CMST 2C03: Communication Theory (Fall 2016)

Mondays 9:30-10:20, Tuesdays 10:30 – 11:20
Central Campus, Information Technology Building, AB 102
Dr. Phil Rose, 333 Togo Salmon Hall; email: roseph@mcmaster.ca
Office Hours: Tuesdays 12:00-1:00pm
Teaching Team: Nina Camalleri (cammaln@mcmaster.ca), Paula Pimentel Daidone
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The Course: An introduction to various theories on the organization, use and manipulation
of communication, including semiotics, sociolinguistics, interpersonal communication, group
communications, and performance. A variety of theories from multiple traditions in
communication studies will be presented and analyzed. Underpinning debates and tensions
in the field will be discussed. We will use the theories to examine music, film and television,
news, advertising, relationships, fashion, food, and other media and communication
processes and events. We will also be considering how our study of communication theory
can facilitate community engagement.

Required Texts:

Laughey, Dan. (2007) *Key themes in media theory.* Cambridge: Open University Press (book
store or library e-book).

Lum, C. (2006) "Excerpts", in *Perspectives on Culture, Technology and Communication.* Cresskill,
New Jersey: Hampton Press, pp. 14-18 and 28-38 (on reserve at library).

Knapp, M., J. Hall, and T. Horgan (2014) "Nonverbal Communication: Basic Perspectives",
in *Nonverbal Communication in Human Interaction* (Eighth Editon). Boston: Wadsworth, pp. 3-
28.

Cayley, D. (2001) "The Scapegoat, Part 1", IDEAS. Toronto: CBC Radio,
http://www.cbc.ca/radio/ideas/the-scapegoat-the-ideas-of-ren%C3%A9-girard-part-1-
1.3474195.

Course Learning Objectives:

1. Understand what a "theory" is and why we have them.

2. Analyze the assumptions, tenets, and implications of communication theories.

3. Differentiate between communication theories.

4. Apply theories to mediated contexts to gain insights into the world.

5. Understand how theories interact with media practices.

6. Incorporate one's understanding of theory into one's own media/communication practice.

7. Engage critically about social and political implications of particular theories.

8. Discuss underlying tensions and debates in the field.

9. Extrapolate theory from research and arguments.

10. Consider how communication theory can be part of a toolkit for community engagement.

11. Sharpen writing and discussion skills.

Assessment and Evaluation:

Tutorial attendance and participation	10%
First assignment	20%
Mid Term test	20%
Second assignment	20%
Final written exam	30%

ASSIGNMENTS:

<u>Tutorial attendance and participation</u> 10% -- Each student must register for and attend weekly tutorials, run by TAs. Tutorials are designed to build off of readings and lecture, and to apply the concepts to new situations. Tutorial is mandatory; attendance will be taken. Please come to class with the readings completed, ready to discuss them, as participation is required. TAs will help answer questions, prepare you for exams, and work through readings. *Note: Tutorials will start on Tuesday, September 13.*

The following rubric might guide your observations for ongoing discussions of weekly materials:

a) item's most interesting aspects?

b) item's problematic aspects?

c) author's/broadcaster's oversights?

d) item's confusing aspects?

e) general thoughts/commentary?

f) at least 1 good discussion question.

In preparation, students should keep notes regarding the main points and strengths or weaknesses of each course item for tutorial discussions and other term work.

Midterm Test: The midterm test will be a mixed-format (e.g., multiple choice, true/false, matching, short answer), and will test knowledge from lecture, tutorial, readings, discussions, and assignment.

Two Written Assignments -- Total = 20 + 20 = 40%.

Title pages must include TA's name and tutorial section. Please use APA citation style for in-text citation and bibliography. Double-sided printing is fine.

a) First Assignment: 1250 words (five pages) -- due Week 5 - Oct. 3 (20%)

Concepts from reading/lecture/tutorial will be applied in an extended analysis investigating the possible roles that mimesis or imitation plays in each of the areas that we have explored to this point. The assignment's thesis should be something to the effect of the following:

 "Mimesis or imitation plays a significant though underappreciated role in a number of areas explored this term; here I will probe this phenomenon in relation to the topics of historical information environments, mimetic theory, nonverbal communication, media effects, agenda setting and the two-step flow of communication".

b) Second Assignment: 1250 words (five pages) -- due Week 10 - Nov. 15 (20%)

This assignment will ask students to explore the digital information environment in terms of the physical and symbolic forms associated with the Internet and World Wide Web, noting at the same time some of the cultural costs and benefits of these relatively recent technological developments. Concepts from reading, lecture, and your own considered observations will be applied in an extended analysis.

Superior papers will be free of writing errors, be of professional copy (i.e. use of justified margins, 12 point type, pagination, proper indenting, proper integration of quotations, double-spacing, proper use of citation method etc.), and will make observations and arguments that go beyond those discussed in class.

Final written exam 30% -- Scheduled by the University. The final exam will be cumulative; it will cover all material from the course—readings, lecture, discussion, and debates. The format will be mixed—e.g., multiple choice, true/false, matching, short answer, and essay.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1:

Sept. 6 -- Intro to Course /Intro to Theory/The Theory of Evolution (Chapter 1)

(no tutorials this week)

Week 2:

Sept. 12 -- The Evolving Information Environment (no reading)

Sept. 13 -- Mimetic Theory (Cayley 2001, online)

Week 3:

Sept. 19 -- Interpersonal Communication - The Nonverbal 'Ground' (Knapp, Hall, and Horgan 2014; pp. 3-28)

Sept. 20 -- Behaviourism, Media Effects, Lasswell (Chapter 2)

Week 4:

Sept. 26 -- Cultivation Theory; Agenda Setting (Chapter 2)

Sept. 27 -- Two-Step Flow of Communication; Uses and Gratifications (Chapter 2)

Week 5:

Oct. 3 -- Modernity & Technology; Toronto School of Communication (Chapter 3)

(Assignment One Due)

Oct. 4 -- Media as Environments - Physical and Symbolic Form (Lum 2006; 14-18 and 28-38; on reserve)

Oct. 10/11 -- Midterm Recess: No classes

Week 6:

Oct. 17 -- Frankfurt School and Technology (Chapter 3)

Oct. 18 -- Midterm Test

Week 7:

Oct. 24 -- Socio-linguistics, Semiotics, Myth (Chapter 4)

Oct. 25 -- Ideology, Hegemony, Structuralism (Chapter 4)

Week 8:

Oct. 31 -- Discourse and Power (Chapter 4)

Nov. 1 -- Representation, Subcultures (Chapter 4)

Week 9:

Nov. 7 -- Interactionism, Labelling Theory, Moral Panics (Chapter 5)

Nov. 8 -- Performance Analysis (Chapter 5)

Week 10:

Nov. 14 -- Feminist Theories, Youth, Ideology, Gender (Chapter 6)

Nov. 15 -- Political Economy (Chapter 7)

(Assignment Two Due)

Week 11:

Nov. 21 -- Postcolonial Theories, Orientalism, Critical Race Theory (Chapter 7)

Nov. 22 -- Postmodern Theories (Chapter 8)

Week 12:

Nov. 28 -- Information Theories, cont. (Chapter 8)

Nov. 29 -- Consumer Theories, Fandom (Chapter 9)

Week 13:

Dec. 5 -- Consumerism Theories, cont. (Chapter 9)

Dec. 6 -- Course Wrap-Up: Communication Theory as a Field (Chapter 10)

POLICIES:

Missed Work, Extensions, and Late Penalties:

McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF)

There is a self-reporting tool available for McMaster Students, in order to report absences due to minor medical situations that last up to 3 days. This form provides the ability to request accommodation for any missed academic work, but cannot be used during any final examination period. For further information, see http://mcmaster.ca/msaf/.

Make-up tests/exams will be allowed in case of emergency only, with proper documentation; make-ups will be different than the original and will be scheduled by the Professor, at his discretion. The student has one week to contact the professor to schedule a make-up, after which time a make-up will not be permitted.

Since the university uses software that can check for plagiarism, you must submit papers directly to your TA in hard copy *and* electronically through the link to 'Turn it in' on Moodle. Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the day due. Papers are late if they are submitted the same day after class. Late assignments must be submitted to Moodle, in order to document completion date; the professor and your TA must be sent an email alerting that the paper is on Moodle. The teaching team will not accept papers via email, and hard copies must be identical to electronic copies or risk a mark of 0%. Retain a copy of your paper for your own files. Submit hard copies of late papers directly to TAs as soon as possible.

All late assignments incur a late penalty of 10% per day late (starting immediately upon collection of papers in class); weekend days are treated separately, due to the fact that you can submit on Moodle. Assignments more than ten days late will not be accepted. If you know you will not be in class on an assignment due date, it is your responsibility to submit work early.

Academic Honesty:

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: 'Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty'), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, located at www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained. 2. Improper collaboration in group work. 3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

Students may want to refresh their knowledge of such issues by completing the Academic Integrity Tutorial at the link below:
http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity/students/quizzes/index.html.

Turnitin:

1. McMaster University approves the use of Turnitin.com for the following reasons:

a) prevention – if students know their academic work is being checked for plagiarism, they will hopefully use proper citation methods

b) protection of honest students and their work

c) detection – with the type of technology in common use today, it is necessary to use a detection tool which checks academic work against the Internet

2. Guidelines for the use of Turnitin.com:

a) papers should be submitted to Turnitin.com only with the student's knowledge;

b) the instructor should indicate that Turnitin.com will be used in the course outline and/or on the assignment details;

c) the use of Turnitin.com cannot be mandatory*. If a student refuses to submit his or her work to Turnitin.com, he or she cannot be compelled to do so and should not be penalized. Instructors are advised to accept a hard copy of the assignment and grade it as per normal methods. The assignment can be subjected to a Google search or some other kind of search engine if the instructor wishes.

* Some students object to the use of Turnitin.com because of ownership issues. All work submitted to Turnitin.com becomes part of their database and is used to check authenticity of other student's assignments. Some students object to their work being put in the database and others object to their work being used by Turnitin.com

Student Info regarding Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities: Students who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Academic accommodations must be arranged for each term of study. Student Accessibility Services can be contacted by phone 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or e-mail sas@mcmaster.ca. For further information, consult McMaster University's Policy for Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities.

Course Modification The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of students to check their McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

Faculty email policy: It is the policy of the Communication Studies and Multimedia Department that all email communication between students and instructors (including TAs) must originate from their official McMaster University email accounts. This policy protects the confidentiality and sensitivity of information and confirms the identities of both the student and instructor.

Effective time management is critical for university students. Adhering to the schedule for assignments supports the development of this skill. In this regard, therefore, consider the following:

> "*What information consumes is rather obvious: it consumes the attention of its recipients. Hence a wealth of information creates a poverty of attention, and a need to allocate that attention efficiently among the overabundance of information sources that might consume it*" (Herbert A. Simon).