THEORIES OF HUMAN COMMUNICATION  
Psych 236, Fall Semester 2005

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Phone: 656-4016  
Office Hours BY APPOINTMENT ONLY  
Tues/Thurs 1:45 – 2:45 p.m.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course is intended to serve as an introduction to various theoretical formulations and concepts which are central to an analysis and understanding of human communication process in multi-sociocultural contexts. Broadly, the course emphasis will be on selected cognitive and behavioral theories with a view to examine their fruitfulness in generating research hypotheses for the study of human communication. We shall also examine the applications of communication theory and research to various professional areas. In addition, the course will survey several different ways of studying the human communication process as a means of enabling beginning graduate students to select an approach toward viewing communication as a central variable in their research.

TEXTBOOKS


CLASS FORMAT AND CLASS PARTICIPATION:

Each student is expected to attend classes, except in cases of illness or special religious observances. Our class meetings will usually follow a seminar format involving a discussion of reading materials and important concepts pertaining to the attached schedule of topics. During the semester, we also plan to have brief presentations of your case study assignments and research projects. Thus, I ask each of you to remain actively engaged in your readings and research assignments as well as in class discussions so that we can have a stimulating and participatory learning environment in our seminar.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1. Lectures And Readings: All readings corresponding to the list of topics indicated in the outline will be required for all class members.

2. Research Abstracts: You will have the option to review a minimum of ten (10) empirical research articles from professional journals and periodicals and prepare substantive abstracts detailing the bibliographic reference, objectives, methodology, research findings, conclusions, and strengths and weaknesses of the study. These research abstracts should pertain to the specific topic of your research project in an area such as self concept and symbolic interaction, communication and socialization of children, family communication processes and patterns, roles and sex stereotypes and human communication, non-verbal communication, interpersonal communication patterns in the process of creative problem solving and conflict resolution, communication and cross-cultural adaptation, and, cognitive and behavioral impacts of public communication campaigns, etc. Your research abstracts should be typed and are due on Tuesday, November 22. The basic purpose of these abstracts is to provide you with excellent resource materials for your research project as indicated below.
3. **Research Project:** You will integrate the ten (10) abstracts and complete a substantive and independent project in the area of human communication that is close to your academic and professional interest. Your research project should clearly document and explain the problem, the objectives, the previous studies that have been done, including your research abstracts, your findings, conclusions, and the significance of your research study to human communication. The research project report should be typed and should reflect proper citations of the origins of its contents that are obtained from the work of others.

I will be glad to discuss with you your ideas and interests regarding the research project. To facilitate these discussions, you may hand in your proposal for the research project by **Thursday, September 22nd**. The final project report is due on **Tuesday, November 22nd**. You will be invited to make an informal class presentation of your research project during the last week of classes.

4. **Examinations:** There will be two (2) hourly examinations based on required readings and class discussions. Each Examination will involve objective questions as well as descriptive questions requiring you to provide short answers and essays. The **FINAL EXAMINATION will be cumulative**.

5. **Case Study Assignments:** Each student will complete one (1) independent case study assignment pertaining to a selected aspect of the following topics and turn in a report of about ten (10) typewritten pages on the results of your analysis. Each assignment should analyze a clearly defined question/problem and should include a review of a minimum of seven (7) appropriate empirical research studies by other investigators together with a discussion of your personal case study, findings and your conclusions. Please document appropriate research material that you might incorporate from previous research studies, and other sources (i.e., who said it, when, where). You will be invited to make a brief oral presentation of your case study followed by class discussion. The schedule for your case study assignments is as follows:

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COURSE EVALUATION: Your course evaluation will be based on the option you choose.

Option A: If you choose to take advantage of the option of completing the research project and the abstracts as well as the case study described earlier on page 1 and 2, your final grade in this course will be determined on the basis of your performance in your individual research project, research abstracts, case study assignments, class participation and examinations. Specifically, each of these components will be evaluated as follows:

Research Project and Research Abstracts = 33.3% of final grade
Case Study Assignments
    and Class Participation = 33.3% of final grade
Hourly Examinations = 33.3% of final grade

Option B: If you do not choose Option A, your final grade in this course will be determined on the basis of your performance in your examinations, case study class assignments, class presentation and class participation. Specifically, each of these components will be evaluated as follows:

Case study assignments/class presentation
    class participation = 33.3% of final grade
Two examinations and final = 66.6% of final grade

Option C:

Research Project/class presentation,
    class participation = 33.3% of final grade
Two examinations and final = 66.6% of final grade

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS

I. The Study Of Human Communication

Tu 08/30 1. General introduction to the course
Th 09/01 2. Theory and research in human communication (Littlejohn, chaps. 1, 2)
Tu 09/06 3. Cognitive process and behavioral orientation to human communication (Littlejohn, chap. 3)
Th 09/08 4. Communication as a system (Littlejohn, chap. 3; Knapp & Hall, chap. 2)

II. Perception And Human Information Processing

Tu 09/13 1. Transactional approach to human communication (Hastorf & Cantril in Schramm's text, pp. 300-12) (on reserve in Bailey/Howe)
Th 09/15 2. Gestalten approach (Krech & Crutchfield - in Schramm's text, pp. 235-64) (on reserve in Bailey/Howe)
Tu 09/20  3. Perceptual distortion and human communication (Lippman - in Schramm's text, pp. 265-88) (on reserve in Bailey/Howe)
        4. Codification of information in human communication: social constructionist and phenomenological approaches (Knapp & Hall, chap. 1)

III. Self Concept And Human Communication

Th 09/22  1. Symbolic interaction--The basis of human communication (Littlejohn, chap. 4, pp. 82-93; Littlejohn, chap. 6, pp. 154-158)
Tu 09/27  2. The development of self-concept and social being
            3. Role of self-concept in human communication

***FIRST CASE STUDY ASSIGNMENT DUE (GROUP #1)***

IV. Language, Meaning And Communication

Th 09/29  1. Language structure, form and functions (Littlejohn, chap. 5)
Tu 10/04  2. Learning language and meaning (Littlejohn, chap. 5)
Th 10/06  3. Language and communication (Littlejohn, chap. 11)

V. Non-Verbal Message Systems In Human Interaction

Tu 10/11  1. Types of Non-verbal messages (Littlejohn, chap. 5; Knapp & Hall, chaps. 3, 4, 5)
Th 10/13  ****FIRST HOURLY EXAMINATION****
Tu 10/18  2. Communicative functions of non-verbal messages (Knapp & Hall, chaps. 6, 7)
Th 10/20  3. Relationship between verbal and non-verbal communication in human interaction (Knapp & Hall, chaps. 9, 10, 11, 12)
Tu 10/25  ***FIRST CASE STUDY ASSIGNMENT DUE (GROUP #2)***

VI. Cognitive And Affective Processes In Human Communication

Th 10/27  1. Intervening cognitive factors in communication--Attitudes, beliefs and values (Littlejohn, chap. 4)
Tu 11/01  2. Cognitive dissonance--coping with contradictory communication and resolution of discrepancies (Littlejohn, chap. 4)
Th 11/03  3. Communication and persuasion
Tu 11/08  ***FIRST CASE STUDY ASSIGNMENT DUE (GROUP #3)***
VII. **Interpersonal Processes In Human Communication**

Th 11/10  1. Co-orientation and Interpersonal communication (Littlejohn, chap. 7)
       2. Communication rules in dyadic interaction (Littlejohn, chap. 6)

Tu 11/15  3. Interpersonal conflict and family communication (Littlejohn, chap. 7)

Th 11/17  4. Interpersonal interaction and communication networks in small groups in a variety of socio-cultural contexts (Littlejohn, chaps. 8, 9)

Tu 11/22  ***FIRST CASE STUDY ASSIGNMENT DUE (GROUP #4)***
       RESEARCH PROJECTS/RESEARCH ABSTRACTS DUE

VIII. **Human Communication And Mass Media**

Tu 11/29  ****SECOND HOURLY EXAMINATION****
       1. Interfaces between mass media channels and human communication (Littlejohn, chap. 10)

Th 12/01  1. Research projects/case studies presentation

Tu 12/06  CLASSES END

**THURSDAY Dec 15  FINAL EXAMINATION -- 8:00 A.M.**

**IMPORTANT DATES (DEADLINES!)**

Case Studies:
   Case Study Group #1....  ...........  ...........  ...........  Tu .......  Sept 27th
   Case Study Group #2....  ...........  ...........  ...........  Tu .......  Oct 25th
   Case Study Group #3....  ...........  ...........  ...........  Tu .......  Nov 08th
   Case Study Group #4....  ...........  ...........  ...........  Tu .......  Nov 22nd

Research Project:
   Abstracts and Research Project Report ..  ...........  Tu . .....  Nov 22nd

Examinations:
   First Examination .......  ...........  ...........  Th .....  Oct 13th
   Second Examination.....  ...........  ...........  Tu .....  Nov 29th
   **Final Examination .....  ...........  ...........  Thursday Dec 15th  8:00 a.m.**