



ComS 221

Instructional Communication Theory Fall 2013

Instructor: Dr. Mark Stoner

Office: MND 5034

Email: stoner1@csus.edu (best way to contact me) **Instructor's**

Home Page: www.csus.edu/indiv/s/stonerm **Course Web Page:**

[http://www.csus.edu/indiv/s/stonerm/ComS221_FrontPage.](http://www.csus.edu/indiv/s/stonerm/ComS221_FrontPage.htm)

htm **Office Hours:**

Tues: 2-3; & 5-5:30 PM (I will be available in office and via Skype. My Skype name is mark.stoner)

Thurs: 2-3; & 5-5:30PM (in office and via Skype.)

CATALOGUE DESCRIPTION:

A survey of dominant theories of instructional communication. Students read, study and critique prevailing bodies of literature which have a bearing on the study and practice of instructional communication. Theories are used to help students reflect on their own experiences as teachers and students and to generate new ideas for research in instructional communication. 3 units.

PLACE IN THE CURRICULUM:

ComS 221 is the theoretical complement to ComS 222 Instructional Communication Practicum. Although ComS 222 features practice, it is related to relevant theory and conversely, ComS 221, while featuring theory, it is always concerned with the connection of theory to practice.

This course will be centered around two major questions and relevant subordinate questions:

1) What are the boundaries of the study of instructional communication?

- *How are those boundaries marked?*
- *How do the present boundaries shape our knowledge about communicating and learning?*

2) What is the nature of our present knowledge of instructional communication?

- *What do we study?*
- *How do we study it?*
- *What do we know about the relationship between communicating and learning?*

As you can see, the course is essentially a course in epistemology; specifically, our knowledge of instructional communication. We will assume that we *do* know some things and we *don't* know other things about how individuals learn when they communicate with other people. We will also assume that what we study, how we study it, and how we talk about the results are processes that are themselves problematic.

That is, we will not sit down with a preset list of readings, that having read them, we will act as if we know all that is to be known about instructional communication. Everything we do in the course will be problematic—we need to be aware that all of *our* interactions about instruction merit reflection.

Course Texts

Required books:

Ashwin, P. (2012). *Analyzing Teaching-Learning Interactions in Higher Education: Accounting for Structure and Agency*. London: Continuum.

Friere, Paulo. (1994). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed. Revised 20th Anniversary Edition*. New York: Continuum Publishing. (I recommend you get this used online)

Richmond, V. and McCroskey, J.C. (Eds.). (1992). *Power in the Classroom: Communication, Control and Concern*. Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1992. (I don't like [Questia](#), but you can get an electronic version there if you can't afford a proper paper version.)

Young, R.(1992). *Critical Theory and Classroom Talk*. Philadelphia: Multilingual Matters, Ltd. (This is available online from numerous sellers at about \$25—even for a new copy.)

Anderson, Terry and Fathi Elloumi. eds. *Theory and Practice of Online Learning, 2nd ed.* Athabasca University, Canada, 2008. You can access this online for free at: <http://www.aupress.ca/index.php/books/120146>

Course Readings

Required and resource readings will be made available online.

CONCEPTUAL OUTLINE OF THE COURSE:

We will begin by looking at research that is paradigmatic of contemporary research in instructional communication. *The Power in the Classroom* studies show us how **American** scholars look at instructional communication and provide a good characterization of such research and theory.

Next, we'll examine the **British/European** approach to instructional communication and note significant differences between it and the American approach. This comparison will set the stage for a call by Jo Sprague for new perspective on instructional communication. At that time, we'll begin looking for a new, more appropriate and relevant scheme than the geographical one with which we start.

From Sprague, and the debate she generated, we'll examine critical theory, "liberation theory" and conclude with examination of mediated instructional contexts.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Knowledge:

- To know significant authors, theories, and methodologies relevant to creating knowledge in instructional communication
- To create knowledge about the nature of communication in a variety of instructional settings
- To know the dominate research in an area of instructional communication that is most significant to you.

Knowledge goals of your own:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Values/Attitudes:

- To appreciate the breadth and interdisciplinary nature of research in instructional theory
- To assess the value of research in instructional communication, particularly in the field of communication studies
- To appreciate the complexity of the instructional context
- To be intellectually curious and energetic

Values/Attitudes you want to strengthen or challenge for yourself.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Skills:

- To critique existing theory in ways that uncover its nature
- To develop the ability to uncover the heuristics of theory
- To apply ideas presented in readings and discussion to instruct colleagues in what you are learning
- To use theory to reflect in your experience in the classroom as a learner and teacher
- To identify your own philosophical positions regarding the nature of, purpose of, and processes of instruction in various contexts.

Skills you want to develop or modify:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

ASSIGNMENTS:

You will have some choice over what you want to do in the course. Since this is a graduate course, you should have some discretion over what you study; this is one of the perks of academic work (at least at the moment). Also, given the condition that this is a graduate course, the expectation is that what you do and write will be of excellent quality.

Core Projects	
Weekly Reading logs	20 %
Reading Presentation	10 %
Theoretical essay (20 pages approximately) on topic of your choice OR Investigation of Instructional Communication (20 pages approximately) on a topic of your choice.	25 %
Proposal and benchmark report on term project (a or b)	10 %
Presentation of essay or study and its central findings	10 %
Total for core	75 %

*Completion of these, such that they meet the criteria for the assignments, will mean you will receive a **B-** for the course. If a **B-** is satisfactory with you, this is all you will need to do. Probably you won't score perfectly on all assignments, so plan accordingly.*

Optional Projects from which you may select:

Follow-a-thread: a short essay (about 3 pages) that explores, in greater depth, a topic from the readings by reading relevant citation or citations. (5%) *Assignment can be repeated once for a total of 10 %*

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 these with me before proceeding. (10%)

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 for a total of 10 %*

Interview with an expert: report of and analysis of content of an interview done with an expert in the field of instructional communication (5-10% depending who is interviewed, and the level of contribution to the course content).

Critical Analysis of teaching material: apply some specific approach to instructional communication such teaching materials as textbooks, teacher's manuals, syllabi, web pages, etc. This will be a critical/rhetorical analysis or systematic content analysis of whatever material you choose. (10%)

Reading Presentation (10%) (1 optional permitted beyond the 1 required)

Extended descriptions of the assignments are on the course web page.

<http://www.csus.edu/indiv/s/stonerm/ComS%20221OptionalAssignmentDescriptors.pdf>

COURSE POLICIES:

ATTENDANCE: Your attendance and participation every class session is important. I expect you will attend every scheduled class meeting unless you are ill or have an emergency. If possible, please let me know if you must miss a session via phone or email. We will need to have a discussion about your progress in the course if you miss a second time.

USE OF LAPTOPS: If you wish to bring a laptop, please keep it closed until there is "tops up" time for writing a few notes to yourself or there is a need to do some research online. I find it hard to connect with students who are focused on a laptop display; some students find the key clicks distracting as well. If you have a documented disability and verification from Services to Students with Disabilities (SSWD), and wish to discuss academic accommodations, please let me know.

USE OF CELL PHONES: Please turn off your cell phones while class is in session. If you must be available for a call, please put your phone on vibrate and sit near the classroom door so you can discretely exit and take your call. I expect this will be a rare event, but we should be prepared.

DUE DATES: For Core Assignments, all such assignments will be due at the beginning of class time on the date announced in the calendar or in class. Due dates for Optional Assignments will be set by you, in consultation with me, and it will be your responsibility to meet your dates. On those dates, the same policy applies as for Core Assignments.

CHEATING: I follow the departmental policy on plagiarism

DROPPING: I follow the departmental and university policies on dropping. (I hope you don't!)

GRADE OF INCOMPLETE: will not be assigned unless the requirements and conditions of the university policy are met.

Class mates' contact information:

Names	Email	Phone	Address

