

**SYLLABUS**  
**COMM 4350-01 Communication Theory**  
**Dixie State College Fall, 2006**

**Instructor:** Dennis L. Wignall, Ph.D.

**Office:** Eccles, 104

**Office Hours:** M/W/F, 12:00-2:00pm; By Appointment

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**Textbook:** Theories of Human Communication, 8<sup>th</sup> Ed. Stephen W. Littlejohn & Karen A. Foss. Thomson/Wadsworth. 2005

**Readings:** Special readings will be assigned occasionally during the semester. Copies of these will be on closed reserve in the library. You will be notified of their availability.

**NOTE:** “If you are a student with a medical, psychological, or learning disability or think you might have a disability and would like accommodations, contact the Disability Resource Center (652-7516) in the Student Services Center. The Disability Resource Center will determine eligibility of the student requesting special services and determine the appropriate accommodations related to their disability.”

**General description of the course:**

There is widespread agreement among experts from a variety of disciplines (e.g., psychology, sociology, business, and human communication) concerning the importance of studying Communication Theories, how to apply theoretical understanding to a broad range of research interests, and how to incorporate theoretical understanding into one’s everyday life. For many individuals substantial and significant moments and events of their lives are delineated by one or more Communication Theories. Whether it is deciding upon relationship dynamics, determining one’s role within an organization, facilitating one’s efficiency and progress with members of other cultures in our global society, or the influences of modern technologies on the human experience: they all are defined by one or more Communication Theories. This course is designed to give you practical and theoretical insights into the many varied theories informing Human Communication and to apply your knowledge and understanding in practical, personally helpful ways. The primary goal for the semester is to understand the effects of many of these theories on you as well as how you might design appropriate research to reveal additional theoretical concerns.

**Course Goals:**

1. Understand the importance of attending and listening to the other person, and portray listening behaviors that demonstrate your understanding.
2. Transfer an understanding of theoretical communication fundamentals to the social contexts experienced in both your everyday and professional lives.

3. Recognize the important, meaningful roles that non-spoken behaviors fulfill during our communication interactions with others.
4. Understand the axioms of primary Human Communication theories as well as their principles and ethics.
5. Evaluate the various strategies by which these theories can be applied and function.
6. Explore a high-level survey of theories across the communication discipline.
7. Conceptually connect communication contexts and theoretical traditions.
8. Explain the connections, trajectories, and relationships among the many theories.
9. Distinguish and derive applications and implications across the range of Human Communication theories.

**1. Class Activities:** Class time will be a combination of lecture and discussion. My lectures are usually based on our text and other assigned readings but I will often refer to material and/or personal life experiences not discussed in either of them. It is vitally important that you keep up with the readings for each assigned day and be prepared to participate in the discussions. I will talk about specific theories from the assigned readings (and additional sources, as well) during the first 20 minutes or so of each class. I will **assist** you in applying those theories, concepts, etc. to relational settings, developments, and predictions during the class discussions by bringing in appropriate examples from my own life. *It is important to be able to apply the theories to your everyday lives.* In addition, we will often make use of the Case Study method where we analyze specific communication events and the theories that seem to be most influential in understanding the events themselves. **Make it applied!**

## **2. Class requirements:**

- a) **Exams:** There will be three exams given this semester – 2 ‘content to date’ (CTD), and a *final that will be cumulative*. The exams **may** be a combination of true/false, multiple choice, fill in the blank, and short written answer. Review time and study sheets will be provided prior to each exam. If our discussions become labored and you seem to lack the necessary background in our assigned readings, you can expect to experience an unannounced **Pop Quiz** from time to time. These quizzes won’t happen if you are prepared to discuss and do so actively.
- b) **Theory Synthesis:** Each student will develop an extended synthesis of selected theories of choice throughout the semester. This is an extended manuscript where the selected theories are applied to a communication event(s) in your personal and/or professional life. You are expected to explain, illustrate, support, and elaborate upon your application by drawing heavily from our readings and classroom discussion. I am hoping for Service Learning Credit for each of you in this regard and will inform you of the possibilities by the middle of September. This manuscript will be turned in for grading at the end of the semester and constitutes your major written assignment for successful course completion. Specific format and content details are located within a handout to be published in a couple of weeks.
- c) **Service Learning:** In conjunction with the development of the Theory Synthesis

manuscript, it is expected that you identify with and become involved with an agency, profession, business, volunteer group (et al) in which you assist those involved by utilizing your growing knowledge and insight of Communication Theories. Students and Professors are ethically bound to provide service and support to members of our immediate community, particularly to those citizens and groups inhabiting the fringes our society and culture. A brief **Service Learning Reflection Paper** will be due at the end of the semester. Specific format and content details are located within a handout to be published in a couple of weeks.

- d) **Class attendance and participation:** Each student is expected to attend class regularly. There is no such thing as an "excused absence", but if you let me know ahead of time, I tend to be more understanding should you choose to be absent. Also, you are required to orally participate in the daily classroom proceedings. Your contributions can be anecdotal, theoretical, conceptual, poignant, angry, and even funny; **but plan on being actively involved!** Since this is a communication class and because I am a firm believer in the educational philosophy that we can **all** learn from one another, everyone is expected to participate in class. Please don't be shy. Also, if you don't show up for class, you can't very well participate. **There is no such thing as turning something in late.** It just won't happen! In that same vein, if **YOU** are late to class you demonstrate rudeness and insensitivity to your classmates and your professor. Once in awhile is understandable, but a regular habit of lateness will adversely affect your grade.

You are allowed five absences per normal semester (16 weeks), on those days during which you are not scheduled to present or participate in a debate. **The sixth absence incurs a grade reduction of one full grade level.** Every third absence thereafter your grade is reduced one full level. Thus, if you otherwise have an "A" but you have missed 18 class days (out of a possible 45), you will have earned a grade of "F". There is no need to tell me why you were absent. You are an adult and are thus responsible for your actions because adults have the right to make decisions about their own lives. Of course, every decision results in consequences; some positive, some not so positive. There is no such thing as an "excused absence."

**3. Extra Credit:** You may have a desire or need to explore options for extra credit during the semester. If at any time you find that you would like to pursue an area of interest directly related to some Communication Theory or other, please talk to me about your interest and we will arrive at a mutually acceptable topic/project and determine a point value for your work. For example, a **Think Piece** (details forthcoming later) would be an excellent opportunity for additional points.

**Graded Assignments:** CTD Exams = 20%; Final = 20%; Theory Synthesis = 25%; Service Learning = 15%; Attendance/Class Partic = 20% (includes any Pop Quizzes). (These are approximate).

**Point Value (all values are approximate) Scale:** CDT Exams = 50pts ea.; Final = 100pts; Synthesis = 125pts; Service Learning = 75pts; Attendance/Class Partic = 2pts per day in class

(approximately 16 X 3 X 2 = 96pts). Lateness will result in reduced points for that day.

**Grading Scale:** A = 450+ to 415; B = 414 to 380; C = 379 to 345; D = 344 to 310; F = 0 to 309.

## **SCHEDULE OF ALL THE IMPORTANT EVENTS:**

(The dates include a two-week block and begin with a Monday, ending on a Friday)

WEEKS 1 & 2: 8/22-9/1 Orientation to the course. Read Case Study Handout  
Read Chap 1. Begin Reading Chap 2  
Discussion of readings.

WEEKS 3 & 4: 9/4-9/15 Read Chap 3 in your text. Discuss readings.  
Watch out for the nefarious Pop Quiz!  
**Labor Day – Sept 4 – No classes!**

WEEKS 5 & 6: 9/18-9/29 Continue with readings thru Chap 4. Related exercises and  
discussion. **First CTD Exam!** All material thru Chap 4.  
**Synthesis Review!** Bring your Synthesis in for assessment/progress

WEEKS 7 & 8: 10/2-10/13 Read Chaps 5 & 6 in your text. Discuss Readings.  
**Semester Break: October 12 & 13. No classes!**

WEEKS 9 & 10: 10/16-10/27 Read Chap 7 in your text. Discuss Readings. Related exercises.

WEEKS 11 & 12: 10/30-11/10 Read Chaps 8 & 9 in your text. Related discussion.  
The **2<sup>nd</sup> CTD Exam – 3/24**. Material covered in Chaps 5-9,  
incl.

WEEKS 13 & 14: 11/13-11/24 Read Chap 10 in your text. Related discussion.  
**Thanksgiving: November 22-24. No classes!**

WEEKS 15 & 16: 11/27-12/8 Read Chaps 11 & 12 in your text. Related discussion.  
**All Extra Credit is Due: 11/24!**  
**Synthesis & Service Learning Reflection Due! – 12/8!!**  
Finish up the readings & related discussion.

WEEK 16: 12/11-12/15 **Final Exams!** Final Exam (*cumulative*)...Please check the Spring  
Schedule, page 5, for the time/day of the Final Exam for  
this class.

**The preceding syllabus represents a general, goal-oriented, intention on our part. We may speed things up, or slow them down, depending upon our progress as the semester unfolds. You can rest assured that we will cover all the material by the end of the semester, and that**

**means you are responsible for it.**

***NOTES:***

1) If you would like to hand in example pages of any written assignment at any time during the semester in order that I might provide feedback on your progress, please feel free to do so!

Bring them by my office for discussion, or email (an attachment) a copy of them to me.

2) All electronic devices must be inoperable during class time. These include, but are not limited to: cell phones, pagers, digital cameras, head phones/music, chainsaws, jackhammers, etc. I will, however, allow my lectures to be taped using an audio tape recorder. Please ask for permission.

3) **Plagiarism** will not be tolerated! Plagiarism is defined as the use of scholarly work by other researchers/writers where you claim that work as your own. Any assignment containing plagiarized info will receive an “F” as the least severe level of punishment. More severe instances could result in failing the class and/or expulsion from the College. Please don’t do it! If you’re having difficulties with time, etc., please seek me out and I’m sure that I will be able to recommend an appropriate course of action to enable you to meet the needs of the assignment.

4) I will place an occasional reading assignment on reserve in the library. You will have to go to the library, check out the item, read it, and return it within a specified time. In every case, you will be responsible for the content of the reserved items because it will appear on your scheduled exams.

5) The study of Communication Theory includes, of course, developing competency in written, spoken, and behavioral instances. Typos, misspellings, unprofessional or sloppy written work are not qualities of a competent communicator. Vulgar language in class, or any disrespectful behavior directed towards anyone will not be tolerated! You are an adult and will be treated as such. Please reciprocate adult treatment to others at all times.

I'm looking forward to a terrific class!

**Good Luck!**