

# DRAFT

---



**COMM 200** (4 units, 20327)  
**Communication and Social Science**  
**Spring 2024 T/T 2:00 – 3:20 Room ANN L105A**

---

Instructor: Jillian Pierson, Ph.D.  
(213)821-1127  
jilliank@usc.edu

Feel free to reach out to me by texting or calling my office phone number. Text for short messages only, please. Longer, content-related questions are best sent via email.

Office: ASC G21  
hours: TBD

I encourage you to connect with me outside of our regularly scheduled class meetings!

Aside from these hours, please email or text whenever you'd like to come by or meet on Zoom. I generally can meet before or after our class in-person. I'm also available via Zoom (or phone) most Fridays. When you email, suggest a couple of times that work for you.

---

---

## 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. These will include interpersonal communication, organizational communication, small group communication, media studies, and persuasion.

## Course Learning Outcomes

By the end of the semester, you should be able to:

- Define social science, communication, and communication as a social science
- 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
- Recognize the limitations of the body of theory and research in communication that are tied to the historical context they were created in
- Apply theoretical constructs to "real world" communication examples
- Describe recent research studies in communication

## Required Texts

Dainton, M., & Zelle, E. D. (2022). *Applying communication theory for professional life* (5th ed.). Sage. [NOTE: We are using the FIFTH edition of this text.]

Additional required readings will be posted on Blackboard and listed by abbreviated citations on the course calendar. These readings are subject to change.

# D R A F T

## Tentative Course Schedule:

This is our plan but please keep in mind we may have to make slight adjustments during the course of the semester. I will try to keep all due dates and exam dates in place but the topics may shift from this schedule.

The chapters in this calendar refer to our Dainton and Zelley textbook. Other readings will be found on Blackboard.

Week	Date	Topic	Assignment due	Readings for <b>after</b> class
1	Jan 9	Course welcome & introduction		COSSA
	Jan 11	Communication as a social science	Student Info Form due before class	Avoiding plagiarism; NCA, 2008
2	Jan 16	Evaluating theories; axioms of comm	Syllabus quiz due before class	Chapter 1 (except "Case Study 1 Attribution Theory)
	Jan 18	Research strategies	Academic integrity due before class	Chapter 2; Chapter 8 <i>only</i> p. 144-146 (section on five axioms)
3	Jan 23	Attribution theory & Uncertainty reduction		Chapter 1 Case Study 1 Attribution Theory
	Jan 25	Expectancy violations theory	Research paradigm Due Jan 26 at 11:59 pm	Chapter 3
4	Jan 30	Cognitive dissonance theory	Quiz	Burgoon, 2016
	Feb 1	(cont.)		Aronson & Tavriss, 2020
5	Feb 6	<b>Exam 1 (bring laptop)</b>	Exam 1	
	Feb 8	Interpersonal comm Politeness theory		Knobloch et al 2010
6	Feb 13	Social exchange theory & relational dialectics theory		Chapter 4
	Feb 15	RDT (cont.)		Stephenson-Abetz & Holman, 2012
7	Feb 20	Comm privacy management		Hammonds, 2015
	Feb 22	Intercultural communication		Baldwin et al., 2013
8	Feb 27	Communication accommodation	Theory exploration	Chapter 5
	Feb 29	Face negotiation theory		Giles et al., 2012; Kirschbaum, 2012
9	Mar 5	<b>Exam 2 (bring laptop)</b>	Exam 2	
	Mar 7	Group comm		Chapter 8
<i>Enjoy spring break! – No classes meet March 11-15</i>				
10	Mar 19	Group comm cont		tbd
	Mar 21	Org comm		Chapter 9; Koschmann, 2015

# DRAFT

Week	Date	Topic	Assignment due	Readings for <b>after</b> class
11	Mar 26	Org comm (cont.)		Graham et al., 2015
	Mar 28	Diffusion and network theory		Check Bb
12	Apr 2	networks (cont.)		Bb readings
	Apr 4	Persuasion		Chapter 6 ( <i>except</i> pp. 94-103)
13	Apr 9	Persuasion (cont.)		Chapter 7 ( <i>except</i> 129-131)
	Apr 11	(cont.)	Application paper Due Apr 6 at 11:59 pm	Booth-Butterfield; Rumble et al., 2017
14	Apr 16	Mass & mediated comm		Chapter 10
	Apr 18	(cont.)		tbd
15	Apr 23	Mass comm (cont.)		Chapter 11; Walther & Whitty, 2021
	Apr 25	Course conclusion		
	<b>May 2</b>	<b>Final exam 2-4</b>		

Please note the date of the final exam, no matter how inconvenient, is set by USC. The university requires we hold the final during that time period.

## 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, including both lectures and discussion sections. While it is normal to miss a few times during the course of a semester, you cannot take this class without attending regularly.

2. Of course you may occasionally have to miss class for illness or other reasons. When you are absent, I do not need to hear an excuse. However, 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.

If you miss more than six classes, your overall grade for the course will be lowered. Similarly, if you are consistently late to class, your grade may be lowered.

3. When you miss class, you should ask two other students for their notes from class. After you've reviewed any slides and read students' notes, feel free to come to us with questions.

4. Participation credit will be given on occasion during lectures and discussion section meetings.

# DRAFT

If you miss the live session, it will be your responsibility to find the alternative participation opportunity on Blackboard to receive that credit. Your alternative participation assignment must be submitted no later than one week from the date of the missed class, or you will not receive credit for it.

5. If you added the class late, you are still responsible for the material and assignments you missed. Please submit any homework and participation assignments no later than Friday of the fourth week of class.

## **No laptops or electronics in lecture.**

In order to create the best possible learning environment, I ask you to not use your laptops or phones. I completely understand the temptation, but I think we all benefit from focusing without technology. Current research shows that taking notes by hand is more effective than typing them. Read the articles posted on Blackboard for a lengthier discussion of this policy. (Sometimes students have documented reasons for using laptops for note-taking; exceptions are made only for students with such documentation.)

Please bring pen and paper to lectures for note-taking and activities. If you are using an iPad or other tablet instead of pen and paper, that is acceptable as long as you keep your device open to the note-taking app only.

The three exams will require use of a laptop, so they will be an exception to the “no laptop” rule.

Please turn off all notifications and sounds on your devices before class begins.

## **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.

When you write to us, please put COMM 200 in the subject line of your email!

**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 and your TA 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 a valid 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.

# DRAFT

## **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 do not receive 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.

## **Accommodations for students with registered disabilities**

Please upload your letter from OSAS to the “assignment” I've created for it on Blackboard. If there's anything specific about your accommodations you'd like me to know, I would be very happy to talk with you and support you however I can.

## **Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use Policy**

Generative AI (such as ChatGPT, Bard, Claude and many others) is a tool which offers opportunities and raises concerns. As the technology rapidly evolves, we students of communication need to be thoughtful and ethical consumers of the technology. For our class, there may be times when it is appropriate to use AI, such as for brainstorming topic ideas. But please keep in mind some important notes when using generative AI:

1. You must **give credit** to the specific AI used in your assignment. Check Blackboard and the specific assignment instructions for information about how to do that appropriately. Failing to cite AI use is an academic integrity violation and will be treated as such, with potentially serious consequences.
2. Generative AI often is incorrect and gives **misinformation** through its “hallucinations.” You cannot rely on AI output; you have to check for correctness.
3. The **quality of the prompts** shapes the quality of the output of generative AI. As these tools develop, our skills in “conversing” with them will need to change and grow too.
4. AI should never be a substitute for your own **thoughtful, critical contributions** to the subject matter. Expressing oneself through writing is an important part of learning, refining thought, and demonstrating understanding that cannot be ceded to AI tools.

These are just a few of many considerations that I wanted to highlight at present. I expect my own knowledge and policies in this arena to evolve, and I welcome your thoughts.

## **Grading**

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.

# DRAFT

Grades will be calculated as follows:

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

Grades are earned according to the following standards:

- A Excellent; demonstrates extraordinarily high achievement; comprehensive knowledge and understanding of subject matter; all expectations met and exceeded.
- B Good; moderately broad knowledge and understanding of subject matter; explicitly or implicitly demonstrates good, if not thorough understanding; only minor substantive shortcomings.
- C Satisfactory; reasonable knowledge and understanding of subject matter; most expectations are met; despite any shortcomings, demonstrates basic level of understanding.
- D Marginal; minimal knowledge and understanding of subject matter; more than one significant shortcoming; deficiencies indicate only the most rudimentary level of understanding.
- F Failing; unacceptably low level of knowledge and understanding of subject matter; deficiencies indicate lack of understanding.
- P/ NP To earn a passing grade, you must have a C- or higher. You also may not omit any assignments. You cannot earn a “P” without completing the theory exploration, the application paper, and all three exams regardless of your average score in the class.

We will do our best to get you feedback on assignments within two weeks of the due date. If you have questions about a grade on an assignment, you have ten days after the grade was posted to inquire about it via email.

## **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 makeup participation assignments if you have to miss), and you’ll have an automatic 100% or “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.

# DRAFT

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

All homework and in-class work assignments are credited via labor-based grading only. In other words, you merely do the assignment on time and get full credit. These assignments include the following:

### *Student Information Sheet*

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

### *Syllabus Quiz*

Please complete the syllabus quiz on Blackboard outside of class time.

### *Academic Integrity Tutorial*

Please complete the assigned tutorial listed on Blackboard, and then upload your certificate of completion.

### *In-Class Work*

During both lecture and discussion meetings, we will have a variety of participation activities. 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 synchronous class, please look at Blackboard to check for alternative participation assignments.

### *Quiz*

We will have one in-class quiz to give you an opportunity to practice for the first midterm. Your performance on the quiz will not affect your grade; you merely have to take the quiz to receive full credit as it will count as part of your homework/in-class work grade.

## **Research Paradigm Assignment (10%)**

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.
4. Be prepared to briefly explain the study you read during your discussion section meeting.

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.

## **Theory Exploration (15%)**

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.

# DRAFT

## **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, even if the two do not overlap.

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)).

## **Honoring Native Lands**

Our USC campus is located on the traditional land of the Tongva People. It is a complicated reality that we exist in a space which for many years belonged to the Tongva who have been here for at least 10,000 years. I would like to acknowledge the unjust, violent history that unfolded over many years before and during the establishment of this university, and to show appreciation and humility toward indigenous communities and the sacrifices they have been forced to make.

## **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.



# DRAFT

## Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

### Academic Integrity

The University of Southern California is foremost a learning community committed to fostering successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Academic misconduct is in contrast to the university's mission to educate students through a broad array of first-rank academic, professional, and extracurricular programs and includes any act of dishonesty in the submission of academic work (either in draft or final form).

This course will follow the expectations for academic integrity as stated in the [USC Student Handbook](#). All students are expected to submit assignments that are original work and prepared specifically for the course/section in this academic term. You may not submit work written by others or "recycle" work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s). Students suspected of engaging in academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

Other violations of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

The impact of academic dishonesty is far-reaching and is considered a serious offense against the university and could result in outcomes such as failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

For more information about academic integrity see the [student handbook](#) or the [Office of Academic Integrity's website](#), and university policies on [Research and Scholarship Misconduct](#)

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.

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 or Learning Lab, without approval of the instructor.

### Course Content Distribution and Synchronous Session Recordings Policies

USC has policies that prohibit recording and distribution of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment.

Recording a university class is prohibited without the express permission of the instructor and announcement to the class, or unless conducted pursuant to an Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) accommodation. Recording can inhibit free discussion in the future, and thus infringe on the academic freedom of other students as well as the instructor. ([Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook](#), page 13).

Distribution or use of notes, recordings, exams, or other intellectual property, based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study is also prohibited. This includes but is not limited to providing materials for distribution by services publishing course materials. This restriction on unauthorized use also applies to all information, which had been distributed to students or in any way had been displayed for use in relationship to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the internet, or via any other media. ([Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook](#), page 13).

# DRAFT

## **Students and Disability Accommodations**

USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. [The Office of Student Accessibility Services](#) (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at [osas.usc.edu](https://osas.usc.edu). You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at [osasfrontdesk@usc.edu](mailto:osasfrontdesk@usc.edu).

## **Support Systems**

### [Annenberg Student Success Fund](#)

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.

### [Annenberg Student Emergency Aid Fund](#)

Awards are distributed to students experiencing unforeseen circumstances and emergencies impacting their ability to pay tuition or cover everyday living expenses. These awards are not intended to cover full-tuition expenses, but rather serve as bridge funding to guarantee students' continued enrollment at USC until other resources, such as scholarships or loans, become available. Students are encouraged to provide as much information in their application, as well as contact their academic advisor directly with questions about additional resources available to them.

### [Counseling and Mental Health](#) - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call

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

### [988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#) - 988 for both calls and text messages – 24/7 on call

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline is comprised of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. The new, shorter phone number makes it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services (though the previous 1 (800) 273-8255 number will continue to function indefinitely) and represents a continued commitment to those in crisis.

### [Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services \(RSVP\)](#) - (213) 740-9355(WELL) – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking).

### [Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX \(EEO-TIX\)](#) - (213) 740-5086

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

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

### [The Office of Student Accessibility Services \(OSAS\)](#) - (213) 740-0776

OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

### [USC Campus Support and Intervention](#) - (213) 740-0411

# DRAFT

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

## [Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#) - (213) 740-2101

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

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) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call

Non-emergency assistance or information.

## [Office of the Ombuds](#) - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)

A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

## [Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice](#) - (323) 442-2850 or [otfp@med.usc.edu](mailto:otfp@med.usc.edu)

Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.

## [TrojansAlert](#)

TrojansAlert is an alert system that allows university officials to contact you during an emergency. It is your connection to real-time updates, instructions on where to go, what to do, or what not to do, who to contact and other important information. Visit the website to sign up.

## *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](#).

## [ITS Customer Support Center \(CSC\)](#): (213) 740-5555

The ITS Customer Support Center (CSC) provides support to the USC community for connecting to the USC Network and using supported applications. For help with network connectivity and software, contact CSC. Walk-in support is available in Leavey Library's Information Commons.

## [Violence-Free Campus](#)

Visit the website to read more about prohibited behaviors, reporting responsibilities and where to report.

## *Student-Athlete Travel Excuse Letters*

Prior to a university-sponsored away competition, Student-Athletes are responsible for providing their Instructor with a Competition Excuse Letter (provided by their academic counselor) for the classes missed while on the road (i.e., excused absence). It is the responsibility of the Student-Athlete to provide the letter prior to leaving on their trip and to make arrangements for a make-up of any missed assignments or exams. Please refer to the [SAAS site](#) where they detail travel and travel excuse letters.

## **Add/Drop Dates for Session 001**

**(15 weeks: 1/8/2024 – 4/26/2024; Final Exam Period: 5/1-8/2024)**

Link: <https://classes.usc.edu/term-20241/calendar/>

Last day to add: Friday, January 26, 2024

# DRAFT

**Last day to drop a class without a mark of "W," except for Monday-only classes, and receive a refund:** Friday, January 26, 2024

**Last day to change enrollment option to Pass/No Pass or Audit:** Friday, January 26, 2024 [All major and minor courses must be taken for a letter grade.]

**Last day to add/drop a Monday-only class without a mark of "W" and receive a refund or change to Audit:** Tuesday, January 30, 2024

**Last day to withdraw without a "W" on transcript or change pass/no pass to letter grade:** Friday, February 23, 2024 [Mark of "W" will still appear on student record and STARS report and tuition charges still apply.]

\*Please drop any course by the end of week three for session 001 (or the 20 percent mark of the session in which the course is offered) to avoid tuition charges.]

**Last day to drop with a mark of "W":** Friday, April 5, 2024