

CMST 7900
Introduction to Graduate Studies in Communication Studies
Fall 2018

Dr. Tracy Stephenson Shaffer

Office: Coates 128

Email: tsteph3@lsu.edu

Office Hours: Wednesdays 10:30-11:30 and by appointment

Course Description: CMST 7900 provides an introduction to graduate study and is required for students declaring an emphasis in Communication Studies. The course focuses on research and writing in academia, the current landscape of Communication Studies, the research of scholars in this department, and your own place within Communication Studies. Ultimately, this class will give you the tools and vocabulary to speak to scholars inside and outside of Communication Studies who hold a range of perspectives.

Required Texts:

Boice, Robert. *Professors as Writers: A Self-Help Guide to Productive Writing*. Stillwater, OK: New Forums Press, 1990.

Gehrke, Pat J. and William M. Keith, eds. *A Century of Communication Studies: The Unfinished Conversation*. New York: Routledge, 2015.

Graff, Gerald and Cathy Birkenstein. *They Say, I Say: Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2014.

Lindemann, Kurt. *Composing Research, Communicating Results*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2018.

Other readings (coming from graduate faculty in the department) will be made available via email attachment.

Assignments and Evaluation:

1. All students are expected to attend all class sessions, complete assigned readings, and participate regularly in class discussions. The class will NOT be successful without your participation. Thus, attendance and participation will be worth 30% of the final course grade.
2. On the last day of our “Academic Writing” section (at the end of the fourth week of school), you will turn in a “Review Essay” (5 page max, 12-point font, 1 inch margins, double spacing, 1 additional page for references). In this essay, you will evaluate the three writing texts we read and discussed. The following definition of the review essay comes from the University of Southern California Library webpage:

“A multiple book review essay involves assessing the quality of two or more books that cover the same overall subject area [e.g., analysis of European debt crisis] or that are related to each other in a particular way [e.g., applying grounded theory methods to study student access to education]. The review is written in the form of a short scholarly paper [essay] rather than as a descriptive book review. The purpose is to compare and contrast the works under review, to identify key themes and critical issues, and to evaluate each writer's contributions to understanding the overarching topics common to each book. Professors assign reviews of multiple books to help students gain experience critically evaluating the ways in which different researchers examine and interpret issues related to a specific research problem.”

This essay is worth 20% of your grade.

3. To facilitate class discussion during the “Communication Studies” section of our course, each of you will select a chapter in the “Century” book and prepare a brief (500-1000 words) reaction statement. The reaction statements will be read aloud at the beginning of the class meeting when we discuss the chapter and will help provide the basis for class discussion that day. You will also lead the discussion that day. The purpose of these reaction statements is to organize and stimulate discussion; hence, they should be focused and brief. Each should end with a set of questions or provocations to help you lead class. We will select chapters from the “Century” book on the third week of class.

The reaction statement is worth 10% of your grade. Your leading of the discussion is worth 10% of your grade. The total is 20% of your grade.

4. All students will prepare a major paper. The paper should focus on a communication phenomenon of interest to the student and present a compelling rationale for its study.

My expectation is that these papers will involve a review and assimilation of the theoretical and empirical work related to a particular phenomenon. At the end of the semester, you should have a final product that would be suitable for revising with an eye toward submission to an academic conference.

This paper will be developed in two stages:

· Stage 1 – After the “Our Department” section of the course, you will present a rough draft version of your paper in class. The goal of the first stage of the paper is to provide an explication of the phenomenon to be examined and a bibliography of research on the phenomenon. “Explication” is more than just a simple definition. It is a careful analysis of the phenomenon and the scope, specificity, and contextual elements that define the phenomenon. Students should make ample use of existing research to clarify how the phenomenon has been conceptualized in the literature.

This presentation is worth 5% of your grade. You will also turn in a typed bibliography worth 5% of your grade.

· Stage 2 – The final paper should include a revision of the explication presented in Stage 1 to reflect the feedback received and the student’s increasingly sophisticated understanding of the phenomenon. You should draw from Graff and Lindemann (and the various Communication Studies and Departmental examples) to work through the paper.

Your paper is worth 20% of your grade.

Calculating Course Grades:

The grade you earn for this class is calculated based on a formula that weights the assignments (listed above) by their respective percentages. For all assignments, you will earn a letter grade that corresponds to the “meaning of grades” found below. These letter grades will correspond to a traditional 4.0 scale, where a 4.0 equals and grade of “A” as follows:

A+ = 4.33 A = 4.0 A- = 3.67

B+ = 3.33 B = 3.0 B- = 2.67

C+ = 2.33 C = 2.0 C- = 1.67

D+ = 1.33 D = 1.0 D - = .67

F+ = .33 F = 0.0

An example of final grade tabulation follows:

Attendance and Participation: A (4.0x.30) = 1.2

Review Essay: B (3.0x.20) = .6

Reaction Statement: A (4.0x.10) = .4

Lead Discussion: B+ (3.33x.10) = .333

Paper Stage 1: B- (2.67x.10) = .267

Paper Stage 2: A- (3.67x.20) = .734

I add these totals together and get 3.534 = B+ in the class

The Meaning of Grades:

A - Excellent work. The student went above and beyond assignment expectations.

Furthermore, the student has represented mastery of course material, both conceptually and pragmatically. Although there is room for improvement, the argument was appropriate and well-articulated, the literature cited was appropriate with no germinal pieces missing, and the paper met appropriate style guide criteria.

B - Acceptable work. The student completed the assignment at an above average level.

B work is good work, but still has room for significant improvement. There may be problems with articulating a central thesis or a theoretical or practical problem; major grammatical or structure deficits; missing literature that is key to an important argument; etc.

C - Unacceptable work. The student completed the assignment as specified by the assignment description. No more than “effort as expected” was achieved. Minimum requirements were met, minimum effort was put forth. Moreover, there are conceptual and/or methodological flaws that suggest the student is either not ready for graduate work or not putting forth the effort that it takes to be a successful graduate student.

D - Late work. Late work is acceptable and will be negotiated on a case-by-case basis. If a student does not make prior arrangements, all late work, regardless of quality (and if granted post-due date), will be given a maximum grade of D. Your receiving a D means nothing more than you need to work on punctuality and prioritization.

F - Unfulfilled assignment. Any assignment not turned in by the deadline will be given a grade of F (but see “D” above). This is totally unacceptable for graduate school.

Tentative Course Calendar

August 20 Introduction to the course and each other

“Academic Writing”

August 22 Boise Sections A & B (make sure to do the assessment)

August 27	Boise Sections C, D, and E (Part 1) (make sure to do the questionnaire)
August 29	Graduate Handbook Discussion
September 3	LABOR DAY (NO CLASS)
September 5	Graff Preface-Part 2
September 10	Graff Part 3-Part 4
September 12	Lindemann Chapters 1-3
September 17	Lindemann Chapters 4-6
September 19	Lindemann Chapters 7 & 8 (Review Essay Due)

“Communication Studies”

September 24	Century Chapter
September 26	Century Chapter
October 1	Century Chapter
October 3	Century Chapter
October 8	Century Chapter
October 10	Century Chapter
October 15	Century Chapter
October 17	Century Chapter

October 22 Century Chapter

October 24 Century Chapter

“Our Department”

October 29 Guest Scholar

October 31 Guest Scholar

November 5 Guest Scholar

November 7 NCA (NO CLASS)

November 12 Guest Scholar

“You”

November 14 Presentations of Stage 1 (10 minutes each)

November 19 Presentations of Stage 1 (10 minutes each)

November 21 THANKSGIVING BREAK (NO CLASS)

November 26 Writing Day

November 28 Writing Day