

# COM465: Communication Theories & Research

*“If we knew what we were doing, it wouldn’t be called research.”*

*--A. Einstein*

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## Required Texts:

Infante, A.D., Rancer, A.S., & Avtgis, T.A. (2010). *Contemporary Communication Theory*. Dubuque, IA: Kendal Hunt.

Treadwell, D. (2014). *Introducing communication research (2<sup>nd</sup> ed)*. Los Angeles: Sage. [ISBN: 9781452217352]

American Psychological Association (2010). *Publication manual of the AMA (6<sup>th</sup> ed)*. Washington, D.C.: AMA. [ISBN: 1-4338-0561-8]



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*See Canvas for all COM465 information and materials throughout the semester !*

Additional Required Readings & Resources:

Rubin, R.B., Rubin, A. M., Graham, E. E., Perse, E. M., & Seibold, D. R. (Eds.). (2009). *Communication research measures II: A sourcebook*. New York: Routledge.

Cherry, C. (1957). What is communication? *On Human Communication*. (pp. 3-9). Cambridge, MA: MIT.

Forward, G.L., Sanson-Livolsi, A., & McGovern, J. (2008). College student communication, Religiosity, and family satisfaction: The importance of opposite-sex parent relationships. *The Journal of Communication and Religion*, 31, 245-271.

Corman, S. R. (1995). That works fine in theory, but... In S. R. Corman, S. P. Banks, C. R. Bantz, & M. E. Mayer (Eds.), *Foundations of organizational communication* (pp. 3-10). White Plains, NY: Longman.

**I. COURSE DESCRIPTION:** This course will critically survey contemporary theories and models of human communication emphasizing both the essence of human communication as well as underlying philosophical and paradigmatic contexts. The steps involved in generating original research will also be emphasized culminating in a "capstone" level research project.

Specifically, students in this course will be given opportunities to work toward the following course learning outcomes:

- 1). To develop an integral framework with which to organize knowledge about communication.
- 2). To understand the function and process of research in generating insight into communication phenomena.
- 3). To create an awareness of the essential features of a broad variety of current theories.

**II. ASSIGNMENTS:** In addition to exams, your grade this semester will reflect the following assignments:

- 1). Reaction Paper. You will write a brief, two-to-three page (500-800 words) reaction to the following statement (no separate cover page):

*All animals communicate in some form. Nonetheless, the human animal is the only species capable of articulating an infinite combination of sounds and inventing a symbol (language) system to govern their use.*

- a) Rely on early lectures, text, outside reading, handouts, video, and the newspaper article: "Monkeys can be specific and complex in their "talk"

and "Bogus science produces "talking gorilla" Koko, in fashioning your answer.

- b) Clearly state your agreement or disagreement with the assertion stated above and support your position by citing relevant theory and research.
  - c) If you believe human communication is different, specifically state how and why it is different and defend your reasoning.
- 2). Original Research Paper. Each team will be responsible for a 25 page (double-spaced, one-side, 8 ½ X 11" paper, 12-pt. font, Times New Roman typeface only, 1-inch margins, approximately 250-280 wpp) paper based on original research conducted this semester. This descriptive research will be quantitative in nature and will therefore utilize some form of a survey format. (NOTE: Twenty-five pages is a minimum amount for this paper - there is no upper limit).

In order to facilitate learning research procedures, the project will be structured to include the following preliminary due dates (see class schedule):

- a) **Project Proposal**: This proposal will include the following --
  - (1). A timeline for each major segment of your project including research, data gathering, IRB approval, writing, data input, statistical analysis, etc.
  - (2). A completed Project Proposal Form (2 pages) answering all 7 questions in the proposal. You want to tell why this topic is important, establish the context, and indicate what you hope to contribute by conducting your research. Also list the variables you anticipate including in your study.
  - (3). An annotated bibliography of 20 empirical (research) articles that you believe may be useful in your study. Use a 5x7 card for each article. On the front side of the card include the complete APA citation, the purpose of the study, the subjects involved, and the method utilized. On the reverse side of the card summarize the author's main findings.
- b) **Institutional Review Board**: Complete and submit an IRB application for your project. An expedited review can be submitted on any Wednesday by noon and will be returned by 5 PM on Friday of the same week (any corrections or modifications will extend this time).

**“Communication opens more doors than any other major . . . many employers view communication majors as better equipped to contribute to a fast-changing, information-based environment. No other major offers as much flexibility.”**

**-- Blythe Camenson (1997). Great Jobs for Communication Majors.**

## **RESEARCH PAPER GUIDELINES**

Each research team is to submit two (2) copies of a twenty-five page formal typewritten, research paper - one copy for grading the other to be placed on file in the Communication Studies Department. All projects should contain the nine (9) basic formatting elements listed below. However, since each study is different, individual papers may vary slightly in some of the specific elements listed for the method section, as well as, appendices.

1. **TITLE PAGE:** Running head, Title, Author, Date, Purpose of Submission.
2. **ABSTRACT:** Summary of the Problem, Procedure, and Results (100-150 words).
3. **INTRODUCTION:** Background and Statement of the Problem, Goal and Contribution of the Research, and Any Assumptions you bring to the topic.
4. **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE:** Summary and Analysis of Previous Research, Constitutive Definitions of Variables, Research Question(s) (Hypotheses).
5. **METHODOLOGY:** Research Setting, Subjects, Procedure for the Protection of Human Subjects, Operational Definitions of Research Variables, Procedures, Instrumentation, and Timing.
6. **RESULTS:** Characteristics of Sample, Data Tables (e.g., t-test, descriptives, correlation matrix, regression), Results of Statistical Methods Organized by RQ.
7. **DISCUSSION:** Include a discussion of your findings in terms of implications, importance, and usefulness. Study limitations and suggestions for future research, and a final conclusion (if you want one).
8. **APPENDICES:** Charts, Graphs, Word Tables, Informed Consent Statement, Questionnaire, etc.
9. **BIBLIOGRAPHY:** Bibliography is to include the listing for all indirect notations and direct quotations. Please cite all resources in appropriate APA bibliographic form.

APA Manual 6<sup>th</sup> ed. can be found in the reference section of the library.

Notes: **DO NOT** use plastic covers, binding, folders or any other such encumbrances. The paper should be secured with the smallest binder clip possible in the upper left corner.

Never hand in your only copy of anything.

### III. COURSE POLICIES & PROCEDURES:

A. <u>Grade Distribution</u> –		Your Score
Exam 1	75	_____
Exam 2	145	_____
Quiz	30	_____
Reaction Paper	25	_____
Project Timeline & Bibliography	25	_____
Final Research Paper	150	_____
Poster Session	50	_____
Excess Absences (subtract from total points)		(- _____)
Impromptu Assignments Not Submitted (subtract points)		(- _____)
*TOTAL POINTS POSSIBLE (subject to change)	500	_____

#### B. Grading Scale:

**A** (90-100%) Exceptional Scholarship - initiative for exceeding assignments, outstanding achievement.

**B** (80-89.9%) Superior Scholarship - some initiative, work completed in superior manner, timely, effective.

**C** (70-79.9%) Good average scholarship - all work completed in satisfactory manner, consistent with requirements.

**D** (60-69.9%) Passing grade but work does not meet all requirements in acceptable manner.

**F** (59.9% and below) Not a passing grade, work seriously deficient, missing, plagiarized, etc.

C. Grading Policy:

The grading scale indicated above represents a baseline for evaluation. Although grading criteria will never be more stringent than the percentages printed here, I may choose to adjust points upward if circumstances warrant.

D. Grading Challenges:

If you believe an error has been made in a written assignment or exam which adversely affects your grade, do not hesitate to bring it to the attention of the instructor. However, in an effort to void confusion, you must (a) document the error in writing, (b) state why you think it is an error, and (c) suggest what you think should be done to rectify the error (in cases where this is not obvious).

This must be done within 1 week of an assignment/exam being returned. These matters will be dealt with promptly and fairly. (If an error has been made which benefits you, please accept it as a "gift" which does not need to be reported.)

E. Academic Misconduct:

Please be aware that I consider cheating/plagiarism of any kind to be a serious breach of academic and moral norms. I have (and will) failed assignments and reported students when I believed them to be guilty of cheating. Every effort will be made to protect the integrity of the academic enterprise. If you are unsure about what activities are acceptable or unacceptable, please consult with me.

F. Announcements:

You are responsible for ALL course policies, announcements, and changes regardless of how or when they are shared. Relevant information is usually shared at the beginning of class and occasionally via your PLNU email account. You are responsible for this information regardless of your attendance on any given day when an announcement may be made or the regularity with which you check your email.

**IV. General Policies:**

a) All assignments must be typed (double-spaced, 8 x 11" paper, 250-280 words per page, 12-pt. font, Times New Roman typeface only, and 1-inch margins) unless otherwise instructed. Use the APA style guide where necessary. In addition, assignments are due at the beginning of the class on the appropriate day. Tardy assignments will be accepted but will be penalized for lateness (@ 10% per day).

b) The university requires that attendance be taken in every class. You are permitted only 2 absences without penalty. This means excused and unexcused.

If you have an urgent medical or personal need (e.g., sports, class field trip, etc.) to miss class, you should inform me, otherwise you are free to arrange your schedule according to your own priorities (e.g. if you are sick and miss 2 classes, there is no problem, no penalty). If you have not missed any classes and decide you just don't feel like getting up that day, again no penalty unless you miss more than 2 classes total). Coming late or leaving class early will count as a ½ absence. If you arrive after the roll is called, be sure to inform me after class. Ten points will be deducted from your end-of-semester point total for every excess absence.

- c) **Technology in the classroom: The routine use of technology during class (including but not limited to laptops, cell phones, IM, etc.) is NO LONGER permitted in class. Research indicates that those who take notes on a laptop computer do more poorly on exams than those who hand-write their notes. In addition, despite assurances to the contrary, students continue to violate agreed upon uses of technology in the classroom. Individual exceptions may be possible after consultation with the instructor.**
- d) You must be present in class when you are scheduled to present in order to receive credit - no exceptions, so please do not ask (barring serious illness or tragedy.)
- e) **GROUP EXPERIENCE:** Almost everything done “in the real world” is done in a group context. The ability to manage group experience is one of the most often mentioned skills employers look for in a college educated person. This class is another opportunity for you to practice effective group management skills and techniques. *It is your responsibility to figure out who you can / should work with in a semester-long project like this and manage the relationships, tensions, demands and stress of a collaborative project.*
- f) Evaluation of Group Members: Due to a phenomenon known as “social loafing” (where a group member may slack off assuming others will make up for their negligence); group members will be given an opportunity to evaluate their group member’s relative contribution to the finished product. Ordinarily all group members receive the same grade on this project. However, if contributions are VERY lopsided (defined as 1 SD or more on a class z-score), the “social loafer” will have his/her grade lowered 1 full letter grade for each SD below the mean (e.g., a grade of “B” would become a “C” for 1 SD below the class mean and a grade of “D” for 2 SD’s below the class mean). *Choose your group members wisely and manage the experience proactively throughout the semester!*
- g) Classroom Demeanor: Every effort should be made to arrive at class before the posted start time. Although a rare late arrival may be unavoidable, consistent lateness is at best an expression of immaturity and a lack of self-discipline. Likewise, while I permit a relaxed classroom atmosphere, talking and joking loud enough to be heard by me is both discourteous and rude and will not be tolerated.

- h) Academic Accommodations: All students are expected to meet the standards for this course as set by the instructor. However, students with learning disabilities who may need accommodations should discuss options with me early in the semester and provide approved documentation and verification of need. The Academic Support Center is available to students for a variety of tutorial needs.

## DEFINITIONS OF COMMUNICATION

Infante, Rancer, Womack (1990) "...the stimulation of meaning through the exchange of shared symbols."

Stevens, (1950) "Communication is the discriminatory response of an organism to a stimulus."

Dance (1967) "...the eliciting of a response through verbal symbols."

Hoben (1954) "Communication is the verbal interchange of thought or idea."

Berleson & Steiner (1964) "...the transmission of information, ideas, emotions, skills, etc.... by the use of symbols - words, pictures, figures, graphs, etc."

Anderson (1959) Communication is the process by which we understand others and in turn endeavor to be understood by them. It is dynamic, constantly changing and shifting in response to the total situation."

Ruben (1992) "... the process through which individuals - in relationships, groups, organizations, and societies – respond to and create messages to relate to the environment and one another."

Devito (1990) "Communication refers to that act, by one or more persons, of sending and receiving messages that are distorted by noise, occur within a context, have some effect, and provide some opportunity for feedback."

Adler & Towne (1984) "Communication is a continuous, irreversible, transactive process involving communicators who occupy different but overlapping environments and are simultaneously senders and receivers of messages, many of which are distorted by physical and psychological noise."

**“Communication in today’s society is the most vital aspect of success. The various core communication classes truly develop the skills needed to compete in the ‘real world.’”**

*Trevor A Shaw G' 1997  
Director of Sales  
American Behavioral Benefits Managers  
Birmingham, AL*



# COMMUNICATION QUIZ

**Instructions:** Please read the following statements and respond to each one by marking “T” if it is generally true or “F” if it is generally false. It is probably best to record your initial impression.

- \_\_\_\_\_1. I understand communication. I’ve been communicating all my life.
- \_\_\_\_\_2. Communication can be improved simply by improving communication skills.
- \_\_\_\_\_3. I didn’t misunderstand them. They misunderstood me.
- \_\_\_\_\_4. Most problems in human relationships are caused by communication breakdowns.
- \_\_\_\_\_5. The goal of communication is to achieve perfect understanding among participants.

YOUR SCORE: \_\_\_\_\_ CORRECT OUT OF FIVE

# THE PANAS SCALE

Directions: This scale consists of a number of words that describe different feelings and emotions. Read each item and then mark the appropriate answer in the space next to that word. Indicate to what extent you have felt this way during the past few weeks.

*Use the following scale to mark your answers:*

1 = *Very Slightly (or not at all)*

2 = *A Little*

3 = *Moderately*

4 = *Quite a Bit*

5 = *Extremely*

- |       |     |              |       |     |            |
|-------|-----|--------------|-------|-----|------------|
| _____ | 1.  | Interested   | _____ | 11. | Irritable  |
| _____ | 2.  | Distressed   | _____ | 12. | Alert      |
| _____ | 3.  | Excited      | _____ | 13. | Ashamed    |
| _____ | 4.  | Upset        | _____ | 14. | Inspired   |
| _____ | 5.  | Strong       | _____ | 15. | Nervous    |
| _____ | 6.  | Guilty       | _____ | 16. | Determined |
| _____ | 7.  | Scared       | _____ | 17. | Attentive  |
| _____ | 8.  | Hostile      | _____ | 18. | Jittery    |
| _____ | 9.  | Enthusiastic | _____ | 19. | Active     |
| _____ | 10. | Proud        | _____ | 20. | Afraid     |

## Scoring Directions:

Positive Affect: add up your scores for items 1,3,5,9,10,12,14,16,17, and 19.

PA TOTAL: \_\_\_\_\_

Negative Affect: add up your scores for items 2,4,6,7,8,11,13,15,18, and 20.

NA TOTAL: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Guidelines for the Use of Human Subjects in Social Science Research**

Introduction: Communication students are often required to engage in course-related research that involves gathering data from other people. In general, researchers must guarantee the following rights to research subjects:

- (1). The Right of Privacy: you must collect data in such a way that the identity of participants is concealed (e.g., surveys should be unsigned and names never recorded). In addition, you should indicate when and on what terms the information you collect will be revealed.
- (2). The Right of Informed Consent: you must supply sufficient detail about your project so that persons can make an informed decision as to their involvement or non-involvement. Participation must be strictly voluntary and you must assure subjects that their decision to provide data can be rescinded at any time.
- (3). The Right of Confidentiality: clearly state who will have access to any information you collect. Typically, access to data is limited to the researcher(s) and course professor.

Generally, the foregoing assurances are explicitly stated, in writing, in a cover letter that includes the name(s) of the student researchers, personal contact information (e.g., phone, e-mail address), and the course number, name, and instructor's name. Participants should be invited to contact the researcher if they have any questions or concerns. If you are contacted, respond directly to any questions and do not get defensive. People decline participation for many – this is not personal. Thank them and simply move on.

Written surveys must be grammatically correct, visually appealing, use gender-neutral language, and utilize existent instruments whenever possible.

NOTE: The course instructor must approve all research proposals in advance. You may save yourself work in the long run if you submit your proposal to the campus Human Subjects Review committee (this will add a minimum of an extra week to the research process). Otherwise, you should design a project that is exempt from further Human Subjects Review according to article II; sub-section C (see below):

### II. Who Must Submit Research to the Review Process

C. An exemption is granted for research involving survey or interview procedures or psychological tests; *unless* this exemption is nullified when responses are recorded in such a way that subjects can be identified or the research deals with some sensitive aspect(s) of the subject's behavior (e.g., delinquency, drug use, sexuality, rape) such that the subject could be harmed by the completion of the questions.