

## Syllabus

## Course Information

Course Number: *COMM 601*  
Course Title: *Foundations of Communication Inquiry*  
Section: *600*  
Time: *1-4pm, Tuesday*  
Location: *BLTN 213*  
Credit Hours: *3*

## Instructor Details

Instructor: *Lu Tang*  
Office: *BLTN 309F*  
E-Mail: *ltang@tamu.edu*  
Office Hours: *11am-noon Tuesday and 11 am-1pm Thursday.*

## Course Description

*Major approaches to data generation and theory building used in the communication discipline, survey of quantitative, interpretive, critical and bibliographic research methods.*

## Course Prerequisites

*Graduate classification or approval of instructor.*

## Course Learning Outcomes

*By the end of this course, students will*

- Understand the philosophical foundations of social science in communication
- Understand major research paradigms of social science research
- Be familiar with contemporary social scientific communication theories
- Understand the research process (conceptualization, operationalization, measurement, validity) in social science

## Textbook and/or Resource Materials

*Reynolds, P.D. (2006). Primer in Theory Construction (Required). All other readings are available on Canvas.*

## Grading Policy

*This course is a doctoral seminar. This means that you will be expected to perform accordingly on this level, which includes reading all the assigned readings before class, and reflecting on them carefully;*

attending all classes and participating actively in the class discussion; turning in your assignments that are of high quality, well proofed, well documented, and in APA 7th edition style.

- *Discussion leadership (15%): Each student is required to lead class discussion on a specified topic in the semester. (A sign-up sheet will be handed out on the first day). You will organize the materials and lead the discussion around 1 hour to cover theory, methodologies, limitations, gaps in current research, etc. You can do a combination of lecture, discussion questions, extensions, exercises, videos, etc. But, you must make it interesting and relevant. A regurgitation of the materials will bring a C at most.*
- *Journal Club (10%): For certain weeks, one student will pick one recently published research article related to the week's topic or theories and make a 15-20 minutes' presentation to teach the rest of the class. The goal is to give you hands-on experience critically reading and discussing social science research articles in communication, and to build confidence in analyzing articles. Each student will lead one journal club.*
- *Final research paper and final presentation (65%): Final research paper. As the final product of this seminar, you will write an individually authored research article that will be submitted to a conference and hopefully to a journal. You have a few options:*

*OPTION 1: A completed research project, including Introduction, Literature Review, Method, Results, and Discussion. You can collect your own data, or you can also use existing dataset for your study.*

*OPTION 2: A research proposal with Introduction, Literature review, Research Questions/Hypotheses, and Proposed methodology.*

*OPTION 3: Write an extensive, critical literature review on a topic relevant to social science inquiry in communication.*

*To facilitate the success of this final project, you will turn in the assignments in the following four segments:*

1. *Topic (5%): A one-page description of your research topic (Due: 09/30)*
  2. *Outline and research (10%): a two-page outline of your research paper + a bibliography (Due 10/28)*
  3. *Final paper (40%): Turn in your completed final paper around 20 pages (excluding reference page), double spaced, formatted in APA style (Due 12/02).*
  4. *Presentation (10%): you will present your final project as if you are presenting it at an academic conference. Each student will have 12 -15 minutes and will answer questions from the audience (12/02)*
- *Attendance, participation, and charisma (10%)*
  - *Grading Scales*  
A: 90-100 points  
B: 80-89

C: 70-79

D: 60-69

F: <60

*Graded Class Participation* – Charisma points are designed to evaluate not only participation, but appropriate and helpful participation. On days when you are not the discussion leader, I still expect you to have done all the required readings prior to class, note questions/issues for discussion, and to take an active role in the discussion. Your class contribution should go beyond “I liked this reading but didn’t like that one” (though these reactions are important to note and keep track of). More importantly, our class culture is created, sustained and destroyed through our thoughtful, courteous and supportive interaction with our classmates. Certainly, we can challenge one another’s ideas, and we should! However, at all times, we will uphold high standards of respect, non-domination, and work to foster a climate of intellectual curiosity.

*Graded Attendance* – As graduate students, you have made a commitment to furthering your education. That commitment affects the culture of each class that you are in, and thus, I expect that you will always choose to come to class. By attending, I will presume that you have done your reading, completed your assignments, and will be prepared to contribute positively to our class culture. Missing 2 classes can result in a full-letter grade deduction. After 3 absences, I reserve the right to assign you an “F” regardless of your numerical grade. If you have extenuating circumstances for attendance (true illness, death in the family, sick children), please let me know in advance.

### Late Work Policy

- All assignments are due at the beginning of the class on the due date. Late assignments are strongly discouraged. There is a 5% penalty for each day the assignment is late (including weekends and holidays).
- Work submitted by a student as makeup work for an excused absence is not considered late work and is exempted from the late work policy ([Student Rule 7](#)).

### Course Schedule

Week 1 (08/26): Course Introduction

Week 2 (09/02): What is Social Science? What is Theory?

Week 3 (09/09): Social Science Theory Development

Week 4 (09/16): Social Science Research Method

Week 5 (09/23). Mixed traditions-Can humanists and social scientists talk?

Week 6 (09/30): Technology and Human Computer Interaction (Guest Speaker: Dr. Brittany Garcia)

Week 7 (10/07): Interpersonal Communication

*Week 8 (10/14): Fall Break. No class*

*Week 9 (10/21): Organizational Communication & Innovation*

*Week 10 (10/28): Persuasion & Message Processing*

*Week 11 (11/04): Media Processing and Effects*

*Week 12 (11/11): Media and Society*

*Week 13 (11/18): Individual meetings with instructor on final paper and presentation*

*Week 14 (11/25): Human-AI Communication*

*Week 15 (12/02): Student Presentations (conference style; 12–15-minute presentation followed by Q&A)*

## University Policies

*This section outlines the university-level policies that must be included in each course syllabus. The TAMU Faculty Senate established the wording of these policies.*

### Attendance Policy

The university views class attendance and participation as an individual student responsibility. Students are expected to attend class and to complete all assignments.

Please refer to [Student Rule 7](#) in its entirety for information about excused absences, including definitions, and related documentation and timelines.

### Makeup Work Policy

Students will be excused from attending class on the day of a graded activity or when attendance contributes to a student's grade, for the reasons stated in Student Rule 7, or other reason deemed appropriate by the instructor.

Please refer to [Student Rule 7](#) in its entirety for information about makeup work, including definitions, and related documentation and timelines.

Absences related to Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 may necessitate a period of more than 30 days for make-up work, and the timeframe for make-up work should be agreed upon by the student and instructor" ([Student Rule 7, Section 7.4.1](#)).

"The instructor is under no obligation to provide an opportunity for the student to make up work missed because of an unexcused absence" ([Student Rule 7, Section 7.4.2](#)).

Students who request an excused absence are expected to uphold the Aggie Honor Code and Student Conduct Code. (See [Student Rule 24](#).)

### Academic Integrity Statement and Policy

"An Aggie does not lie, cheat or steal, or tolerate those who do."

"Texas A&M University students are responsible for authenticating all work submitted to an instructor. If asked, students must be able to produce proof that the item submitted is indeed the work of that student. Students must keep appropriate records at all times. The inability to authenticate one's work, should the instructor request it, may be sufficient grounds to initiate an academic misconduct case" ([Section 20.1.2.3, Student Rule 20](#)).

### Texas A&M at College Station

You can learn more about the Aggie Honor System Office Rules and Procedures, academic integrity, and your rights and responsibilities at [aggiehonor.tamu.edu](http://aggiehonor.tamu.edu).

### Notice of Nondiscrimination

Texas A&M University is committed to providing safe and non-discriminatory learning, living, and work environments for all members of the University community. The University provides equal opportunity to all employees, students, applicants for employment or admission, and the public regardless of race, color, sex (including pregnancy and related conditions), religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, or veteran status. Texas A&M University will promptly, thoroughly, and fairly investigate and resolve all complaints of discrimination, harassment (including sexual harassment), complicity and related retaliation based on a protected class in accordance with System Regulation 08.01.01, University Rule 08.01.01.M1, Standard Administrative Procedure (SAP) 08.01.01.M1.01, and applicable federal and state laws. In accordance with Title IX and its implementing regulations, Texas A&M does not discriminate on the basis of sex in any educational program or activity, including admissions and employment. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries and complaints regarding the non-discrimination policies: Jennifer M. Smith, TAMU Associate VP & Title IX Coordinator at YMCA Ste 108, College Station, TX 77843, 979-458-8407, or email [civilrights@tamu.edu](mailto:civilrights@tamu.edu). For other reporting options, visit <https://ocrcas.ed.gov/contact-ocr> to locate the address and phone number of the office that serves your area, or call 1-800-421-3481.

### Civil Rights, Free Speech, and Title IX Policies

Texas A&M University is committed to fostering a learning environment that is safe and productive for all. University policies and federal and state laws prohibit discrimination and harassment based on an individual's race, color, sex, (including pregnancy and related conditions), religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, or any other legally protected characteristic. This includes forms of sex-based violence, such as sexual assault, sexual harassment, sexual exploitation, dating/domestic violence, and stalking.

Students can report discrimination/harassment, access supportive resources, or learn more about their options for resolving complaints on the [University's Civil Rights & Title IX webpage](#).

Students should be aware that all university employees (except medical or mental health providers) are mandatory reporters, which means that if they observe, experience or become aware of an incident that they reasonably believe to be discrimination/harassment alleged to have been committed by or against a person who was a student or employee at the time of the incident, the employee must report the incident to the university.

### Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Policy

Texas A&M University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. If you experience barriers to your education due to a disability or think you may have a disability, please contact the Disability Resources office on your campus (resources listed below) Disabilities may include, but are not limited to attentional, learning, mental health, sensory, physical, or chronic health conditions. All students are encouraged to discuss their disability related needs with Disability Resources and their instructors as soon as possible.

To request academic accommodations, contact the designated ADA office based on your location:

- Texas A&M University, College of Nursing, College of Dentistry, Irma Lerma Rangel College of Pharmacy College Station, College of Medicine, School of Public Health, Institute of Biosciences and Technology, EnMed Program, Bush School in Washington DC, Mays Business School – CityCentre, TAMU Engineering Academies, Texas A&M University Higher Education Center at

McAllen and Texas A&M University at Galveston should contact [Disability Resources](#) at (979) 845-1637 or [disability@tamu.edu](mailto:disability@tamu.edu).

- Texas A&M University School of Law should contact the Office of Student Affairs at (817) 212-4111 or [law-disability@law.tamu.edu](mailto:law-disability@law.tamu.edu) to request accommodations.
- Irma Lerma Rangel College of Pharmacy in Kingsville should contact the Disability Resource Center at Texas A&M University - Kingsville at (361) 593-3024 or [drc.center@tamuk.edu](mailto:drc.center@tamuk.edu) to request accommodations.
- Texas A&M University College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences in Canyon should contact the Office of Student Accessibility at West Texas A&M University – Canyon at (806) 651-2335 or [osa@wtamu.edu](mailto:osa@wtamu.edu).
- Texas A&M University at Qatar (TAMUQ) should contact the campus psychologist, Dr. Steve Wilson +974-4423-0047 or [stephen.wilson@qatar.tamu.edu](mailto:stephen.wilson@qatar.tamu.edu).

If you are experiencing difficulties with your approved accommodations, contact the office responsible for approving your accommodations or the Texas A&M ADA Coordinator Julie Kuder at [ADA.Coordinator@tamu.edu](mailto:ADA.Coordinator@tamu.edu) or (979) 458-8407.

### Pregnancy Accommodations

Texas A&M provides reasonable accommodations to students due to pregnancy and/or related conditions, such as childbirth, recovery and lactation. Students should contact the University's [Pregnancy Coordinator](#) as soon as they become aware of the need for accommodation. Depending on the circumstances, accommodations could include extended time to complete assignments or exams, changes in course sequence, or modifications to the physical classroom environment. Texas A&M will also allow a voluntary leave of absence, ensure the availability of lactation space, and maintain grievance procedures to provide for the prompt and equitable resolution of complaints of sex discrimination. For information regarding pregnancy accommodations, email [TIX.Pregnancy@tamu.edu](mailto:TIX.Pregnancy@tamu.edu).

### Statement on Mental Health and Wellness

Texas A&M University recognizes that mental health and wellness are critical factors influencing a student's academic success and overall wellbeing. Students are encouraged to engage in healthy self-care practices by utilizing the resources and services available through [University Health Services](#) on its [mental health webpage](#). The [TELUS Health Student Support app](#) provides access to professional counseling in multiple languages anytime, anywhere by phone or chat, and the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline offers 24-hour emergency support at 988 or [988lifeline.org](https://www.988lifeline.org).

### Texas A&M College Station

Students needing a listening ear can contact University Health Services (979.458.4584) 24-hour emergency help is also available through the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (988) or at [988lifeline.org](https://www.988lifeline.org).

### Statement on the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

FERPA is a federal law designed to protect the privacy of educational records by limiting access to these records, to establish the right of students to inspect and review their educational records and to provide guidelines for the correction of inaccurate and misleading data through informal and formal hearings. Currently enrolled students wishing to withhold any or all directory information items can do so within [howdy.tamu.edu](https://howdy.tamu.edu) using the Directory Information Withholding Form. The complete [FERPA Notice to Students](#) and the student records policy is available on the Office of the Registrar webpage.

Items that can never be identified as public information are a student's social security number, citizenship, gender, grades, GPR or class schedule. All efforts will be made in this class to protect your privacy and to ensure confidential treatment of information associated with or generated by your participation in the class.

Directory items include name, UIN, local address, permanent address, email address, local telephone number, permanent telephone number, dates of attendance, program of study (college, major, campus), classification, previous institutions attended, degrees honors and awards received, participation in officially recognized activities and sports, medical residence location and medical residence specialization.

### **Artificial Intelligence Policy**

The introduction of generative artificial technology (generative AI), such as ChatGPT, has produced a new context for learning and writing. Although AI programs can assist students with various course tasks, AI cannot replace human creativity, originality, and critical thinking. As such, in this class it is only permissible to use AI programs within limited circumstances and with proper attribution detailed below.

- With the exception of citation formatting, spelling corrections, and/or grammatical corrections, students ARE NOT allowed to use generative AI to produce text for any assignment in this course.
- Students ARE allowed to use AI to assist with brainstorming and topic development. (Friendly clarification: do not "copy and paste" AI responses to brainstorming exercises into your essays. This will violate the above statement regarding not using generative AI to produce text.)
- All written assignments must include an attribution statement at the end of the assignment. This statement should abide by the following template: "The author acknowledges the use of [AI software name(s)] in the preparation of this assignment. [AI software name] was used in the following ways: [e.g. brainstorming, grammatical correction, citation, etc.]."

Using an AI tool to generate content will be considered a violation of TAMU's academic integrity policy and will be reported to the Aggie Honor System Office.

Written assignments will be scanned using Turnitin and other Texas A&M approved AI detection programs.