

**CST 601 Engaging Communication Theory
Syllabus
Spring 2008
M 5:30-8:20 p.m. 118 Ferguson Bldg.**

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Office Hours: M 3:30-4:30p.m.; T/TH 2:00-3:00 p.m.; Or by appointment

Purpose of the Course: CST 601 presents an historic range of theories of communication, including interpretive, critical, rhetorical, and scientific. The emphasis is on engaging social and cultural contexts in order to utilize theory in everyday life and to prepare you with a knowledge set for the capstone. Students will examine ways of organizing theory into paradigms and traditions. We will also consider issues of constructing theory (called *metatheory*), including philosophy, perspective, epistemology, theory testing, and evidence. Metatheory is as important as theory in this course. We will examine theory as a manifestation of the mission statement of the graduate program in communication studies: “we research, teach, and practice communication to cultivate the ethical voices of people that speak in critical, constructive, and transformative ways to identities, relationships, and communities.” Students should come to the course with undergraduate preparation in research methods and knowledge of communication theories. If you think you lack enough background, read Em Griffin's *A First Look at Communication Theory*, call number P90G725 2006. See also Littlejohn and Foss on the e-reserve list.

General Objectives: The objectives stated below are situated within the context of the course. CST 601 is a foundation course taught in a seminar fashion and is a companion course to CST 600 and 602. By its very nature, the course is broader in scope than depth, and we all come together as an intellectual community to teach each other. Seminars are intense, small group courses where the primary objective is to discuss the material being studied. CST 601 is designed to expose new graduate students to a range of theory representative of the discipline and to teach students how to read theory. Students are then expected to utilize the content of the course as appropriate to the student's individual program of study. Ultimately, you choose what is important and useful from the range of possibilities presented in class. The theories presented in this course give you the material from which to build in CST 602 and in the capstone. Choose wisely!

Upon completion of this course, the student should be able to:

1. discuss the philosophical assumptions underlying paradigms/traditions of inquiry in the field of communication.
2. compare and contrast traditions and paradigms of inquiry in the construction of communication theory.
3. apply a particular perspective to the evaluation of theoretical literature.
4. synthesize and describe knowledge of theories in communication pertinent to representative paradigms/traditions.
5. demonstrate a high level of critical thinking skills in the understanding and evaluation of evidence supporting communication theories.
6. develop a personal "mind map" to guide your professional action as a graduate student and communication practitioner.
7. discover ways to engage/apply theory as a framing device for your communication choices in everyday social contexts.

Attendance: Please attend every class session. The course is designed for participation by students and includes discussion as the primary mode of learning. An excused absence is limited to illness, accident, required attendance at university-sponsored events, death or illness in the immediate family, and unavoidable company travel for fulltime employees. It is imperative to call or e-mail the professor in the event you will be absent. For an unexcused absence, you will receive a 10-point deduction off the final grade. A second unexcused absence will result in a drop of a letter grade. A third unexcused absence will result in a WF. Keep the professor posted if you cannot be in class.

Textbooks: [Buying texts on Amazon.com may be more cost effective than the UNCG Bookstore.]

Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association. (5th. ed). (2001). Washington, D.C.: APA. [All work for this course will be submitted in APA style.]

Robert T. Craig, & Heidi L. Muller. (Eds.). (2007). *Theorizing communication: Readings across traditions*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Gregory J. Shepherd, Jeffrey St. John, & Ted Striphas. (Eds.). (2006). *Communication as. . . Perspectives on Theory*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Required readings on e-reserve or in the stacks at Jackson Library. See attached list. Most items can be accessed through Blackboard, but there are times when you will have to go to library and share materials.

Evaluation: Students will be evaluated on several levels during this course. A take-home midterm will allow students to critically think through initial concepts and synthesize material. A formal research paper will allow students to research and evaluate a particular topic of interest. In-class participation is essential as this is a seminar approach to learning. Each student will also be asked to act as a discussant for readings at least twice during the semester. This may include an application of theory that requires handouts.

Grading: Your final grade will be based on the following breakdown:

Possible Points:	Final Grade:			
Midterm:	90 pts.	270-278=A-	279-293=A	294-300=A+
Paper	100 pts.	240-248=B-	249-263=B	264-269=B+
Participation	100 pts.	210-218=C-	219-233=C	234-239=C+
Prospectus	10 pts.	209-below=F		
Total	300 pts.			

Class Rules: Certain individual behaviors bother the class and impede the progression of learning. Please do not eat in class. Water bottles and other contained drinks are permissible, but be discreet. Go to the restroom at the break. Turn off your cell phone. No laptops. Address your peers and professor with respect, and that includes no cursing or off-color language. Arrive on time. Be prepared. Don't badger me about grades or tell me you need an A. Earn the grade and a fair one will come your way. Share speaking and listening time. Retain a sense of humor when the going gets rough. We all should try our best.

Honor Code: It is the responsibility of everyone at UNCG to obey and support the Academic Honor Policy. Students should become familiar with the Policy by reading in the 2007-2008 *Graduate Catalog*. Violation of Honor Policy will result in maximum penalty.

Some themes or assumptions about communication theory that will help you understand the structure of the course:

1. Communication theories build off of and intersect with other communication theories.
2. Communication theory construction is embedded in pivotal historic works that have had surprisingly lasting influence.
3. Messages, communicators, and the interpretation of meaning within contexts or levels continue to be key foci of communication theory.
4. An intense trend in the last decade is critical theory. Theory has now become a political tool.
5. Communication is one of the few academic disciplines to benefit from both scientific and humanistic modes of theorizing.

Topic I Communication: Traditions, Paradigms, Multiplicity, and Practicality

Schedule		Preparation
Jan. 14	Orientation: Organizing Theory in Comm Paradigms and Traditions Building a Mind Map	Buy Books Check Out Reserves
Jan. 21	No Class Meeting. MLK Holiday	Read CM, pp. ix-53 Read SSS, Chps. 2, 3 Write opinion
Jan. 28	Theory Construction Evidence, Context for Use	Read CM, Chp. 5 Read Powers, e-reserve Skim <i>WJC</i> , 58(1), 1994, Book Stacks/See handout Read Petronio, e-reserve Read SSS, Chp. 4, 5

Topic II Rhetorical Paradigm or Tradition

Feb. 4	The Greek Genesis and the Production of Discourse	Read CM, pp. 103-130 Read SSS, Chps. 11, 21
	Rhetorical Theory Growth by Extension: Situation, Identification, Ideograph	Read Bitzer, e-reserve Read CM, Chp. 8 on Burke Read McGee, e-reserve

Feb. 11	Critical Rhetoric: The Turn and The Feminine	Read Wander, e-reserve Read Campbell, e-reserve Read CM, Chp. 9 on Foss & Griffin
	Communication as Narration: Fisher's Anti-Aristotelian Move	Read Fisher, e-reserve

Topic III Social Science Paradigm

Feb. 18	Philosophical Underpinnings of Science	Read Hollis, e-reserve
	The Cybernetic Tradition (Concentrate on Chps. 19 & 20 in CM)	Read CM, pp. 217-256
Feb. 25	The Socio-psychological Tradition Dialectics: A Hybrid	Read CM, pp. 313-338 Read Baxter & Montgomery, e-reserve Read SSS, Chps. 1, 12
	Term Paper Prospectus Due (10 pts.)	

Topic IV What Should We Do With Semiotics Anyway? A Midterm Re-Grouping

Mar. 3	The Semiotic Tradition Discussion to Take Stock of Course	Read CM, pp. 163-212
Mar. 10	No Class. Spring Break	

Topic V Interpretive Paradigm

Mar. 17	The Phenomenological Tradition	Read CM, pp. 217-256 Read SSS, Chps. 3, 13, 14
	Communication in Family and Personal Identity	Read Trujillo, e-reserve Read Taylor, e-reserve Read SSS, Chps. 8, 9
Mar. 24	The Sociocultural Tradition Actional Ontology for Self and Society	Read CM, pp. 365-376 Skim Goffman, Reserve Desk
	Understanding Communication in Politics and Organizations	Skim Benson, Book Stacks Read Pacanowsky & O-Donnell- Trujillo, e-reserve

Read CM, Chp. 30 on Cameron

Mar. 31 Discussion Group on Research Papers
Take-Home Exam Due (90 pts.)

Topic VI Critical Theory and the Postmodern Wave

Apr. 7 The Critical Tradition Read CM, pp. 425-490
 Read SSS, Chps. 17, 22

Apr. 14 Foucault and the European Influence
 Gender Theory Read Foucault, e-reserve
 Skim Ashcraft & Mumby,
 Reserve Desk
 Read Blair, Baxter, Brown,
 e-reserve

Apr. 21 Presentation of Papers

Apr. 28 **Papers Due by 5:30 p.m. (100 pts.)**
No formal class meeting

May 5 Concluding Reflections Review Course Materials
 Culture and Universality in Theorizing Read CM, pp. 495-502
Bring Conclusions Read *Comm Monographs* Issue
 Forum, e-reserve

The professor reserves the right to hold class during the scheduled final exam period if it is necessary.

Final Grades: You may check your grades via the internet. Log on to the UNCG Homepage and click on *Campus Pipeline* or *uncGenie* using your Student ID number and your University PIN. Follow the instructions. No grades will be posted or given out over the department telephone line in accordance with university regulations.