



COM 422-001

Proseminar in Communication Philosophy and Theory

Fall 2019

Classroom: Fell Hall 112

Dates & Times: Wednesdays 6:30 - 9:20 p.m.

Instructor: Kevin R. Meyer, Ph.D.

Email: kmeyer@ilstu.edu

Office Phone: 309-438-3298

Cell Phone: 309-299-1961

Office: Fell Hall 430

Office Hours: Tuesdays 11:00-11:30 a.m. & 5:30-6:30 p.m., Wednesdays 5:30-6:30 p.m.,
Thursdays 11:00-11:30 a.m., and by appointment

Required Readings:

Required readings are available through Milner Library or Internet hyperlinks in this syllabus and/or on the ReggieNet website. A reading packet might be made available for purchase through university Printing Services (if we are able to work this out, further details will be provided). In addition, you should obtain a copy of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th edition).

Course Description:

The Graduate Catalog description for this course is "Introduction to the role of theory, in communication processes and its relation to research." More specifically, Proseminar is an introduction to the philosophy of human inquiry and to the formulation and application of theory in the discipline of communication and related social sciences. The course is designed to provide students with diverse and in-depth knowledge about the process of communication and the nature of formally studying that process from the various perspectives that compose and characterize the communication discipline today. Topics include: the philosophy of human interaction in general and of the social sciences in particular, metatheoretical perspectives, the process of theory building and evaluation, basic and applied research, disputes and debates within the field, and an overview of content areas representative of the discipline.

Course Objectives:

We assume that students bring with them into the course fundamental knowledge about communication concepts and methods. By the end of the course, we expect students to be thoroughly familiar with the course content, as well as to begin to develop a deeper and more effectively applicable knowledge and understanding of one or more content areas within the discipline. By the end of the course, you should be able to:

1. Describe the historical development of communication as a discipline;
2. Define communication;
3. Explain the nature and functions of theory and research;
4. Identify and evaluate prevalent theories within the discipline;
5. Recognize key theorists and researchers in major areas of the discipline;

6. Critically analyze lines of research and key issues in the discipline;
7. Describe diverse metatheoretical perspectives;
8. Suggest future directions for theory and research within the discipline;
9. Articulate a perspective for your own study of communication;
10. Demonstrate depth and applicability in one or more content areas.

Special Needs Accommodation:

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 (SAAS) in 350 Fell Hall, (309) 438-5853, or visit StudentAccess.IllinoisState.edu. I am happy to accommodate any special needs you may have, although I require documentation from SAAS for ongoing accommodations.

Academic Misconduct Policy:

Students are expected to be honest in all academic work, consistent with the academic integrity policy as outlined in the *Code of Student Conduct* and Graduate Student Handbook for COM. All ideas are to be appropriately cited when borrowed, directly or indirectly, from another source. Inadequate citation, unauthorized and unacknowledged collaboration, and/or the presentation of someone else's work constitutes plagiarism. Students found to commit acts of dishonesty (including cheating on an exam, falsifying evidence, or plagiarizing a written assignment) will receive a failing grade in the course and will be referred for appropriate disciplinary action through Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution. Please note, I am very serious about reporting academic dishonesty and view it as my professional responsibility; I am not shy about enforcing the consequences of this policy.

Professionalism:

Learning is maximized by carefully and critically reading class materials, note-taking, critical listening, cognitive engagement, and focusing one's attention by not yielding to distractions. Professionalism includes listening to others' perspectives (although not necessarily agreeing with those viewpoints), actively listening to those who are speaking during lectures and discussion, and working together in a spirit of cooperation. Collectively, we are a team working together to improve and learn. Each student must be a productive, contributing member of our team. Be on time for class. Use of electronic devices should not interfere with your ability to pay complete attention, nor distract classmates or myself.

Attendance Policy:

Regular attendance and active engagement are required. Come to class prepared to discuss and engage with the daily readings. Perfect attendance is expected; by enrolling in this course you have made a commitment to being present during all class meetings. Absences deprive you of valuable discussions and information. There is a strong correlation between absences and grades; the more class time students miss, the lower the grades they tend to earn. Graduate students should not have issues with attendance, but be aware that missing more than one class period will result in a 5% deduction from your course grade for each additional unexcused absence.

Late Work and Incomplete Grade Policy:

If you do not come to class on the presentation day or an exam or quiz day, you will forfeit your points for that assignment. An automatic 5% of the points possible will be deducted from late assignments, with an additional 10% deducted for each 24 hours the assignment is late. If these penalties seem steep, please consider that conferences and journals do not accept late work. With documented university excused absences, assignments should be completed *prior* to the absence. As a general rule, incomplete grades will not be given.

Course Assignments and Grades:

The grading scale is as follows: A= 100-90%; B= 89-80%; C= 79-70%; D= 69-60%; F= 59% and below. Percentages will be calculated based on points earned from:

<u>Examinations</u>	<u>Points Possible/Your Points</u>	
Exam #1	100	/_____
Exam #2	100	/_____
<u>Quizzes</u>		
Quiz #1	25	/_____
Quiz #2	25	/_____
Quiz #3	25	/_____
Quiz #4	25	/_____
<u>Papers</u>		
Position Paper #1	25	/_____
Position Paper #2	25	/_____
Position Paper #3	25	/_____
Position Paper #4	25	/_____
Final Paper	80	/_____
Final Presentation	20	/_____
<u>Questions & Contentions</u>		
Q&C #1	20	/_____
Q&C #2	20	/_____
Q&C #3	25	/_____
Q&C #4	25	/_____
<u>Research Study Announcement Board</u>	10	/_____
(The board is at: https://sites.google.com/site/ilstusocstudies/)		
(Students wishing not to participate in the research studies may complete a 5-page journal article review instead. A sample is on ReggieNet.)		
Total	600	/_____

Questions & Contentions:

Write Questions and Contentions (Q&C's) for one or more of the readings assigned for each of the class periods in which Q&C's are due. Pick one or more readings that you wish to question and/or contend with. First, provide a clear and compelling statement articulating what you believe is a/the central contention of the reading. Second, challenge, defend, or otherwise elaborate upon some aspect of the reading. Third, include at least one well-formulated question that you feel is raised by the reading, and you want to the class to consider. Direct us to specific passages, arguments, or sections of the reading that give rise to your concerns. Q&C's are due by

5:00 p.m. Wednesdays. While your response may be longer, Q&C's ought to take 1-2 typed double-spaced pages in 12 point plain Times New Roman font, with 1 margins on the sides, top, and bottom. Place a header with your full name and page number in the top right corner of each page (i.e., "Ken Griffey 1"). A title should be centered on the top line of page one.

Examinations and Quizzes:

You will be given two exams over the course of the semester, the second of which will occur during finals week. There will be four quizzes that cover the assigned readings on those days.

Papers:

You will complete 5 papers through the semester: 3 short position papers, a fourth paper that will summarize a published study, and a final paper critiquing a theory. All papers and references should conform to APA style, 6th edition, and be typed double-spaced in 12 point plain Times New Roman font, with 1 margins on the sides, top, and bottom. Place a header with your full name and page number in the top right corner of each page (i.e., "Ken Griffey 1"). A title should be centered on the top line of the first page. APA style examples and other resources are available on ReggieNet. Only the Final Paper should include a Title Page and Abstract, necessitating APA style running head and headers. Integrate specific terminology from the readings where appropriate. Write well and proofread thoroughly to earn above average points.

Position Papers #1-3 are short papers requiring you to argue a position based on the readings, or to indicate your understanding of a theory or perspective by applying it to a novel context. The purpose of these papers is to help you structure your reading and to clarify your thinking.

Position Paper #4 is an abstract, or executive summary, of a research article or book chapter relevant to one of the concepts or theories covered in the course. The *Final Paper* is a longer and more in-depth evaluation and analysis of a theory we have discussed; you will also present your findings orally. Specific requirements and expectations for these papers are included below.

Position Paper #1: Defining Communication

Your paper should be 3-4 full pages, not including references. Present your own original definition of communication, explain it completely, define key words used in your definition, thoroughly justify or defend your definition, and identify strengths and weaknesses of it. The definition should be your own creation, but will obviously draw upon parts of definitions by scholars. Properly cite the readings, but evaluate and blend them with your own thinking.

Address the following:

1. Define communication. Begin with the words "Communication is a (an or the)..." and try to finish the sentence. You may use several sentences to define communication, but do not begin by saying something like: "Communication occurs when" or "Communication involves the..." In other words, begin with a "perspectives" approach – what is the overall purpose or goal of communicating in the first place? You should use the readings from class as you begin this paper, but digest them, evaluate them, and blend them (when relevant) with your own thinking about communication.
2. Isolate important words such as message, intentional (or unintentional), behavior, meaning, interpretation, (un)conscious, process, etc. (whatever words contribute to the development of your definition).

3. Explain whether you are taking a receiver orientation, a sender orientation, or a message orientation in your definition.
4. Identify the strengths and limitations of your approach to communication. For example, what would be the benefits of your definition in terms of research that might be conducted using your definition? What would be the limitations of research guided by your definition? What kinds of communication (what contexts or contents) would your definition best or most effectively explore? What kinds or areas might be excluded from study that followed your definition?

Position Paper #2: Identifying Metatheoretical Paradigms

In this 3-4 page paper (not including references), address the following:

1. Select three of the supplemental readings that clearly represent the three general paradigms of knowing that we have explored (post-positivist, interpretive, critical).
2. In a paragraph or two summarize the content of each.
3. Using your understanding of epistemology, ontology, and axiology, explain how these three approaches to understanding communication differ.

Position Paper #3: Building a Communication Theory

Your paper should be 3-4 full pages (more space may be necessary if your theory is more complex). Present your own original communication theory. First, explain and define the communication phenomenon addressed by your theory, making sure to provide operational and conceptual definitions for the variables included in the theory. Second, specify hypotheses posited by your theory and indicate how your theory might be tested. Third, indicate the strengths and weaknesses of your theory. Finally, indicate the metatheoretical assumptions behind your theory and identify the perspective on theory development from which your theory originates. The purpose of this assignment is to invite you to take on the role of a communication scholar. Your mission is to construct a theory that might reasonably explain or lend meaning to some communication phenomenon. While the format is a social scientific (post-positivist) approach to theory, it is certainly not intended to devalue in any way the many theories that have been developed through interpretive or critical perspectives. Rather, one benefit of social scientific inquiry is its insistence on strict forms and descriptions – qualities that should make this assignment easier for you. So, pretend you are a social scientist who wants to create an explanatory (rather than a descriptive) theory. In doing so, include the following:

1. An overview. Describe the phenomenon that you are going to explain in your theory. For example, you might be interested in why criticism in interpersonal relationships (or at the workplace) seems to be a negative, destructive force at certain times and a positive, affirming experience at others. You might be interested in why some television commercials convince viewers to buy and others do not. You might be interested in why some communication traits seem more important than others in helping people to emerge as leaders in the small-group setting. You might be interested in why some teachers are more effective in the classroom than others. Ignore the scholarly journals and our classroom discussions in this one paper; let your own curiosity guide you.
2. Variables. Variables are concepts that differ from one another in value in some way; age, gender, predisposition to anger, message directness, sensitivity to criticism, etc. In this section, provide a conceptual definition of the variables that your theory deals with. For example, sex refers to biological maleness or femaleness, while gender refers to the

psychological orientation toward endorsing characteristics associated with the male sex role orientation or female sex role orientation in a particular culture (in other words, individuals will fit somewhere along a cultural continuum with “feminine” at one end and “masculine” at the other end). Likewise, emotional sensitivity might refer to whether a person has a dispositional tendency to feel negative emotions (e.g., sadness and hurt or anger and resentment) or to feel positive emotions (e.g., happiness and love) or both. It might also refer to the ability to sense feelings. Regardless of the variables your theory covers, it is vital to define or conceptualize them in a clear and accurate way. Be sure your variables are both exclusive and exhaustive; in other words, that every individual belongs to a condition, but to only one condition. Be certain as well that your definitions of your variables are consistent with your theoretical perspective.

3. Hypotheses. Explain the relationships or associations that you would expect to exist among your variables. Would one variable increase as the other decreases? Would a variable differ in its intensity, quality, frequency, etc., according to social groups (e.g., supervisors/subordinates or males/females)?
4. Explain how you would test your hypotheses. To do so, you will need to provide an operational definition of your variables. For example, if you believed that female managers worked longer hours because they were more willing to spend time talking to employees during the workday, how would you test this? Would you give a questionnaire to both male and female supervisors? If so, how would they identify their supervisory role (e.g., direct supervisor on the floor, supervisor of department managers, etc.)? How would the questionnaire measure time spent talking to employees? Depending on how you defined this variable, you might ask about the number of email messages received during a day or over a week, how many lunches were spent talking to other people rather than eating alone in the office, or how much of the time spent talking to other people was focused on personal problems versus on task issues.
5. Limitations. Give an honest assessment of the limitations of your theory. Does it only explain social relationships rather than close or intimate relationships? Does it only explain processes for couples who live together rather than those who do not? Does it explain interaction for educated persons rather than those who dropped out of high school? Does it explain interactions, processes, antecedents, or consequences only for individuals who grew up in Western cultures rather than in more collectivist cultures?

Position Paper #4: Executive Summary of a Research Study

After reading the article you and I agree will be the subject of this paper, provide the information requested in each section. No two students can do the same article and it cannot be required reading for another class. Do not get creative; just follow the supplied format. Mark each section with the appropriate subheading. The length of your abstract should be 3-4 pages. The abstract should be single spaced within each section and double-spaced between sections.

1. Citation. Use APA style (6th edition).
2. Hypotheses and/or Research Questions. What predictions were made or what questions we asked? You will find these at the conclusion of the introduction/rationale.
3. Sample. Who served as the sample? Were they college students? Married couples? Was the sample a set of advertisements or television commercials?
4. Procedures. Explain what was done in order to collect the data. Did college students complete the survey? Did the researchers show videotapes and ask high school students

- for responses? Were married couples brought into a lab and asked to interact? How were the variables measured (e.g., using scales of 1 to 7 or by counting behaviors, etc.)?
5. Results. Did the researchers support their hypotheses or not? Be sure that every research question and/or hypothesis is covered here (you might want to list them by number to make sure you include all of them).
 6. Critique. What is your general reaction to this study? Do you believe that it was a good study? If so, what strengths do you see? Do you believe that it was not a particularly good study? If not, what limitations or weaknesses do you see? Note that you might find both strengths and weaknesses in the Discussion section, but you should also try to think of some that the authors did not consider. Try to identify both strengths and weaknesses in order to give a balanced critique.

Final Paper: Reviewing and Critiquing a Communication Theory

Your paper should be 15-20 full pages, not including title page, abstract, or references. The communication theory you review must be approved with me in advance. No two students can do the same theory. Once approved, there will be no switching of topics. The paper should contain the following sections:

1. Briefly but completely summarize the theory using at least one primary source.
2. Discuss the metatheoretical considerations of the theory and identify the metatheoretical perspective from which the theory originates. Also, critique the value of the theory according to Littlejohn, Foss, & Oetzel's criteria for a good theory.
3. Identify and integrate a minimum of 5-8 research studies, retrieved from Milner Library, that were motivated by the theory to review the communication theory. Also, cite the readings for this class as applicable.
4. Identify at least three exemplar research studies that have used the theory and explain how those studies used the theory, what the studies found, and whether the studies confirmed or disconfirmed the theory. Analyze the current state of the theory based on its application in research. Has the theory been appropriately/sufficiently tested? Has it been applied to the appropriate contexts? Is it driving new research efforts?
5. Propose what should be done with the theory in the future. What direction should future research in this area take?
6. References. Be sure these conform to APA 6th edition style.

Final Presentation:

You will share a brief summary of your Final Paper in an oral presentation (8-10 minutes) to the class. Bring photocopies of a one-page handout summarizing your talking points for your classmates; list key references on the backside so they can read further. Select carefully which aspects of your paper you would like to present to your audience. You may, for example, only lightly touch on aspects of the theory that are familiar to your classmates, and focus instead on new concepts or ideas that you have discovered through your research. Visual aids are not required, but are encouraged to help you to more effectively illustrate your points.

Tentative Schedule

Week 1	Topic & Readings	Assignments Due
W, Aug. 21	*Introduction to Course and Syllabus *Philosophy of the Course and rationale for assignments *Assign Position Paper #1 and Questions & Contentions *The Life of the Mind *Overview of the Communication Discipline, Conferences, Journals, Theories, Academic Writing, APA Style, Literature Searches *Graduate School, Academic and Non-Academic Careers, the CV	*Read Syllabus *Explore ReggieNet *Locate readings
Week 2	Topic & Readings	Assignments Due
W, Aug. 28	*Metatheory and Metatheoretical Considerations *Read Miller 2005 (<i>metatheory</i>) *Read Littlejohn Foss Oetzel 2017 (<i>criteria for good theory</i>) *What is Communication? *Read Watzlawick Beavin Jackson 1967 (<i>5 axioms of com</i>) *Read Motley 1990 (challenge to WBJ) *Read Andersen 1991 (<i>reply to Motley</i>) *Read Motley 1991 (<i>rebuttal to Andersen</i>)	**Q&C #1 due
Week 3	Topic & Readings	Assignments Due
W, Sept. 4	*What is Theory? (Assign Final Paper & Presentation) *Metatheoretical Perspectives and Paradigms *Read Kuhn 1970 (<i>scientific revolutions</i>) *Read Craig 1999 (7 traditions) *Read Potter 1996 (<i>science v humanist</i>)	**Position Paper #1 due
Week 4	Topic & Readings	Assignments Due
W, Sept. 11	*Paradigms, Theory, and Evidence (Assign Position Paper #2) *Read Fisher 1994 (<i>WJC evidence debate</i>) *Read Hawes 1994 (WJC evidence debate) *Read Berger 1994 (WJC evidence debate) *Read Carlson 1994 (WJC evidence debate) *Read Wilson 1994 (WJC evidence debate) *Read Fitch 1994 (WJC evidence debate) *Read Foss Foss 1994 (WJC evidence debate) *Read Tompkins 1994 (WJC evidence debate) *Read Beach 1994 (WJC evidence debate) *Read Liska Cronkhite 1994 (WJC evidence debate) *Feminism and Critical Theory *Read Wood 2008 (critical feminist theories) *Read Buzzanell 1994 (feminist org com theory)	**Q&C #2 due

Week 5	Topic & Readings	Assignments Due
W, Sept. 18	*Proseminar Faculty Night *Meet in Fell Hall 2 nd Floor Atrium at 6:00 p.m.! The sessions will be in the CIC and SMACC. *Traditional Thesis, Documentary Thesis, and 39-Hour Projects *Picking a Graduate Advisor and Advisory Committee	*Select and read <u>three</u> supplemental readings to use in Paper #2
Week 6	Topic & Readings	Assignments Due
W, Sept. 25	*Postmodernism and Critical Theories *Read Foucault 1982 (subject and power) *Read Shome Hegde 2002 (postcolonial) *Read Chidester Campbell Bell 2006 (postmodern racial identity) *Rhetorical Approaches *Read Burke 1963 64 (definition of man) *Read Fisher 1984 (narrative paradigm) *Read Keith Lundberg 2008 (rhetoric chapters 1 2 3) *Read Black 1970 (the second persona)	** <i>Position Paper #2 due</i>
Week 7	Topic & Readings	Assignments Due
W, Oct. 2	** <i>Quiz #1</i> *Assign Position Paper #3 *Semiotics *Read Fiske 1990 (semiotics) *Read Hall 2001 (encoding decoding) *Read Saussure 1916 (signs) *Read Barthes 1977 (rhetoric of the image) *Identity Theories *Read Mead 1934 (symbolic interactionism) *Read Goffman 1959 (presentation of self)	
Week 8	Topic & Readings	Assignments Due
W, Oct. 9	*** <i>Exam #1</i>	
Week 9	Topic & Readings	Assignments Due
W, Oct. 16	*Assign Position Paper #4 *Interpersonal Theories *Read Berger 2005 (interpersonal theories) *Read Baxter Montgomery 1996 (relational dialectics theory) *Read Manusov 1990 (attribution theory) *Read Burgoon Hale 1988 (expectancy violation theory) *Read Burgoon Buller 1994 (interpersonal deception theory) *Read Petronio 2010 (com privacy management theory)	** <i>Q&C #3 due</i>

Week 10	Topic & Readings	Assignments Due
W, Oct. 23	<p>**Quiz #2</p> <p>*Persuasion Theories *Read <i>Miron Brehm 2006 (psychological reactance theory)</i> *Read Witte Allen 2000 (fear appeals and EPPM) *Read Ajzen 2012 (theories of reasoned action and planned behavior)</p> <p>*Culture Theories *Read Gao Gudykunst 1990 (anxiety uncertainty management theory) *Read Houston Kramarae 1991 (muted group theory) *Read Cohen Avanzino 2010 (co cultural theory) *Read <i>Philipsen 1997 (speech codes theory)</i> *Read Gasiorek Giles 2012 (com accommodation theory)</p>	<p>**Position Paper #3 due</p>
Week 11	Topic & Readings	Assignments Due
W, Oct. 30	<p>**Quiz #3</p> <p>*Intergroup and Group Theories *Read Koerner Fitzpatrick 2002 (family com theory) *Read Sahin 2006 (diffusion of innovations theory) *Read Bonito DeCamp Ruppel 2008 (information sharing model) *Read Bormann 1982 (symbolic convergence theory) *Read Black 2008 (dialogue theory)</p>	<p>**Q&C #4 due</p>
Week 12	Topic & Readings	Assignments Due
W, Nov. 6	<p>*Organizational Theories *Read <i>Giddens 1979 (structuration theory)</i> *Read Larson Thompkins 2005 (concertive control theory)</p> <p>*Public Relations Theories *Read Ware Linkugel 1973 (apologia) *Read Ryan 1982 (kategoria and apologia) *Read Blaney Benoit Brazeal 2002 (Firestone image restoration) *Read Coombs Holladay 2002 (situational crisis com theory)</p> <p>*All sources for the Final Paper should be collected and approved by now.</p>	<p>**Position Paper #4 due</p>
Week 13	Topic & Readings	Assignments Due
W, Nov. 13	<p>**Quiz #4</p> <p>*Media Theories *Read Noelle-Neumann 1977 (spiral of silence theory) *Read <i>McLuhan 1964 (medium is the message)</i> *Read McCombs 2005 (agenda setting) *Read Entman 1993 (framing) *Read Ruggiero 2000 (uses and gratifications theory)</p> <p>*Computer Mediated Communication *Read <i>Walther 2011 (theories of CMC and IP relations)</i> *Read DeAndrea 2014 (warranting theory)</p>	

Week 14	Topic & Readings	Assignments Due
W, Nov. 20	*Course Evaluations *Review procedure for Final Exam *Synthesis and Reflection	
Week 15	Topic & Readings	Assignments Due
W, Nov. 27	* NO CLASS (Fall Break) ** <i>Research Board Participation due</i>	
Week 16	Topic & Readings	Assignments Due
W, Dec. 4	** <i>Final Paper Presentations</i>	*** <i>Final Paper due</i>
Finals Week	Topic & Readings	Assignments Due
W, Dec. 11	*** <i>EXAM #2</i> in Fell Hall 112 (5:30-7:30 p.m.) ***Exact date and time to be confirmed by Registrar	