

## COMM 6806: Contemporary Theories of Communication

**Professor:** Dr. David DeAndrea

**Email:** deandrea.1@osu.edu

**Office Hours:** By appointment via Zoom

**Location:** Derby Hall 3116 or Zoom

**Time:** Tu/Th 2:20pm-3:40pm

**Office:** Derby Hall 3066

### Course Objectives:

1. You will be able to explain many of the theories used in the social scientific study of communication.
2. You will develop an understanding of some of the research conducted by faculty members in the School of Communication at OSU.
3. You will be able to explain the theories that are important to your interests as a scholar.
4. You will be able to critique any of the theories that are discussed in class or found in the readings.
5. You will be able to identify linkages between the theories found in distinct areas of the discipline and utilize these theories to improve your own research.

### Mode of Delivery:

This is a hybrid course. The default mode of instruction will be in-person. Students will be emailed in advance if sessions occur via Zoom.

### Assignments: 100 possible points

- Discussion questions and participation: 20pts.
- Short paper: 20pts.
- Exam: 20pts.
- Final paper presentation: 10pts.
- Final paper: 30pts.

### Readings, Discussion Questions, and Participation:

***Reading Expectations and Advice.*** The success of seminar-style courses largely revolves around the quality of discussion that takes place. This means that it is essential for everyone to carefully read the assigned articles prior to class AND be prepared to speak knowledgeably about the content of assigned readings. For many of you this might be one of the first courses that require you to critically read and evaluate academic journal articles. For those new to the process, the aim is to go beyond understanding and accurately conveying the content of articles; you are also expected to begin developing or honing your ability to critically evaluate academic research. Some tips that might assist you in the process are to take notes or write brief summaries for each reading. This can help ensure that you recall important aspects of the readings and thus are able contribute to classroom discussion. Reading an article a day or two in advance and showing up to class without revisiting its content likely will inhibit your ability to contribute to classroom discussion. For this specific course, a non-exhaustive list of critical components of articles with which you should be familiar include:

- The scope of the investigation (what is and is not examined)
- The theory or theories that guide the hypotheses and their central logic
- What do the hypotheses specifically predict?
  - Consider the quality of the logic/evidence to support the predictions
- What methods are employed?
  - Methodological critiques are **NOT** the central focus of this course but are inherently connected to tests of theory. Seek to connect methodological observations or critiques back to theory testing (e.g., Does the method allow for a true test of the theory/hypotheses? Given the method, what boundary conditions exist?). The goal is not to, for instance, critique experimental or survey methods in general but rather to consider how a specific method employed might have influenced a specific test of theory.
- What are the results?
  - Authors explicitly note whether hypotheses did or did not receive empirical support.
- Given the results, what practical and theoretical implications do the authors assert? Do you agree with the stated implications?
- What are the stated directions for future research?
  - Do you agree with them? Are exciting opportunities overlooked?
- Consider how a specific article relates to other articles covered in class.

This process is hard. Try not to get discouraged if at times you struggle. If you are struggling and trying you are learning and improving. Also try to keep your focus on the content of the article rather than related content outside of the article. Seek to understand and critique the arguments and evidence within a reading rather than what could have been done or related work with which your classmates may or may not be familiar. Finally, PLEASE engage in this process with a high level of humility and collegiality. Faculty within the School of Communication and leading scholars in the field authored many of the assigned readings. Conducting and publishing academic research is very difficult. All studies have limitations. Constructive critiques are absolutely encouraged. However, they should be conveyed in a respectful manner that acknowledges the hard work and positive contributions the authors contribute to the field through their efforts. It is much easier to poke holes and tear something down than it is to build something up.

**Discussion Questions:** To facilitate discussion, you will be responsible for posting one detailed question about the readings prior to every class. For readings on Monday, you must post a question to the discussion forum by 9am on Monday. For readings on Wednesday, you must post a question to the discussion forum by 11am on Wednesday. You cannot post a question that has already been asked. Therefore, you need to pay attention to the questions that have already been posted by your classmates. You can, however, build off your fellow classmates' questions to create a cohesive line of inquiry. Questions should be accompanied by a few sentences that **BRIEFLY** describe/clarify the issue you are trying to raise; consider providing examples to clarify any abstract or nuanced ideas related to your question. If it takes paragraphs to explain/rationalize your question this might be an indication that you have more thinking to do and/or the issue you wish to raise could be conveyed to the class more clearly. Questions can serve a variety of purposes such as seeking to clarify an issue you find confusing, constructively

challenging some aspect of a reading, or provoking discussion of a particular issue you find compelling. Overall, try to ask questions that will stimulate a scientific discussion and avoid asking questions that you could easily answer yourself with some additional research. Again, please keep your focus within rather than outside the article.

**Short Paper Assignment:**

Five double-spaced pages. The aim of this paper is to express a communication-based research question you would like to examine. You need to provide a clear articulation of the research question, an argument as to why you think this research question is important (both in terms of social significance and theory building, but mostly theory building), and some sense of where you might start looking in terms of past research (i.e., identify specific articles in peer-reviewed journals) in order to address this research question. More detailed instructions will be provided on Carmen.

**Exam:**

The exam will consist of a series of essay questions that touch upon multiple content points covered in class. Students will select 4 of 6 questions to answer; each question is worth five points.

**Final paper presentation:**

Students will provide a detailed overview of their final research paper. The structure of the presentation will mimic what typically occurs at communication conferences. Additional instructions will be provided on Carmen.

**Final paper:**

Ten double-spaced pages. This paper requires the student to write a complete front-end of an article. It should include an introduction and rationale, a literature review, and at least one hypothesis. The paper is limited to no more than four constructs-variables. The goal of the article should be to challenge, extend, or modify an existing communication theory. More details will be provided on Carmen.

**Grades:**

Grades are determined by the standard OSU grading scheme. I will not round grades up.

A = 93 - 100%	A- = 90 - 92%	
B+ = 87 - 89%	B = 83 - 86%	B - = 80 - 82%
C+ = 77 - 79%	C = 73 - 76%	C - = 70 - 72%
D+ = 67 - 69%	D = 60 - 66%	E = 0 - 59%

**Email and Carmen:**

You are responsible for checking your OSU email account and the Carmen course page regularly. Grades and course materials will be posted on Carmen throughout the semester.

**Attendance Policy:** You are expected to attend every class. However, **students should not attend class if they are feeling sick.** You do not need to provide a physician's

document of illness, but you should advise me via email as soon as you are safely able to do so.

**Exam Make-up Policy:**

Students must always email in advance or make-up requests will not be considered. Assignments can only be made up in the event of a religious conflict, serious illness, death of friend/family member, or pre-approved university activity (e.g., athletic event). Consistent with university policy, I will accommodate students' religious observance days by re-scheduling any exams that conflict with those observances.

**Academic Misconduct:**

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term "academic misconduct" includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct <http://studentlife.osu.edu/csc/>.

**Technology:**

Students are NOT allowed to take photographs, record video, or record audio during class. Laptops and tablets should be used only for note taking and class related activities.

**School of Communication Diversity Policy:**

The School of Communication at The Ohio State University embraces and maintains an environment that respects diverse traditions, heritages, experiences, and people. Our commitment to diversity moves beyond mere tolerance to recognizing, understanding, and welcoming the contributions of diverse groups and the value group members possess as individuals. In our School, the faculty, students, and staff are dedicated to building a tradition of diversity with principles of equal opportunity, personal respect, and the intellectual interests of those who comprise diverse cultures.

**Students with Special Needs:**

The University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options. To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Student Life Disability Services. After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion. SLDS contact information: [slds@osu.edu](mailto:slds@osu.edu); 614-292-3307; [slds.osu.edu](http://slds.osu.edu); 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

<b>Class</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Required Reading</b> <b>***Read articles in order of appearance***</b>	<b>Assignment Due</b>
Tu 8/20	Syllabus and course discussion		
Th 8/22	What graduate students should know	Roloff and Pfau (2008) (p. 1-16 of PDF) Roloff (2015)	
Tu 8/27	About theory and the field of communication	Berger et al. (2010) Chaffee and Berger (1987) (p. 104-105)	
Th 8/29	Foundations: Asking questions	Miller and Nicholson Chap 1	
Tu 9/3	Theoretical contributions	Slater and Gleason (2012)	
Th 9/5	Precision in articulating, testing, and evaluating theory	DeAndrea and Holbert (2017) Holbert and Park (2019)	
Tu 9/10	Deception	Park et al. (2002) Levine and McCornack (2014) Levine (2014)	
Th 9/12	Audience involvement and narrative persuasion	Brown (2015) Moyer-Guse (2015)	
Tu 9/17	Computer-mediated communication	Walther et al. (2015) Walther commentary (2014)	
Th 9/19	Online self-transformation and mobile media	Walther and Lew (2022) Ross and Campbell (2021)	
Tu 9/24	Human computer interaction and AI Interaction	Liu (2021) Novak and Fox (2018)	
Th 9/26	Media entertainment	Grizzard et al. (2023) Lynch et al. (2024)	
Tu 10/1	Political communication	Appiah et al. (2024) Garrett, Weeks, and Neo (2016)	
Th 10/3	Relationships and interpersonal communication	Afifi et al. (2021) Giles et al. (2023)	
Tu 10/8	Science communication	Shulman and Bullock (2020) Bonus & Mares (2018)	
Th 10/10	Fall Break	Fall Break	
Tu 10/15			<b>Exam</b>
Th 10/17	Norms and social influence	Rimal and Lapinski (2015) Rhodes et al. (2020)	
Tu 10/22	Short paper discussion	Short paper discussions	
Th 10/24	Media and stereotypes	Dixon, T. (2019) Saleem et al. (2019)	
Tu 10/29	Media effects	DeAndrea and Bullock (2022) Ellithorpe, Holt, and Ewoldsen (2022)	<b>Short Paper Due</b>
Th 10/31	Social Media and Privacy	Trepte (2021)	
Tu 11/5	Election Day No Class	Read two articles in support of final paper	<b>Email me articles</b>
Th 11/7	Health communication	Kuang & Wilson (2020) Kam, Merolla, and High (2019)	

Tu 11/12	Media use and selection	Bayer and LaRose (2018)	
Th 11/14	Gender and Health	Roberts, Calogero, and Gervais (2018) Statman (2022)	
Tu 11/19	Final paper theoretical model presentation		<b>PPT of model</b>
Th 11/21	Final paper progress	asynchronous/no in person class	
Tu 11/26	<b>Final Paper Presentations</b>		
Th 11/28	Thanksgiving break	Thanksgiving break	
Tu 12/3	<b>Final Paper Presentations</b>		<b>Presentations</b>
Finals Week Monday 12/9	<b>Final Paper Due (end of day)</b>	<b>Final Paper Due (end of day)</b>	

### \*Criteria for Grading Paper Assignments

**A:** All aspects of the work are outstanding and error-free (or close to it). Students reveal a deep understanding of the content of the course as well as an ability to work with concepts beyond the level of simply regurgitating facts and definitions. Overall, students demonstrate in their work an excellent ability to synthesize and apply course content.

**B:** All work is of high quality. Work is clear, well structured, and largely error-free. Work effectively responds to all required elements of the assignment. Overall, the work demonstrates a solid grasp of course content, and some ability for creative, integrative, or intellectually rigorous application of the material.

**C:** All work is of acceptable, average quality. Work is on topic, responds to the requirements of the assignment, and is not rife with errors. Work addresses the requirements of the assignment and includes some elements of good style and structure. Content demonstrates a basic understanding of most elements of the course. Overall, work demonstrates a reasonable grasp of all content, but limited ability for creative, integrative, or intellectually rigorous application of the material.

**D:** Some work is of unacceptable quality. Work addresses the topic in a broad sense, but misses some key points or contains an unacceptable level of errors. Work addresses the assignment at only the most basic level. Content reveals some key areas of the course material in which knowledge is lacking. Overall, work demonstrates a weak grasp of content and little ability for creative, integrative, or intellectually rigorous application of the material.

**E:** A majority of the work is of unacceptable quality. Work fails to meet the basic requirements of the assignment, lacks basic elements of professional presentation, or is otherwise unresponsive to instructions. Errors are probably frequent. Content reveals a widespread lack of knowledge. Overall, work demonstrates little grasp of the material.

\*Grading criteria adopted and modified from Dr. Jesse Fox

**Tentative Nature of this Syllabus**

This syllabus represents a contract in the works. Events that transpire over the semester may require me to modify the administration of the course and therefore the syllabus. In the event I need to modify the syllabus, I will announce the modification in class and update the syllabus on Carmen. Ultimately it is your responsibility to keep up with any such modifications and be aware of current policies, deadlines, etc. I reserve the right to modify course policies throughout the semester and was as the course delivery mode.

**Please Take Care of Yourself: Mental Health Statement**

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student's ability to participate in daily activities. The Ohio State University offers services to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing.

If you are or someone you know is suffering from any of the aforementioned conditions, you can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the Office of Student Life's Counseling and Consultation Service (CCS) by visiting [ccs.osu.edu](https://ccs.osu.edu) or calling 614--292--5766. CCS is located on the 4th Floor of the Younkin Success Center and 10th Floor of Lincoln Tower. You can reach an on-call counselor when CCS is closed at 614-292-5766.

If you are thinking of harming yourself or need a safe, non-judgmental place to talk, or if you are worried about someone else and need advice about what to do, 24 hour emergency help is also available through the Suicide Prevention Hotline (Columbus: 614-221-5445 / National: 800-273-8255); or text (4hope to 741741); or at [suicidepreventionlifeline.org](https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org).