



CMST 301 • CMST: Approaches & Perspectives

Department of Communication Studies
Dates & Times: Wednesdays, 6:00 – 9:45pm
Room: P-0844, or online through Zoom

Spring 2022
Section: 60
Course ID: 005903

Instructor: Justin J. Rudnick, Ph.D. (“Dr. J”) (pronouns: he/she/they)
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Office Hours: [Book an appointment with me here!](#)
Mon / Tue: 2:00 – 4:00pm (Online or @ Normandale)
Wed / Thurs: 2:00 – 5:00pm (Online or @ Normandale)
**I am also available by appointment. Please contact me to set up a meeting.*

Required Texts:

This course has one required textbook. It is necessary for the successful completion of this course:

Floyd, K., Schrod, P., Erbert, L., & Trethewey, A. (2017). *Exploring communication theory: Making sense of us*. Routledge. ISBN: 978-1-138-20015-9 (pbk)

Additional required readings will be made available on the Desire-2-Learn (D2L) system (<https://mnsu.ims.mnscu.edu/>).

About the Course:

The purpose of CMST 301 is to introduce you to the many and varied ways of understanding, researching, and practicing communication. We will question what “communication” is, what questions a communication student might ask about a social phenomenon, how communication theory helps us understand social phenomena, and how a degree in communication will prepare you for life and work outside of the university. As a “gateway” course for the communication major, you will practice basic research and writing skills—including library database research and writing in APA style—to enhance your skills in observing, analyzing, and understanding the process of communication in a variety of contexts.

Your successful completion of this course will fulfill the following learning objectives:

1. Describe the process of communication through various theoretical perspectives;
2. Analyze how humans use symbols to communicate;
3. Explain the communicative nature of a social phenomenon in which you are interested;
4. Use research and writing techniques appropriate to the study and practice of communication;
5. Assess the strengths and weaknesses of various communication theories to answer questions about a social phenomenon;
6. Integrate communication theory and communication research to propose an original research project about a social phenomenon of interest to you.

About Me:

My name is Dr. Justin Rudnick (students call me “Dr. J”), and I’ll be your guide as we study the many approaches and perspectives to understanding communication! I have a doctoral degree in Communication Studies and a graduate certificate in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies from Ohio University, and my research specialties are in identity, performance, and gender/sexuality studies. I joined the CMST department in 2016, and have been teaching mostly at our twin-cities program housed at Normandale Community College. On a personal level, I consider myself an amateur foodie (I love exploring new food and drinks), I enjoy staying active, and I also play a lot of video games. 😊

Nondiscrimination and Classroom Etiquette:

We live in a multicultural world that is diverse, distinct, evolving, and complex. As an instructor, you can expect me to facilitate an amicable environment where ideas and thoughts can flow freely, creatively, and comfortably. As students, I expect you to enter our class with a similar commitment. We will entertain many ideas, hear conflicting perspectives, and remain open to challenging others and being challenged. As a final note, all MNSU nondiscrimination policies will be upheld and enforced in our class.

Accessibility and Academic Accommodations:

Minnesota State University, Mankato provides students with disabilities reasonable accommodation to participate in educational programs, activities, or services. Students with disabilities requiring equal access to participate in class activities or meet course requirements should first register with Accessibility Resources, (Memorial Library 132, telephone 389-2825, or TDD 711) to establish an accommodation plan and then contact me if needed. Through our Partnership Center, Minnesota State Mankato will cooperate with Normandale Community College to set up any accommodations you need to succeed in this class. I will gladly incorporate any accommodations you might need in order to successfully complete this course.

Rigor and Academic Honesty:

In keeping with MNSU’s Academic Honesty policy, all work that engages in such inappropriate activities as plagiarism, cheating, or collusion will be subjected to the appropriate academic sanctions. These sanctions may include anything ranging from re-doing the assignment to receiving an automatic failing grade in the course. For more information on your rights and responsibilities as they relate to academic honesty, consult the university’s policy at <https://www.mnsu.edu/policies/approved/academichonesty.pdf>.

COVID-19 Notice:

Minnesota State University, Mankato holds as paramount the health, safety and welfare of every member of its community. Minnesota State Mankato, however, cannot guarantee a COVID-19-free environment. Unfortunately, the risk of COVID-19 exposure exists in all public places where people are present. Minnesota State Mankato is taking all recommended steps to mitigate this risk, but we cannot categorically guarantee you will not get sick. Minimizing the risk of COVID-19 infections (or any other spread of disease) at Minnesota State Mankato is a shared responsibility. Every member of our community – including you – must do their part. Requirements for masking may change as changes in infections in our community change as well. You will be notified by the University if and when mask requirement practices are altered.

For questions about **symptoms, testing, or risk of COVID-19**, call the Student Health Services COVID Healthcare Hotline at 507-389-5591 or the Minnesota Department of Health hotline at 651-297-1304 or 800-657-3504.

To **report a positive COVID case** among our campus community, call the COVID Reporting Hotline at 507-389-2030.

Students who need assistance with services should contact the Student Affairs Office at student-affairs@mnsu.edu or 507-389-2121.

For **general questions**, contact the Provost's Office at provost@mnsu.edu or (507) 389-1333.

Our goal is to mitigate the potential transmission of COVID-19; therefore, we strongly encourage students and employees who have not already been vaccinated to do so. Learn more about our campus vaccine opportunities at <https://mankato.mnsu.edu/coronavirus/safety-measures/vaccinations/>.

Potential Shifts in Class Format and Instruction

Due to higher education COVID-19 guidelines or other factors outside the University's control that results in a decision to end face-to-face instruction before the end of the semester, the format of this class will adapt as needed. In the case of such a scenario, the instructor will communicate with the students and clarify the nature of these changes.

Should the instructor become ill for an extended period, the department will take steps for a substitute instructor to teach the remainder of the class.

Should you, as the student, need to change your class attendance plan that was developed by the instructor, contact the instructor to discuss this further.

Attendance Policy:

CMST 301 is designed to be a "gateway" to the major—the skills and knowledge you gain in this course are needed to successfully complete the rest of your degree in Communication Studies. It is in your best interest to attend class regularly and participate to the fullest extent you are able. I will take attendance every week and keep track of your meaningful participation. You have the opportunity to miss two (2) class sessions without question. Missing more than two sessions will result in your final semester grade being lowered by 5% (the equivalent of ½ letter grade) for each absence beyond one. **If you are unable to come to class for any reason, please check in with me so I know not to expect you.** Please note that it is your responsibility to make up any work you miss as a result of missing class. Any student missing more than 1/3 of the semester's class sessions should withdraw and re-take the course in another term, as you will not be awarded a passing grade in the class. As a final note: I am not responsible for "catching you up" if you miss class—it is your responsibility to stay current in your work. Please use your classmates, **and class recordings on D2L**, as resources to assist you.

Additionally, those of you attending class live through Zoom are expected to actively, and appropriately, engage in class sessions. This involves tuning in at the start of class, staying for

the duration of class, and keeping your camera on throughout the class session. I also expect you to situate yourselves in a mode that is safe and conducive to your learning (i.e., do not tune in while you are driving).

Dr. J's Tips for Learning in an Online Synchronous Course:

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way we are able to learn together, creating new opportunities and new barriers. Your success in the course is my top priority, but success in this environment requires a new kind of effort on your part as well. Based on my observations from the fall, here are my suggestions to ensure you get the most out of our time together:

- Do your best to create a **designated workspace** from whatever location you join class. Creating small barriers or separations in your living space helps you enter—and more importantly, leave—the classroom “environment.”
- **Minimize your distractions** when you tune into class. Avoid taking advantage of the increased flexibility the Zoom classroom affords us—attending class from the car, for example, is neither safe nor conducive to your learning.
- **Avoid multi-tasking** while tuned into class. Learning from home presents temptations that can interfere with your focus. Preparing dinner, painting your nails, or watching TV during class will 100% affect what you take from our time together.

Work Policies:

Late work is not indicative of upper-level course preparedness and is not conducive to success in this class. I expect all work to be completed by the assigned deadlines, for your success and for my well-being. Please consult with me if you have issues meeting any deadlines in this class.

I also have stylistic expectations for all written work in this class. Any written work, unless specified otherwise, should comply with the following expectations:

- All work must be submitted electronically through the appropriate dropbox on D2L;
- All work **MUST** be in a Word document or a format I can open with Microsoft Word;
- Type your work and double-space everything evenly;
- Use an APA-approved font and size (e.g., Times New Roman-12, Calibri-11, Arial-11, Georgia-11);
- Margins should be 1” all around;
- All assignments must include a cover page in proper APA format;
- Anything written by someone else and referenced in your assignment **in any way** should be cited in-text and included in a reference section according to the American Psychological Association (APA) style guide, 7th edition.

If the above requirements are not met, I will return the work to you—ungraded—and you will have the ability to make corrections.

Course Assignments and Grades:

The following grading scale will be used in this course:

A- = 90—92.9%	A = 93—96.9%	A+ = 97—100%
B- = 80—82.9%	B = 83—86.9%	B+ = 87—89.9%
C- = 70—72.9%	C = 73—76.9%	C+ = 77—79.9%
D- = 60—62.9%	D = 63—66.9%	D+ = 67—69.9%
	F = 0—59.9%	

Please note the definition of each letter grade:

“A” is reserved for work that is exceptional;

“B” is reserved for work that is above average;

“C” is reserved for work that is average (**i.e., meets the minimum expectations**);

“D” is reserved for work that is below average;

“F” is reserved for work that is failing, late, or not submitted for evaluation.

A note about contesting your grade: If you have questions about your grade, I encourage you to come discuss your grade with me, with these exceptions: (1) you may not ask me about your grade before you have received my feedback; and (2) I will not discuss grades more than 2 weeks after they are distributed.

A note about final grades: At the conclusion of the course, I will assign letter grades based on the above percentage scale. As indicated by the scale, *I will round grades to the nearest tenth decimal (0.x)*. I will not round beyond this, so do not ask me to. ☺

The following assignments will be completed by each student in the class. You can determine your percentage (and grade) by totaling the points you have accumulated and dividing those points by the number of points possible.

<u>Assessment:</u>	<u>Points Earned / Points Possible</u>
Reading Quizzes (12 @ 10 pts each)	____ / 120
Theory Facilitations (3 @ 25 pts each)	____ / 75
Real-World Problem Project:	
1. Pinpoint the Problem	____ / 20
2. Review the Research Draft	____ / 10
3. Review the Research Final	____ / 40
4. Identify Lessons Learned	____ / 50
5. Apply Theories	____ / 50
6. Intervention Presentation	____ / 75
Total:	____ / 440

- 1. Reading Quizzes (10 points each):** Whenever you have assigned readings, you will complete a short online (D2L) quiz to test your comprehension of the material. These quizzes are always 10 questions, multiple-choice, and 1 point per question. Quizzes open a week before the class session, and close at 5:30 pm before class.
- 2. Theory Facilitations (25 points each):** Throughout the semester, you'll be assigned to different theories we'll learn about. For each of your assigned theories, you will need to prepare a presentation where you teach the class about that theory from the reading. You will need to connect the theory to a pop culture example to help illustrate it to the class, and I will supplement your presentation in-class. Together, the class will teach each other (with my help) the complex ideas from the reading.
- 3. Real-World Problem, Part 1: Pinpoint (20 points):** To help you experience how communication theory can be used to address real issues, you will work on a Real-World Problem project throughout the semester. Your first step will be to identify a problem or issue related to communication, and introduce that problem in a short (~2 page) essay describing the problem and why it would be important to study.
- 4. Real-World Problem, Part 2: Review (50 points total):** To further explore your real-world problem, you'll do a search for academic sources that help you better understand your chosen problem from a communication standpoint. You will compile these sources into an APA-style bibliography and identify relevant or useful quotations from *each* article. You will bring a complete draft to class for an in-class workshop, which you will then revise into a final version.
- 5. Real-World Problem, Part 3: Identify (50 points total):** Using the sources you collected for your review assignment, you will develop a 4-5 page essay reviewing the lessons you learned about your problem. These lessons will teach us what communication research has already discovered about your chosen problem, and what questions we still need to answer in order to solve that problem.
- 6. Real-World Problem, Part 4: Apply (50 points):** Toward the end of the semester, you will craft a short (4-5 page) essay applying relevant theories from our class to the real-world problem you chose. You will need to identify 2-3 theories from class and explain how each of those theories relate to your chosen problem. You will provide both broad overviews and specific conceptual descriptions for each theory to demonstrate your understanding of those perspectives.
- 7. Intervention Presentation (75 points):** You will conclude your real-world problem project with a presentation (9-11 minutes) where you describe your semester project and explain the things you learned about communication, and about your real-world problem. You will also identify new questions your project has inspired that you might want to continue researching in future classes.

Tentative Schedule

Note: This schedule is subject to change at my discretion. I will attempt to give you fair warning and make reasonable accommodations if I need to adjust the schedule.

Week	Day	Topic	Assignment
1	Jan 12	Course Overview & Defining Communication <i>Assign: RWP, Part 1</i>	Read: Chapter 1 + Wood (D2L) + O'Hair & Wiemann (D2L) Quiz 1
2	Jan 19	Theory, Research, & Asking Questions <i>Assign: Theory Facilitations</i>	Read: Ch. 2 (select pages) + Keyton (D2L) Quiz 2
3	Jan 26	Guest Presenters: CMST Faculty	Due: RWP, Part 1
4	Feb 2	Understanding Signs & Symbols Workshop: Finding Academic Sources <i>Assign: RWP, Part 2</i>	Read: Chapter 4 Quiz 3
5	Feb 9	Explaining Human Behavior Workshop: Formatting in APA Style	Read: Chapter 6 Quiz 4
6	Feb 16	Developing Relationships	Read: Chapter 8 Quiz 5 Due: RWP, Part 2 Draft
7	Feb 23	Sustaining Relationships <i>Assign: RWP, Part 3</i>	Read: Chapter 9 (stop at p. 213) Quiz 6 Due: RWP, Part 2 Final
8	Mar 2	Technology & Media Processing	Read: Chapter 14 Quiz 7
—	Mar 9	No Class—Spring Break!	
9	Mar 16	Communicating in Groups	Read: Chapter 12 Quiz 8
10	Mar 23	Communicating in Organizations <i>Assign: RWP, Part 4</i>	Read: pp. 249-260 + Org Control (D2L) Quiz 9 Due: RWP, Part 3
11	Mar 30	Guest Presenters: CMST Graduates	
12	Apr 6	The Art of Persuasion	Read: pp. 223-239 + pp. 315-321 Quiz 10
13	Apr 13	Health Messaging <i>Assign: Intervention Presentations</i>	Read: pp. 308-315 + Health Theories (D2L) Quiz 11
14	Apr 20	Communication, Culture, & Critique	Read: pp. 163-169 + 360-366 + Culture Theories (D2L) Quiz 12
15	Apr 27	Intervention Presentations!	Due: RWP, Part 4
F	May 4	Finish up any late work!	

Theories to be Reviewed

Use this list as a reference for your work throughout the semester!

Signs & Symbols:

- Symbolic interactionism
- Dramatism
- Coordinated management of meaning

Explaining Human Behavior:

- Attribution theory
- Expectancy violations

Developing Relationships:

- Uncertainty reduction
- Social penetration
- Social exchange

Sustaining Relationships:

- Relational dialectics
- Communication privacy management

Technology & Media Processing:

- Agenda setting
- Uses & gratifications
- Multiplexity theory

Communicating in Groups:

- Symbolic convergence
- Functional group
- Family communication patterns

Communicating in Organizations:

- Organizational sense-making
- Organizational culture
- Organizational control

The Art of Persuasion:

- Cognitive dissonance
- Elaboration likelihood
- Theory of planned behavior

Health Messaging:

- Extended parallel process model (fear management)
- Social support theory
- Motivated information management

Communication, Culture, & Critique:

- Accommodation theory
- Face negotiation theory
- Co-cultural theory
- Critical race theory