

ComS 221 Instructional Communication Theory

Optional Assignments:

1. Follow-a-thread
2. Debate
3. Poster/concept map
4. Interview with an expert
5. Critical or Empirical Analysis of teaching material
6. Reading Presentation
7. Glossary

1. Follow-a-thread: a short essay 2-3 pages that explores, in greater depth, a topic from the readings by reading relevant citation or citations. (5%) Assignment can be repeated once. To "follow a thread" is to examine the treatment of a concept or theory across related essays or studies.

For example, the notion of **communicative style** is treated in:

Thomas, C. E., Richmond, V.P. & McCroskey, J. C. (1994). The association between immediacy and socio-communicative style. *Communication Research Reports*, 11, 107-114.

Wooten, A. G., & McCroskey, J. C. (1996). Student trust of teacher as a function of socio-communicative style of teacher and socio-communicative orientation of student. *Communication Research Reports*, 13, 94-100.

Wanzer, M. B., & McCroskey, J. C. (1998). Teacher socio-communicative style as a correlate of student affect toward teacher and course material. *Communication Education*, 47, 43-52.

Your task is to read find at least two *related* essays and explain how a concept or theory is treated among scholars of instructional communication. Remark on what you learn about the nature of our knowledge about the concept or theory.

Essays that score all five points will present some insight rather than just reporting the contents of the studies. Include a bibliography and cite sources in APA style. (You may not use the concept or citations in the example above.)

2. Debate: one form is a debate with a colleague; another form is presentation and analysis of a debate on a relevant topic that you discover in the literature. Clear the resolution or topic with me before proceeding. (10%)

See two options below:

Debate with a Colleague (Option 1)

A traditional debate will require a "resolution" about some existing set of beliefs, statement of fact or procedures for researching instructional communication. The debate will include

- an Affirmative speech (4 minutes);
- a Negative speech (4 minutes);
- cross-exam A of N (3 minutes);
- cross-exam N of A (3 minutes);
- N closing speech (3 minutes);
- A closing speech (3 minutes).

The class will vote by secret ballot for the winner.

Debaters will provide an outline of their first speeches and a complete bibliography of sources used. To score well, debaters will exhibit clear preparation (outline and bib. ready at time of debate; graphics properly prepared and organized; flow of presentation smooth); will employ time effectively; will display insight in the arguments (this is not competitive debate so speed and sheer quantity of facts are not the standard)

Debate in the Literature (Option 2)

A few debates exist in the literature regarding specific issues such as the Sprague v. Rodriguez/Cai that you have in your reader. (You may not use this one.)

You will create a 10-12 minute presentation outlining fairly and clearly the existing sides of the debates. Added to this will be a critical commentary (similar to that of a panel respondent at WSCA or NCA convention) wherein you provide perspective on the debate. Your presentation will be a formal presentation—you will provide a scholarly reaction that moves beyond reporting the two side's positions. You will provide me a copy of your outline before speaking; your bibliography will organize the sources by side of the debate with a third category for all other sources used.

Proper outline form will be followed and citations will be in APA style.

3. Present a poster/concept map *of relationships between elements of instructional theory be it a group of articles to major themes or movements in the study of instructional communication* (5%) *Assignment can be repeated once.*

This will be a 6-8 minute poster presentation on some topic of interest to you that is relevant to our study as a class. The presentation should be interactive (which is the intent of poster presentations).

For assistance in designing your concept map see:

<http://www.mind-mapping.co.uk/make-mind-map.htm>

Some resources for constructing posters: <http://www.csus.edu/atcs/poster session. htm>

Presentation Grading Criteria

Content: overview, transitions, review of main points; between 6 and 8 minutes of speaking on your topic, plus answering questions

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Delivery: eye contact, loudness, engagement with listeners, body movements, conversational style, preparedness for questions

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Poster:

Attractiveness: title, subject matter, visual layout, purpose identified (for your lit review), presenter identified (i.e. your name)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Message: clear, logical selection of terms; readable; logical connections between terms; complexity of relationships realistic

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Graphics: colorful; creative and memorable; augments the concepts; displays key qualities of concepts

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4. Interview with an expert: *report of and analysis of content of an interview done with an expert or experts in the field of instructional communication (5-10% depending who is interviewed, and the level of contribution to the course content; this will be negotiated by you and me.)* Check with me regarding your choices of interviewee before proceeding.

You will arrange an interview with an expert in the field of instructional communication, complete the interview, then write up report of it. (If you need help arranging an interview, let me know and I'll do what I can to help.)

(See for example:

Crandell, H. & Hazel, M. (2002). Issues in communication education: An interview with Joe Ayers. *Communication Education*, 51, 405-12.)

The interview write-up will **include an introduction that explains your rationale for your choice and explanation of what you hoped to learn from the interview.** The write-up of the interview will **conclude with a section summarizing the significant ideas** presented by your interviewee, **and your reflections on the experience.**

The write-up will be **5-8 pages in length.** Articles or essays discussed in any part of the write-up will be **properly documented in APA style.**

(NOTE: be sure to send a thank you note to the interviewee.)

5. Critical / Empirical Analysis of teaching material: apply some specific analytical approach to an appropriate body of teaching materials as textbooks, teacher's manuals, syllabi, web pages, etc. This will be a **critical/rhetorical analysis** or **empirical analysis** of whatever material you choose. (10%)

If you are doing **a critical analysis, you will**

- characterize the material you are studying and the context of it;
- describe/explain your theoretical approach,
- present your analysis and
- interpret the findings of the analysis. (Be sure to talk with me about this approach)

If you choose **an empirical study, you will**

- provide an introduction and rationale for your study;
- present your research question/s;
- describe your methodology
- present results and
- discuss the results.
- Conclude with a brief discussion of the limitations of the study and suggestions for future research.

Your essay will be 12-15 pages in length in proper APA format

6. Reading Presentation (same as Required Reading Presentation)

As you read the course material, your task is to discover the essential ideas presented in the reading. The number of essential concepts will vary, of course, between readings; you may find two essential concepts presented whereas your colleague may have to deal with eight or ten in his or her presentation. (10%) (You are required to do one; you may do one as an optional assignment)

Carefully prepare a ten-twelve minute presentation of the material for the class. Elements of the presentation will be:

- 1) definitions of specific concepts
- 2) explanations of their relationships to each other and other concepts encountered in the course
- 3) discussion of the relative value of the concepts discovered in the reading
- 4) application of the concepts to some discourse to show how the concepts work
- 5) *presentation of significant theoretical questions or problems raised by these concepts*

This will be a polished presentation that indicates significant engagement with and thought about the material. Use of visual aids and/or handouts as needed will be appropriate **(Do not create PowerPoint stack that you read through!)**. Be sure to provide citations of material you find that expands, elaborates or complements to the assigned reading. If material you read is available in an electronic form, put it on the ComS 221 wiki for classmates to retrieve as they need or wish.

Consult the presentation schedule and coordinate with your colleague what you will present so we have better coverage of the content, and avoid redundant treatments.

7. Glossary Assignment

Bruce Gronbeck argued that part of a liberal education is the "installation of technical or in other ways precise language that enables its users to talk more accurately and usefully about the world. With the act of naming . . . come the abilities to assume perspectives on and to express attitudes toward the world" (185). Since we, as increasingly sophisticated students of communication theory, must talk about the world of experience we have chosen to focus on, it is important that we develop a sufficiently sophisticated vocabulary to provide insight to ourselves and our audiences.

Goal:

To expand your scholarly vocabulary in the area of instructional communication.

Directions:

The glossary assignment asks you to do four tasks in the development of a vocabulary about communication theory:

- 1) Isolate words within the readings that you see as significant terms to know for a communication scholar interested in instructional communication.
- 2) Define the term from the reading or other sources.
- 3) Write a sentence using the term in a way that displays your correct command of the term
- 4) Provide a full bibliographic reference (APA form) for the term so you can locate its source and the surrounding ideas if needed in the future. Your entries should look like the example below:

Symbol

"... symbols are the instruments *par excellence* of 'social integration': as instruments of knowledge and communication, they make it possible for there to be a *consensus* on the meaning of the social world, a consensus which **contributes fundamentally to the reproduction of the social order**" (Bourdieu 166).

When we say to a young child, "This is a book" while showing a book, we use **symbols** to create knowledge of a particular kind in the child, providing the child a means for the child to operate more effectively in society using symbols/words herself.

Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and Symbolic Power*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

25 accepted entries earns 10 points

I make the final judgment as to what is acceptable. **Hint: In the past, two problems prevent students from getting full credit:**

- 1) students choose terms that are not technical terms in the literature. For example, "teaching" is a term of general use. However, while the word is used in natural speech, "andragogy" is a technical term identifying a particular set of assumptions, and communication practices relative to adult learners. **If you aren't sure, feel free to check terms with me as you move along.**

2) Sentences of application generated by the student often do not show that the student has grasped the concept. Writing, "I think using andragogy is important with adult students," does not indicate your mastery of the term! Show off your understanding.

You will receive points based on a percentage of terms accepted. So, if you attempted 25 entries, and 19 were accepted, you would get 7.5 (75%) points; the assignment is not an "all or nothing" proposition.