

# SPCOM 399: Communication Inquiry

Faculty of Arts, Speech Communication, Fall 2016: Friday 8:30-11:20 in ML 246

## **Professor Robert Danisch**

**Office Hours:** Wednesday 11:00-12:00, Friday 11:30-12:30, or by appointment

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## **Course Description:**

This course is an introduction to communication as a field of inquiry. It is designed to prepare you for more in-depth courses on single communication topics by showing you how communication theory, research, and practice interrelate. The course is structured as follows: Each week concerns a broad area of the field of communication studies. Each week's broad area of inquiry is comprised of a Theory Track, a connected Research Track, and a Practice Track. The Theory Track provides you with a variety of important communication theories, which will help you to understand communication in various contexts and introduce you to ways of knowing, or epistemology. The Research Track introduces you to communication research. Research includes finding and understanding scholarly information about a specific communication theory, summarizing what is known about that communication theory, and identifying questions that the theory has not yet answered. The Practice Track introduces you to key performances or behaviors that can demonstrate competence or mastery of particular communication practices related to the theories and research from that particular week. We will be covering a lot of diverse ground in this course.

## **Course Objectives:**

- Students should become familiar with some of the varied intellectual traditions and theories of communication.
- Students should gain a sense of the central philosophical and intellectual questions concerning communication as a field of inquiry.
- Students should have a working vocabulary of key theories of communication (working vocabulary means that you will have the ability to use these theories in practical ways as explanatory or interpretive tools).
- Students should develop, practice, and master some practical tools for becoming better communicators in a range of contexts.
- Students should develop the capacity to think theoretically and critically. That is, students should be able to explain particular phenomena by appeals to general ways of understanding and figure out how to explore ideas and the meaning of objects or events in a sustained, substantive, sophisticated, and insightful manner.
- Students will be introduced to and expected to read very difficult texts. Thus, students will be expected to improve their reading comprehension skills.

- Students will be expected to turn in polished, elegant writing that demonstrates a clear command of the readings, a distinct authorial voice, and a capacity for thoughtful reflection on complex ideas.
- Students will be expected to develop the ability to think critically, clearly and analytically. This means understanding the ideas and concepts raised throughout the course, their origins, strengths, weaknesses, and their relationship to larger themes in this class, in your education, and in your view of the world.
- Students will be expected to improve their abilities to conduct research.

### **Course Policies and Procedures:**

- *In the Classroom* – This is a hybrid lecture/seminar/workshop class. At various points during the semester or during individual course meetings, I will deliver a lecture on the topics outlined on the course schedule. However, that does not mean I expect you to be passive consumers. At times I will be asking you questions and I will expect you to ask me questions. In addition, I will ask you to provide examples of concepts we talk about in class, and so participation in lectures will be encouraged in a variety of ways. We will also try to turn lectures into seminars. One of the main objectives of the class is for a small group of students to engage in intense study and conversation about public communication. Seminars are characterized by high degrees of interactivity between students and between professor and student. Finally, we may, at times, engage in practical exercises designed to improve communication practices. At these moments, seminars or lectures will transform into a workshop designed to improve students' communication skills. In order to make the lectures, seminars and workshops run effectively, I ask all students to please turn off all ringing electronic devices when entering the classroom. The sound of a cell phone (or any other device) is extremely distracting to your professor, and I assume to your fellow classmates, and it is rude and offensive.
- *Attendance* – Your presence in class is mandatory. However, I will not be taking attendance, and there will be no way for me to be absolutely certain that you are attending regularly. But you should be aware that the best way to do well in this course is to show up to every class, prepared and attentive. Inevitably, at the end of the semester, students who missed classes do poorly, while students who show up consistently do well. I do not post lecture notes on the Internet, nor do I respond to emails that say “what did we talk about in class on Thursday.” We cover lots of material in class and for that reason it is critical that you attend in order to do well. Attendance also means refraining from playing with your cell phone, reading the newspaper, surfing the internet, using other electronic devices or doing other coursework while in the classroom. If I notice you engaged in some activity that does not pertain to what is happening in the class, I will ask you to leave. This course is designed for courteous, motivated students who attend each class, do all the reading, and ask questions when they don't understand something. If you miss class, you are responsible for getting materials we covered from a classmate. Students who fail to meet these basic and reasonable expectations can assume that their performance on assignments will suffer.

- *Academic Integrity* – I expect that the work you complete for this course will be your own, which is to say that cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Any written assignment that borrows from other sources without giving proper credit or that is plagiarized in whole or in part from another source (including other student’s work) is grounds for an “F” on the assignment, or depending on the severity of the crime, is grounds for an “F” in the course.

## **University Policies on Academic Integrity:**

**Academic Integrity:** In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility.

**Discipline:** A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Undergraduate Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under Policy 71 – Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71 - Student Discipline, <http://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-71>

**Grievance:** A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4, <http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/student-grievances-faculty-guidelines/policy-70>

**Appeals:** A student may appeal the finding and/or penalty in a decision made under Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances (other than regarding a petition) or Policy 71 - Student Discipline if a ground for an appeal can be established. Read Policy 72 - Student Appeals, <http://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-72>

**Academic Integrity website (Arts):**

[http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/arts/ugrad/academic\\_responsibility.html](http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/arts/ugrad/academic_responsibility.html)

**Academic Integrity Office (University):**

<http://uwaterloo.ca/academic-integrity/>

## **Accommodation for Students with Disabilities:**

The AccessAbility Services (AS) Office, located in Needles Hall, Room 1132, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require

academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the AS Office at the beginning of each academic term.

## **Required Texts and Readings:**

I like books - I like buying them, I like reading them, I like keeping them on my bookshelf, I like talking to people about them. Reading makes you smarter. You should read a lot. Reading carefully, critically, and analytically is essential for your success. This is a humanities course, and, therefore, it requires careful reading of complex and sophisticated texts. Really motivated students will go to Amazon.com (or some other website or bookstore) and buy the following books listed on the course schedule. Students are not required to purchase these texts. Instead, I will make an email list for the course during the first meeting and I will invite everyone to a dropbox folder for the class. Each week, or as soon as I have the pdfs, I will put copies of the readings in the dropbox folder. I expect everyone to have done all of the readings before coming to class and to have the readings accessible (either as a book, printed out, or on an electronic device) for classroom conversation.

## **Assignments:**

- 1) **Think Questions** – You are required to complete the readings prior to each class session – class discussion and class content will build upon the readings assigned for that particular day. The quality of class discussion and your experience will depend on your having made an attempt to read and understand the articles assigned each week. On FOUR occasions throughout the semester I will ask you to write a 1-2 page, single-spaced response to a specific question I pose about the readings. I will ask the question at the end of class about the following week's readings, and the following week you will turn in your answer. The due dates for the think question are: September 23<sup>rd</sup>, September 30<sup>th</sup>, October 21<sup>st</sup>, and November 4<sup>th</sup>. Each think question will be graded on a scale of 0-25 for a total of 100 possible points. Collectively, the think questions are worth a total of 20% of your final grade.
- 2) **Research Summary, Bibliography, and Presentation (group assignment)** – On the first day of class, we will form 10 groups. Each group will be assigned a week, from week 3 to week 12. As a group you will prepare a research summary, annotated bibliography, and presentation to be distributed to the class. You will have 30 minutes of class time to summarize and present your findings. Your research findings will be related to the week's main broad theme and will demonstrate a command of the latest questions, methods, and concepts from the field of communication studies. You will also help contextualize the research and use examples to show the significance of that research. This assignment will be graded on a scale of 0-100 and will be worth 25% of your final grade (each group member will receive the same grade).
- 3) **Collaborative Inquiry** – Over the course of the semester you will also work with the same group members from the research summary assignment on a collaborative

inquiry into some communication problem or phenomenon. The collaborative inquiry will be more free flowing than the research report and will involve back-and-forth discussion about some particular object or problem in the field of communication studies. It will also hopefully draw from the research being circulated in class. This assignment will be graded on a scale of 0-100 and will be worth 20% of your final grade (group members may earn different grades based on the quality of their participation in the inquiry). It will be due in class on December 2<sup>nd</sup>.

- 4) 360 Degree Communication Audit** - A communication audit critically assesses the specific communication practices of a particular person, team, or organization. The purpose of this kind of audit is to show specifically where and how a person or group can improve communication competencies. A 360 degree audit includes feedback from peers and other individuals that help assess communication competence in action. Each student will design and perform a communication audit of their own practices. We will discuss this more substantively in class. The final report will be graded on a scale of 0-100 and worth 35% of your final grade. It will be due on December 12<sup>th</sup>.

## Grades:

- *Is this Class Going to be Easy?* - The students in this class represent some of the best and most capable young people in the province. Accordingly, I will expect a lot from you. You will not automatically be given an A because you have made an effort or because you are accustomed to getting high marks. C is an average grade, and in order to do better than that, you will have to produce better than average work. This means that you will go the extra distance, do the extra reading, prepare for classes by taking notes and formulating questions, make thoughtful interventions in class, submit careful and polished assignments free from careless errors, etc. There are no easy A's and this is not an easy class.
- *How are Grades Calculated?* - For each of the four assignments you will receive a score out of 100 points. I will then average the marks based on the percentage weights listed above. I do not like giving students numerical marks and I think it is an inferior system of grading. In my mind, I often think in terms of a letter grade. So that you know, your number out of 100 points translates into the following letter grades:

90-100 = A+	73-76 = B	60-62 = C-	0-50 = F
85-89 = A	70-72 = B-	57-59 = D+	
80-84 = A-	67-69 = C+	53-56 = D	
77-79 = B+	63-66 = C	50-52 = D-	

- *What do the Grades Mean?* – Loosely translated the letter grades mean the following: an A+ is truly outstanding and spectacular work that goes well above and beyond the normal expectations of an assignment and demonstrates a complete mastery of the subject matter. An A or an A- is excellent and exceptional work. A grade in the B range is good to very good work that demonstrates a solid grasp of the material. A grade in the C range is average work that demonstrates a satisfactory but incomplete grasp of the course material.

A grade in the D range is unsatisfactory work of poor quality. And an F is failing work that does not meet the minimum requirements for the course. Because grades in the A range are exceptional and grades in the C range are average, A grades are rare and difficult to obtain. I'm telling you this so that you know that if you earn a 75 on an assignment it means that I think the assignment is good not excellent. If you earn a 95, it means it's one of the best pieces of work I've have ever seen for this kind of class.

- *Extensions* – There are no extensions for any assignment. Assignments are announced well in advance of due dates. If you know in advance that you cannot make a due date for an assignment, please discuss it with me beforehand. Requests for extensions after a due date has passed will only be granted in exceptional and unavoidable circumstances and must include (a) one typed, double-spaced page explaining the reason for missing the deadline, and (b) relevant documentation such as an official doctor's note. The written request for an extension must be in my hands within one week after the scheduled due date. I am under no obligation to accept late assignments; assignments that are accepted may suffer a significant penalty (5 points for each day late).
- *Negotiations and Missed Assignments* - I do not haggle with students over grades, nor do I listen to declarations about why a student deserves an extra point here or there. You and I will not be negotiating your grade for the class – you will be earning a grade based on criteria that are explicitly stated in class. In addition, after the final grades are posted for the semester I will not re-mark or re-consider any grade from earlier in the semester. If you do not understand why you got a particular grade or why you lost points on a given assignment, you should come to my office hours or make an appointment to see me and I will explain your grade.

### **Course Schedule:**

Week #1 – Friday, September 9<sup>th</sup> –

*The Field of Communication Studies (Theory, Research, Practice)*

Week #2 – Friday, September 16<sup>th</sup> –

*Interpersonal Communication*

Readings:

Carl Rogers, "A Tentative Formulation of a General Law of Interpersonal Relationships," from *On Becoming a Person* (1961): pp. 338-346.

John Durham Peters, *Speaking Into the Air: A History of the Idea of Communication* (University of Chicago Press, 2001): pp. 33-62.

John Gottman, *A Couple's Guide to Communication* (Research Press, 1976): pp. 1-82.

Week #3 – Friday, September 23<sup>rd</sup> –

*Small Group Communication*

Readings:

Jon Katzenbach and Douglas Smith, *The Wisdom of Teams: Creating the High Performance Organization* (Harper Business, 1999): pp. 11-108.

Yochai Benkler, *The Penguin and the Leviathan: How Cooperation Triumphs over Self-Interest* (Random House, 2011): pp. 1-118.

Group Presentation #1

Week #4 – Friday, September 30<sup>th</sup> –

*Mass and Public Communication*

Readings:

John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems* (Swallow Press, 1954): pp. 3-36 and 119-184.

Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (Free Press, 1949): pp. 3-22 and 201-262.

Group Presentation #2

Week #5 – Friday, October 7<sup>th</sup> –

*Leadership*

Readings:

Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis, and Annie McKee, *Primal Leadership: Unleashing the Power of Emotional Intelligence* (Harvard Business Review Press, 2013): 3-32 and 91-112.

Gail Fairhurst and Robert Sarr, *The Art of Framing: Managing the Language of Leadership* (Jossey-Bass, 1996): pp. 1-126.

Group Presentation #3

\*\*\*Please note that class does not meet on Friday October 14<sup>th</sup> because of the University's new policy regarding study days after Canadian Thanksgiving.

Week #6 – Friday, October 21<sup>st</sup> –

*Writing and Speaking*

Readings:

Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: The Politics of the Performative* (Routledge, 1997): pp. 1-70.

Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Johns Hopkins University Press): TBD.

Group Presentation #4

Week #7 – Friday, October 28<sup>th</sup> –

*Listening, Reading, and Interpretation*

## Readings:

Lisbeth Lipari, *Listening, Thinking, Being: Toward an Ethics of Attunement* (Penn State University Press, 2014): pp. TBD.

## Group Presentation #5

Week #8 – Friday, November 4<sup>th</sup> –

*Rhetorical Communication*

## Readings:

Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (University of California Press, 1969): pp. 49-89.

Danielle Allen, *Talking to Strangers: Anxieties of Citizenship since Brown V. Board of Education* (University of Chicago Press, 2004): pp. 101-159.

Mark Backman, *Rhetoric and the Rise of Self-Consciousness* (Oxbow Press, 1991): pp. 3-28 and 161-181).

## Group Presentation #6

Week #9 – Friday, November 11<sup>th</sup> –

No Class – Instructor Away at NCA

Week #10 – Friday, November 18<sup>th</sup> –

*Intrapersonal and Nonverbal Communication*

## Readings:

Carl Rogers, “To Be that Self which One Truly Is: A Therapist’s View of Personal Goals,” from *On Becoming a Person* (Mariner Books, 1995): pp. 163-182.

Jean Nienkamp, *Internal Rhetorics: Toward a History and Theory of Self-Persuasion* (Southern Illinois University Press, 2001): pp. 108-124.

*A Dictionary of Nonverbal Communication* (will circulate as pdf.).

## Group Presentation #7

Week #11 – Friday, November 25<sup>th</sup> –

*Critical Communication Inquiry*

## Readings:

Regretfully we will take a small reading siesta this week.

## Group Presentation #8

Week #12 – Friday, December 2<sup>nd</sup> –

*Inquiry as Communication – Meta-problems and Critical Self-Consciousness*

Readings:

Charles Peirce, "The Fixation of Belief" (circulated as pdf.).

John Durham Peters, *The Marvelous Clouds: Toward a Philosophy of Elemental Media* (University of Chicago Press, 2015): pp. 13-52.

Group Presentation #9 (Interpersonal Communication)