

**Communication 2000**  
**Introduction to Communication**  
**Spring 1997**

**Prof. Gil Rodman**

**Office Hours: Tu 3-4p, Th 2-3p, or by appointment**  
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This course satisfies 3 hours of the Social Science requirement in the USF Liberal Arts Curriculum. Specific dimensions of the curriculum addressed include (1) values and ethics, (2) race and ethnicity, and (3) gender. This course will require students to demonstrate competence in written communication skills, and will emphasize conceptual, analytical, and creative thinking.

This course is designed to provide an introduction to the study of communication from a critical/cultural perspective, and to examine the ways that communication -- in any and all of its various forms -- works to create, shape, and transform the world in which we live. In particular, we'll be looking at the communicative practices associated with a wide range of phenomena -- from oil paintings to advertising, from prime time television to novels, from spoken language to popular music -- and how we incorporate those practices and texts into the rhythms of our daily lives.

In the end, then, this course is not about teaching you how to communicate as much as it is about providing you with the critical tools that will allow you to view communication and the culture(s) it produces in a more thoughtful and analytic fashion.

**Required course materials:**

(1) Books. Available at the University Book Store.

- (a) John Fiske, *Introduction to Communication Studies* (2nd edition)
- (b) Don DeLillo, *White Noise*
- (c) John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*

(2) Photocopied articles. Available at the reserve desk of the main USF Library.

**Grading schedule:**

Five (5) quizzes	25% (5% each)
Midterm exam	35%
Final exam	40%

**Quizzes:**

Over the course of the semester, there will be five (5) short-answer quizzes, each of which will be based on the assigned readings for the class sessions in question. Quizzes, when they occur, will take place during the first 15 minutes of our weekly meetings. Dates for these quizzes will *not* be announced in advance and no make-up quizzes will be given. If you are absent (or sufficiently late) on a quiz day, you will receive a zero (0) for that quiz.

**Exams:**

The exams will be based on the assigned readings *and* the lectures/discussions (i.e., you won't do well if you only do the readings *or* if you only take notes during lectures), and will consist of a combination of fact-based short-answer questions and analytical/argumentative short-essay questions on the exams. The exams are intended to test (1) your knowledge of the relevant course material and (2) your ability to apply that knowledge meaningfully (i.e., you will also not do well if you assume that you *only* have to memorize facts and names). The final will be cumulative.

**Attendance:**

We will begin class promptly at 6 pm each week. While I recognize that parking at USF is an ongoing problem, it is your responsibility to arrive on campus early enough to park your vehicle and be in class ready to begin by 6 pm. While there is no formal penalty for absences and/or late arrivals, too much of your grade (e.g., quizzes, the portions of the exams based on lectures) depends on your being in class on time each week for you to be consistently absent or tardy.

In keeping with the University Policy on Religious Observances, students who anticipate being absent from class due to a major religious observance must provide notice to me *in writing* by 14 January concerning which class period(s) you expect to miss and why.

**General comments:**

On average, there are about 40 pages of assigned reading each week . . . *except* for the last two weeks of the semester, when we read *White Noise*. And while, on a minutes-per-page basis, this novel should go quicker than the rest of our readings, I would *strongly* recommend that you start reading the book much earlier than mid-April.

## EIGHT TIPS ON HOW TO DO WELL IN THIS COURSE

**(1) Read your syllabus.** Aside from telling you what to read and when you need to do so, this document contains the basic ground rules by which this course works. And while, under exceptional circumstances (e.g., life and death emergencies), I may be willing to bend some of these rules, ignorance of the rules on your part is not one of them.

**(2) Read the required course materials as scheduled.** This should be self-explanatory. But to drive the point home: virtually everything you'll do for a grade in this class will depend on your having thoughtfully consumed the assigned readings. If you blow these off, you will have *lots* of trouble with the quizzes and the exams.

**(3) Think about what you read.** None of the material for this course is intended to be consumed passively. If you're *only* reading to absorb "facts" or to be entertained, you will not do well. And while you're certainly allowed (and even encouraged) to learn new facts and have fun, it's more crucial that you approach the assigned readings in a critical and thoughtful fashion.

**(4) Attend class . . . and show up on time.** While attendance will not be taken, the weekly lectures and discussions will raise issues about the material at hand that won't always be obvious to you from the readings alone. You can (and should) expect material addressed in class to be on the exams. Also bear in mind that if you are absent (or sufficiently late) on a day when a quiz is given, you will receive a zero (0) for that quiz.

**(5) Pay attention -- and take notes -- during the lectures.** The lectures are intended to both explain and expand on the assigned readings and the issues raised in them. You will be held responsible for points discussed in the lectures (i.e., you can expect questions based on the lectures to appear on the exams), regardless of whether or not those points are made in the readings.

**(6) Come to class with questions about the readings.** On occasion, you may find parts of the readings to be difficult and/or confusing. Should this happen, don't panic: not all of this material is easy, and it's perfectly alright to not get it on first reading. Part of why we meet face-to-face each week, however, is to try and make sure that, in the end, we all understand the material. So ask questions if you've got 'em: that's a large part of what we're here for.

**(7) See me or Patrick as necessary.** If you don't understand why you received a particular grade, or the reading has you baffled, or you have any other questions about the course, feel free to come talk to either of us during our office hours (or make an appointment to meet at some other time).

**(8) Think ahead.** Do *not* wait until the night before the final to catch up on all the reading. This is not a course where simple rote memorization of names and facts will earn you an acceptable grade. Bear in mind that the semester will go by faster than you think and plan accordingly.

**WARNING: The opinions expressed in the readings do not necessarily reflect those of the instructor. Just because a given essay is part of this course does not mean the instructor agrees with it. In other words, THINK about what you're reading, don't just absorb it.**

**0: Introduction and overview**

Jan 7 no assigned readings

**1: Linear models of communication**

Jan 14 Fiske, pp. 1-38 (Introduction, chs. 1-2)

**2: Signs, symbols, structures, and codes**

Jan 21 Fiske, pp. 39-84 (chs. 3-4)

Jan 28 Berger, pp. 7-34 (ch. 1)

Feb 4 Fiske, pp. 85-100 (ch. 5); Berger, pp. 36-64 (chs. 2-3)

Feb 11 Fiske, pp. 115-134 (ch. 7)

**3: Ritual models of communication**

Feb 18 James Carey, "A Cultural Approach to Communication"  
Christopher Anderson, "Some Reflections on *Magnum, P.I.*"

Feb 25 Greg Seigworth, "Sound Affects"  
Michael Ventura, "Hear That Long Snake Moan"

Mar 4 **MIDTERM EXAM**

Mar 11 **SPRING BREAK -- NO CLASS**

**4: Culture, media, and ideology**

Mar 18 John Berger, "The Storyteller"  
Raymond Williams, "Culture Is Ordinary"

Mar 25 Berger, pp. 66-112 (chs. 4-5)

Apr 1 Berger, pp. 114-154 (chs. 6-7)

Apr 8 Fiske, pp. 164-190 (ch. 9)

**5: Putting it all together**

Apr 15 DeLillo, pp. 3-163 (Parts I and II)

Apr 22 DeLillo, pp. 167-326 (Part III)

Apr 29 **FINAL EXAM**