CMST 7910
Contemporary Theories of Interpersonal Communication
Spring 2015, W 15:30-18:20, 153 Coates

‘Human relationships are not in any proper sense the subject matter of science. They are the stuff of insight and sympathy and spiritual comprehension.’ – Woodrow Wilson

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Office Hours: by appointment (no availability on Thursday)

Course Description:
This course explores what constitutes interpersonal communication scholarship. The class takes an historical approach to that task by situating contemporary theories in the formative texts from which most work seems to stem. We will discuss the history of the field through a few influential works and the progression of the ideas presented within them as illustrated by contemporary scholarship.

The class requires you to think critically about a range of topics including, but not limited to,
(a) the philosophical underpinnings of interpersonal communication research,
(b) the role and function of the individual in theories of communication,
(c) theory and metatheory,
(d) methods and methodologies, and
(e) trends past and yet to come.

The class is theory heavy, but it will, at points, require some understanding of complex statistics. Ultimately, this class provides the tools and vocabulary necessary to speak to scholars of interpersonal communication who come from a variety of epistemological standpoints and to more fully understand the literature in the vast domain labeled Interpersonal Communication.

This class is structured to promote dialogue, conversation, and debate among attendees about the strengths and limitations of different approaches to the study of interpersonal communication.

Finally, this class seeks to debunk myths like “interpersonal communication is synonymous with relationships” and “interpersonal communication is about talk between two individuals face-to-face.” These outdated notions of what it means to study interpersonal communication are simply caricatures of the field. Equally embarrassing is when students claiming to have studied IPC at LSU A&M claim that “93% of communication is nonverbal” or “when a person looks up and to the right it means she is lying.” We will put to rest these and other myths by looking at research.
Course Objectives:
1. To introduce students to and develop understanding of the primary theoretical foundations of interpersonal communication.

2. To provide a core base of knowledge that promotes intellectual debate and dialogue.

3. To assist students in elaborating their own responses to foundational questions concerning interpersonal communication.

4. To encourage students to think about the idea of synthesis, its possibility, and its ramifications.

5. To enhance understanding of what constitutes interpersonal communication scholarship.

Texts:

In addition to individual articles and book chapters (made available on Moodle), the following texts are used:


I also recommend the following basic reading, though you are welcome to browse my copy and make photocopies if you don’t have the extra 30 bucks:


For those of you who plan to make interpersonal communication a main focus of teaching and research, I also recommend the following:


Assignments and Grading

1. All students are expected to attend all class sessions, complete assigned readings, and participate regularly in class discussions. The class will NOT be successful without your participation. Attendance and participation is worth 10% of the final course grade. Graduate students are held to a higher standard than undergraduates. If you miss class, you need to provide valid reasons for doing so. Clearly, do not come to class with a diagnosed and communicable disease only to infect us and our families. Extra-academic work or other job-related responsibilities are not valid reasons for missing class. In all cases, correspond with the instructor.

2. To help me resist the temptation to “lecture” for the first few weeks and to assist students in understanding the applicability of formative readings, students (in groups) will be responsible for leading a discussion for half of a single class period (i.e., an hour and 15 minutes). Discussion should illustrate the applicability of the concepts discussed in one of the four texts covered in the second unit of the course. This means that groups should look for elements in their book of choice that can be applied to some area of interest to the members of that group. There is no need to delve into all concepts or areas of application; the time is likely to be filled with one or a small subset of interrelated areas of interest.

As there are four texts, there will be four groups; as there are 9 people enrolled, there will be three groups of 2 students and one group of 3 students \( [(3*2) + (1*3)] = 9 \). No one is allowed to work alone unless there is an undying preference for doing so followed by a compelling justification.

The discussion and supplementary material count for 10% of the course grade. All groups should provide the class with a list of discussion questions and/or issues and an annotated bibliography (author abstracts will suffice). Visual aides are optional. I strongly oppose useless Prezi execution or bullet-filled PowerPoint slides.

3. To facilitate class discussion after our formative text readings, you are asked to prepare several brief (500-1000 words) reaction statements. The reaction statements should be read aloud during class meetings when appropriate and will help provide the basis for class discussions. The purpose of these reaction statements is to organize thought and stimulate discussion; hence, they should be focused and brief. Each weekly set of required readings is accompanied by discussion questions which may serve as a basis for your reaction statements. If, however, students are moved to write about an issue not reflected in these questions, they are free to write a reaction statement addressing that issue. Obviously, a brief reaction statement cannot provide detailed responses to the discussion questions; rather the purpose of the statement is to help students begin drawing together ideas about what they have read. Most important, you should make a claim and back it up with evidence; the length of the assignment makes it impossible to do justice to more than one major claim.

Reaction statements will be turned in each week during class starting on week 7. For each of the 9 relevant weeks, 2 students are responsible for reaction statements. Each student is responsible for 2 reaction statements over the course of the semester. Each reaction statement counts for 5% of the course grade for a total of 10% of the final grade. Students will sign up for their reaction statements during the first class meeting of the course.
4. At three points in the semester, students will write short position papers (5 page max, 12-point font, 1 inch margins, double spacing, 1 additional page for references), each of which will require you to take a position on an important issue, provide reasons to support your position, and anticipate and respond to possible counter-arguments. Each paper is worth 10% of the final course grade for a total of 30%.

- Paper I is meant to allow you to explore the applicability of a formative text that you did not explore as a group member. Take a proposition from one of the remaining three texts and apply it to an area of interest, drawing from the literature that has done this already to propose interesting questions and possible answers.

- Paper II is meant for you to explore the place of the individual within the study of IPC.

- Paper III is meant for you to explore some aspect of theorizing at the level of the dyad.

5. All students will prepare a major paper and present that paper to the class on our final class meeting during final exam week. Working individually or as part of a group, students will write a paper in which they do one of the following:

(a) describe, review, and evaluate an important theory of interpersonal communication;
(b) sketch the beginnings of a theory of some phenomenon important to interpersonal communication scholarship that is undertheorized;
(c) pull together several theories to build a larger framework for the study of some aspect of interpersonal communication;
(d) prepare a proposal for a research study that tests key tenets of an existing or self-made theory of interpersonal communication; or
(e) test key tenets of an existing or self-made theory of interpersonal communication.¹

Other options are available and are only limited to your creativity and ability to convince me of their suitability for this class. If you are dissertating, you can propose to turn in a chapter of your dissertation. If you are about to take comprehensive exams, you can propose to practice for those exams in lieu of writing a final paper. Whatever the case may be, your choice should be useful for you given your progression in the program.

Final papers will be written in stages.

- Stage 1 – The goal for Stage 1 is to provide a rationale for the content and focus of your paper and initial bibliography that includes germinal manuscripts and exemplar research studies. Your paper should include what you are studying: a careful analysis of the labels attached the phenomenon of interest; the meaning of the labels; the operationalizations of the phenomenon; and the scope, specificity, and contextual elements that define the phenomenon. Students should make ample use of existing research to clarify how the phenomenon has been conceptualized in the literature. Stage 1 is due in class on March 11. ¹

¹ Note that option (e) requires data collection and analysis.
• **Stage 2** – Stage 2 should include a revision of the paper submitted for Stage 1 to reflect the feedback received and the student’s increasingly sophisticated understanding of the phenomenon. The student should **demonstrate an increasingly sophisticated understanding of the phenomenon and identify questions about the phenomenon that might be answered by the final paper**. The bibliography should grow and this point as well. Stage 2 of the paper is due in class on April 15.

• **Final Paper** – The final paper builds on the draft from Stage 2 by reflecting the feedback received and the student’s increasingly sophisticated understanding of the phenomenon. It is final at this point and should be as close to “conference ready” as possible given the student’s progression in the program. The final paper is due on May 4, 10:00.

Students should **turn in two copies at each stage** – one with author identification and one that is void of such identification for blind review. The copy with identification should be accompanied with a cover letter, formatting according to APA 6th edition (the manuscript can be whatever official style guide you will use for the majority of your writing career). For Stages 2 and 3, your cover letter should include information about the revisions you made, paying attention to how you addressed the feedback. The Moodle course page has examples of cover letters.

Each student will review another student’s paper and provide feedback. The feedback you provide to classmates will be written void of identification. Your feedback should be a minimum of 500 words; there is no max, but do not overdo it – you have your own work to do too. This is practice in balancing commitments. You will submit the feedback by Monday the week following submission of original manuscripts. Feedback is due no later than 10:00. Emailed feedback is acceptable and preferred. I will compile these reactions with my own for a full editorial review of the manuscripts.

**The paper will be worth 30% (Stage 1 = 5%; Stage 2 = 10%; Stage 3 = 15%) and the feedback worth 5% (3%, 3%, 4%) of the final grade.**

Students will present their projects during the final exam period scheduled for this course (5/6, 20:00-22:00). The **presentation counts 5% toward the final grade.** All students are required to attend this final exam period. Failure to attend will result in the deduction of your final grade (after the “F” grade for the presentation is factored in) by an entire letter grade.

**** Assigned grades follow a 4.0 scale that includes suffixes (.33 for each; A+ = 4.33, A = 4.0, A- = 3.67, B+ = 3.33, etc.). Final course grade will be calculated as the sum of the weighted assignment grades. Weights are detailed in the assignment descriptions above.
Policies:

Academic Integrity: Louisiana State University A&M adopted the Commitment to Community in 1995 to set forth a guiding mantra for student behavior inside and outside of the classroom. The Commitment to Community charges students to maintain high standards of academic and personal integrity. All students are required to read and be familiar with the LSU Code of Student Conduct and Commitment to Community, found at [www.lsu.edu/saa](http://www.lsu.edu/saa). It is a student’s individual responsibility to understand the standards of behavior for the LSU community.

Access: Please drop by my office when the door is open or make an appointment to speak with me at any point. Part of my job is to assist students in learning course material as well as providing advice for all things academic and professional. If you are having issues in your personal life that are impeding your ability to perform in this class as you normally would, it is vital that you speak to me about them before you begin to fall behind. If it can be prevented, I do not want you to slip through the cracks.

Accommodations: Louisiana State University A&M is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for all persons with disabilities. The syllabus is available in alternate formats upon request. Students with disabilities: If you are seeking classroom accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act, you are required to register with Disability Services (DS). DS is located in 115 Johnston Hall. Phone is (225) 578-5919. To receive academic accommodations for this class, please obtain the proper DS forms and meet with by January 28, 18:30.

Classroom Climate: Classmates are likely to express opinions quite different than your own. Please respect your colleagues during class discussion. Your instructor and other classmates may also express opinions that are counter-attitudinal for the purpose of facilitating a debate about a core issues in Interpersonal Communication. We attack issues, not people.

Correspondence: I frequently use email as a means for getting in touch with the entire class or with individual students. It is important that regularly check your LSU email account. You should use email to correspond with me regarding areas of confusion, to make appointments, and to indicate whether you will miss class on a particular day. Do not use email to turn in assignments or ask me to pre-read those assignments.

Late Work: All written work is to be handed in on the due date stated in the syllabus (above) and reviewed in the table below. No emailed assignments will be accepted without prior arrangement. Papers submitted past the deadline will be placed at the bottom of the stack. If I have not yet finished grading the assignments, then there is no penalty for late work. If I have finished grading the assignments, then your work will be read and marked, but a grade of “F” will be assigned.

Personal Emergencies: If you experience an unavoidable personal situation that prevents you from completing work on time, you must take responsibility for informing your instructor prior to the date the work is due. A failure to contact your instructor prior to the due date will result in the application of the late work policy above. Extensions will only be granted for substantiated and documented emergencies.
Summary of the Course

Disclaimer: Clearly a single course cannot cover all aspects of IPC. The class focuses primarily on social scientific approaches to its study and even ignores key concepts within that literature because there are topical classes available at LSU on, for instance, the self (Edwards); emotion (Honeycutt); and health (Pechioni). In addition, we will not directly cover such important concepts as Face or Politeness because even though utilized by communication scholars their roots are in other disciplines—texts from which these concepts come are certainly “formative”, and I would enjoy reading them as such but I had to make concessions somewhere. I assume everyone has had exposure to Goffman as well as Brown and Levinson in prior graduate work. If not, you should attempt to read them at some point soon. We also will not do justice to semiotics or the work of scholars like Grice, Austin, Searle, and Peirce—again, very notable and formative, but simply too much for this class and for one semester.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1/14</td>
<td>Class Overview, Introductions, Logistical Decision Making</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1/21</td>
<td>What is Interpersonal Communication? Historical and Contemporary Answers</td>
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<td><strong>Unit II: Formative Works in the Study of Interpersonal Communication</strong></td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>1/28</td>
<td>Kelly: <em>A theory of personality: The psychology of personal constructs.</em></td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>2/4</td>
<td>Mead: <em>Mind, self, and society.</em></td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>2/11</td>
<td>Watzlawick, Beavin, &amp; Jackson: <em>Pragmatics of human communication.</em></td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>2/18</td>
<td>Thibaut &amp; Kelley: <em>The social psychology of groups.</em></td>
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<td><strong>Unit III: Theorizing the Individual</strong></td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>2/25</td>
<td>Constructivism [Position Paper I Due]</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>3/4</td>
<td>Other “Cognitive” Approaches</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>3/11</td>
<td>Biological Approaches to the Study of Interpersonal Communication [Stage 2 of Final Paper Due]</td>
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<td><strong>Unit IV: Theorizing Interaction</strong></td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>3/18</td>
<td>Theories of Accommodation, Adaptation, and Behavioral Synchrony</td>
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<td><strong>Unit V: Contexts for the Study of IC</strong></td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>4/1</td>
<td>Interpersonal Influence</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>4/8</td>
<td>NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>4/15</td>
<td>Supportive Communication [Stage 2 of Final Paper Due]</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>4/22</td>
<td>Lifespan Perspectives [Guest Lecture: Dr. Loretta Pechioni] [Position Paper III Due]</td>
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<td><strong>Unit VI: “Alternative” Approaches to the Study of IC</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>4/29</td>
<td>Dialectics, Discourse Analysis, and Narrative</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>5/6</td>
<td>(20:00-22:00) Final Exam Period – Individual/Group Presentations [Stage 3 of Final Paper Due by 5/4, 10:00]</td>
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### Summary of Important Dates:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Other</th>
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<tr>
<td>1/28</td>
<td>Kelly</td>
<td>Group: Nicole &amp; Yuwa</td>
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<td>2/4</td>
<td>Mead</td>
<td>Group: Adam, Kassi, Mike</td>
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<td>2/11</td>
<td>WBJ</td>
<td>Group: Richie &amp; Matthew</td>
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<td>2/18</td>
<td>Thibaut &amp; Kelley</td>
<td>Group: Cassie &amp; Sanela</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/25</td>
<td>Constructivism</td>
<td><strong>Position Paper I Due</strong></td>
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<td>R1: Nicole</td>
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<td>R2: Adam</td>
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<td>3/4</td>
<td>Other “Cognitive” Approaches</td>
<td>R1: Kassi</td>
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<td>R2: Richie</td>
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<td>3/11</td>
<td>Biological Approaches</td>
<td><strong>Stage 1 of Final Paper Due</strong></td>
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<td>R1: Matthew</td>
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<td>R2: Sanela</td>
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<td>3/18</td>
<td>Theories of Accommodation, Adaptation, and Behavioral Synchrony</td>
<td>R1: Mike</td>
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<td>R2: Adam</td>
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<td>3/25</td>
<td>Theorizing Communication in Romantic Relationships</td>
<td><strong>Position Paper II Due</strong></td>
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<td>R1: Richie</td>
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<td>R2: Cassie</td>
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<td>4/1</td>
<td>Interpersonal Influence</td>
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<td>R2: Yuwa</td>
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<td>4/8</td>
<td>NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK</td>
<td>Remember the sunscreen!</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Final Exam Period (20:00-22:00)</td>
<td><strong>Papers due 5/4, 10:00; Presentations, 5/6</strong></td>
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Detailed Course Outline with Readings

Week  Date  Topic

Unit I: Orientation and Contemporary Background

2  1/21  What is Interpersonal Communication? Historical and Contemporary Answers

Issues
What constitutes Interpersonal Communication scholarship? What makes (if anything) IPC a distinct area of study in the larger discipline we call Communication? Are the various approaches to the study of IPC incompatible? If not, how is synthesis broached?

Readings


Supplemental Readings


Unit II: Formative Works in the Study of Interpersonal Communication

1/28  Kelly: A theory of personality: The psychology of personal constructs.

Issues
Whence do constructs come? Are they inborn? Learned? Do all constructs really have two extreme points? Is it really as simple as a dichotomy? Kelly suggests humans can act like scientists by organizing our experiences and testing the accuracy of our constructed knowledge by performing actions. Do you buy this? What is the main tenet of personal construct theory? How does PCT help define the study of interpersonal communication? Think of a particular context in the study of IC and of the ramifications of applying Kelly’s theory to that area. What are the implications for the study of IC more generally?

Readings

Supplemental Readings
In addition to the full two volumes of this work, a host of contemporary scholarship can be classified as “constructivist” in nature including, but not limited to, articles published in the Journal of Constructivist Psychology and Personal Construct Theory & Practice.
Mead: Mind, Self, and Society

Issues
What is Mead’s thesis? How does his proposal help define the study of interpersonal communication? Is his idea really that radical? Why was it so when it was proffered? Think of a particular context in the study of IC and of the ramifications of applying Mead’s theory to that area. What are the implications for the study of IC more generally?

Readings

Supplemental Readings

Mead, G. H.


There are also lots and lots of books with “Symbolic Interaction(ism)” in the title. One of the most influential is by Manis and Meltzer.

Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson: Pragmatics

Issues
What is the main tenet of Pragmatics? How does this tenet help define the study of interpersonal communication? Think of a particular context in the study of IC and of the ramifications of applying this theory to that area. What are the implications for the study of IC more generally? Take one of the five “axioms” and draw out its most logical conclusions. Based on this analysis, do you buy the axiom? Why (not)? For instance, is it possible to not communicate? Depending on your answer, what does that say about your view of interpersonal communication? Can you find others (scholars in particular, not your mom) that agree with you?

Readings

Supplemental Readings


**An Axiomatic Debate**


2/18   Thibaut and Kelley: *The social psychology of groups*

**Issues**
What is interdependence? How does this construct help define the study of interpersonal communication? Why is (or why is not) “the proper starting place for an understanding of social behavior…the analysis of dyadic interdependence”? Is the focus represented in this book similar to the other two positions (i.e., Kelly and Mead)? How so? How does the concept of interdependence differ from ideas presented in the other readings? Think of a particular context in the study of IC and of the ramifications of applying this theory of the dyad to that area. What are the implications for the study of IC more generally? How is interdependence formed? Is it an inherent part of forming relationships? Does it look different depending on various aspects of relationships? Thibaut and Kelley assert their framework makes only very simple assumptions then adds to them complexity only as needed. Is this way to structure a theory appropriate given it analyzes human behavior, a very complex construct to be sure? Can one really assume that “[the] phenomena considered are entirely too complex to be dealt with in their raw form”?

**Readings**

**Supplemental Readings**
The new introduction (pp. v-xviii) provides several citations that might be of interest. The most direct use of this theory and most relevant for the study of interpersonal communication is Interdependence Theory of Caryl Rusbult. There is a good treatment of this theory in the second edition of the *Handbook of Personal Relationships: Theory, Research and Interventions* edited by Steve Duck and published by John Wiley & Sons.

Laura Stafford provides a good overview of “Social Exchange Theories” in her chapter in the Baxter/Braithwaite book; and her reference list is a good starting point for readings.

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2/25   Constructivism [Position Paper I Due]

**Issues**
What does the constructivist perspective tell us about the origins of IC? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the constructivist perspective as an explanation for how world views and communicative behavior are socialized? Is the characterization by Burleson that constructivism is a theory of “functional communication skills” an accurate depiction in light of the other writings? Why did this perspective seem to do so well in the Communication discipline after it was introduced? What are the factors leading to its success?

**Readings**


**Supplementary Readings**


There was a special section in the third issue of volume five of the *American Communication Journal* devoted to “constructivism.”

**8 3/4 Other “Cognitive” Approaches**

**Issues**

What does it mean to study IPC from a “cognitive” perspective? What is the utility (if any) of the “goal” concept? What are its limitations? Is all communication goal-directed? Depending on your answer, what does that say about your view of IC?

**Readings**


**Supplemental Readings**


3/11 Biological Approaches to the Study of Interpersonal Communication

**Issues**
What role should biology and genetics play in explaining human communication? What needs to be done in the future to determine the utility of biological approaches? Are biological approaches necessarily “reductionist” and/or “deterministic”? Is it really possible to determine an exact percent contribution for biological factors in predisposing people to communication in particular ways? Why (not)?

**Readings**


*Theoretical exemplar: Affection Exchange Theory*


**Supplemental Readings**
Kory Floyd has a list of publications at [www.koryfloyd.com](http://www.koryfloyd.com) that might be of interest.


*Communibiology:*


There is a special issue (volume 49, issue 1) of *Communication Education* (2000) entitled “The Nature/Nurture Balance” that includes a few good articles on Communibiology (and a few response from Condit).

Unit IV: Theorizing Interaction

3/18 Theories of Accommodation, Adaptation, and Behavioral Synchrony

Issues
What does it mean for people to “coordinate” and “adapt” communicatively to others? What does a distinctly communication view about the concepts accommodation, adaptation, behavioral synchrony, coordination, and adaptation look like? How does a communication perspective on these concepts differ from a more psychologically or sociologically oriented approach? What are the biggest challenges for communication scholars interested in the study of accommodation, adaptation, and behavioral synchrony?

Readings


Exemplar Theory: Communication Accommodation Theory


Supplemental Readings


Issues
What is the role of communication in romantic relationships? What is a “relational message” and how is this concept key to understanding communication in close relationships? Does the way in which “relational messages” are cast align with the view first put forward by Watzlawick et al.? According to the Relational Turbulence Model, the shift from casual to seriously dating is marked by the most uncertainty in close relationships. Do you agree from experience? Are there other points where uncertainty is heightened? Can the RTM be applied to these points in relationships? What perspectives (from our formative texts) do you see represented in the RTM? What other perspectives can be applied to explain communication in romantic relationships? How would theories stemming from those perspectives differ from, for instance, the RTM?

Readings


Exemplar Theory: Relational Turbulence Model


Supplemental Readings
Believe it or not, a great first resource is a textbook! *Close Encounters* by Guerrero, Andersen, and Afifi. I use this book when I teach 4012.

There are several core concepts that seem to define (for better or worse) published work on relationships. Those include, but are not limited to,

- **Uncertainty**


  Uncertainty is also covered in the Braithwaite & Schrodit Engaging Theories book.

- **Attachment** – see Guerrero’s work and her chapter in the Baxter/Braithwaite book

- **Demand-Withdraw Conflict Pattern in marriages** – see work by John Caughlin

- The work of John Gottman has been instrumental in shaping the study of marital relationships. A good place to start is one of his many popular press books.

- There exists a line of research on “relational maintenance” that documents those communicative behaviors contributing to the sustainability and satisfaction of various types of relationships with a particular focus on romantic relationships. A recent meta-analysis will be published in the *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*: [http://spr.sagepub.com/content/early/2012/11/20/0265407512463338.full.pdf+html](http://spr.sagepub.com/content/early/2012/11/20/0265407512463338.full.pdf+html)

- There is a long line of work on “disclosure” within relationships, perhaps the most interesting of which if the work on secrets. A good article to start with is Caughlin et al., 2005, Reasons for, and consequences of, revealing personal secrets in close relationships, *Personal Relationships* volume 12, pp. 43-59.
• There is quite a bit of work on “forgiveness”

• as well as relational transgressions (Laura Guerrero has done some work here)

• Finally, there is quite a bit of work on different “types” of romantic relationships – on again/off again (Rene Dailey), friends with benefits (lots of folks)

Extra Readings for Relational Turbulence Model


Unit V: Contexts for the Study of IC

4/1  Interpersonal Influence

Issues
Some have argued that all communication is about influence – that is, every communicative act is an attempt to reach some goal, and usually a goal related to influencing others. The claim: all primary goals of communication are related to influence. Do you agree? Why (not)? If not, what are some other primary goals that can describe interpersonal communication? How does the study of interpersonal influence exemplify the study of IC? What formative texts do you see represented in the readings for this week? What about Inoculation Theory makes it a “communication” theory? have Compton and his colleagues made a case for why communication scholars should be interested in a fundamentally psychological mechanism driving attitude change?

Readings

Exemplar Theory: Inoculation Theory


Supplemental Readings


Depending on interests, there are several chapters in both the first and second edition of The Persuasion Handbook. I have copies of both if you are interested.

13 4/8 NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK
14 4/15 Supportive Communication [Position Paper III Due]

Issues
What does social support mean from a communication perspective? What role do communication processes play in the feeling better process? How does the comforting process work? Have Burleson and Goldsmith accounted for how all people, in all contexts feel better? What other mechanisms might be at work? And under what conditions are these various mechanisms likely to be activated and drive change? According to the dual-process theory of supportive message outcomes, it is necessary to attend to both the content of messages and how they are processed. Does this theory cover all necessary variables important to the impact of supportive communication? What else needs to be (should be) considered?

Readings


Exemplar Theory: Dual-Process Theory of Supportive Message Outcomes


Supplemental Readings


**Readings on Dual-Process Theory**


General Dual-Process Readings


Lifespan Perspectives [Guest Lecture: Loretta Pecchioni]

Issues
What does it mean to study communication from a “life-span” perspective? What are its advantages? Disadvantages? Does failing to account for the developmental nature of communication processes negatively impact our ability to theorize communication? What about our ability to offer useful pragmatic guidelines for policy makers and ordinary people (i.e. non-scholars)? For your own research interests, how would taking a “life-span” perspective change how you have already thought about core concepts and theories?

Readings

- family relationships in childhood through adolescence and in later life
- interpersonal conflict management


Supplemental Readings


Exemplar “age related issue” – Presbycusis


Unit VI: “Alternative” Approaches to the Study of IC

4/29 Dialectics, Discourse Analysis, and Narrative

Issues
Why is “alternative” in quotation marks? What does it mean to think about IC from a dialectical, discourse analytic, and/or narrative approach? Do these approaches have fundamentally different epistemological standpoints? Ontological starting places? Do they really offer vastly different viewpoints on what it means to “communicate” and for the role of communication in relationships and other aspects of our lives? Given your particular interests, do any of these “alternative” perspectives offer any useful insights? Compare and contrast these perspectives with the formative texts read at the beginning of the semester. Are you more informed about interpersonal communication (as a phenomenon or a field or both) because of any of these “alternative” perspectives?

Readings

Dialectics

Discourse Analysis


Narrative


Supplemental Readings


17 5/6  (20:00-22:00) Final Exam Period – Individual/Group Presentations