Communication 641:

Organizations and Communication Technologies

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Course Description

In this course we will examine what the changing technological landscape means in terms of human communication, with particular emphasis on new technologies’ use within and across organizations. Throughout the class, we will concentrate on theory, evidence, and directions of and for future research. Readings for this course will guide us in this pursuit. Each participant is expected to come to class prepared to discuss each of approximately five required readings per session. The readings will be the shared knowledge base among participants that will serve as the core of our discussion. Like most graduate seminars, our success depends to a large degree on you being prepared. Please do the readings carefully, critically, and prior to class meetings. Come prepared to share your ideas, thoughts, and questions and to contribute to our collective discussion on the topic of the day. Determine what you believe to be the major contribution, most interesting finding, or most intriguing point suggested by the reading. What is compelling about the reading? What has the author offered that is new or that adds to our understanding of the topic? What critiques do you have of the work?

Assignments and Evaluation

You will be evaluated on your class participation (70% of your grade) and on your written work (30% of your grade.)

Readings

On average, you will read five papers a week. All of the readings are available in PDF format in the course’s dropbox folder.
**Class Participation**

Analyze and be prepared to discuss the readings that are assigned for each class. All students should arrive at class with their analyses of the readings, ready to go. A good analysis means that you will think about the "big story" of the day as well as the details of the articles.

For the "big story," it may helpful to ask yourself the following questions about the theoretical perspective under review (think about the readings as a collection):

1. What are the core research problems or questions addressed by the theory?
2. What is the typical metatheory (e.g., concepts, assumptions, evidence, methods, etc.) associated with this approach?
3. Can you specify the general theoretical arguments typically used in the approach?
4. What is the state of the evidence with respect to various theoretical claims?

For the details, it may be useful to ask yourself the following questions about each reading:

1. What are the central theoretical questions addressed?
2. What primary mechanisms are posited?
3. What is the evidence to support the argument(s)? How convincing is that evidence?
4. What are the basic assumptions behind the analysis?
5. How could this analysis be improved? Be specific and practical (do not make suggestions that you could not realistically envision yourself implementing)

In addition to weekly preparation, you will be asked to present an empirical paper in the day’s readings in conference-style several times during the semester. Eligible papers are marked by an asterisk in the course reading list. That is, present the key points of the paper in 12 minutes (firmly enforced), relying on the following flow of 8 power point/prezi slides:

1. Literature background (note key points and citations),
2. Continue #1 (if necessary)
3. Research question(s), major hypotheses (presentation should note underlying arguments),
4. Key aspects of the research design (research design, sample, data collection, construct measures, analytic techniques),
5. Major results (e.g., regression table),
6. Continue #5 (if necessary)
7. Discussion points,
8. Conclusions.

Keep in mind that your presentation should give the audience a few intriguing take-aways, impress the audience with the quality of your research, and stay on time.

**Course readings responsibilities: primary readings.** For each class meeting, you will read the items assembled on the week’s topic listed in this syllabus. The readings may change as
necessary based on your interests, our understanding of the topic, and our progress as the course moves forward.

For the readings, each of you will take primary responsibility for several readings and secondary responsibility for all other readings. For the reading(s) for which you have primary responsibility, you should do 3 things:

1. Summarize the reading, including the author's main points, central premises or arguments, and findings or conclusions. In your summary identify what you believe to be the major contribution, most interesting finding, or most intriguing point suggested by the reading. What is compelling about the reading? What has the author offered that is new or that adds to our understanding of the topic?

2. Generate 3 points for further discussion. Among things you might consider are: What questions are left unanswered or unclear? What are the implications of the reading? What faults are there with the theory, methodology, or analysis? What does the reading suggest? What is the next step and why? How does this reading fit with other work in the area?

3. By the preceding Monday evening distribute copies of your summary/discussion points to all seminar participants (preferably via email or dropbox).

**Course readings responsibilities: secondary readings and seminar participation.** For the readings for which you have secondary responsibility, you should consider the analysis/discussion questions generated by those with primary responsibility while you read the article yourself. Come to class prepared to discuss each of these points and any others that occur to you.

**Course responsibilities: hypotheses.** For each class session, please bring at least three different hypotheses that you have generated from the readings. As a class we will review hypotheses and work to make them as well-crafted as possible.

Your grade in this course will be determined by a consideration of your participation in seminar discussions and secondary reading responsibilities, primary reading preparation, hypothesis preparation, and the final paper you complete for the course. It is expected that you will make regular and well-considered contributions to the seminar.

**Final Paper**

You will be expected to produce a detailed outline of a final paper (8-10 pages) and final paper (20-25 pages) for this course which is high enough quality to submit to a conference. We will discuss the details of this paper in our first meeting of class.
## Course Topic Overview

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The Nature and Study of Technology and Organization


January 22
Technological versus Social Determinism as Paradigm


January 29
Alternative Theories-1: Media Richness Theory and Social Influence Theory


February 5
Alternative Theories-2: Structuration Theory and Practice Theory


February 12
Alternative Theories-3: Actor-Network Theory and Materiality


February 19
Technology Supported Social Networks


February 26

Technology for Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing


March 5

Social Media and Knowledge Processes (note: there are six articles to read)


**March 12**

**Social Media and Organizational Innovation**


**March 19**

**Spring Break**

**March 26**

**Paper Outline Presentations**

**April 2**

**Technology Adoption and Adaptation in Organizations**


April 9
The Interplay of Technology and Organizational Change Processes


April 16
Technology and Collective Action Networks


April 23
Paper Presentations

April 30
Papers Due

May 6
No formal class; papers due