FALL, 2016

COMMUNICATION 4383 & MLCOM 6383 – COMMUNICATION THEORY (CAPSTONE)

INSTRUCTOR – Dr. Robin Williamson

Office – Guadalupe House (Communication Building, #102; 1311 Branard)

Hours: 3:30-4:30 MW; 11:30-12:30 & 2:00-4:00 T; 11:30-12:30 & 2:00-3:00 TH; and by appointment.

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Course Purpose: The communication discipline has experienced a great deal of change and growth over the last fifty years. Many assumptions are challenged, and established theories have been questioned. Entire “ways of knowing” about communication are under debate. This course will act as an invitation to examine the nature, functions, and processes underlying human communication.

Course Goals: The course goals are four-fold: (1) to synthesize and evaluate key theories of communication; (2) to demonstrate an understanding of the symbiotic relationship of theory, research, and practice; (3) to examine research and statistical methodologies; and (4) to create a research paper or case study.


Course Requirements:

Four Exams: 80% (20% per exam)

Written Analysis: 15% (late papers will be penalized)

Group Projects: 5%

Attendance is expected! After four absences you will lose a percentage point with each succeeding absence.

(1) EXAMS: There will be four exams covering readings, lectures, handouts, and class discussions. Missed exams must be made up within a week at Career Services and Testing, located on the second floor of Crooker Center. Call (713) 525-3160 to schedule a make-up appointment. Please do not make a habit of missing exams. Illnesses or accidents are valid excuses.

(2) WRITTEN ANALYSIS: This paper should be between 7-10 pages in length using MLA or APA styles (with footnotes or references.) Thoroughness of your
research, the quality of your ideas, the degree of insight you bring to your topic, correct grammar and composition will be criteria for grading. The paper is due on **NOVEMBER 28**. Late papers will be penalized one grade per class period until the paper is turned in. Possible paper topics include:

(A) Literature review and observational study: Summarize a body of literature in one of the many areas of communication (nonverbal, persuasion, symbolic convergence, etc.) From that body of literature, create a hypothesis, a quasi-experimental study to test your hypothesis, and a discussion section analyzing your results. Research methodologies will be discussed during the third week of the semester.

(B) Literature review and case study. Choose an area of research (e.g. agenda setting, verbal and nonverbal indicators of deception, territoriality, cultivation theory, etc.) and summarize the body of research in detail. Apply that research to a media event, television program/series, news story/series, advertisement, or public address.

(3) GROUP PROJECT: Each 4-5 person group will be assigned a body of research not discussed in class. Groups will summarize the research and illustrate through skits or media examples major ideas or trends. A 2-3 page outline as well as a 15-20 minute oral presentation are required.

**GRADUATE STUDENT ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS:**

(1) For every exam, extra essays will be required showing advanced synthesis of theory and research.

(2) Graduate students’ papers must be at least 12 pages in length and demonstrate greater depth of research and analysis.

**SCHEDULE:**

8/22: Overview & Review
8/24: Communication Perspectives (Ch.1)
8/29: What is Theory (Ch. 2); Communication Research (Appendix A)
8/31: The Development of Approaches (Ch. 3)
9/5: LABOR DAY HOLIDAY
9/7: Approaches continued
9/12: Paradigms (Ch. 4)
9/14: Paradigms continued; Review for Exam #1
9/19: Traits (Ch. 5)

9/21: EXAM #1 (CHAPTERS 1-4; HANDOUTS)

9/26: Theories of Language and Meaning (Ch. 7, handouts)

9/28: Language and Meaning continued

10/3: Theories of Nonverbal Communication (Ch. 8)

10/5: Nonverbal Communication continued

10/10: FALL BREAK

10/12: Persuasion overview (Ch. 6) Explain Group Projects

10/17: Review for Exam #2; Work on Group Projects

10/19: EXAM #2 (CHAPTERS 5, 7, & 8; HANDOUTS)

10/24: Work in Groups

10/26: GROUP PROJECTS

10/31: GROUP PROJECTS

11/2: GROUP PROJECTS

11/7: Interpersonal Contexts (Ch. 9)

11/9: Interpersonal continued; Tributary Contexts (Ch. 13, pp. 373-415)

11/14: Review for Exam #3; Group Theories (Ch. 10)

11/16: EXAM #3 (CHAPTERS 6, 9, 13)

11/21: Group Theories continued; Organizational Theories (Ch. 11)

11/23: THANKSGIVING HOLIDAYS

11/28: Mass Communication Theories (Ch. 11) PAPER DUE

11/30: Mass Communication continued

12/5: Review for Final Exam

12/14: FINAL EXAM (11:00-1:30)

NOTE: Any student with a disability requiring accommodations in this course is encouraged to contact me after class or during office hours. Additionally, students will need to contact Counseling and Disability
Services in Crooker Center. This office can be reached at (713) 525-3162 or (713) 525-6953.