Introduction to Theory in Telecommunication, Information, and Society

Course Description & Objectives
This course will introduce you to classic and contemporary theories of communication. Special emphasis will be placed on understanding new media and technology. Comparisons to traditional mass media will be featured and the application of theory to practical communication problems will be highlighted. The course will meet as a seminar and student participation is important.

By the end of the semester, students will have learned about a number of theories and concepts and will be able to critique their strengths and weaknesses. Students will also have gained fluency in speaking and writing in theoretical language and in translating theories out of the language of scholars and into sophisticated non-technical terms. Finally, students will be able to select and apply appropriate communication theories to solving communication problems in the marketplace.

Lecture and Work Schedule
Each class meeting will begin with a lecture by Prof. Levy. In the second half of class, one or more students will report on a scholarly article, relevant to the week’s reading. The class will then discuss “real world” examples, keyed to the week’s reading and brought to class by the students.

Required Text
Coursepack is available from the Collegeville Textbook Company, 321 East Grand River Ave, East Lansing, MI 48823.

Course Requirements
There will be a mid-term examination on October 23rd, covering the readings, lectures, presentations, and discussion up to that point in the course. During the semester, each student will make one 15-minute class presentation, based on a scholarly article. Every week, all students must bring one real-world example to class, illustrating a theoretical point in the reading. Each student will write a 12 page final paper, either applying theory to a practical problem. The final paper must be emailed to Prof. Levy (mlevy@msu.edu) no later than 5 pm on December 7th.

Percent of Semester Grade
Mid-term exam  35%
Class presentation  15%
Class participation  10%
Final paper  40%

Contact Information
Office Hours: Monday, 11am – 1pm; Tuesday 11am – 1 pm or by appointment
Room 402 Communication Arts and Sciences Building
Phone: (517) 432-6747
E-mail: mlevy@msu.edu

Course Outline & Reading Assignments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Material to be covered</th>
<th>Readings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>04 September</td>
<td>Introduction to course</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Authors/Works</td>
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<tr>
<td>25 September</td>
<td>Globalization</td>
<td>Castells, “Informationalism and networks”</td>
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<tr>
<td>09 October</td>
<td>Communication Technology and Self</td>
<td>Turkle, “Virtuality and Discontents”; Jin, “Mini-me.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>23 October</td>
<td>MID-TERM EXAM IN CLASS</td>
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<tr>
<td>30 October</td>
<td>The Internet and Political Life</td>
<td>Putnam, “Bowling alone”; Benkler, “Political freedom”; Tufekci &amp; Wilson, “Decision to demonstrate.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>06 November</td>
<td>Computer-Mediated-Communication</td>
<td>Walther, “Personal communication by CMC”; Turkle, “Authenticity”.</td>
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<tr>
<td>13 November</td>
<td>Online Social Networks</td>
<td>boyd &amp; Ellison, “Definitions, etc.”; LaRose, et al., “Addictive or just a habit.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 November</td>
<td>Uses and Gratifications</td>
<td>Papacharissi, “Uses and gratifications”; Chen, “Tweet this”; Wu, et al., “Fall in love”;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04 December</td>
<td>Mobile Communication</td>
<td>Turkle, “Always-on/Always-on-you”; Ling &amp; Donner, “3”</td>
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billion new telephones.”

07 December  
FINAL PAPER DUE BY 5 pm.  
EMAIL YOUR PAPER TO PROF. LEVY (mlevy@msu.edu)

Readings


Your task is to apply all the information and communication theory that you know to the dual problem of: 1) how to keep Cisco from monopolizing the teleconferencing business and 2) what additional features for an AT&T counter-product would help AT&T beat Cisco?

As a first step, you should go to the website listed above and, by exploring that site, become completely familiar with the features, functions, and specifications of TelePresence®. Poke around in the entire website and see, for example, how Cisco is currently marketing TelePresence®, what Cisco says you can do with TelePresence® and what they say the impact of TelePresence© will be.

Next, make a check-list of all the concepts and theories we’ve studied this semester. Go through your list, one item at a time and ask yourself, “How, if at all, does this concept/theory apply to identifying some potential weakness in TelePresence® -- a weakness that we can use against the product. Also ask yourself “How does theory help me put TelePresence® in perspective Vis a Vis other information and communication technologies and processes?” Report on your answers to these questions as part of your paper.

Then, based on each theory, generate as many new features for an ATT counter-product as you can. Try explaining why the unique AT&T tele-conferencing technology that you’ve just created would be more attractive, useful, and valuable than Cisco’s. Explain how the concept/theory led you to propose each new feature. Finally, once you have exhausted all of the theoretical items in your check-list, come up with a theory-based name and three, advertising slogans for the new AT&T product.

Your paper -- no more than ten pages (corporate types have short attention spans), double-spaced, 12-point font. Email it to me no later than 5 pm on December 7th.

Plagiarism
All work presented in this class must be the product of your own effort. Your work should not be copied without appropriate citation from any source, including the Internet. Any student caught presenting work which is not his or her own will face disciplinary action, which may include a failing grade for the assignment, receiving a failing grade for the class, or being expelled from the university. This policy applies to all work submitted, either oral or written. If you have the slightest question concerning the meaning of plagiarism or whether a particular instance constitutes plagiarism, please ask me.