

Instructor:	Jillian Pierson, Ph.D.	I encourage you to connect with me outside of our regularly scheduled class meetings!
Office Hours:	Wed 10-12 Thurs 12:45-1:45	These are my official Zoom “office hours” but if they aren’t convenient for you, I’d be glad to meet you at other times. Check Blackboard for an office hours sign-up link, and email me if you’d like to set up alternate times.
Phone:	323-610-6820	I give you my cell phone number in case you want to send a quick text or would like to meet by phone. But for content or assignment-related issues, email is the best way to connect with me.
Email:	jilliank@usc.edu	

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### **Course Description**

This class will introduce you to social scientific scholarship in human communication. I’d like you to complete this course recognizing how powerful communication theory can be in explaining the social world we are immersed in, and appreciating that communication is much more than everyday talk and conversation. You will encounter a variety of areas of communication theory that may help you decide which parts of the discipline will become the focus of your studies.

### **Course Objectives**

By the end of the semester, you should have the ability to:

- Distinguish between common uses of the term “communication” and how the concept is defined by communication scholars
- Identify the perspectives researchers bring to the study of communication as a social science
- Explain theories of communication as a social science and critique them according to specific criteria
- Apply theoretical constructs to “real world” communication examples
- Describe recent research studies in communication

### **Required Texts**

Dainton, M., & Zelle, E. D. (2019). *Applying communication theory for professional life* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Additional required readings are posted on Blackboard and listed by abbreviated citations on the course calendar. These readings are subject to change (in selection, not amount).

Please note that even when class lectures and discussions do not cover material from the text, you will be required to read and thoroughly understand the readings for the exams and assignments.

## Tentative Course Schedule:

This is our plan but be aware we may have to make slight adjustments during the course of the semester.

	Date	Topic	Assignment Due <i>before</i> class	Readings to do <i>after</i> class
1	Aug 18	Course introduction		
	Aug 20	Communication as a social science	Student Info Form	Marar, 2013; Sides, 2013
2	Aug 25	Evaluating theories axioms of comm		Chapter 1; NCA, 2008 Chapter 4 <i>only</i> p. 65-68 (section on five axioms)
	Aug 27	Cognition and comm	Academic Integrity Tutorials	Chapter 2
3	Sept 1	Cognitive dissonance theory Uncertainty reduction	Quiz	Aronson & Tavis, 2020
	Sept 3	Expectancy violations theory		Ch 3 Burgoon, 2015
4	Sept 8	Politeness theory /Social exchange theory	Research Paradigm	Chapter 3
	Sept 10	Relational dialectics theory		Knobloch et al 2010
5	Sept 15	(cont.)		Chapter 5
	Sept 17	CPMT		Stephenson-Abetz & Holman, 2012
6	Sept 22	Exam	Exam	
	Sept 24	Understanding culture		Baldwin et al., 2013
7	Sept 29	CAT		Chapter 6
	Oct 1	Face negotiation theory		Giles et al., 2012; Kirschbaum, 2012
8	Oct 6	Persuasion	Theory Exploration	Chapter 7 ( <i>except</i> pp. 132-135)
	Oct 8	(cont)		Griffin, 2018 (SJT)
9	Oct 13	Persuasion (cont)		Rumble et al., 2017
	Oct 15	Org Comm		Chapter 9
10	Oct 20	(cont.)		Graham et al., 2016
	Oct 22	Exam	Exam	
11	Oct 27	Diffusion and network theory		Chapter 10, pp. 182-191
	Oct 29	Media Richness; SIP		Chapter 10, pp. 192-194
12	Nov 3	Mediated comm		Chapter 11, pp. 199-213
	Nov 5	(cont)	Application Paper	
13	Nov 10	Mediated comm (cont)		Walther et al., 2013
	Nov 12	Loose ends and course conclusion		
	Nov 17	Exam (scheduled by university for 11-1)		

## **Course Policies**

**Respectful conversation:** We may touch on topics that some students feel sensitive about during class. If you find yourself having an emotional response, please reach out to me. Know that I want everyone to feel comfortable engaging in productive, open conversation, including at the times we don't agree with one another. If I get something wrong, I'd like to hear from you in a respectful way; I have an open mind and like most people, I am still learning and evolving.

I also hope you'll be mindful that we all come to the classroom from a variety of backgrounds and life experiences. We can't truly understand another person's perspective, but we can listen with acceptance and empathy.

## **Attendance and Participation**

1. To get the most out of this class, you must show up for our meetings. While it is normal to miss a few times during the course of a semester, you cannot "take" this class without attending the lecture and discussion sections regularly.

2. Some students may have to miss class because of a significant time difference, or illness, or for other reasons. If you have to miss several classes, I would appreciate your letting me know what is going on, so that I don't worry about you.

3. If you miss class, please view the Zoom recording and complete any alternative "participation" activity provided.

## **Engagement and Note-taking**

The best online class meetings will occur when everyone is focused and engaged. This can be challenging in the Zoom environment, but I ask you to make a decision to be focused on our class during our meetings. I recommend you turn off your notifications and put aside your cell phone while we are together.

I also recommend that you take notes by hand. Most students work on laptops which means you have a relatively small screen. Have a notebook and pen by your side so you can write notes while listening and participating during class. Current research shows that taking notes by hand is more effective than typing them.

## **Communication**

Please be sure to read your USC emails and Blackboard announcements daily on weekdays.

I reply to my emails within 24 hours (although on the weekends I may take longer). If you don't hear back from me promptly, feel free to send me a follow-up after a day has gone by.

**Timely submission of work:** If your assignment is late, it will be marked down by one third of a letter grade for every day it is late. Also, please be aware that if you end up handing a paper in late, it falls to the bottom of our stack of things to do and will most likely not be returned to you in a very timely manner.

Sometimes a student has a true emergency. Please contact me as soon as possible if something prevents you from submitting your work on time.

Accidentally uploading the wrong assignment or using a format not accepted by Blackboard is not an excuse for a late submission.

**Back up your work:** Computer failures are sadly not uncommon. Please cover yourself by regularly saving your work to cloud storage and to an external storage device.

### **Electronic submission of assignments**

Please upload your assignments to Blackboard only. If you have trouble with Blackboard, reach out to Blackboard support directly for help—service is available 24/7 at 213-740-5555.

Blackboard submissions that have uploaded successfully automatically generate an email to the student who submitted them. If you don't get the email, you haven't submitted your assignment.

If Blackboard has a problem, you may email your assignment as proof that you completed it by the deadline. However, we can only grade in the Blackboard environment so you will still need to upload there as soon as the system is functioning.

### **Zoom policies**

Ideally, all students will attend class with their camera on, wearing classroom appropriate clothing. I of course understand and accept that sometimes it's not possible to keep a camera on due to bandwidth or other issues.

Please keep your microphone off during class, except when you're asked to unmute for discussion or questions.

You are welcome to use virtual backgrounds but please select only classroom-appropriate images.

### **Zoom recordings**

Zoom recordings are for our internal class purposes only. Lecture content is considered intellectual property, and the privacy of students is guaranteed by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). It is your responsibility to keep our Zoom recordings private; you may not save, distribute or share the recordings or transcripts with anyone.

### **Grading**

To achieve a "C" or better on papers, you must write at a level appropriate for a university student, i.e., with correct grammar, punctuation and spelling. If you have specific difficulties with writing, please visit the university's Writing Center before you submit your first assignment.

The grading scale for this class will be that an A is equivalent to 94 or above; A- is 90-93; B+ is 87-89; B is 84-86; B- is 80-83; C+ is 77-79; C is 74-76; C- is 70-73; D+ is 67-69; D is 64-66; D- is 60-63; and F is 59 and below.

Grades will be calculated as follows:

Homework/In-Class Work	10%
Research Paradigm	5%
Quiz	5%
Theory Exploration	15%
Application paper	20%
Exam 1	15%
Exam 2	15%
Exam 3	15%

### **No “Extra Credit”**

This class gives you many opportunities to succeed. The ten percent homework/in-class work specifically gives you an opportunity to get full credit without any evaluation. Do homework on time, come to class to get credit for participation (or do the alternate assignments), and you’ll have an automatic “A” in ten percent of the class.

### **Assignments**

More information will be given in class and posted on Blackboard, but these descriptions will help you get a sense of our plans.

#### **Homework/In-Class Work (10%)**

##### *Student Information Sheet*

Please complete and upload to Blackboard. We want to get to know you and to have your contact information on hand.

##### *Academic Integrity Tutorials*

Please complete the assigned tutorials listed on Blackboard, and then upload your certificates of completion.

##### *In-Class Work*

During both lecture and discussion meetings, we will have a variety of participation activities including brief small group assignments and quizzes. In class-work may be assigned at any point during the class and will not be scheduled in advance but randomly distributed throughout the semester. If you miss by arriving late or leaving early, or by being absent altogether, *you will not have an opportunity to make up the work*. Because we recognize that some absences and lateness are inevitable, three missing scores will not count against your in-class work grade.

#### **Research Paradigm Assignment (5%)**

1. Find and read a recent research article in communication from one of the communication journals listed for this assignment on Blackboard.
2. Turn in the citation for the article along with the article’s published abstract.
3. Based on the information presented in class and in the text, write a brief paragraph or two explaining which perspective the author(s) took and what about their work made that perspective evident.

Be sure to choose a *research* article in which the authors conducted an actual study. Do not choose a meta-analysis (a study of other studies), a book review, an essay, or an article that only discusses theory.

### **Quiz (5%)**

This quiz will cover early material and will help set expectations for the exams.

### **Theory Exploration (10%)**

In this assignment you will describe a theory in your own words, evaluate it, and offer an original example of the theory in action. Check Blackboard for further information.

### **Application Paper (20%)**

This 5-7 page paper is an opportunity to apply the theories and concepts you've learned about communication to *examples* you observe. Detailed information about the assignment will be posted on Blackboard and discussed in class.

### **Exams** (three exams at 15% each)

The exams assess if you have learned the material covered in the readings, lectures, and class discussions. They will also ask you to put your knowledge to use by applying it to material presented in new examples. Prepare for a series of rigorous multiple choice questions on the exams. If you know yourself to be someone who finds these kinds of tests particularly challenging, check my posts on Blackboard for tips and seek help early in the semester.

Please note that you are responsible for the material presented both in the readings and in class. The two do not always overlap. If you miss a class, it would be a good idea to get notes and discuss them with at least two other students.

The third exam will not be “cumulative” in that you won't have to go back to the earlier chapters and study them in depth, but your knowledge will build and questions on later exams may rely on that foundation.

### **Campus Resources**

Please take advantage of some of the resources your tuition supports. Early in the semester, connect with The Writing Center for one-on-one assistance or small-group workshops. (Email [writing@usc.edu](mailto:writing@usc.edu) or call 213-740-3691). If you have difficulty with tests, reach out to the Center for Academic Support (call 213-740-0776 or email them at [study@usc.edu](mailto:study@usc.edu)).

### **Looking Ahead**

Exploring the field of communication is an ongoing experience of discovery for me. I look forward to learning more with all of you this semester.

## Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

### Academic Integrity Policy:

The School of Communication maintains a commitment to the highest standards of ethical conduct and academic excellence. Any student found responsible for plagiarism, fabrication, cheating on examinations, or purchasing papers or other assignments will be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards and may be dismissed from the School of Communication. There are no exceptions to the school's policy.

### Academic Conduct:

Plagiarism – presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Part B, Section 11, "Behavior Violating University Standards" [policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b](http://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b). Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, [policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct](http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct).

In addition, it is assumed that the work you submit for this course is work you have produced entirely by yourself, and has not been previously produced by you for submission in another course, without approval of the instructor.

### Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity in a Crisis

In case of a declared emergency if travel to campus is not feasible, USC executive leadership will announce an electronic way for instructors to teach students in their residence halls or homes using a combination of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technologies. See the university's site on **Campus Safety and Emergency Preparedness**.

### Support Systems:

*Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call*  
[studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling](http://studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling)

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

*National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call*  
[suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

*Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press "0" after hours – 24/7 on call*  
[studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault](http://studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault)

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

*Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) - (213) 740-5086 | Title IX – (213) 821-8298*  
[equity.usc.edu](http://equity.usc.edu), [titleix.usc.edu](http://titleix.usc.edu)

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

*Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298*  
[usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care\\_report](http://usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report)

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity | Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

*The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776*  
[dsp.usc.edu](http://dsp.usc.edu)

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

*USC Campus Support and Intervention - (213) 821-4710*

[campussupport.usc.edu](http://campussupport.usc.edu)

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

*Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101*

[diversity.usc.edu](http://diversity.usc.edu)

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

*USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call*

[dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu), [emergency.usc.edu](http://emergency.usc.edu)

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

*USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call*

[dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu)

Non-emergency assistance or information.

*Annenberg Student Success Fund*

<https://annenberg.usc.edu/current-students/resources/additional-funding-resources>

The Annenberg Student Success Fund is a donor-funded financial aid account available to USC Annenberg undergraduate and graduate students for non-tuition expenses related to extra- and co-curricular programs and opportunities.