

COMM 3350: Theories of Communication

Instructor: Dr. Mu Hu

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Class time: Mondays and Wednesdays, 3:30 pm. – 4:45 pm.

Classroom: Madla 238

Office hours: Mondays and Wednesdays, 2:00 pm. – 3:30 pm. or by appointment

Course Description

This course provides a survey of both classic and contemporary communication theories with an emphasis on mass communication theories. This survey provides a unique lens into communication research, which allows the students to observe human communication from a theoretical perspective. Students will understand the historical and interdisciplinary nature of communication research, and learn to apply the theories to their analysis of human communication behavior and the relationship between individuals and society.

Learning objectives

By taking this course, students should be able to

- 1) Observe human communication from a developmental and interdisciplinary perspective.
- 2) Understand how different types of human communication are intertwined with each other.
- 3) Apply communication theories to their observation and analysis of human communication phenomena in various contexts.
- 4) Critically review and analyze classic and contemporary theories in communication research.
- 5) Use academic databases skillfully to locate the research needed in major communication research journals.

Required Readings

Baran, S. J., & Davis, D. K. (2020). *Mass communication theory: Foundations, ferment, future* (8th ed.). Oxford University Press.

Grade breakdown

A = 90% and above, B = 80% to 89%, C = 70% to 79%, D = 60% to 69%, F = 59% and below.

Grading

Participation in class discussion	20 points
Theory application and analysis papers (20 points each)	60 points
Midterm	50 points
Final	50 points
Total	180 points

Grade record (excluding tardiness, absence, etc.)

Participation	/20
Theory application and analysis paper 1	/20
Theory application and analysis paper 2	/20
Theory application and analysis paper 3	/20
Midterm	/50
Final	/50
Total	/180

Brief description of assignments

Theory application and analysis paper (20 points each)

Each student should submit three theory application and analysis papers. Each paper should be individual work. Each of these papers should be no less than four pages long (excluding the title page and the reference page). You are required to use the relevant communication theories to analyze various communication phenomena reflected in the media artifacts assigned by the instructor. Detailed instructions will be given in class.

Requirements of assignments

All the assignments should be in word document format. For the assignments, you should include a cover page, with the title of the paper, your name, as well as the course name. Each paper should be carefully proofread and demonstrate a high level of competence in written communication. Please use double space, 1-inch margins, and 12-point Times New Roman font in your papers. Use proper APA citations. Have a reference page in APA format if needed. Details of the instructions will be given in class.

Assignment Policy

You are expected to turn in all assignments on time. Each assignment should be turned in by 11:59 pm. on the due date in the Dropbox in Blackboard. No late assignment will be accepted.

Computer and/or printer problems are NOT valid excuses for late assignments, so please leave enough time for such problems just in case.

If you are asked to rewrite your paper, you need to turn in the rewritten paper at the beginning of the class meeting immediately after the class meeting when your original paper is given back. You can earn up to 75% of the full grade for the rewritten paper.

Tardiness Policy

Our class starts at 3:30 pm on Mondays and Wednesdays. Please be in class on time. Tardiness without prior notice of legitimate reasons will negatively influence your participation grade.

Attendance Policy

Attendance is mandatory. Missing class meetings without prior notice of legitimate reasons will negatively influence your participation grade.

Participation Policy

Participation is a must in class. There are in-class discussions, assignments, and activities in almost all the class meetings. Your participation grade is decided by the quantity and quality of your contribution to the class discussions and activities. Missing class meetings means that you miss the class discussions and activities and therefore will negatively influence your participation grade.

If you don't get involved in class activities but instead do other things unrelated to class (including but not limited to: disruptive talking, working on your homework, using cell phones for activities unrelated to class, and sleeping), you will be asked to leave the classroom immediately and receive a zero on your participation grade.

If you miss a class meeting (especially when the instructions of the assignments are given), it is your responsibility to find out what you miss. If you miss the class meeting(s) due to legitimate reasons, feel free to contact me. You are responsible for the loss of points for not knowing the instructions because of your absence.

Students Needing Accommodations

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disability. If you believe you have a disability that may require accommodations, please contact Disability Support Services (DSS) for the coordination of services. DSS is located at the Main Campus on the 2nd floor of the Central Academic Building in suite 210. The phone number for DSS is (210) 784-1335 and email is dss@tamusa.edu.

Writing Center

The Jaguar Writing Center provides writing support to graduate and undergraduate students in all three colleges. Writing tutors work with students to develop reading skills, prepare oral presentations, and plan, draft, and revise their written assignments. The Writing Center is currently holding all appointments digitally. Students can schedule appointments with the Writing Center in JagWire under the student services tab. Students wanting to work in realtime with a tutor can schedule an “Online Appointment.” Students wishing to receive asynchronous, written feedback from a tutor can schedule an “eTutoring” appointment. More information about what services we offer, how to make an appointment, and how to access your appointment can be found on our website at www.tamusa.edu/Writing-Center. The Writing Center can also be reached by emailing wldcc@tamusa.edu.

Financial Aid and Verification of Attendance

According to the following federal regulation, 34 CFR 668.21: U.S. Department of Education (DoE) Title IV regulation, a student can only receive Title IV funds based on Title IV eligibility criteria which includes class attendance. If Title IV funds are disbursed to ineligible students (including students who fail to begin attendance), the institution must return these funds to the U.S. DoE within 30 days of becoming aware that the student will not or has not begun attendance. Faculty will provide the Office of Financial Aid with an electronic notification if a student has not attended the first week of class. Any student receiving Federal financial aid who does not attend the first week of class will have his/her aid terminated and returned to the DoE. Please note that any student who stops attending at any time during the semester may also need to return a portion of his/her federal aid.

University Email Policy and Course Communications

All correspondence between professors and students must occur via University email accounts. You must have Jaguar email account ready and working. If it is not working, contact the help desk at sahelp@tamusa.edu or at 210-784-4357.

The Six-Drop Rule

Students are subject to the requirements of Senate Bill (SB) 1231 passed by the Texas Legislature in 2007. SB 1231 limits students to a maximum of six (6) non-punitive course drops (i.e., courses a student chooses to drop) during their undergraduate careers. A non-punitive drop does not affect the student’s GPA. However, course drops that exceed the maximum allowed by SB 1231 will be treated as “F” grades and will impact the student’s GPA.

Student Misconduct

Appropriate conduct is essential to the effective functioning of the University. University policy defines unacceptable conduct, both academic and non-academic misconduct, and penalties for such behavior in The Student Handbook and The Student Code of Conduct.

Academic Misconduct Policy

Students at Texas A&M University-San Antonio are expected to adhere to the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. Academic misconduct for which a student is subject to penalty includes cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, multiple submissions, misrepresentation of academic records, facilitating academic dishonesty, unfair advantage, violating known safety requirements and ethical misconduct. This includes holding other students to the same standards and reporting any incidents of alleged violation of the honesty policy to the instructor involved or, if necessary, to the appropriate academic department head. All students are responsible for being familiar with the Academic Misconduct Policy, which may be found in the Texas A&M University-San Antonio Student Handbook.

University policy prescribes serious consequences for acts of academic misconduct including, but not limited to, a grade of 'F' on the particular paper or assignment or a failing grade in the course. Also, a referral may be issued to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities where the sanctions can vary up to possible expulsion from the University. Considering the potential consequences of academic misconduct, it is obviously in students' best interests to avoid even the appearance of such behavior. If you are ever unclear whether a specific act might constitute academic misconduct, please contact your instructor for an assessment of the situation.

In this classroom, I expect that you will always produce your own, original work and that you will use outside sources in a scholarly, precise manner that adheres to APA guidelines. When you quote and paraphrase, you must always put words, phrases, and sentences that are not your own into quotation marks. In addition, you need to indicate the source of information at the end of the sentence in parentheses and at the end of your paper or presentation on a reference page. When you do not use quotation marks, parenthetical citations, and a reference page in this manner, then you ostensibly claim the work of others as your own; this action constitutes plagiarism. Please note that changing one word in a sentence does not mean that it's in your own words.

Sources that need to be used in a scholarly, precise manner include but are not limited to your textbook, any other books, websites, discussion boards, essays, journals, newspapers, magazines, and visual images. As a general rule, it is expected that you will not consult sources such as Cliffnotes or Sparknotes in this class if for no other reason than the fact that these sources over-generalize and often provide erroneous information.

All student papers and other written assignments are subject to analysis by anti-plagiarism software.

AI Use Policy

This class assumes that all work submitted by students will be generated by the students themselves individually. Students should not have another person/entity do the writing of any portion of an assignment for them, which includes hiring a person or a company to write assignments and/or using artificial intelligence (AI) tools like ChatGPT. Use of any AI-generated content in this course qualifies as academic dishonesty and violates Texas A&M-San Antonio’s standards of academic integrity.

Grade Grievance

Any grade grievance needs to be submitted to me in written form, including a print-out copy of the argument, the assignment or exam in question, and the evidence supporting your grievance.

Tentative Class Schedule
(Subject to change. Any change will be announced in class)

Date	Topic	Chapter	Assignments due
8/26	Introduction		
8/28	A historical and interdisciplinary perspective of communication	Chapter 1	
9/2	No class meeting		
9/4	Communication as the bridge between individuals and society	Chapter 2	
9/9	Descriptive theories vs. Normative theories	Chapter 3	
9/11	Strong media effects	Chapter 4	
9/16	“Not that strong” effects	Chapter 5	
9/18	Critical theories	Chapter 6	
9/23	Violence and communication: More than social learning	Chapter 7	
9/25	From audiences” to “users	Chapter 9	Theory application and analysis paper 1

9/30	Framing	Chapter 13	
10/2	Cultivation	Chapter 12	
10/7	Media as a reflection of society	Chapter 11	
10/9	Agenda setting	Chapter 11	
10/14	Midterm		
10/16	Movie watching at home		
10/21	Priming		
10/23	The spiral of silence?	Chapter 11	
10/28	The intersection between mass communication and interpersonal communication		
10/30	The role of culture	Chapter 13	
11/4	Challenges to communication		
11/6	Enjoyment		Theory application and analysis paper 2
11/11	Health communication	Chapter 10	
11/13	Computer and video games		
11/18	Human computer interaction		
11/20	No class meeting		
11/25	Online communication		
11/27	No class meeting		
12/2	Persuasion	Chapter 10	
12/4	Social media		Theory application and analysis paper 3

The final exam will be arranged in the final's week.