

School of Information Management

COMM 501 COMMUNICATION THEORY

Second Trimester 2005

COURSE OUTLINE

Contact Details

Course Instructor:	Dr Lalita Rajasingham – Room EA 215
Telephone:	(04) 463-5266
Availability:	Monday 2:00 - 5:00 pm, Thursday 10:00 - 5:00pm or by appointment. E.Mail will be answered daily
E-mail:	lalita.rajasingham@vuw.ac.nz
URL:	http://www.sim.vuw.ac.nz/staff/lalita-rajasingham.aspx
Administrator:	TBA
Telephone:	TBA
Fax:	(04) 463-5446
Locations:	All Wellington based seminars will be held in Room RLWY 315. Students will participate by teleconference from other centres by arrangement.
Trimester 2:	4 July-7 October 2005
Seminar Times:	Thursday: 5:40 - 7:30 pm. Tutorials via email. Listserv TBA

Introduction

COMM 501 seeks to explain communications and surveys diverse theories of communications as they relate to new and emerging communications infrastructures. You learn about theory building and apply and critique communications theories in your professional environment at a time of globalisation; and gain an appreciation of the sociocultural and technological contexts of communications. There is no central unifying theory of communications. Instead, there are literally hundreds of theories, models and approaches that try to explain aspects of communication and information phenomena. You do not have to learn them all. The course is divided into three UNITS and each Unit consists of

four modules: UNIT 1: Metatheories- Systems Theory, the Mathematical Theory of Communication and Cybernetics. UNIT 2: Human Communications. UNIT 3: Mediated Communications. This Course provides the basis not only for the conceptual background and development of communications theories and models, but also the development and application of information technology.

Course Objectives

Think of the theories as the tools of communications professionals so that you can select the appropriate theoretical tool for a particular job and use it.

- The first objective is that you can apply the metatheoretical body of knowledge contained in systems theory, information theory and cybernetics to communication and information phenomena of any kind.

- • Enabling objective

That you are aware of the contribution of these theories to the Communications/Information Revolution and the different ways they are used by communicators and informants in the emerging knowledge society.

Assignment 1 will ask you to analyse a communication system in terms of three theories.

The second objective is that you are able to select appropriate theories to apply to communication phenomena at the level of intrapersonal communication, interpersonal communication, group communication and organisational communication, and apply them.

- • Enabling objectives

That you are critically aware of the context in which these theories were developed and be sensitive to their limitations and well as their strengths. That you are aware of the relationship of theories at these levels of communication to systems theory, information theory, cybernetic theory, network theory and fractal theory.

Assignment 2 will give you an opportunity to apply a theory that you find appropriate and interesting. You will be asked to select from a list of 36 theories and apply one theory to a subject or phenomenon given. This will be a 20-minute presentation, followed by a 10-minute discussion in Seminars. You are encouraged to be innovative in your presentation.

- The third objective is that you are aware of the impact of mass communications and the nature of multimediated communications.

- • Enabling objectives

That you are able to critique theories of mass media effects and consider their relevance to cultural, intercultural, national, international and global communications.

That you are able to discuss the impact of information technology (IT) especially the Internet on the growth and issues of global communications.

Assignment 3 will ask you to critique a body of theory in terms of a particular application. If you find a theory or body of theories unsatisfactory or inadequate ask yourself why and from that point start to build a critique.

An implicit objective is that you are interested in improving your communication style and experimenting with information technology to do this. The third assignment, the critique should be a scholarly, well-researched and referenced written paper that could be published.

The assessment will establish that you have achieved the objectives of the course at a level that will be internationally recognised as that of a Masters student. We would hope that any of the internationally recognised universities would happily accept a VUW Master of Communications as equivalent to their own Masters degrees.

Assessment

This course is internally assessed. Course members will not be assessed against each other.

A straightforward response to an assignment that covers the main points and communicates clearly gets a "B+".

"A's" come for style, originality and elegance.

Quality is more important than quantity. Observe Einstein's dictum that one should be as simple as possible but no simpler. Individual viewpoints are respected. Originality treasured.

There is strong emphasis on how you communicate. This accounts for approximately half the marks in any assignment (as distinct from what you communicate). How you communicate is not just the way you write. It includes formatting, presenting, referencing, observing deadlines and targeting the reader/audience.

Terms

To keep terms and thereby pass the course you will need to:

- Complete all the assignments by the due date and gain a pass grade (C). Extensions will be granted only in exceptional circumstances and on an individual case basis.
- Attend not less than 8 of the 12 seminars.

Workload

Students participating in COMM 501 can expect to spend:

- Three hours per week in seminars and tutorials;
- 14-16 hours per week on reading, researching, Webbing, and assignments.

Delivery Method

The seminars take place on Thursdays between 5.30-7.40 pm and online tutorials TBA. You will be asked to make a variety of contributions. You are expected to do the readings before the seminar not after. In this way, you are prepared to discuss the ideas and concepts involved. The seminar is a point at which you synthesise the knowledge you already have and use it in interaction with your peers.

The tutorials will be email and are for opportunities to discuss and clarify the concepts and ideas you are dealing with and resolve any difficulties you have with them. Listserv will be provided.

You must have access to an Internet connected computer and printer for sufficient time each week to carry out the Web searching and E-mail based interactions required by the course. You must be able to send and receive electronic mail on a daily basis, and to browse the World Wide Web with a graphic browser such as Internet Explorer or Netscape.

Course Content and Calendar

The topics covered in the twelve seminars, and the schedule for the course can be found in the Course CD-ROM provided to registered students only.

Every student is required to read and explore the subject using the material provided, the Web sites pointed to, and any print resources specified. The Website for each seminar will be accessible through the "Map" link on the CD-ROM.

Key Texts and Readings

The readings required for each seminar will be found in the Course disk for registered students. The Calendar contains links to the appropriate page for each seminar. Any handouts will be distributed in class.

You need to purchase the set textbook, Stephen Littlejohn (2005) Theories of Human Communication, (8th Edition), Wadsworth Publishing Company, California. Copies of this book are available from the Victoria University Book Centre.

Course Communications

All students are automatically enrolled on a COMM 501 listserv, TBA. Any message posted to this listserv will be automatically copied to all subscribers to that list.

These are the official channels of communication for the course, and students are required to check their e-mail daily if possible, and at least a day or two before each seminar. Students are required to adhere in all respects to the University's requirements with regard to the use of the Internet.

General University Information and Requirements

Faculty of Commerce and Administration Offices

Railway West Wing (RWW) - FCA Student Administration Office

The Student Administration Office is located on the ground and first floors of the Railway West Wing. The ground floor counter is the first point of contact for general enquiries and FCA forms. Student Administration Advisers are available to discuss course status and give further advice about FCA qualifications.

Easterfield (EA) - FCA/Law Kelburn Office

The Kelburn Campus Office for the Faculties of Commerce & Administration and Law is situated in the Easterfield Building - it includes the ground floor reception desk (EA005) and offices 125a to 131 (Level 1). The office, will be open from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm during Trimester 2, offers the following:

- Duty tutors for student contact and advice.
- Information concerning administrative and academic matters.
- FCA Student Administration forms (e.g. application for academic transcripts, requests for degree audit, COP requests).
- Examinations-related information during the examination period.

Please note:

There will be a Student Administration Adviser, from the RWW office, based in EA005 from Monday 27 June to Friday 1 July (9:00 am to 5:00 pm) and from Monday 4 July to Friday 22 July (11:00 am to 1:00 pm).

General University Policies and Statutes

Students should familiarise themselves with the University's policies and statutes, particularly those regarding assessment and course of study requirements, and formal academic grievance procedures.

Student Conduct and Staff Conduct

The Statute on Student Conduct together with the Policy on Staff Conduct ensure that members of the University community are able to work, learn, study and participate in the academic and social aspects of the University's life in an atmosphere of safety and respect. The Statute on Student Conduct contains information on what conduct is prohibited and what steps can be taken if there is a complaint. For queries about complaint procedures under the Statute on Student Conduct, contact the Facilitator and Disputes Advisor. This Statute is available in the Faculty Student Administration Office or on the website at: www.vuw.ac.nz/policy/StudentConduct.

The policy on Staff Conduct can be found on the VUW website at: www.vuw.ac.nz/policy/StaffConduct.

Academic Grievances

If you have any academic problems with your course you should talk to the tutor or lecturer concerned or, if you are not satisfied with the result of that meeting, see the Head of School or the Associate Dean (Students) of your Faculty. Class representatives are available to assist you with this process. If, after trying the above channels, you are still unsatisfied, formal grievance procedures can be invoked. These are set out in the Academic Grievances Policy which is published on the VUW website:

www.vuw.ac.nz/policy/AcademicGrievances.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

Academic integrity is about honesty – put simply it means **no cheating**. All members of the University community are responsible for upholding academic integrity, which means staff and students are expected to behave honestly, fairly and with respect for others at all times.

Plagiarism is a form of cheating which undermines academic integrity. Plagiarism is **prohibited** at Victoria.

The University defines plagiarism as follows:

Plagiarism is presenting someone else's work as if it were your own, whether you mean to or not.

'Someone else's work' means anything that is not your own idea, even if it is presented in your own style. It includes material from books, journals or any other printed source, the work of other students or staff, information from the Internet, software programmes and other electronic material, designs and ideas. It also includes the organization or structuring of any such material.

Plagiarism is not worth the risk.

Any enrolled student found guilty of plagiarism will be subject to disciplinary procedures under the Statute on Student Conduct (www.vuw.ac.nz/policy/studentconduct) and may be penalized severely. Consequences of being found guilty of plagiarism can include:

- an oral or written warning
- suspension from class or university
- cancellation of your mark for an assessment or a fail grade for the course.

Find out more about plagiarism and how to avoid it, on the University's website at: www.vuw.ac.nz/home/studying/plagiarism.html.

Students with Disabilities

The University has a policy of reasonable accommodation of the needs of students with disabilities. The policy aims to give students with disabilities an equal opportunity with all other students to demonstrate their abilities. If you have a disability, impairment or chronic medical condition (temporary, permanent or recurring) that may impact on your ability to participate, learn and/or achieve in lectures and tutorials or in meeting the course requirements, then please contact the Course Coordinator as early in the course as possible. Alternatively you may wish to approach a Student Adviser from Disability Support Services to confidentially discuss your individual needs and the options and support that are available. Disability Support Services are located on Level 1, Robert Stout Building, or phoning 463-6070, email: disability@vuw.ac.nz. The name of your School's Disability Liaison Person can be obtained from the Administrative Assistant or the School Prospectus.

Student Support

Staff at Victoria want students' learning experiences at the University to be positive. If your academic progress is causing you concern, please contact the relevant Course Co-ordinator,

or Associate Dean who will either help you directly or put you in contact with someone who can.

The Student Services Group is also available to provide a variety of support and services. Find out more at www.vuw.ac.nz/st_services/ or email student-services@vuw.ac.nz.

VUWSA employs two Education Coordinators who deal with academic problems and provide support, advice and advocacy services, as well as organising class representatives and faculty delegates. The Education Office is located on the ground floor, Student Union Building, phone 463 6983 or 463 6984, email education@vuwsa.org.nz.

Maori and Pacific Mentoring programme (Manaaki Pihipihinga)

This is a free programme of mentoring for Maori and Pacific students doing first year courses within the Faculty of Commerce and Administration. Weekly one hour mentoring sessions: drafting and editing assignments/discussing any questions that you might have from tutorials or lectures and going over every aspect of essay writing, either in small group sessions or on a one-to-one basis.

This includes:

- A computer suite hooked up to cyber commons for students to use to produce their assignments.
- Regular skill-based workshops with a learning adviser from Student Learning Support Services.
- Networking with other Maori and Pacific support groups throughout the university.

For more information please contact:

Melissa Dunlop, Programme Coordinator

Ph: 463 6015 or Email: Maori-Pacific-Mentoring@vuw.ac.nz