

**Communication Theory and Analysis (COMM 3371 – CRN: 11153)**

Fall 2020

Dr. Frank G. Pérez

Office: Quinn Hall, Room 207

Class Location: Online

Office phone: 915.747.6287

Office Hours (Zoom): Mondays 10:00 – 11:00 a.m./by appt.

Email: [fperez1@utep.edu](mailto:fperez1@utep.edu)

Class Sessions: Asynchronous

**Course Overview:**

Theory guides our behavior and ability to negotiate realities in a variety of interpersonal, organizational, and social contexts. The purpose of the course is to understand the important role that communication theory plays in the formation, development, and termination of human relationships, particularly at societal levels. A thorough understanding of theories and their ability to understand the logic or rationale that underlies them helps one to analyze problems and to communicate effectively. In this class, we will specifically examine: (a) how communication affects one's view of self, society, and other, (b) how the use of different communication theories affects outcomes in research and in our own views on reality, and (c) how cultural factors influence contemporary communication theory.

We will begin by examining key theories across a number of communication subfields (e.g., interpersonal, mass media, cultural studies). In the latter part of the course, there is an emphasis on intercultural communication vis-à-vis an examination of public memory and art. Finally, we will also seek to link theory to "real life" by also examining contemporary issues using selected theories.

**Course Goals:**

1. To build foundational knowledge in the study of communication through an examination of the history of the discipline and through the study of landmark and contemporary theories of communication.
2. To compare and contrast theories, understanding how the use of one may be beneficial or limiting.
3. To learn how we can use communication theories in applied contexts.
4. To develop presentational, research, and writing skills.
5. To apply and integrate theories into everyday situations.
6. To generate a passion for lifelong learning in writing, researching, and critical thinking.

**Required Texts:**

- Griffin, E. et al. (2018). *A first look at communication theory*. (10<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York: McGraw Hill.

**NOTE: You may purchase the 9<sup>th</sup> or even the 8<sup>th</sup> edition. However, the chapter numbers may not match and it is possible some chapters may be missing in older versions.**

- A second text will be assigned and you will be informed once it is selected.
- Given the pandemic, I will likely have to ask you to track down and/or possibly rent two or three videos during the semester. The videos will be academic in nature and I will first look for something on a UTEP library database to help defray class costs.

**Course Assignments:**

- |                                                                     |                  |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| 1. Participation via discussion board                               | 10 points        |
| 2. Quizzes (Assigned for multiple readings, number of quizzes TBD). | 15 points        |
| 3. Theory Paper/Music Video (Due October 9 by 11:59 p.m.)           | 15 points        |
| 4. Midterm Exam (Due October 16 by 11:59 p.m.)                      | 30 points        |
| 5. Final Exam (Comprehensive. Date to be announced.)                | <u>30 points</u> |

**Total Points****100 points****INSTRUCTOR RESERVES THE RIGHT TO ALTER THE GRADING SCHEDULE**

**Theory Paper/Music Video:** Please select a visually dynamic music video that you like or want to critique (perhaps this is a video you view as particularly creative, innovative, or even offensive). In a 3½ to 4-page essay analyze the video using one of the theories we have or will cover in class. This is your opportunity to “read” the video from an academic perspective. Do not be afraid to see where this analysis takes you; rather, see it as an opportunity to have fun and explore. Here are some basic ideas you can start with (You do **NOT** have to use them all. It is only a 4-page paper.): Does a person or figure in the video mean something to you that you want others to see? What aesthetics/colors are used and why do you think they are used? How does the video compare to the lyrics? How are women represented in the video, or how is masculinity constructed in the video? Social class? Ethnicity/race? I will post a sample for you to view on Blackboard, more if possible. **However, you may NOT use any of the videos we critique in class for this assignment. YOUR PAPER MUST BE IN ESSAY FORMAT. I HAVE PROVIDED AN OUTLINE TO HELP YOU ORGANIZE YOUR THOUGHTS AND PAPER.** Your paper will need the following format. AGAIN, WRITE IT AS AN ESSAY (NOT AS AN OUTLINE):

- I. Introduction
  - a. What video
    - i. “This essay examines the video *Side Effects* by pop duo The Chainsmokers. Specifically, it analyzes the representation of stereotypical romantic tensions after a breakup.”
  - b. Why important (or, why should we care?) – Here, focus on the general topic.
    - i. “The band’s success and its hegemonic framing of the topic make it worthy of study. The essay examines the video vis-à-vis representations of a young woman presumably dealing with a romantic breakup with her partner and how those images, together with the song lyrics address the physical aspects of romantic absence.”
  - c. What theory
    - i. “Building on Gerber and Gross’s (1976) concept of cultivation theory, the idea that (explain theory in a few words here, I will argue that . . .)”
  - d. Research Questions
    - i. List two research questions: “In the following essay, I will examine how representations of a young female hotel employee are used to represent romantic separation, as well as what they suggest about . . . The essay will then ask what perspectives these elements potentially cultivate in viewers.”
- II. Video Description
  - a. Describe the video (and song lyrics if you want).
    - i. *Side Effects* depicts a young hotel worker, portrayed by Camila Mendes of *Riverdale* fame, who is forced to work for an entire weekend. Throughout the video, Mendes’ character dances near the hotel pool and viewers see what some hotel guests are doing. In the first scene, . . . Second, blah, blah, blah . . . Third, the video . . . The lyrics (elaborate on the lyrics without writing them down; use a small quote or two if you must).”

**Important: Do NOT explain anything here. In APA, you first describe what you are analyzing in the Findings Section and then explain what it means in the following or Analysis section.**
- III. Theoretical Analysis
  - a. What does the video mean when you analyze it via the theory you selected. Answers to your research answers belong here and will be driven by the theory used. For example, cultivation analysis may suggest XYZ but standpoint theory will suggest ABC (something different).
- IV. Conclusion
  - a. Summarize your essay in one paragraph.
  - b. Explain why this is an important finding or contribution

**IMPORTANT:** Use a chapter from the Griffin et al. (2015) book for this paper – **DO NOT USE SOCIAL PENETRATION THEORY.** To augment your understanding of the theory you select, **you must also use**

**an academic journal article on the same theory.** Magazines, newspapers, trade journals, websites, or similar sources are NOT ALLOWED for this project. YOUR PROJECT MUST INCLUDE AN APA-FORMATTED REFERENCES SHEET. FAILURE TO INCLUDE ONE WILL COST YOU ONE ENTIRE LETTER GRADE.

**Instructor’s Message about Learning:** Learning can be challenging and this class will expose you to ideas that may counter your points of view or lead you to question how you see the world. During such moments please recall that the purpose of an **education is to push you to think** in ways that may be new or different. If you disagree with all or any part of a film, lecture, or reading, please understand that you do not have to concur with the idea(s) advocated by their authors. You do, however, need to contemplate what is being said, understanding that doing so will either reinforce what you already believe or allow you to think in a new way. **You are here by choice and my job is to help you grow intellectually.** Doing so requires that you engage the class with an open mind. **University is NOT technical school and liberal arts colleges focus on intellectually diverse ways of understanding the world.** If you are unwilling to see things in new ways perhaps you need to reevaluate why you are seeking a university education.

Again, I do not ask you to agree but simply to consider how others see the world. If something is anathema to you, ask yourself why. In the end, exposure to a diversity of opinions will help you to either reinforce what you believe or to learn new ways of thinking. I invite you to share your thoughts on class discussion boards and/or in your assignments. We are here to learn from one another. Please participate in class and show one another the respect you ask that we give you. The grading criteria are designed to let you express your views. No one will pass or fail because of their views. Good grades require a cogent argument, solid writing, and a deep contemplation of the course materials. In terms of grading, I do not care what stance you take, only that you develop and defend it to your best technical and analytical abilities.

#### Class Policies

**Academic Honesty:** Students caught in acts of academic dishonesty will be disciplined in accordance with UTEP policy. I will report the incident and submit the assignment to the Dean of Students and they will determine your punishment.

**Disabilities:** Qualified students with disabilities needing appropriate academic adjustments should contact me as soon as possible to ensure that their needs are met in a timely manner. Please also register with the UTEP Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS), UTEP Union East, Room 106. You may reach them via telephone (915) 747-5148 or email [cass@utep.edu](mailto:cass@utep.edu). If you need any accommodation, CASS registration will protect you and will help to ensure you receive the accommodation(s) you need to excel in your studies. I am always glad to help in any way I can. However, CASS staff members are the only individuals who can validate and authorize accommodations for students with disabilities.

**Grading:** All assignments are graded using the same criteria: (a) grammar/spelling, (b) organization, (c) accuracy in using concepts, (d) originality of analysis, (e) depth of critical thinking, (f) quality of arguments—using evidence to support opinions, and (g) following instructions.

An “A” paper will be a one that is superior. It will address all of the issues assigned (i.e., directions are followed). The writer will demonstrate exceptional fluency and use of language. The paper will be distinguished by the quality of its content, the amount of detail used to support or illustrate its central ideas, and the coherency of the analysis presented. It will contain very few grammatical errors. It will include original analysis of the theories/concepts (not repeating what it covered in class or the texts). It will accurately use and cite sources (using APA style; this means citing them in text as well as including a reference list). That is, there is a good amount of substance from the sources and it is accurate. The sources are strong, academic sources. Finally, the paper will be well organized with a clear purpose/thesis statement, clear topic sentences for paragraphs, good transitions, and good previews and reviews of main points.

A “B” paper will be above average. It will be well organized and developed, and it will demonstrate a clear understanding of the assignment (i.e., all issues are addressed—directions

followed). Although it may contain minor flaws, the writing will exhibit an ability to use the language effectively and the analysis presented will be relatively coherent. It will include original analysis of the theories/concepts, but not quite as compelling as an A paper (e.g., not as well supported with evidence). It will accurately use and cite sources (using APA style; this means citing them in text as well as including a reference list). The amount of substance is strong, but not as well developed as an A paper and there may be minor flaws in the evidence. The sources are strong academic sources. Finally, the paper will be well organized, but with some minor flaws in organization.

A “C” paper will be an average paper. It will demonstrate an adequate level of organization and development. It will contain enough specific information to illustrate a described experience or a proposed argument. Although the paper may contain writing errors, they will not be serious or frequent enough to distract the reader from the content. All issues must be addressed for it to receive a “C” (i.e., you must follow directions to get a C). The analysis is largely repetitive with what is presented in class or texts and thus is not original. Sources are not cited properly or the amount of substance from the sources is limited (An example of limited substance is using one quotation—usually a definition—from the source to show you used it in order to count as one of the required sources.). All of the sources are not strong academic ones. Finally, the organization has some flaws. For example, main points may not be clear, the paper lacks a thesis, etc.

A “D” paper will be below average. It will reveal one or two of the following weaknesses: (1) all objectives of the assignment are not addressed (you did not follow directions), (2) serious problems of organization or focus, (3) insufficient information to illustrate experiences or support the arguments, (4) serious problems in sentence structure, (5) errors in writing that are sufficient to distract the reader from the content of the paper, (6) not enough outside sources (or none), and (7) lacking original analysis.

An “F” paper will demonstrate little understanding of the assignment or the mechanics of writing. Essentially, it will include three or more of the weaknesses presented in the “D” paper.

I expect you to contribute your original ideas to class discussions and in assignments.

**Late Papers:** I do not accept late papers unless there are circumstances beyond your control that you can document. If you need to submit an assignment late, please let me know ahead of time, whenever possible. You will lose 10 points of the final grade for late papers, unless the tardiness is due to an illness or death.

**Letters of Recommendation:** I provide letters of recommendation only for students who have completed at least two classes with me, one of which must be an upper-division class. Furthermore, you must have earned an "A" in at least one of the classes. You must give me at least two weeks to complete the recommendation. Please also let me know if you would like for me to serve as an employment reference. I am always glad to help but need to know who you are as a person, have a copy of your resume, and some basic info about the job or position for which you are applying. Please contact me before you list me as a reference.

**Participation:** It is imperative that you keep up with the reading assignments and comment on discussion boards.

**Schedule of Class Sessions**  
(Instructor reserves the right to alter the class readings and/or assignments)

## Introduction and History of Communication Studies

### Week 1 – Aug 25 and 27

#### Topic/Readings

**Tues**

**Introduction to Communication Theory and Analysis**

Introductions

Syllabus Overview

What is a research university and why it matters to you

**Read for Thurs, Aug 27** – Chapters 1 and 2 in Griffin et al. (2018)

**Thurs**

**Discussing Theory: An Introduction**

Chapter 1: Launching Your Study of Communication Theory

Chapter 2: Talk about Theory

**Read for Tues, Sept 1** – Chapter 4: Mapping the Territory in Griffin et al. (2018)

### Week 2 – Sept 1 and 3

**Tues**

**How Did We Get Here?**

**Lecture:** A History of Communication Study vis-à-vis Chapter 4

**Read for Thurs, Sept 3:** Chapter 8: Social penetration theory

**Thurs**

Social penetration theory

**Read for Tues, Sept 8** – Chapter 8: Social Penetration Theory

### Week 3 – Sept 8 and 10

**Tues**

Dialectics (Dialectical theory in Griffin et al., 2018)

**Read for Thurs, Sept 10** – Chapter 26: Semiotics in Griffin et al. (2018)

**Thurs**

**Lecture:** Semiotics

**No readings for Tues, Sept 15**

## The Media Effects Tradition

### Week 4 – Sept 15 and 17

**Tues**

**Review Slide Presentation on Plagiarism and APA**

**Read for Thurs, Sept 19:** Chapter 19: Cultivation Theory/Analysis in Griffin et al. (2018)

**Thurs**

Cultivation Theory/Analysis

**No readings for Tues, Sept 22**

### Week 5 – Sept 22 and 24

**Tues**

**Lecture:** Cultivation Analysis in Action – Class activity

**Read for Thurs, Sept 24:** Chapter 35: Standpoint Theory in Griffin et al. (2018)

**Thurs**

Standpoint Theory

**Read for Tues, Sept 29:** Chapter 25: Media Ecology in Griffin et al. (2015)

**Week 6 – Sept 29 and Oct 1**

**Tues**

**Media Ecology of Marshall McLuhan**

**Read for Thurs, Oct:** Jean Kilbourne's speech, "Jesus is a Brand of Jeans" (2015) from *Humanist* – PDF on Blackboard

**Thurs**

**Video:** *Miss Representation* (2010)

**No readings for Oct 6 and 8**

**Video Paper is due on Oct 11 by 11:59 p.m.**

**Week 7 – Oct 6 and 8**

**Tues**

**Video:** *The Mask You Live In* (2015)

**No readings for Oct 8**

**Video Paper is due on Oct 9 by 11:59 p.m.**

**Thursday**

**Writing day**

**Video Paper is due TOMORROW, Friday, Oct 9 by 11:59 p.m.**

**Week 8 – Oct 13 and 15**

**Tues**

**Midterm Review. I will be available via Zoom during our scheduled class time to answer any questions you may have about the midterm or any related content.**

**Thurs**

**Midterm Exam is due tomorrow, Friday, Oct. 23, no later than 11:59 p.m.**

**Read for Tuesday, Oct 20:**

**CRITICAL THEORY and CULTURAL STUDIES**

**Week 9 – Oct 20 and 22**

**Tues**

**Lecture on Critical Theory and Cultural Studies (via Zoom and recorded and posted on our FB AFTER Oct 20. I plan to present the lecture on this day).**

**Read for Thurs, Oct 22:** Garcia Canclini (2014) – *Visual Cultures: Between Art and Heritage*

**Thurs**

Art, Heritage, and Settler Colonialism

Read for Tues, Oct 27: Patrick Wolfe (2006) on settler colonialism

**Read for Tues, Oct 27:** Pérez and Ortega (2008) on Juan de Oñate in El Paso PDF on Blackboard

**Week 10 – Oct 27 and 29**

**Tues** Juan de Onate in El Paso and the Erasure of Mexican/American History  
**Read for Thurs, Oct 29:** Hammer (2012) - Memory Lines: The Plotting of New York's New Military Tract

**Thurs** **Memory Lines**  
**Reading for Tues, Nov 3:** Mask (2020) – What Can House Numbers Teach Us about Power?

**Week 11 – Nov 3 and 5**

**Tues** House Numbers and Power  
**Read for Thurs, Nov 5:** Bonilla-Silva (2018) – The New Racism

**Thurs** Color-blind Racism/The New Racism  
**Read for Tues, Nov 10:** Eddo-Lodge – What is White Privilege? And Britt Rusert – Black Drugs, White Drugs

**Social Scientific Theories of Communication**

**Week 12 – Nov 10 and 12**

**Tues** **Read for Thurs, Nov 12:** Aguirre – A Stranger in Charlotte and Penelope Esparza – Tenure with a Termination Letter

**Thurs** **Read for Thurs, Nov 17 –** Rogers (2003): Diffusion of Innovations

**Week 13 – Nov 17 and 19**

**Tues** **Diffusion of Innovations**

**Thurs** **Case Studies in DOI**

**Week 14 – Nov 24 and T-Day!**

**Tues** **Free Day**

**Thurs** **Thanksgiving Holiday**

**Week 15 – Dec 1 and 3**

**Tues** **Catch up Day**

**Thurs** **Final exam review**