

**COM 201: Introduction to Communication Theory**  
**Spring 2014**  
**Dr. Thomas Bovino**  
**Suffolk County Community College**

**TEXTBOOK**

Griffin, E. (2012). *A first look at communication theory* (8<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES:**

A survey of the major theories/methodologies of communication and their application to the analysis of discourse. This course presents a historic range of theories of communication, including interpretive, critical, rhetorical, and scientific. Students will begin to conceptualize how a theory can be used to describe, analyze, and explain a particular communication issue or event.

Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

1. Understand the nature and development of theoretical inquiry in explaining human experience.
2. Gain a better understanding of the communication process by exploring a variety of theories based on intrapersonal, interpersonal, intercultural, small group, organizational, rhetorical, public, and mediated contexts.
3. Become a more discerning critic of communication theories.
4. Learn how theories and concepts can be used to analyze and understand interactions, messages, ideas, arguments, and points of view.
5. Develop an in-depth comprehension of a specific theory by researching, writing, and presenting a cohesive, well-justified, well-written critical analysis of a relevant communication event or issue of student choice.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

**Theory Paper** (100 points): Each student will select one theory from those we are discussing and become an expert on that theory. During our second class, selections will take place. Your selection should be informed by your personal interests, previous familiarity with the theoretical concepts, the abstracts in Appendix A, information from the website, and, of course, your position for selection in the class. Greater details on this paper will be given during the selection process, but this is a **HUGE** part of your final grade for the course. Papers are due on the date you are presenting your theory to the class.

**Final Exam** (100 points): Test given over all material discussed during the semester. It is in your best interest to take notes during class sessions on the various theories so that you will have information to use when you want to study for this test. The test may be a combination of multiple choice, true/false, short answer, fill-in-the-blank, or essay.

**Co-Teaching/Oral Report** (50 points): At least one week prior to the date your theory is being discussed, you **MUST** meet with me to discuss what you will present in class. As the student with more expertise on a theory than the rest of the class, you will be responsible for taking a proactive part in teaching the theory. Your emphasis should be on creating understanding beyond what is covered in the text. Your presentation will be evaluated on the basis of clarity and accuracy of ideas presented, adaptation to classmates' interest and level of knowledge, and presentational qualities. Your responsibilities might include explaining concepts you've uncovered in your research, responding to questions from your classmates, and/or providing examples that create understanding. In this co-teaching role, you share a responsibility with me to make the class time interesting and productive for those who have already read the text. You may wish to find real-life practical applications of the theory and/or devise some type of activity aimed at illustrating some part of the theory.

**Participation** (50 points): The nature of this course and the way I have structured it necessitates active involvement from all members of the class in the discussion of course content, theory presentations, activities, etc. I expect everyone to contribute, whether it is in the form of questions, comments, personal insights, observations or experiences, answers to questions, or in being an attentive audience member when others are presenting to the class. Your participation grade will depend on several things: your attendance, your contributions as previously mentioned, and your attitude toward the course. Remember, you can't participate if you are absent, late, asleep, or haven't completed the reading.

**TENTATIVE SCHEDULE:**

<u>WEEK</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>ASSIGNED READING</u>
1	Course Introduction Theory Selection and Paper Assignment	Ch. 1, Appendix A
2	Communication and Theory Communication and Theory	Ch. 2 Ch. 3, Ch. 4
3	Symbolic Interactionism Coordinated Management of Meaning	Ch. 5 Ch. 6
4	Expectancy Violations Theory Constructivism	Ch. 7 Ch. 8
5	Social Penetration Theory Uncertainty Reduction Theory	Ch. 9 Ch. 10
6	Relational Dialectics	Ch. 12

7	Social Judgement Theory	Ch. 15
	Cognitive Dissonance	Ch. 17
8	Functional Pers. On Grp. Decision Making	Ch.18
	Symbolic Convergence Theory	Ch. 19
9	The Rhetoric of Aristotle	Ch. 22
10	Dramatism	Ch. 23
11	Media Ecology	Ch. 25
	Semiotics	Ch. 26
12	Uses and Gratifications	Ch. 28
13	Cultivation Theory	Ch. 29
14	Communication Accommodation Theory	Ch. 31
15	Speech Codes Theory	Ch. 33
	Standpoint Theory	Ch. 35
<b>16</b>	<b>Final Exam</b>	<b>LAST DAY OF CLASS</b>