

## COMM 6806: Contemporary Theories of Communication

**Professor:** Dr. David DeAndrea

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**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: 10pts.
- Discussion helpers and participation: 10pts.
- 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 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 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?
  - Do the methods provide an appropriate or robust test of the hypotheses
  - What threats to validity exist (internal, external, ecological)?
- What are the results and are appropriate statistics employed?
  - 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?

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. **Please post your question no later than 10am on Tuesday/Thursday. Please read the entire article before posting your question.** 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.

**Discussion Helpers:**

Discussion helpers are expected to be extra prepared to participate in class discussion. I will still lead the majority of the class. However, discussion helpers will be expected to provide a brief (5-10 minutes max) overview of critical components of each reading (see above); the overview should review key aspects of the research, paying the most attention to the theoretical components. Discussion helpers do not need to post a discussion question but are welcomed to do so.

**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 Dishonesty:**

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 3335-5-48.7 \(B\)](#)). For additional information, see the [Code of Student Conduct](#).

**Generative AI (e.g., ChatGPT) Policy:**

Do not use generative AI to complete your assignments or while taking exams.

<https://oaa.osu.edu/artificial-intelligence-and-academic-integrity>

"All students have important obligations under the [Code of Student Conduct](#) to complete all academic and scholarly activities with fairness and honesty. Our professional students also have the responsibility to uphold the professional and ethical standards found in their respective academic honor codes. Specifically, students are not to use "unauthorized assistance in the laboratory, on field work, in scholarship or on a course assignment" unless such assistance has been authorized specifically by the course instructor. In addition, students are not to submit their work without acknowledging any word-for-word use and/or paraphrasing of writing, ideas or other work that is not your own. These requirements apply to all students — undergraduate, graduate, and professional.

To maintain a culture of integrity and respect, these generative AI tools should not be used in the completion of course assignments unless an instructor for a given course specifically authorizes their use. Some instructors may approve of using generative AI tools in the academic setting for specific goals. However, these tools should be used only with the explicit and clear permission of each individual instructor, and then only in the ways allowed by the instructor."

**Students with Special Needs:**

The university strives to maintain a healthy and accessible environment to support student learning in and out of the classroom. 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.

If you are ill and need to miss class, including if you are staying home and away from others while experiencing symptoms of a viral infection or fever, please let me know immediately. In cases where illness interacts with an underlying medical condition, please consult with Student Life Disability Services to request reasonable accommodations. You can connect with them at [slds@osu.edu](mailto:slds@osu.edu); 614-292-3307; or [slds.osu.edu](http://slds.osu.edu).

**Religious Accommodations:**

Ohio State has had a longstanding practice of making reasonable academic accommodations for students' religious beliefs and practices in accordance with applicable law. In 2023, Ohio State updated its practice to align with new state legislation. Under this new provision, students must be in early communication with their instructors regarding any known accommodation requests for religious beliefs and practices, providing notice of specific dates for which they request alternative accommodations within 14 days after the first instructional day of the course. Instructors in turn shall not question the sincerity of a student's religious or spiritual belief system in reviewing such requests and shall keep requests for accommodations confidential.

With sufficient notice, instructors will provide students with reasonable alternative accommodations with regard to examinations and other academic requirements with respect to students' sincerely held religious beliefs and practices by allowing up to three absences each semester for the student to attend or participate in religious activities. Examples of religious accommodations can include, but are not limited to, rescheduling an exam, altering the time of a student's presentation, allowing make-up assignments to substitute for missed class work, or flexibility in due dates or research responsibilities. If concerns arise about a requested accommodation, instructors are to consult their tenure initiating unit head for assistance.

A student's request for time off shall be provided if the student's sincerely held religious belief or practice severely affects the student's ability to take an exam or meet an academic requirement and the student has notified their instructor, in writing during the first 14 days after the course begins, of the date of each absence. Although students are required to provide notice within the first 14 days after a course begins, instructors are

strongly encouraged to work with the student to provide a reasonable accommodation if a request is made outside the notice period. A student may not be penalized for an absence approved under this policy.

If students have questions or disputes related to academic accommodations, they should contact their course instructor, and then their department or college office. For questions or to report discrimination or harassment based on religion, individuals should contact the [Civil Rights Compliance Office](#). (Policy: [Religious Holidays, Holy Days and Observances](#))

**An Environment Free from Harassment, Discrimination, and Sexual Misconduct:**

The Ohio State University is committed to building and maintaining a community to reflect diversity and to improve opportunities for all. All Buckeyes have the right to be free from harassment, discrimination, and sexual misconduct. Ohio State does not discriminate on the basis of age, ancestry, color, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity or expression, genetic information, HIV/AIDS status, military status, national origin, pregnancy (childbirth, false pregnancy, termination of pregnancy, or recovery therefrom), race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or protected veteran status, or any other bases under the law, in its activities, academic programs, admission, and employment. Members of the university community also have the right to be free from all forms of sexual misconduct: sexual harassment, sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking, and sexual exploitation.

To report harassment, discrimination, sexual misconduct, or retaliation and/or seek confidential and non-confidential resources and supportive measures, contact the Civil Rights Compliance Office:

Online reporting form at [civlrights.osu.edu](https://civlrights.osu.edu)

Call 614-247-5838 or TTY 614-688-8605

Or Email [civilrights@osu.edu](mailto:civilrights@osu.edu)

**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)

### Intellectual Diversity:

Ohio State is committed to fostering a culture of open inquiry and intellectual diversity within the classroom. This course will cover a range of information and may include discussions or debates about controversial issues, beliefs, or policies. Any such discussions and debates are intended to support understanding of the approved curriculum and relevant course objectives rather than promote any specific point of view. Students will be assessed on principles applicable to the field of study and the content covered in the course. Preparing students for citizenship includes helping them develop critical thinking skills that will allow them to reach their own conclusions regarding complex or controversial matters.

### COURSE SCHEDULE

Class	Topic	Required Reading ***Read articles in order of appearance***	Assignment Due
Tu 8/26	Syllabus and course discussion		
Th 8/28	What graduate students should know	Roloff and Pfau (2008) (p. 1-16 of PDF) Roloff (2015)	
Tu 9/2	About theory and the field of communication	Berger et al. (2010) Chaffee and Berger (1987) (p. 104-105)	
Th 9/4	Foundations: Asking questions	Miller and Nicholson Chap 1	
Tu 9/9	Theoretical contributions	Slater and Gleason (2012)	
Th 9/11	Precision in articulating, testing, and evaluating theory	DeAndrea and Holbert (2017) Holbert and Park (2019)	
Tu 9/16	Deception	Park et al. (2002) Levine and McCornack (2014) Levine (2014)	
Th 9/18	Audience involvement and narrative persuasion	Brown (2015) Moyer-Guse (2015)	
Tu 9/23	Computer-mediated communication	Walther et al. (2015) Walther commentary (2014)	
Th 9/25	Online self-transformation	Walther and Lew (2022) Carr et al. (2021)	
Tu 9/30	Human computer interaction and AI Interaction	Liu (2021) Gambino et al. (2020)	
Th 10/2	Media entertainment	Grizzard et al. (2023) Lynch et al. (2024)	<b>Discussion helpers:</b> Bontempo; Ji
Tu 10/7	Political communication	Appiah et al. (2024) Garrett et al. (2016)	<b>Discussion helpers:</b> Channel; Huang
Th 10/9	Relationships and interpersonal communication	Giles et al. (2023) Sharabi and Timmermans (2021)	<b>Discussion helpers:</b> Hicks; Gomes

Tu 10/14	Science communication	Shulman and Bullock (2020) Dixon et al. (2025)	<b>Discussion helper:</b> Clark
Th 10/16	<b>No Class Fall Break</b>		
Tu 10/21			<b>Exam</b>
Th 10/23	Norms and social influence	Rimal and Lapinski (2015) Rhodes et al. (2020)	<b>Discussion helper:</b> Channel
Tu 10/28	Short paper discussion	Short paper discussions	
Th 10/30	Media and stereotypes	Dixon, T. (2019) Saleem et al. (2019)	<b>Discussion helper:</b> Bontempo
Tu 11/4	Children and Media	Bonus et al. (2025) Mares et al. (2023)	<b>Discussion helper:</b> Gomes
Th 11/6	Health communication	Kuang and Wilson (2020) Medero and Hovick (2023)	<b>Discussion helper:</b> Clark
Tu 11/11	<b>No Class Veteran's Day</b>		
Th 11/13	Media use and selection	Bayer and LaRose (2018)	<b>Discussion helper:</b> Hicks  <b>Short Paper Due</b> <b>11/14/25</b>
Tu 11/18	Gender and health	Roberts et al. (2018) Statman (2022)	<b>Discussion helper:</b> Huang
Th 11/20	Biology and comm theory	Potter et al. (2024)	<b>Discussion helper:</b> Ji
Tu 11/25	Final paper progress, asynchronous meetings		
Th 11/27	<b>No Class Thanksgiving</b>		
Tu 12/2	Theory/Model Discussion		<b>Send 1 slide visual</b>
Th 12/4	<b>Final Paper Presentations</b>		<b>Presentations</b>
Tu 12/9	<b>Final Paper Presentations</b>		<b>Presentations</b>
Fr 12/12	<b>Final Paper Due (end of day)</b>		<b>Final Paper Due</b>

### **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.