

COMM 6807
Foundations of Communication Theory
Spring 2018: Monday 5:30 – 8:15
Derby 3116

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The official description of this course is as follows:

An historical overview of the major theories and research that led to the development of the field of communication.

This course is a combination of “history” and “theory” in that we will examine the history of the creation of the field of communication and the influence that this history has had on the dominant theories in the field today. Although the history of communication theory might go as far back as the ancient Greeks and the study of rhetoric, in this course we will focus on the development of the social scientific study of communication in (roughly) the first half of the 20th century – just prior to the institutionalization of communication study within Departments of Speech and Schools of Journalism.

A central component of the course will be making links between the history of the field and the theories addressed in COMM 6806, which is a prerequisite for the course. By the time you have completed this course, (1) you should understand the genesis of the field of communication and its beginnings as an academic unit in universities; (2) you will have read many of the seminal works that serve as the foundation of communication theory and research; (3) you will learn how to trace the impact of a given work on the field and how to discover the foundations of a given modern area of research; and (4) you will develop a better understanding of the current state of research by understanding the ideas that underpin it.

Course Requirements & Grading

The textbook for the course – Rogers’ *A History of Communication Study: A Biographical Approach* (1994) published by The Free Press – is available new and used through Amazon.com or the OSU Bookstore.¹ In addition, I have compiled a number of readings from classic scholars and works that you will read. Those copies are available in electronic format via the course Canvas site.

¹ Those interested in additional sources on the history of communication might consider consulting Chaffee & Rogers’ (1997) *The beginnings of communication study in America: A personal memoir by Wilbur Schramm* and Dennis & Wartella’s (1996) *American communication research: The remembered history*.

The nature of a graduate seminar is to allow for group discussion and deliberation of issues raised in readings or by the professor or students. That is, the course does not take the traditional undergraduate lecture format. Instead, information is discussed and shared among seminar participants as part of the learning process. Given the nature of the graduate seminar, each student plays two important roles: one as learner, and one as teacher. Both of these roles are equally important for the success of the class. These two roles will be formalized in this course by having a student discussion leader for each class period (after the first few weeks). Discussion leading is described in more detail later in the syllabus.

The readings for the class are listed later in this syllabus. **I expect that everyone will read these articles and chapters prior to class and be prepared to discuss them.** This is absolutely essential to this class (hence the underlining, boldfacing, and italicizing)! Some other classes have much longer reading lists. I have made the reading list for this class manageable enough so that I can expect everyone to have read each reading for that week prior to our class meeting. Discussion leaders will be expected to read more deeply in the topic area they are discussing so that they may bring more to the table than the average student. This means searching off-syllabus for additional readings in the given area to supplement those assigned for the rest of the class. I will explicitly ask discussion leaders to discuss readings beyond those required of other students.

Evaluations of student performance will be based on several criteria: in-class discussion leader duties, general in-class participation (on non-discussion leader days), and the final paper. The weighting of these evaluation criteria will be the following:

Discussion leading	15%
General in-class participation	20%
Citation analysis	15%
Final paper (all components)	<u>50%</u>
Total:	100%

When letter grades are given for an assignment, they will be converted into the following numeric values for final grade calculation:

A+, A, A- = 100, 95, 91
B+, B, B- = 88, 85, 81
C+, C, C- = 78, 75, 71
D+, D, D- = 68, 65, 61
E (F) = 0

I will use the standard OSU grade lettering scheme to convert numeric course grades back to a final course letter grade. Note that the OSU grade lettering scheme does not incorporate rounding.

Discussion Leading

Each student will sign up to serve as a discussion leader for one class period during the course of the semester. I will ask students to rank the available dates and I will assign them to maximize the number of students getting topics ranked high on their lists. In addition to reading the required readings, discussion leaders will read (and discuss) additional work on the topic from the same era and/or from the modern era. To do so they must seek out this additional relevant material. In order to structure the discussion in the class, discussion leaders should develop a

number of questions – and for themselves, the answers to those questions – that will serve as the fodder for class discussion. Questions are likely to pertain to some combination of the method, form, content, or connections to current research (e.g., COMM 6806 content) and work covered in previous weeks of COMM 6807. Discussion leaders should distribute their questions via email at least 24 hours before class so that students can think about them in advance and bring copies to class. In addition to these questions, discussion leaders should include in the mailing the list of additional readings they did (for reference), and a brief description (a couple of sentences) of the reason why each additional reading might be of value for students in the class. And, of course, discussion leaders will play a major role in moderating class discussion.

Discussion leaders will be evaluated based on: (1) the quality of their questions; (2) the apparent depth of their reading, both of assigned and additional readings; and (3) their performance in leading the discussion. Discussion leading will be worth 15% of the course grade and will be given as a letter grade. It is entirely possible that students working together as discussion leaders on a given week will receive different grades since only #1 above is a shared product.

General In-Class Participation

Just as discussion leaders will be evaluated on their preparation and development of questions for the class, students not serving as a discussion leader for a given class will be evaluated on their participation and ability to **intelligently** discuss the assigned readings. **The first, minimum component of this is class attendance.** I do expect students to attend all class sessions unless serious circumstances make it impossible, in which case I will expect documentation for the absence in order to avoid it impacting your participation grade. Beyond attendance, ALL students will be expected to participate fully in the seminar by both asking questions and answering them during **each and every class period**. While a reasonable quantity of verbal participation is a necessary condition for a positive evaluation, it is not sufficient. The quality of questions and answers will be considered when evaluating student participation and quality will be judged by how informed the questions are by the assigned readings and quality thinking. High quantity with low quality will be considered equivalent to not participating at all; it is essentially a distraction. **Students engaged in work unrelated to the course during class periods (e.g., emailing, Web surfing, texting, data analysis, etc., will be docked a full day's participation credit and will be asked to leave the class for the remainder of the session (and I'm really serious about this...).**

Since we are in class for approximately 37 hours this semester, and since participating requires extensive reading and preparation in advance, I seriously evaluate class participation and weight it accordingly. In-class participation will be worth 20% of the course grade and will be derived numerically based on a percentage of the maximum possible score across all class meetings in which values for a given class period will be zero, one, or two, with two indicating meeting expectations for a graduate seminar (multiple meaningful contributions during a 3-hour class) and zero indicating non-attendance or little to no participation during the class.

Citation Analysis

For this assignment you will select a prominent book or journal article published between 1900 and 1950 that is not part of the assigned readings for this course. You should select this work based on your understanding of its impact on work later published in the field of communication

that interests you. (Don't select an article that has not had at least some modest impact on modern research in communication!) How might you find such an article? You could begin by looking at the reference lists of articles you read in COMM 6806, or the reference lists of articles that you have found interesting or important in your own work (maybe from papers you've written in the past or your MA thesis?). Or, maybe you have read some old articles in the past and want to see what their impact has been in communication.

You will then use ISI to identify the impact of this work through citation analysis. You will also skim (skim!) some current communication literature that cites this work, and discuss how this article/book is being used. However, the emphasis of this assessment is demonstrating your ability to use ISI to trace the impact of the original work on subsequent work in communication. You will write a brief paper (~5 pages of text plus accompanying tables/figures or output) describing your findings. The paper should address the following: (1) Briefly, what can you tell me about the author of this piece? A brief biography of a paragraph or so regarding the author(s)' academic family tree and positions (What fields? What countries? What universities?) is useful but not absolutely necessary. (2) What was the citation impact of this work overall, and within communication? In what other fields has this work had impact? Where has the primary impact been? (3) What over time trends in impact – within and beyond communication – can you identify? Does there appear to be a time when this piece “took off”? Or when scholars stopped citing it? (4) What is the secondary impact of the piece? That is, what is the citation impact of the work that directly cites this piece (in communication, and overall)? (5) What were some of the most impactful pieces in communication that cited this work? Might those citations have affected the over-time trend in citation? (6) Based on your skimming of some modern communication research that cites this piece, what aspects of the original work are being highlighted in the modern research? Is there a great quote that keeps being repeated? A key concept being used? An important theoretical argument driving modern work? An innovative method? Or is it just a gratuitous “I read old stuff” cite to open the modern paper? Give a few examples.

We will discuss the technicalities of doing a citation analysis on the first day of class so that you have a full understanding of how this will work. I have also posted a Powerpoint file showing how to use ISI on Canvas. This assignment is worth 15% of your course grade and will be evaluated using a letter grade. It should be written in APA format (12-point Times New Roman font, 1” margins, APA reference style), and is due to be uploaded in the Canvas “Citation Analysis” dropbox folder in PDF format by the beginning of class on January 29th. The dropbox folder will not accept late paper submissions, and I will deduct one full letter grade at the start of each 24-hour late period. I encourage all students to discuss their selected article/book, and preliminary findings, with me at least one week prior to the paper deadline to avoid any obviously problematic choices.

Seminar Paper

Each student will write a seminar paper detailing the ideas from the period prior to 1950 that serve as the foundation of a current topic of interest in the communication literature. Specifically, the modern ideas should be appearing largely in journals within the field of communication (see ISI for a list of “communication” journals), so that you can report the impact of historical work prior to the formation of the field of communication (i.e., not in communication) on current work

that is being done in communication by communication scholars. The foundation ideas may or may not have been covered directly in this course.

The best way to identify the historical genesis of a theory or area of research is to follow the citation trail backwards from current communication articles in your area of interest. So, you are likely to find the skills you developed doing the Citation Analysis assignment particularly useful, although applied in the reverse order since now you'll be looking backwards down the citation trail as opposed to forwards. Keep in mind, however, that the Seminar Paper will be larger in scope and, although it will require the use of citation analysis, the writing will be primarily based on the conceptual impact of prior work based on a close reading of the literature and verified through citation analysis. In short, in the Seminar Paper actual citation is a necessary but not sufficient condition for a prior work to have influenced a later work in a meaningful theoretical manner. You might find that in some cases there is a citational disconnect between current and classic work. That is, the historical line backwards, as reflected in citations, may break at some point. In such a case, you should work to make the connections back to the history that was not made by the modern authors.

The seminar paper will be completed in three steps: (1) an initial topic proposal worth 5%; (2) a class presentation where feedback will be provided, worth 10%; and (3) the final paper, worth 35%. Each is described below.

The initial topic proposal is due by the start of class on February 12th. You should be working on the ideas behind your topic proposal during the weeks preceding the due date. The proposal document should answer the following questions clearly and succinctly. (1) What theory or body of empirical research will be the focus of our paper? Here you need to set boundaries by explaining the domain of focus. (2) How is this theory or body of research situated within communication science; that is, explain how this is a topic that is embedded in communication (as opposed to psychology or political science or sociology or linguistics) and currently being studied. (3) What is your initial sense of where the paper will lead you; what is your best guess at this stage about where the origins of these ideas lie? This document should take roughly two double-spaced pages.

The draft presentation will take place in class on April 2nd. Each student will have 10 minutes to present an outline of their ideas. Some form of visual presentation (e.g., Powerpoint, Prezi) is necessary, and should be submitted in PDF format via Canvas in advance of the class meeting. There will then be 5 minutes of feedback from the class on your ideas. I will also subsequently provide written feedback on your draft presentation. In order for this process to provide value to students in completing the write-up of their paper, students need to have much if not most of the necessary reading/research/thinking done by the presentation date. Therefore, I expect to be able to tell that students have done the bulk of the intellectual work of their paper during the nearly two months between the approval of their topic in February and their presentation in early April. Their talk should make clear the meaningful effort they have put forth. Think of the presentation as basically getting feedback on an almost complete project.

The final paper – most students need about 15 pages of text (excluding title page or references) to convey the ideas effectively – is due by noon on April 29th. It should be in APA (including

reference style) format, 12-point Times New Roman font with 1" margins. The final paper should reflect the feedback you received throughout the semester at the various stages of the project. I suspect that most students will also end up soliciting some face-to-face feedback from me during office hours throughout the course of the project. Getting feedback sooner rather than later is wise. Don't wait until the last minute for feedback from me!

All relevant documents should be submitted to the Canvas dropbox folder in PDF format. The first two documents should be submitted prior to the start of class on the due date, and the final paper is due at noon on the due date. Just like online conference submissions systems, the dropbox will not accept late paper submissions (even one minute late). I will deduct one full letter grade at the start of each 24-hour late period; no technology excuses for late papers will be accepted. In short, don't push it until the last minute to submit your work.

Office Hours

I will hold regular office hours during which I encourage you to come to see me to discuss course-related matters, particularly as they relate to the two papers for the course and discussion leading. If your schedule does not permit visiting me during formal office hours, please let me know and we can figure out an alternative time by appointment. If we are not meeting during regular office hours, you may need to travel to the Mershon Center for International Security Studies (see [directions from Derby](#)) as I may be working from my office there this semester on a regular basis.

Please do take advantage of this resource to ask questions or clarification, seek additional information, and so forth. It is my job to make sure that you have every opportunity to learn the course material, and I will make every effort to do so. But, it is also incumbent upon you to seek help when you think you need it, and to not delay in seeking that help until the last minute (especially with regard to papers and discussion leading), when it may be too late.

Etiquette

We want to build a classroom climate that is comfortable for all. In a communication class, it is *especially* important that we (1) display respect for all members of the classroom – including the instructor and students, (2) pay attention to and participate in all class sessions and activities; (3) avoid unnecessary disruption during class time; and (4) avoid racist, sexist, homophobic or other negative language that may unnecessarily exclude members of our campus / classroom. This is not an exhaustive list of behaviors; rather, they represent the minimum standards that help make the classroom a productive place for all concerned.

I want to particularly address the role of laptops and other internet-connected devices in the classroom. Although I realize that these can be valuable tools for reviewing electronic copies of class readings, taking notes during class, and even (on occasion) looking up something online for class discussion purposes, they also serve as a major potential source of distraction – via email, Web surfing, and the ability to work surreptitiously on matters unrelated to class. Doing the latter can be very distracting, not only to the individual with the computer, but also to those around him/her. It is the equivalent of reading a newspaper, listening to an iPod, or having a private

conversation during class. So, please do not ever use your computing device to engage in activities that are not directly course related. Doing so will lead to a zero for class participation for that day plus me publicly asking the student doing so to leave class for the day. If this becomes an issue for multiple students, I may have to resort to banning the use of computers in class.

Some Words About Academic Honesty

It is your responsibility to complete your own work as best you can in the time provided.

Cheating, plagiarism, and falsification of laboratory or other data are serious offenses, and it is my responsibility to make sure they do not occur. If you are unclear about definitions of

plagiarism, read the Code of Student Conduct at

<https://trustees.osu.edu/assets/files/RuleBook/CodeStudentConduct.pdf>

Academic misconduct will be punished to the fullest extent possible. Anyone **suspected** of academic misconduct should expect to have a record of the matter forwarded to the Committee on Academic Misconduct as required by faculty rule. If a student is found guilty of academic misconduct, the most likely outcome will be failure of the course and loss of GA funding.

SPECIAL ACCOMODATIONS

This syllabus is available in alternative formats upon request. Students with disabilities are responsible for making their needs known to the instructor and seeking available assistance in a timely manner. If you need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability, you should contact me to arrange an appointment by the second week of classes. At the appointment we can discuss the course format, anticipate your needs and explore potential accommodations. If you have not previously contacted the Office for Disability Services (ODS) but believe you may need accommodations, I encourage you to do so. I rely on the Office for Disability Services at 614-292-3307 in Rm. 150 Pomerene Hall for assistance in verifying the need for accommodations and developing accommodation strategies.

COURSE OUTLINE: TOPICS, READINGS, AND IMPORTANT DATES

DATE	TOPIC	READING	DISCUSSION LEADER
1/8	Course Introduction	No readings (but read ahead to next week if you can)	
1/15	MLK Day – no classes	No Readings	
1/22	The Establishment of Communication Study	Rogers, Ch. 1 & 12; Delia (1987)	
1/29	The Chicago School: Overview *Citation analysis due	Rogers, Ch. 5	
2/5	The Chicago School: Foundations	Cooley (1902); Cooley (1909); Dewey (1916); Mead (1934)	
2/12	Chicago: Mass & Interpersonal Applications *Paper proposal due	Park (1923); Blumer (1948); Janowitz (1951); Lang & Lang (1953); Goffman (1997/1955)	
2/19	Chicago – Early Research on Movies	Phelan (1919); Blumer (1933); Charters (1933)	
2/26	Opinion and Stereotypes	Rogers, Ch. 6 Lippmann (1922); Berelson (1949); Lasswell (1935)	
3/5	The Columbia School	Rogers, Ch. 7 Morrison (1978); Summers (2006)	
3/12	Spring Break – no classes	No Readings	
3/19	Columbia: Early Radio Research	Cantril & Allport (1935); Cantril (1940); Herzog (1944)	
3/26	Columbia: Voting Studies	Lazarsfeld et al. (1944); Katz & Lazarsfeld (1955)	
4/2	Paper draft presentations		
4/9	Group Dynamics and Persuasion	Rogers, Ch. 8 & 9 Lewin (1947); White (1950); Bavelas (1950); Hovland et al. (1953)	
4/16	Communication Systems and Models	Rogers, Ch. 10 & 11 Weaver (1949); Westley & MacLean (1957); Wilder (1979)	
4/23	Integration and Wrap Up	Review: Rogers, Ch. 1 & 12; Delia (1987)	
4/29 @ noon	*Seminar Paper Due		

Bibliography (by Week)

The Establishment of Communication Study

Rogers, Ch. 1 & 12, pp. 1-29, 445-495

Delia, J. G. (1987). Communication research: A history. In C. R. Berger & S. H. Chaffee (Eds.), *Handbook of communication science* (pp. 20-98). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

The Chicago School: Overview and Foundations

Rogers, Ch. 5, pp. 137-202

The Chicago School: Foundations

Cooley, C. H. (1902). *Human nature and the social order* (pp. 168-210). New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books.

Cooley, C. H. (1909). *Social organization* (pp. 61-103). New York: Schocken Books.

Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy and education: An introduction to the philosophy of education* (pp. 1-9). New York: Free Press.

Mead, G. H. (1934). *Mind, self, & society* (pp. 68-75; 135-144; 173-178; 253-260). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Chicago: Mass and Interpersonal Applications

Park, R. E. (1923). The natural history of the newspaper. *American Journal of Sociology*, 29, 273-289.

Blumer, H. (1948). Public opinion and public opinion polling. *American Sociological Review*, 13, 542-549.

Janowitz, M. (1951). The imagery of the urban community press. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 15, 519-531.

Lang, K., & Lang, G. E. (1953). The unique perspective of television and its effect: A pilot study. *American Sociological Review*, 18, 3-12.

Goffman, E. (1997/1955). Social life as ritual. In C. Lemert & A. Branaman (Eds.), *The Goffman reader* (pp. 109-127). Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers.

Chicago: Early Research on Movies

Phelan, J. J. (1919). *Motion pictures as a phase of commercialized amusement* (pp. 107-122). Toledo, OH: Little Book Press.

Blumer, H. (1933). *Movies and conduct* (pp. 13-50). New York: Macmillan.

Charters, W. W. (1933). *Motion pictures and youth: A summary* (pp. 1-63). New York: Macmillan.

Opinion and Stereotypes

Rogers, Ch. 6, pp. 203-243

Lippmann, W. (1922). *Public opinion* (pp. 1-22; 59-70; 256-276). New York: Penguin Books.

Berelson, B. (1949). Communications and public opinion. In W. Schramm (Ed.), *Mass communications* (pp. 496-512). Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Lasswell, H. D. (1935). The person: Subject and object of propaganda. *Annals of the American Academy of Social and Political Science*, 179, 187-193.

The Columbia School

Rogers, Ch. 7, pp. 244-315

Morrison, D. E. (1978). Kultur vs. culture: The case of Theodor W Adorno and Paul F. Lazarsfeld. *Social Research*, 45, 331-355.

Summers, J. H. (2006). Perpetual revelations: C. Wright Mills and Paul Lazarsfeld. *Annals, AAPSS*, 608, 25-40.

Columbia: Early Radio Research

Cantril, H., & Allport, G. W. (1935). *The psychology of radio* (pp. 19-35). New York: Harper & Brothers.

Cantril, H. (1940). *The invasion from Mars: A study in the psychology of panic* (pp. 47-84). New York: Harper & Row.

Herzog, H. (1944). What do we really know about daytime serial listeners? In P. Lazarsfeld & F. Stanton (Eds.), *Radio research, 1942-1943* (pp. 3-33). New York: Duel, Sloan, & Pierce.

Columbia: Voting Studies

Lazarsfeld, P. F., Berelson, B., & Gaudet, H. (1944). *The people's choice: How the voter makes up his mind in a presidential campaign* (pp. 1-9; 73-104). New York: Columbia University Press.

Katz, E., & Lazarsfeld, P. F. (1955). *Personal influence: The part played by people in the flow of mass communications* (pp. 271-295, 309-320). Glencoe, IL: Free Press.

Group Dynamics and Persuasion

Rogers, Ch. 8 & 9, pp. 316-385

Lewin, K. (1947). Frontiers in group dynamics II: Channels of group life; social planning and action research. *Human Relations, 1*, 143-153.

White, D. M. (1950). The "gate keeper": A case study in the selection of news. *Journalism Quarterly, 27*, 383-390.

Bavelas, A. (1950). Communication patterns in task-oriented groups. *Journal of the Acoustical Society of America, 22*, 725-730.

Hovland, C. I., Janis, I. L., & Kelley, H. H. (1953). *Communication and persuasion: Psychological studies of opinion change* (pp. 1-18). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Communication Systems and Models

Rogers, Ch. 10 & 11, pp. 386-443

Weaver (1949). The mathematics of communication. *Scientific American, 181*(1), 11-15.

Westley, B. H., & MacLean, M. S., Jr. (1957). A conceptual model for communications research. *Journalism Quarterly, 34*, 31-38.

Wilder, C. (1979). The Palo Alto group: Difficulties and directions of the interactional view for human communication research. *Human Communication Research, 5*(2), 171-186. (Read only pp. 171-178.)