

COMM 324 – Communication Theory
Syllabus for Online Course in Fall 2019

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Instructor Contact Information

Instructor: Jessica Fabbricatore
Online Office Hours: Friday 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM
Phone: (304) 613-6730- You may text me if you have a question with a quick answer.
Direct Email: fabbricatore_j@wwvc.edu

Course Description

Communication Theory is an upper level course developed to introduce the student to a variety of theories commonly used in the communication field. The theories will cover areas such as interpersonal, small group, organizational, computer mediated, and mass media communication. The course also covers practical implications of the theories in areas such as health, family communication, international relations, conflict resolution, and relationship maintenance.

Prerequisites

COMM 211- Fundamentals of Human Communication

Special Note

If you are a communication studies major, this course is a required course.

Required Materials

Griffin, E., Ledbetter, A., & Sparks, G. (2014). *A first look at communication theory* (9th ed.). New York, NY: Mcgraw Hill.

- Internet access with adequate bandwidth for viewing videos as well as uploading and downloading documents.
- Installation and ability to use Microsoft Office programs: Word, Excel and PowerPoint.

Also, we will use APA style. If you don't have it:

Schwartz, B. M., Landrum, R. E., Gurung, R. A. R. (2016). *An easyguide to APA style: Easyguide series* (3rd ed.). London: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Outcomes

Course:

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. Analyze communication phenomenon from different perspectives (both general and specific theories).
2. Properly format a research paper following APA guidelines.
3. Apply knowledge of communication theories to everyday life.
4. Recognize and explain major communication theories.

Department:

1. Students will demonstrate an ability to integrate self-knowledge and communication principles in order to evaluate the effectiveness and appropriateness of communication.
2. Students will demonstrate an understanding of communication theories, principles, and research methods.

School:

1. Demonstrate competency in written and oral communication, and information literacy.
2. Illustrate competencies needed to function in an entry-level social science-related career and/or graduate education.

Nature of this course

Online courses are not easy. They require a great deal of responsibility and time management. Prepare accordingly. The activities in this course include textbook readings and mini tests, discussions surrounding various theories, as well as individual papers. I will include PowerPoints with each chapter. In the notes section of my PowerPoints, you will find supplemental information including actual notes and videos that will help drive the points home. When faced with a concept you do not understand, make your first step identifying all that you do know about the problem. Identify resources that can help you fill the gaps in your understanding. These will include your text, your classmates, online academic support resources and your instructor. Many times as you try to put your understanding into writing, the light will dawn.

Organization of Course:

The organization of this course is in modules. Each module has its own set of modular outcomes. Each module is located in a separate folder in the Content section of the course. To begin the course, go to the Content section at the left of the course home page. Click on the Start Here folder. This first folder sets the stage for the class and must be finished by end-of-day (11:59 PM) on the second day, August 27. Specific due dates for all remaining activities are specified within the instructions and also noted on the calendar for the course.

Module	Dates to Complete	Topics	Reading	Assignments Due
Start Here!	Aug. 26-27	Introduction to the course & the people in it		SMT DB
1	Aug. 26-31	What is communication theory?	Ch. 1-2	DB MT
2	Sept. 1-7	Types of communication theory	Ch. 3-4	DB MT
3	Sept. 8-14	Symbolic Interactionism Coordinated Management of Meaning	Ch. 5-6	DB MT
4	Sept. 15-21	Expectancy Violations Theory	Ch. 7	DB SRA
5	Sept. 22-28	Relationship Development	"Rel. Development" Ch. 8-9	DB MT
6	Sept. 29- Oct. 5	Relationship Maintenance	"Rel. Maintenance" Ch. 10 & 13	DB MT
7	Oct. 6-12	Influence	"Influence" Ch. 14-16	DB MT
8	Oct. 13-19	Group Decision Making	"Grp Decision Making" Ch. 17-18	DB MT AP
9	Oct. 20-26	Organizational Theory	Ch. 20-21	DB MT AP
10	Oct. 27- Nov. 2	Rhetoric (10/28- Last day to withdraw)	"Public Rhetoric" Ch. 22	DB MT
11	Nov. 3-9	Intercultural Theory	"Intercultural Comm" Ch. 31-32	DB MT
12	Nov. 10-16	Gender & Communication	"Gender & Comm" Ch. 34-35	DB MT
13	Nov. 17-23	Media Effects	"Media Effects" Ch. 24-25	DB MT
	Nov. 24-30	Thanksgiving Break		
14	Dec. 1-7	Questions about paper.		DB MT
15	Dec. 8-17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Last day of classes: Wednesday, Dec. 11 • Reading Day: Thursday, Dec. 12 • Theory & Application Paper due Saturday, Dec. 14 		

Course Assessments	Points Per Assignment	Number of Assignments	Approx. % of Grade	Total Points
Syllabus Mini-test	20	1		20
Discussion Board	20	13		260
Mini-tests	10	13		130
Synthesis, Reaction, & Application	40	1		40
Advice Paper	40	1		40
Theory & Application	60	1		60
				550

Above is complete list of all required activities.

Assignment Descriptions

With the exception of the mini-tests and discussion posts, all assignments must be submitted as a Word document. Assignments submitted in any other format will not be graded (because I cannot open them), and will adhere to the late assignment policy. I'm looking at you, Mac users.

Mini-tests:

The mini-tests will be based on the assigned textbook readings and PowerPoints that correspond with the chapters. There are a total of 13 mini tests, not including the syllabus quiz. These are due by **Saturday at 11:59 pm** of each module week. For example, the Week 1 mini-tests are due Saturday, August 31 by 11:59 pm. I am not looking over your shoulder to determine if you are using your learning materials when you take your quizzes. Push yourself to rely on your own brain as a diagnostic.

Discussion Board Guidelines:

Discussions are an important part of this course. A discussion board is the centerpiece of our activities within each of weekly modules.

Due Dates: Original posts are due each Wednesday by 11:59 pm. Responses to posts are due each Friday by 11:59 pm. After the due date for the initial blog post, there is a 48 hour period for responses. These dates are noted on the Blackboard calendar. My aim is to provide enough flexibility in the calendar to allow for your various schedules. At the same time, we have to keep up a certain pace to make certain that we work methodically through the assignments and avoid a pile-up of assignments at the end of the course. You can always make these posts sooner than the date due and even work ahead.

Discussion Board Etiquette:

How you post a message to a topic is just as important as what you post. If your behavior does not follow the course etiquette standards stated below, the grade you receive for a posting may suffer.

- The instructor reserves the right to remove any discussion messages that display inappropriate language or content. Do not use offensive language.
- Rudeness or slamming will not be tolerated.
- Show respect for your fellow students, even if you disagree with something that was stated.
- Clearly state what you believe, even if it means that you're disagreeing with someone. Never, however, respond in anger – take care to discuss ideas, not the person.

Grading:

Topic discussion posts will be graded during the week following the date that the discussions are due. 20 total points are possible for each discussion topic. You will post 1 original post and respond to at least 2 classmate's posts each week. The discussion topic will be provided in each module. See the *Discussion Board Rubric* in Appendix A at the end of the syllabus.

Synthesis, Reaction, & Application [SRA]:

You will be responsible for critically reading, analyzing, and processing the chapter reading: Expectancy Violations Theory, and the EVT journal articles posted on Blackboard. You will write a three to four-page paper that demonstrates your full engagement with the readings.

In addition, following the premises of EVT, you will commit the same expectancy violation with two individuals. The type of relationship must be different with each individual (e.g., friend/stranger, family member/friend, co-worker/family member). Include the violation, the context/location, the relationship, and person's reactions. In turn, consider how your activity related/contrasted with the premises of EVT. Be thorough.

You will be graded on your comprehension, synthesis, and critical analysis of the assigned readings, as well as your application of EVT in real life.

Advice Paper [AP]:

A primary criticism of communication research is that it is shared among academics in journals and at conferences, and does not get translated or distributed in a way that actually helps the people we study. You will need to select a theory from the text that interests you and that you believe others would want advice about based on the existing research that includes the theory. This should be from your textbook, and can be a theory we have covered. If you are familiar with a theory that's not in the textbook, and you are interested in using it, please notify the professor first. You should write 750- to 1000-word blog post that summarizes a research area and offers theoretical and evidence-based advice for communication. This should be translated research for a general online audience. The advice blog should include at least four scholarly, academic journal sources related to your topic/advice.

FIRST, find the four scholarly journal sources, and synthesize the information by answering the following questions: What are the results saying about your topic?, Do the studies agree or disagree?, How do the studies fit together?, Give advice that is supported by the research articles? This part of the assignment should be submitted as a Word document to Blackboard. Answer the questions thoroughly.

NEXT, convert the scholarly articles into a popular press advice piece for an online audience. The purpose is to translate specialized scientific or technical writing to make it accessible and attractive reading for a non-specialist audience, i.e., to readers outside of the discourse community.

Synthesize the selected articles for your general audience. Pay attention to your opening paragraph ("the lead"), where word choice and sentence progression are important devices to attract and retain readership. "The most important sentence in any article is the first one. If it doesn't induce the reader to proceed to the second sentence, your article is dead. Also, if the second sentence doesn't induce [the reader] to continue to the third sentence, it's equally dead. Of such a progression of sentences, each tugging the reader forward until [...] safely hooked, a writer constructs that fateful unit: the "lead."

Choose words carefully, expand text to provide parenthetical or sentence-length definitions of key concepts, but avoid jargon. You may need to use simile or metaphor or words that convey a strong visual connection to things your reader should be expected to be familiar with. You may, for example, compare a computer's CPU to a brain, although I hope you can do better than that in an effort to avoid tired clichés.

Your purpose is to communicate to your readers as human being to human being. Also, consider the title for your piece – it should draw your audience in – make them want to read your article. When writing: show how the topic applies to readers, use a conversational tone, relate to readers, end with practical advice, cite arguments/findings/definitions/advice given by others, include reference list.

Theory & Application Paper [TAP]:

Communication theories relate to everyday life, and that life is reflected in the films that we watch. To show that you can apply concepts and ideas from the theories you learn in class, you will write a five- to seven-page paper (excluding the title page and references) analyzing a movie using concepts and ideas from two theories covered in class. The instructor must approve your selected film beforehand. To complete this assignment, you will apply the selected theories to situations and/or characters in a movie by doing (or not doing) the following:

- Describe the theoretical concepts you are applying to the film in detail.
- Give examples from the movie that illustrate these concepts. Students approach this in different ways. Some points. Other students analyze a specific character or look for scenes that illustrate a specific concept. For example, students have analyzed a character's attachment style, looked for examples of dialectical tensions or uncertainty reduction strategies, and analyzed the ways that nonverbal behaviors are exchanged (e.g., are they reciprocated or not).
- The paper SHOULD NOT contain a detailed synopsis, review, or critique of the film. That is not the point of this assignment. The point is for you to demonstrate your understanding of theory and your ability to apply theoretical concepts to various situations as depicted in a movie. So don't waste space telling me about the movie unless what you are telling me is related to the theory.
- Think analytically about how the theory you are applying describes, predicts, or explains events that happen in the movie. Explain how the theory gave you these insights.
- Although not necessary, some students have discussed how things might have played out differently in the movie if characters had done different things (e.g., used a different uncertainty reduction strategy, done a better job balancing rewards and costs in a relationship). This should not be the main focus on your analysis, but it can be part of your paper.
- Be sure to include references to the theory you are applying and cite that material properly using APA style. Include a minimum of six scholarly sources (excluding the textbook).
- In terms of mechanics, the text of the paper (excluding the title page and reference page) should be 5-7 pages long, double-spaced with 1 inch margins, Times Roman 12-pt. font.

The following specific criteria will be used to grade the theory and application papers:

- how well the theoretical concepts are defined and applied
- the degree to which your analysis of the movie reflects a good working knowledge of theory and concepts
- the clarity and creativity of the writing, including how well the paper is written

Grading Scale

To calculate your grade, divide the number of points you have by 650 (the total number of points in the class).

93% & up	A	83-86.99%	B	73-76.99%	C	63-66.99%	D
90-92.99	A-	80-82.99%	B-	70-72.99%	C-	60-62.99%	D-
87-89.99%	B+	77-79.99%	C+	67-69.99%	D+	59.99% & below	F

Expectations

Time

While the organization and the actual activities of this course may be different for a session offered during a regular semester, the expected learning outcomes and the time commitment required to meet those outcomes is the same. This is a full semester course being taught completely online. This means that all the time you would normally spend in class meetings. To be successful in this course, you should plan to allot 3-4 hours per week for "in-class" time which does not include reading the textbook or completing assignments. **I strongly recommend setting aside the same one or two time slots each week to treat as your class time in the same location.**

Communication

You are expected to communicate respectfully. Using formal English. Texting short-cuts not acceptable. Emoticons may be used to help convey feelings, but they are not a substitutes for clearly written statements. Because I will be eight hours away, the best way to reach me is by email. We can arrange a time to connect by phone, or by video conference if you want to talk through some particular aspect of the course. I will monitor my email daily up until 8:30 (EST) at night. If I receive an email from you, you can expect a response within 48 hours. It may be sooner if received during online office hours. If a question is asked that is answered in the syllabus or on Blackboard, I reserve the right to not respond, or reply with "Please see the syllabus."

Reading

There will be a significant amount of reading in this course. Some the reading will be in the assigned textbook, but some may require you to read an article online. When you are reading these materials, you are expected to connect the information read to concepts we are discussing and things you already know. You will be expected to demonstrate your understanding through mini tests and discussion boards. There will be no videos of lectures.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity violations (including cheating, plagiarism, and facilitating either) are serious matters and will not be tolerated. See the West Virginia Wesleyan College Student Handbook for further discussion. Any violations of academic integrity in will result in, at minimum, failure of the assignment and likely failure in the course. All incidents are reported to the Dean of the College. **MAKE SURE YOU CITE ALL OF YOUR WORK.**

Late Policy

You will notice that there are generally two due dates for each week: Wednesday and Saturday (see course schedule for more information). You are expected to turn in assignments and deliver/upload your speeches on time. In order to remove any potential confusion about deadlines, please note that all deadlines for your assignments and class work will be in adherence to Eastern Standard Time (EST). **There are no exceptions. Computer or equipment failure/access is not an excuse.** If you fail to deliver a speech on time, you will receive a ZERO on that assignment. Not feeling well and lack of preparation are not excuses to miss a speech. Late posts or responses are accounted for within the grading rubric for the discussion board because late posts have an effect on the ability of your peers to finish their assignments. Other late assignments will lose 10% each day late, and will never be accepted after five days past the due date.

Allowances may be made based on the following criteria:

- Serious illness or injury resulting in an emergency visit to a physician or hospital that is accompanied by a valid, signed doctor's note or other official medical document, and results in the student's physical inability to complete weekly assignments.
- Absence due to death of a family member.

In order for allowances to be made, you must notify me of your personal situation well in advance. For a grief-related allowance, you should notify me as soon as you become aware of the situation. For a serious medical situation that leaves you unable to satisfactorily complete coursework, you must notify me as soon as physically possible. If you wait until the end of the semester to notify me of a problem that arose earlier in the semester, no accommodations can be retroactively made to help you work through that situation.

Student Support

I realize that a variety of academic and non-academic issues may arise during the time of this course. What follows are brief descriptions of the types of support available to you during the semester. More details and specific resources can be found in the Student Support course link at the left.

Withdrawing

Throughout the duration of the semester, you can email the professor and the registrar when you want to withdraw. The add/drop period is during the first week of the semester. If you want to withdraw from the class after that period, you will need to retrieve a withdraw form from the registrar, fill it out, and return it to the registrar.

Special Learning Needs

If you have a physical, medical, psychological, or learning disability that is going to or require accommodation, please let me know immediately. More information is found in the Academic Support and the Accessibility folders in the Student Support course link at the left.

Library

The WVWC Library offers information resources for students at all levels and all disciplines. Library resources are a key component of academic success. Google and Wikipedia as research tools will not lead to acceptable research assignments, papers, or presentations. The library's reference and instructional staff is available by phone, by email, by text, and via reference chat on the library homepage to assist students with research inquiries. Starting place for accessing library resources is [here](#).

Technical Support

Use the "Technical Support" folder for computer or internet issues. If you cannot find the answer to your issue, contact the HelpDesk. Their contact information can be found [here](#). For troubleshooting and information in general about Blackboard, follow this [link](#) or click the "Help with Blackboard" link in column on the left-hand side of our class.

Personal Support

Should you become overwhelmed during this course, there are a variety of avenues for working through this difficulty. Feel free to contact me by email or telephone. Also, at the Student Support course link at the left side of each page, you can find a folder titled "Personal Support." In that folder you have contact information for advisors who can help you. There are also a variety of links to guidance and practices which may help you manage this demanding period of time.

Institutional Policies

The Student Handbook is here along with direct links to the institutional policies on non-discrimination, students with disabilities and academic integrity.

The College's Policy Regarding Students with Disabilities

West Virginia Wesleyan College ensures that no qualified person shall, by reason of a disability, be denied access to, excluded from participation in, or denied the benefits of any program or activity operated by the College or be subjected to discrimination under any of its programs or activities. The College shall make reasonable accommodations to the known limitations of an otherwise qualified student with a disability to enable the qualified student with the disability to have equal access to educational opportunities, programs and activities. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 [29 U.S.C. 794(a)] and Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) [42 U.S.C. § 12101, et seq.].

If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in this class, please advise me and make appropriate arrangements, according to our Student Handbook <http://www.wvwc.edu/MCEUploads/PDFs/Life%20@%20WVWC/Campus%20Life/student-handbook-15-16.pdf>, with the Director of the Learning Center (473-8499).

Statement of Social Justice/ Non-Discrimination Policy

The College fully subscribes to the development of individuals as worthy persons who should be nurtured to their fullest potential regardless of race, color, creed, religion, age, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, veteran status, genetic predisposition, national or ethnic origin, or physical or mental disability. I concur with the College's commitment to social justice and expect to foster a nurturing learning environment based upon open communication, mutual respect, and nondiscrimination. Any suggestions as to how to further such a positive and open environment in this class will be appreciated and given serious consideration.

Appendix A: Discussion Board Rubric

Criteria	Critical Analysis	Relevance to Post	Contribution to Learning Community	Quality of Writing	Timeliness
Exemplary (4 points)	Response goes beyond the understanding of the content and includes relevant information from outside sources to support the main points.	Post is relevant to the discussion content and discusses other outside sources relevant to the content.	Attempts to motivate further discussion beyond the required participation. Interacts freely.	Free of grammatical, punctuation, and/or spelling errors. Writing style promotes communication.	Original posts are added during the first half of the discussion period.
Proficient (3 points)	Response indicates an understanding of the content including concepts and terminology. Proper citation.	Post is related to the content of the discussion content.	Responses contribute to the discussion by asking related questions, elaborating on relevant topics discussed in post, or making an educated oppositional statement.	Mostly free of grammatical, punctuation, and/or spelling errors. Writing style mostly promotes communication.	Original posts are present, but may have been posted during the last half of the discussion period.
Limited (2 points)	Response does not go beyond summarizing the reading. Little or no reference to outside sources or relevant current applications. Incorrect or no citations.	Responses mention the reading, but does not discuss any points from the reading. Response is short and/or irrelevant to the post.	Responses sometimes contribute to the discussion by asking related questions, elaborating on relevant topics discussed in post, or making an educated oppositional statement.	Some grammatical, punctuation, and/or spelling errors.	Original posts are added at the last minute, leaving no time for classmates to respond.
Incorrect (1 point)	Little or no evidence that the readings were completed or understood.	Response is all opinion-based or anecdotal evidence. Does not reference the content.	Feedback is irrelevant or says something along the lines of, "I agree with her."	Use of texting/informal language; several grammatical, punctuation, and/or spelling errors.	Post is made after the deadline
Unacceptable (0 points)	No post.	No post.	No feedback to fellow student.	No post.	No post.