusive rights of copyright holders are balanced by limitations on those rights under federal copyright law, including the right to make a fair use of copyrighted materials. The absence of a copyright notice or symbol on a work does not denote a lack of copyright. Failure to comply with this policy, including federal copyright laws, may result in restriction or loss of university network access and/or disciplinary action through the Office of Student Life. For questions involving copyright issues, please consult the GC Office of Legal Affairs. Refer to the USG Policy on the Use of Copyrighted Works at <https://www.usg.edu/copyright>.

Electronic Recording Policy

Electronic video and/or audio recording is not permitted during any class unless the student obtains permission from the instructor and every student present. If permission is granted, any distribution of the recording is prohibited. Violation of this policy is grounds for removal from the class and referral for disciplinary action. Students granted specific electronic recording accommodations from Disability Services do not require special permission; however, the instructor must be notified. Any distribution is prohibited.

Georgia College Official Policies... continued

COVID-19

The health and safety of our community will always remain our top priority. Although not required, we strongly encourage students to get a COVID-19 vaccine. Similarly, unvaccinated individuals are also strongly encouraged to continue wearing a mask or face covering in the classroom as well as at social gatherings. Vaccinated individuals may also want to consider wearing a mask or face covering while indoors.

In an effort to assist students with getting vaccinated, [Student Health Services](#) will be offering on-going vaccination clinics on campus starting during our Weekend of Welcome. For more information, contact Student Health Services at 478-445-5288 or via [Email](#). Please consult the [university's website](#) for COVID related updates and resources. (Updated July 30, 2021)

Academic Grievances or Appeals

An academic grievance or appeal is an allegation by a student of substantial and/or unjustified deviation, to the student's detriment, from policies, procedures and/or requirements regarding admission, grading policies, special agreements, instructor's requirements and academic requirements of the University. Students shall have the right to file academic grievances or appeals according to the procedures approved by the University and outlined in the University Catalog.

Fire Drills

Fire drills will be conducted annually. In the event of a fire alarm, students will exit the building in a quick and orderly manner through the nearest hallway exit. Learn the floor plan and exits of the building. Do not use elevators. If you encounter heavy smoke, crawl on the floor so as to gain fresh air. Assist disabled persons and others if possible without endangering your own life. Assemble for a head count on the front lawn of main campus or other designated assembly area.

Course Schedule

We may change parts of the schedule based on our progress and/or student interest. Any such changes will be noted in class and through an updated course schedule.

Date:	Day	Class Topics	Assignments
Mon., Jan. 9	1	Introduction to course	
Wed., Jan. 11	2	History of Communication	Eadie reading (Georgia View)
Mon., Jan. 16		Martin Luther King, Jr. Day - No class	
Wed., Jan. 18	3	Traditions and history of communication as a discipline	Chapter 4, 38
Mon., Jan. 23	4	Approaches to communication theory	Chapters 2, 3
Wed., Jan. 25	5	Symbolic Interactionism and Expectancy Violation Theory	Chapters 5, 6
Mon., Jan. 30	6	Family Communication and Social Penetration Theory	Chapters 7, 8
Wed., Feb. 1	7	Uncertainty Reduction and Social Information Processing	Chapters 9, 10
Mon., Feb. 6	8	Relational Dialectics	Chapter 11 Example Set #1
Wed., Feb. 8	9	Communication Privacy Management, Media Multiplexity	Chapters 12, 13
Mon., Feb. 13	10	Introduction to rhetoric, Political Communication	
Wed., Feb. 15	11	Introduction to Performance Studies/ performative speech act theory	Chapter 14, 15, 16
Mon., Feb. 20	12	Social Judgment and Elaboration Likelihood Model, Cognitive Dissonance, review semester to this point	(Chapter 14, 15, 16)
Wed., Feb. 22	13	Neo-Aristotlean Criticism: Aristotle's Rhetoric	Chapter 17
Mon., Feb. 27	14	Dramatism and Kenneth Burke	Chapter 18
Wed., Mar. 1	15	Narrative Paradigm-Walter Fisher	Chapter 19 Example Set #2
Mon., Mar. 6	16	Group Decision Making and Symbolic Convergence	Chapter 20, 21
Wed., Mar. 8	17	Summary/Review of Rhetorical Theories	
March 13-17		Spring Break - No class	
Mon., Mar. 20	18	Symbolic Convergence/Intro to Organizational Communication	Chapter 21
Wed., Mar. 22	19	Cultural Approaches to Organizational Communication	Chapter 22 Case Study #1
Mon., Mar. 27	20	Critical Approaches to Organizational Communication	Chapter 24 Example Set #3
Wed., Mar. 29	21	Communicative Constitution of Organizations, Flow	Chapter 23

Date:	Day	Class Topics	Assignments
Mon., Apr. 3	22	Intercultural: Communication Accommodation and Face-Negotiation	Chapter 25, 26
Wed., Apr. 5	23	Co-Cultural and Afrocentricity Theories	Chapter 27, 28
Mon., Apr. 10	24	Feminist Standpoint and Muted Group Theory	Chapter 29, 30 Example Set #4
Wed., Apr. 12	25	Media Ecology and Context Collapse	Chapter 31, 32 Theory Paper
Mon., Apr. 17	26	Semiotics and Cultural Studies	Chapter 33, 34 Example Set #5
Wed., Apr. 19	27	Uses and Gratifications and Cultivation Theory	Chapter 35, 36
Mon., Apr. 24	28	Agenda Setting Theory	Chapter 37
Wed., Apr. 26	29	Return to the common threads between theories	Chapter 38
Mon., May 1	30	Summarizing the semester	Example Set #6 (all examples due)
FINAL EXAM: Wed., May 3 3:30-5:45 p.m.		Case Study #2 Discussion	Case Study #2 due