



Master Course Syllabus

For additional course information, including prerequisites, corequisites, and course fees, please refer to the Catalog: <https://catalog.uvu.edu/>

Semester: Spring

Course Prefix: COMM

Course Title: Theories of Communication and Culture

Year: 2025

Course and Section #: 3050-X02

Credits: 3

Course Description

This class is a survey of theories in the field of human communication. In this class, we will explore theories that explain communication behavior between pairs of people, within groups, in organizations, through the media, in the act of persuasion, between cultures, and in societies. Course content focuses on the identification of various theories and the development of support messages appropriate for prescribed research problems or mediums.

Course Attributes

This course has the following attributes:

- General Education Requirements
- Global/Intercultural Graduation Requirements
- Writing Enriched Graduation Requirements
- Discipline Core Requirements in Program
- Elective Core Requirements in Program
- Open Elective

Other: *Click here to enter text.*

Instructor Information

Instructor Name: Dr. Jessica A. Robinson

Student Learning Outcomes

- **Define, explain, and illustrate** transmission and ritual views of communication.
 - **Analyze** the lived experience of human interaction through the symbolic interactionist perspective.
 - **Describe** the relationship between mass communication and mass democracy.
 - **Define, explain, and illustrate** critical theories of communication, including structuralism/semiotics, post-structuralism, and post-modernism.
 - **Apply** communication theories (including transmission, ritual, and critical theories) to contemporary modes of mediated communication.
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Course Materials and Texts

Course Requirements

Course Assignments, Assessments, and Grading Policy

Discussion Boards (15%): Discussions are an opportunity to explore topics together. Posts to the discussion should add significantly to the conversation and support your point of view. In each module, students will answer posted discussion questions. Discussions will be graded on thoroughness and engagement.

Journals (4): During the semester you will submit journal writing assignments on Canvas, each of which relates to a specific theory of everyday life. These journals should both explain the theory and demonstrate that you can apply it to something in your world. Each journal should be formatted in the 5 paragraph essay format with a clear introduction, thesis, organizational strategy, and conclusion. In each journal, you will:

- a. Define your chosen theory.
- b. Apply the claims of the theory to something in your life – current event, tv show, personal experience, etc.
- c. Please note: you are required to cite at least one course reading in each journal.

Reading Quizzes (15%): Each week, you will have a low-stakes, open-note reading quiz on the weekly chapter reading. Some weeks will have two quizzes, depending on the reading schedule. Please prepare accordingly – don't plan to read and take the quiz at the same time!

Research Proposal (40%): One important thing that is learned in this class is how to write a literature review and research proposal. You will find articles in scholarly publications that illustrate how some of the theories we study can be applied to communication in one or more contexts. You need five different scholarly research articles demonstrating that theory to research that particular context. You will write a 5-7 page paper using the research articles that you find. This paper needs to use APA format and be well written with an introduction, clear thesis, conclusion, and bibliography. We will work on this assignment as the semester progresses, and the assignment includes the following parts:

- d. Problem Proposal Worksheet
- e. Introduction
- f. Five Sources
- g. Paper Outline
- h. Paper Rough Draft
- i. Peer Review
- j. Final Paper

Pre & Post Test (5%): Department assessment of course effectiveness.

The following grading scale will be used in this course:

- A = 93%-100%
- A- = 90%-92.9%
- B+ = 87%-89.9%
- B = 83%-86.9%
- B- = 80%-82.9%

C+ = 77%-79.9%
C = 73%-76.9%
C- = 70%-72.9%
D+ = 67%-69.9%
D = 63%-66.9%
D- = 60%-62.9%
F = less than 60%

Required or Recommended Reading Assignments

All required readings use chapters from the course text or provided PDFs that align with the lectures below.

General Description of the Subject Matter of Each Lecture or Discussion

Chapter 1: Launching Your Study of Communication Theory (defining theory; process of creating theory; metaphors for theory; defining communication)

Chapter 2: Objective and Interpretive Approaches to Communication Theory (defining ontology, epistemology, and axiology; objective and interpretive perspectives on ontology, epistemology, and axiology)

Chapter 3: Weighing the Words (goals of objective and interpretive theory; six criteria for testing objective theory; six criteria for testing interpretive theory)

Craft of Research PDF, Writing in the Com Studies Field PDF, How to Write a Literature Review PDF (finding a topic you're interested in; process of moving from topic to question; academic workflow; defining analysis and synthesis; pieces of the research article)

Chapter 8: Social Penetration Theory (theory overview and main claims; the personality onion; costs and rewards of self-disclosure; the importance of context; critique of Social Penetration Theory)

Chapter 9: Uncertainty Reduction Theory (theory overview and main claims; axioms and theorems of URT; information-seeking strategies; making plans to reduce uncertainty; critique of Uncertainty Reduction Theory)

Chapter 12: Communication Privacy Management Theory (theory overview and main claims; five claims of CPM; defining privacy boundaries; defining turbulence; critique of Communication Privacy Management Theory)

Chapter 20: Functional Perspective on Group Decision Making (theory overview and main claims; steps to making sound decisions; the role of communication; critique of the Functional Perspective on Group Decision Making)

Chapter 23: Communicative Constitution of Organizations (defining organization; theory overview and main claims; the four flows of Communicative Constitution of Organizations; four principles of the four flows; critique of Communicative Constitution of Organizations)

Chapter 14: Social Judgement Theory (defining persuasion; theory overview and main claims; the three latitudes; the role of ego; assimilation and contrast; the process of persuasion; critique of Social

Judgement Theory)

PDF reading on Contingency Theory (theory overview and main claims; organizational stance; key variables of Contingency Theory; applying the claims of the theory; practical applications for organizations)

PDF reading on Excellence Theory (theory overview and main claims; four models of publication relations; organizational effectiveness; the role of worldview; organizational hierarchy in public relations; segmenting the public)

Chapter 33: Semiotics (theory overview and main claims; defining denotative and connotative definitions; applying the claims of the theory; Semiotics and the status quo; critique of Semiotics)

Chapter 36: Cultivation Theory (theory overview and main claims; the three prongs of cultivation research; cultivation of worldview; critique of Cultivation Theory)

Chapter 37: Agenda Setting Theory (theory overview and main claims; three levels of agenda setting; the source's sources, need for orientation, agenda melding; the original studies; critique of Agenda Setting Theory)

Chapter 29: Standpoint Theory (theory overview and main claims; defining social location and standpoint; specific applications of Standpoint Theory; weak and strong objectivity; critique of Standpoint Theory)

Chapter 26: Face-Negotiation Theory (theory overview and main claims; individualistic and collectivistic culture; multiple faces of face; self-construal; conflict management styles; critique of Face Negotiation Theory)

Required Course Syllabus Statements

Generative AI

AI programs are not a replacement for your human creativity, originality, and critical thinking. Writing, thinking, and researching are crafts that you must develop over time to develop your own individual voice. At the same time, you should learn how to use AI and in what instances AI can be helpful to you.

The use of generative AI tools (e.g. ChatGPT, Google Bard, etc.) is permitted in this course for the following activities:

- Brainstorming and refining your ideas;
- Fine tuning your research questions;
- Finding information on your topic;
- Drafting an outline to organize your thoughts; and
- Checking grammar and style.

The use of generative AI tools is not permitted in this course for the following activities:

- Impersonating you in classroom contexts, such as by using the tool to compose discussion board prompts/responses assigned to you or content that you put into a Teams/Canvas chat.
- Completing group work that your group has assigned to you, unless it is mutually agreed upon that you may utilize the tool.

- Writing a draft of a writing assignment.
 - Writing entire sentences, paragraphs or papers to complete class assignments.
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Using Remote Testing Software

This course does not use remote testing software.

This course uses remote testing software. Remote test-takers may choose their remote testing locations. Please note, however, that the testing software used for this may conduct a brief scan of remote test-takers' immediate surroundings, may require use of a webcam while taking an exam, may require the microphone be on while taking an exam, or may require other practices to confirm academic honesty. Test-takers therefore shall have no expectation of privacy in their test-taking location during, or immediately preceding, remote testing. If a student strongly objects to using test-taking software, the student should contact the instructor at the beginning of the semester to determine whether alternative testing arrangements are feasible. Alternatives are not guaranteed.

Required University Syllabus Statements

Accommodations/Students with Disabilities

Students needing accommodations due to a permanent or temporary disability, pregnancy or pregnancy-related conditions may contact UVU [Accessibility Services](#) at accessibilityservices@uvu.edu or 801-863-8747.

Accessibility Services is located on the Orem Campus in BA 110.

Deaf/Hard of Hearing students requesting ASL interpreters or transcribers can contact Accessibility Services to set up accommodations. Deaf/Hard of Hearing services can be contacted at DHHservices@uvu.edu

DHH is located on the Orem Campus in BA 112.

Academic Integrity

At Utah Valley University, faculty and students operate in an atmosphere of mutual trust. Maintaining an atmosphere of academic integrity allows for free exchange of ideas and enables all members of the community to achieve their highest potential. Our goal is to foster an intellectual atmosphere that produces scholars of integrity and imaginative thought. In all academic work, the ideas and contributions of others must be appropriately acknowledged and UVU students are expected to produce their own original academic work.

Faculty and students share the responsibility of ensuring the honesty and fairness of the intellectual environment at UVU. Students have a responsibility to promote academic integrity at the university by not participating in or facilitating others' participation in any act of academic dishonesty. As members of the academic community, students must become familiar with their [rights and responsibilities](#). In each course, they are responsible for knowing the requirements and restrictions regarding research and writing, assessments, collaborative work, the use of study aids, the appropriateness of assistance, and other issues. Likewise, instructors are responsible to clearly state expectations and model best practices.

Further information on what constitutes academic dishonesty is detailed in [UVU Policy 541: Student Code of Conduct](#).

Equity and Title IX

Utah Valley University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age (40 and over), disability, veteran status, pregnancy, childbirth, or pregnancy-related conditions, citizenship, genetic information, or other basis protected by applicable law, including Title IX and 34 C.F.R. Part 106, in employment, treatment, admission, access to educational programs and activities, or other University benefits or services. Inquiries about nondiscrimination at UVU may be directed to the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights or UVU's Title IX Coordinator at 801-863-7999 – TitleIX@uvu.edu – 800 W University Pkwy, Orem, 84058, Suite BA 203.

Religious Accommodation

UVU values and acknowledges the array of worldviews, faiths, and religions represented in our student body, and as such provides supportive accommodations for students. Religious belief or conscience broadly includes religious, non-religious, theistic, or non-theistic moral or ethical beliefs as well as participation in religious holidays, observances, or activities. Accommodations may include scheduling or due-date modifications or make-up assignments for missed class work.

To seek a religious accommodation, a student must provide written notice to the instructor and the Director of Accessibility Services at accessibilityservices@uvu.edu. If the accommodation relates to a scheduling conflict, the notice should include the date, time, and brief description of the difficulty posed by the conflict. Such requests should be made as soon as the student is aware of the prospective scheduling conflict.

While religious expression is welcome throughout campus, UVU also has a [specially dedicated space](#) for meditation, prayer, reflection, or other forms of religious expression.