**COM 111**

**INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNICATION THEORY**

**Section 005**

**Online**

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**Expect a 24 hour response time .**

Teaching Philosophy…

**It is my belief that at this institution we are to . become a community of learners by providing a . safe, open environment in which all students are . capable of fulfilling the role of both learner and . learned. It is the responsibility of each student to . come prepared for each class having completed all . assigned tasks, having an open mind, and . having a complete commitment to the process of . learning. .**



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**COM 111 Course Description:** Introduces the student to numerous basic communication theories and underlying assumptions of theory building.

Prerequisites: Majors only

**Course Learning Outcomes**

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| --- | --- |
| **Result from Course** | **Benefit to You** |
| Articulate communication theories across disciplinary contexts: Interpersonal, Mass, Organizational, Small Group, Intercultural, Rhetorical, and Public Relations | You will learn how various areas of the discipline approach communication theory while being introduced to the important theories of the discipline. |
| Analyze communication theories for metatheoretical assumptions and implications | You will learn how to evaluate communication theories and better appreciate your own way of seeing the world. |
| Evaluate the heuristic value and limitations of communication theory in personal, social, and professional contexts | You will learn both the academic and practical ways in which various communication theories are evaluated and deployed in various contexts. |
| Construct practical solutions to social problems using communication theories as frameworks for problem-solving | You will develop the lifelong skill of using established ways to understand the world to improve your own lived experiences across all facets of your life. |

Additional Positive Outcomes of this Course:

* You will expand your understanding of how communication can improve the world
* You will become more comfortable engaging in communication theory
* You will be introduced to the various fields in the discipline of communication
* You will improve your critical thinking skills
* You will improve your analytical (problem-solving) skills
* You will work with other students in the communication major
* You will develop skills of information literacy
* You will succeed!

**Texts**

Griffin, E., Ledbetter, A., & Sparks, G. (2019). A First Look at Communication Theory. McGraw Hill.

ISBN10: 1259913783

ISBN13: 9781259913785

This course will begin with the textbook, but will include additional reading and support materials.

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Additional Requirements:

A strong internet connection

A reliable internet machine with PowerPoint, Microsoft, and YouTube connections

A working ISU e-mail account that you check regularly! (It must be your ISU account.)

**ASSIGNMENTS**

**Informal Demonstrations of Knowledge**

**Theory Discussion**

In these interactive discussions, students will have an opportunity to use theories from within each respective unit to discuss practical solutions to the collective social problems. The students will get to identify important theories and features of theories within each unit that are relevant to improving the selected social situation. For example, if the class selects a local problem in which two groups are at opposition, then the class will identify theories in each unit to contribute to the resolution of the conflict between the parties. Instead of focusing on correct answers, we will explore the multiple perspectives and range of value that theories bring to bear on the conversation. (The discussion is not measured by right or wrong answers, but heuristic value and thoroughness of explanation and application of theory.)

The purpose of this assignment is to share, challenge, and engage in our shared understandings of communication theory. We will use discussions to explore various understandings and perspectives on communication theory. We will ask and answer each other’s questions. We will provide each other with our considerable insights. In order for these discussions to be successful, we will each need to come to class ready and willing to share our perspective so that our understanding is individually and collectively expanded.

**Reflection Paper**

The students will write informal reflection papers that will be opportunities to reflect on their own learning and the course. Students will speak to two general themes: 1.) “What are your biggest learnings of this unit? And how will you use them?”; 2.) “How is class going for you? What works? What could be improved? And what could you be doing to improve your learning?”

The units covered:

Unit 1: Approaching Theory

Unit 2: Interpersonal & Intercultural Approaches to Theory

Unit 3: Rhetorical and Persuasive Approaches to Theory

Unit4: Organizational and Small Group Approaches to Theory

Unit 5: Mediated and Public Relations Approaches to Theory

The purpose of the reflection paper is to think individually about the information covered in course proceedings and how we each anticipate using our respective learning in our personal, social, and professional lives. The reflection paper is an opportunity to contextualize the learning. The reflection paper is also an opportunity to think about how the class is working or not working. It is a chance to think about what additional supports are needed for success in the class, from the learner and the instructor. Each reflection paper presents the possibility of regrouping and recommitting to the course for the next unit.

**Formal Demonstrations of Knowledge**

Over the course of the semester, the students will have multiple opportunities to demonstrate engagement and knowledge in the area of communication theory. The content of these demonstrations will be connected to the unit within which the demonstration is due. Each unit will task the students with answering a question (with additional underlying questions), using a theoretical framework.

The form of the demonstration will vary throughout the course. Students can select a demonstration of knowledge that they deem most appropriate for the selected unit and audience. [Students should not repeat any demonstration of knowledge.]

These assignments are an opportunity to demonstrate our understanding of course material, contextualize the learning to solve real problems, and engage course material through a variety of communicative channels. These assignments are your chance to make the course learning meaningful in ways you deem most appropriate.

You will get to use your understanding of communication theory to solve important social problems. These demonstrations of knowledge will engage both critical and creative thinking. The wide range of knowledge demonstrations will set you up for success in the future because you are able to choose an appropriate structure for demonstrating the knowledge and craft the content. The purpose of this assignment is for you to define success and achieve it.

**CONTENT**

**Demonstration of Knowledge #1 (Reflection on your own metatheoretical identity):** How do your own metatheoretical identity impact your responses to the problem?

Guiding questions:

* With which metatheoretical position do you most identify and why? (Include ontology, axiology, and epistemology)
* With which metatheoretical positions do you not identity and why?
* How does your position benefit your response to the problem? And why?
* How does your position limit your response to the problem? And why?

**CONTENT**

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* How does your position limit your response to the problem? And why?

**Demonstration of Knowledge #2 (Interpersonal and Intercultural):** How can the people interact, particularly across difference, to improve the selected situation?

Guiding questions:

* How can the quality of communication between people benefit or improve the selected problem?
* How can we work to improve the quality of communication and/or relationships?
* What impact does difference make in the quality of communication and/or relationships?
* What strategies can be used to overcome the difference?
* What strategies can be used to make the most of the difference?

**Demonstration of Knowledge #3 (Rhetoric and Persuasion):** How can the messages be better constructed to improve the selected situation

Guiding questions:

* How can the quality of messages, particularly the persuasion, benefit or improve the selected problem?
* How can we work to improve the quality of messages, particularly the persuasion?
* What impact does difference make in the quality of communication and/or relationships?
* What strategies can be used to overcome the difference?
* What strategies can be used to make the most of the difference?

**Demonstration of Knowledge #4 (Small Group and Organizational):** How can groups and/or organizations interact to improve the selected situation?

Guiding questions:

* How can the quality of communication between groups benefit or improve the selected problem?
  + How can we work to improve the quality of communication and/or groups?
  + What impact does difference make in the quality of communication and/or groups?
  + What strategies can be used to overcome the difference?
  + What strategies can be used to make the most of the difference?
* How can the quality of communication between and within organizations benefit or improve the selected problem?
  + How can we work to improve the quality of communication and/or organizations?
  + What impact does difference make in the quality of communication and/or organizations?
  + What strategies can be used to overcome the difference?
  + What strategies can be used to make the most of the difference?

**Demonstration of Knowledge #5 (Media and Public Relations):** How can media be used to improve the selected situation?

Guiding questions:

* How can the quality of communication through media benefit or improve the selected problem?
  + How can we work to improve the quality of message production by media? And the consumption of media?
  + What impact does difference make in the quality of communication and/or groups?
  + What strategies can be used to overcome the difference?
  + What strategies can be used to make the most of the difference?
* How can the quality of communication from organizations via public relations benefit or improve the selected problem?
  + How can we work to improve the quality of public relations communication and/or organizations?
  + What impact does difference make in the quality of public relations communication and/or organizations?
  + What strategies can be used to overcome the difference?
  + What strategies can be used to make the most of the difference?

**Demonstration of Knowledge #6 (Summary Demonstration):** What are you recommendations for the overall improvement of the selected situation?

Guiding questions:

* How can we use communication theory to create positive impacts for the selected problem?
* How can we strategically think across the contexts of communication (e.g., media, small group, organizational, rhetorical, intercultural, interpersonal)?
* What practical suggestions do you have to improve the situation?

**FORM**

This class is an exploration of different ways of being *and doing*. To that end, the students will be exploring multiple epistemologies and pedagogies. For the demonstration of knowledges, the students will explore different ways that information gets shared and knowledge is stored. Here is a non-exhaustive list of ways in which knowledge can be demonstrated.

**Art/Collage:** Draw, construct, or paint some pieces of art that represent an argument or a theme. Add a rationale (a few paragraphs) about the artwork that explains/justifies your design/vision.

**Cartoon/Animated Video:** Write and create a quick five-minute animated video that responds to the prompt and points to course material. Available animation services could include: Powtoon, Moovly, or another free online animation site.

**Children’s/Comic Book:** Write a book for children that connects to course concepts. Your book should have drawings, as well as text, and should be in the form of a story. You will also want to write an abstract for the book.

**Creative Non-fiction:** Write a creative piece of work that resembles (and is based in) reality. You could write a journal (series of entries) that show how someone lives through the material in this course.

**Facebook debate:** (Re)create a debate through Facebook or some social media. The disagreement should be a careful representation of multiple sides of the issue with a specific demonstration of “better” ways to communicate.

**Game Creation:** Create a choose-your-own journey game that interactively “teaches.” You’ll use Google Slides to create this Choose-Your-Own-Journey Story.

**Essay:** Write an argumentative paper with three sections: introduction, body, and conclusion. In this paper, you will articulate your response to the prompt with careful consideration of grammatical construction.

**Handbook:** Make a handbook that serves as a 2nd person guide for the reader. Handbook could include short infographics, pictures, writing selections, etc.

**Infographic:** Create a detailed, lengthy infographic using Canva or Piktochart. Integrate design, video, pictures, and other elements.

**Newspaper/Magazine:** Create a newspaper or magazine that covers the theme from the class. It should have multiple sections and perspectives on the topic.

**Photo Essay:** Create a visual argument using text and photos in ways that the relationship between the text and the photos illuminate responses to the text.

**Play/Skit:** Write the script for a play/drama/comedy. (Performance of the presentation can be optional.)

**Podcast:** Transcribe or record apodcast episode that includes: advertisement, programming, and more—just like one you might download from Apple, Stitcher, or Google Play.

**Poetry/Rap/Song:** Write lyrics about a theme from class. (You do not need to perform the piece, only construct. It should be about 3-5 minutes if performed live. For example, a song would need a chorus, two verses, a bridge, and a repeat of the chorus.)

**Tik Tok recordings**: You will use the format of the social media app Tik Tok. You will record creative arguments using 30-, 90-, or 270-second recordings. You will want to consider the visual and audio appeal of the presentation. (And you can make a series of recordings in multiple parts.)

**Vlog:** In this confessional style recorded presentation, you will speak to the audience through the gaze of the camera. You will speak candidly and directly to your audience about the theme of the class.

**Website:** Build a website using Google Sites. Design a theme. Integrate writing, video, pictures, and other elements.



* **SUCCESS:** Communication is not just about talking, but also about listening and remembering. If you’re like me, you have trouble remembering. Good note-taking is essential to success so you remember everything we go over, because if you don’t remember then you can’t use the skills we learn! Even though this is online, I encourage you to watch every video, complete every optional reading, and complete other review activities as available.



**EVALUATION**

In this course, you will determine your own grade. (Not just in that your work determines your grade, but that you will write a rationale for your final grade.) For me, grades are not a representation or the focus of learning. So, I have given control of the final grade over to you. You’ll assign your final grade at the end of the semester and write a rationale for said grade using your work in the course as evidence of the final grade. Please see below for further details.





* **LEARNING WITH GRACE:**In this class, the provided schedule is designed for your success. Unfortunately, each learner in this class could have different needs and competing life demands. If at any point you need accommodations to the schedule, then just please ask. Alternatives can be created and flexibility provided. The only cost to this grace is that you must be do three good deeds for your community. And report it back. You do not need to justify your need for an adjustment to the schedule. Just need to propose a new timeline and complete three random acts of kindness.





COURSE POLICIES

* UNGRADING POLICY: As previously stated, you are in control of your final grade. To that end, I’ve included some guidelines for your grade rationale below. Individual assignments are not graded, so until you write that narrative at the end of the semester, you’ll be the only one who will know for sure “how you’re doing.” My hope is that working without grades allows you some space to try new things, fail miserably, laugh at yourself, and try again, without pressure. We’ll do the work of the course for its own sake—for the sake of learning something new. I trust you. I trust your work ethic. I trust your integrity.

Learning Narrative Guidelines

* Based on your work this semester, select a letter grade for your work and your learning in this course. Write a narrative that addresses the following prompts:
* Discuss your process as a learner: evaluate your engagement with course content by reflecting on how you handled all aspects of this course. What specific parts of your process worked and what parts would benefit from some adjustments? Why?
* Discuss the products you generated as demonstrations of your learning: evaluate how your work has changed across the semester. Did certain elements improve more than others? Did certain elements become easier or more challenging? Describe.
* What will you do with this knowledge in future semesters? Make a commitment to yourself.
* What have you learned about yourself—as a learner and a member of a learning community—in this course?
* FEEDBACK EXPECTATIONS: You can expect feedback. But the feedback will be on the outcomes of your work (and not on the grade),
* PROFESSIONAL COURTESY: Professional courtesy includes respecting others' opinions, not interrupting in class, being respectful to those who are speaking, and working together in a spirit of cooperation. I expect you to demonstrate these behaviors at all times in this class. With that in mind, sleeping, reading materials irrelevant to class purposes, and disrupting the class will not be tolerated and will result in the student being considered absent for that particular class period.
* BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATION POLICY: Should any student violate the expectations of appropriate classroom behavior (as mentioned in the professional courtesy and presentation etiquette policies above), the instructor will schedule a meeting to discuss these expectations and develop a behavioral modification plan. If these behaviors persist, you will be at-risk for failing the course.
* N’ETIQUETTE: Netiquette is a set of rules for behaving properly online. Something about cyberspace makes it easy for people to forget that they are interacting with other real people. Make sure to avoid profanity. Be respectful of the difference in this class. Avoid grammar and spelling errors. Be kind and avoid flaming.
* BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATION POLICY: Should any student violate the expectations of appropriate classroom behavior (as mentioned in the professional courtesy and netiquette policies above), the instructor will schedule a meeting to discuss these expectations and develop a behavioral modification plan. If these behaviors persist, you will be at-risk for failing the course.

**EVEN MORE COURSE POLICIES?!?**

**CHEATING/PLAGIARISM:** Students are expected to be honest in all academic work, consistent with the academic integrity policy as outlined in the *Code of Student Conduct*. All work is to be appropriately cited when it is borrowed, directly or indirectly, from another source. Unauthorized and unacknowledged collaboration on speech topics and/or the presentation of someone else’s work warrants plagiarism.

Students found to (inadvertently) commit acts of dishonesty will receive appropriate penalties specific to the assignment in question. Students found to commit intentional acts of dishonesty will receive a failing grade in the course and will be referred for appropriate disciplinary action through Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution Office.





**University Bereavement Policy:** If a student experiences a death of an immediate family member or relative as defined below, the student will be excused from class for funeral leave, subsequent bereavement, and/or travel considerations. The student will provide appropriate documentation and arrange to complete missed classroom work as soon as possible according to the process outlined below.

Upon notification of the absence and proper documentation, each faculty member shall excuse the student from class according to this policy and provide an opportunity to complete missed exams, quizzes, and other required work. Ultimately, the student is responsible for all material covered in class and must work with each individual professor as soon as they return to complete any required work. Details can be found at the following website: http://policy.illinoisstate.edu/students/2-1-27.shtml





**Pedagogy of Grace:** We are all enduring trying times. We have great plans for a strong semester. But everything seems up in the air under the current social situation. As we’ve seen in the past years, everything can turn on a dime. There is one constant through all of this: We will get through this together. If anything should come up this semester, please stay in contact with me. I am here as your ally through this class. And I will help you in any way I can as long as you stay in communication with me. Let’s gear up for a great semester.

**More Course Policies…**

* **Communicating with Me:** If you need to contact me by email, please feel free to do so at my Illinois State e-mail address. Please do not contact me through Reggie Net. However, you must give me 24 hours to respond to your email on weekdays and 48 hours to respond to your email on weekends. For example, if you email me an hour before class starts, do not assume I will respond to that email within the hour. As a student of higher education, it is expected that all communication be of professional quality. When writing through e-mail to an instructor ***identify the COURSE in the subject line of the email*.** Please be sure to address the instructor in a professional manner. Always sign your name in your e-mails. Please follow these guidelines so your e-mail is given full consideration.
* **Student Accommodations:** Any student needing to arrange a reasonable accommodation for a documented disability and/or medical/mental health condition should contact Student Access and Accommodation Services at 350 Fell Hall, (309) 438-5853, or visit the website at StudentAccess.IllinoisState.edu.
* **School of Communication Research Pool Webpage:** This website is dedicated to research projects approved by the School of Communication which students enrolled in communication courses may participate during the semester. Com 111 students are encouraged to participate in research projects found on this to facilitate the production of new knowledge about communication and to learn about the value of research. The website can be found at <https://sites.google.com/site/ilstusocstudies/home>
* **Mental Health Resources:** Life at college can get very complicated. According to recent research, nearly 40% of college students are at-risk for developing generalized anxiety disorder and are less likely to seek help for it compared to other mental health issues. Students also sometimes feel overwhelmed, lost, experience depression, and struggle with relationship difficulties or diminished self-esteem. However, many of these issues can be effectively addressed with a little help. Student Counseling Services (SCS) helps students cope with difficult emotions and life stressors. Student Counseling Services is staffed by experienced, professional psychologists and counselors, who are attuned to the needs of college students. The services are FREE and completely confidential. Find out more at Counseling.IllinoisState.edu or by calling (309) 438-3655.
* **DA****TEN**

**Tentative Schedule for COM 111: Introduction to Communication Theories**

**Unit 1:**

**Introductions & Metatheory**

**Week 1: 01/16-01/21** **Lay Approaches to Theory**

Readings about Theory

Theories of the world

Theories of communication

**Assignments:**

* Complete Introduction Biography
* Post in Social Issues Discussion
* Complete Readings
  + Griffin Ch. 1: Launching Your Study of Comm Theory
  + Griffin Ch. 2: Talk About Theory
* View supplemental materials
* Post in Discussion One

**Week 2: 01/22-01/28 Metatheory: Scientific & Humanistic**

Readings about Scientific and interpretivism

Scientific

Interpretivist/Humanistic

**Assignments:**

* Complete Readings
  + Griffin Ch. 3: Weighing the Words
  + Article: Sci-hum Theory from Littlejohn and Fosse
* View supplemental materials
* Post in Discussion Two

**Week 3: 01/29-02/04 Metatheory: Critical & Assumptions**

Readings about Critical and Metatheory

Critical

Language of Metatheory

**Assignments:**

* Complete Readings
  + Read Ch. 4: Mapping the Territory
  + Article: Metatheory
* View supplemental materials
* Post in Discussion Three

**Week 4: 02/05-02/11 Demonstrations of Knowledge**

Demonstrations

**Assignments:**

* Complete Informal Demonstration of Learning #1
* Complete Formal Demonstration of Learning #1

**Unit 2:**

**Interpersonal Communication Theories & Intercultural Communication Theories**

**Week 5: 02/12-02/18 Interpersonal Communication Theory**

Interpersonal Communication Theory Readings

Discuss the use of theory in discipline and an example

Student examples and workshops

**Assignments:**

* Complete Readings
  + Griffin Ch. 8: Social Penetration Theory
  + Griffin Ch. 11: Relational Dialectics
  + Griffin Ch. 12: Communication Privacy Management Theory
* View supplemental materials
* Post in Discussion Four

**Week 6: 02/19-02/25 Intercultural Communication Theory**

Intercultural Communication Theory Readings

Discuss the use of theory in discipline and an example

Student examples and workshops

**Assignments:**

* Complete Readings
  + Griffin Ch. 32: Ch. Standpoint Theory
  + Griffin Ch. 34: Communication Accommodation Theory
  + Griffin Ch. 36: Co-Cultural Theory
* View supplemental materials
* Post in Discussion Five

**Week 7: 02/26-03/03 Demonstrations of Knowledge**

Demonstrations

**Assignments:**

* Complete Informal Demonstration of Learning #2
* Complete Formal Demonstration of Learning #2

**Unit 3:**

**Rhetorical & Persuasive Theories**

**Week 8: 03/04-03/10 Rhetorical Theory**

Rhetorical Theory Readings

Discuss the use of theory in discipline and an example

Student examples and workshops

**Assignments:**

* Complete Readings
  + Griffin Ch. 22: The Rhetoric of Artistotle
  + Griffin Ch. 24: The narrative Paradigm
* View supplemental materials
* Post in Discussion Six

**Week 09: 03/11-03/17 Spring Break**

**Week 10: 03/18-03/24 Persuasion Theory**

Persuasion Theory Readings

Discuss the use of theory in discipline and an example

Student examples and workshops

**Assignments:**

* Complete Readings
  + Griffin Ch. 14: Social Judgment Theory
  + Griffin Ch. 15: Elaboration Likelihood Model
* View supplemental materials
* Post in Discussion Seven

**Week 11: 03/25-03/31 Demonstrations of Knowledge**

Demonstrations

**Assignments:**

* Complete Informal Demonstration of Learning #3
* Complete Formal Demonstration of Learning #3

**Unit 4:**

**Small Group Communication Theories & Organizational Communication Theories**

**Week 12: 04/01-04/07 Small Group Communication Theory**

Small Group Communication Theory Readings

Discuss the use of theory in discipline and an example

Student examples and workshops

**Assignments:**

* Complete Readings
  + Griffin Ch. 17: Functional Group Decision Making
  + Griffin Ch. 18: Symbolic Convergence Theory
* View supplemental materials
* Post in Discussion Eight

**Week 13: 04/08-04/14 Organizational Communication Theory**

Organizational Communication Theory Readings

Discuss the use of theory in discipline and an example

Student examples and workshops

**Assignments:**

* Complete Readings
  + Griffin Ch. 19: Cultural Approach to Organizations
  + Griffin Ch. 21: Critical Theory of Communication in Organizations
* View supplemental materials
* Post in Discussion Nine

**Week 14: 04/15-04/21 Demonstrations of Knowledge**

Demonstrations

**Assignments:**

* Complete Informal Demonstration of Learning #4
* Complete Formal Demonstration of Learning #4

**Unit 5:**

**Media/Mass Communication Theories**

**& Public Relation Theories**

**Week 15: 04/22-04/28 Media/Mass Communication Theory**

Media/Mass Communication Theory Readings

Discuss the use of theory in discipline and an example

Student examples and workshops

**Assignments:**

* Complete Readings
  + Griffin Ch. 28: Uses and Gratifications
  + Griffin Ch. 29: Cultivation Theory
* View supplemental materials
* Post in Discussion Ten

**Week 16: 04/29-05/05 Public Relations Theory**

Public Relations Theory Readings

Discuss the use of theory in discipline and an example

Student examples and workshops

**Assignments:**

* Complete Readings
  + Griffin Ch. 30: Agenda-Setting Theory
  + Article: 4 Models of Public Relations
* View supplemental materials
* Post in Discussion Eleven

**Week 17: 05/06-05/10 Demonstrations of Knowledge**

Demonstrations

Final Grade Rationale

**Assignments:**

* Complete Informal Demonstration of Learning #5
* Complete Formal Demonstration of Learning #5
* Submit Grade Rationale
* Schedule Grade Conference (if necessary)