

School of Information Management

## **MMIM 551 COMMUNICATIONS THEORY**

Second Trimester 2006

### **COURSE OUTLINE**

#### **Contact Details**

**Course Instructor:** Associate Professor Lalita Rajasingham – Room EA 215

**Telephone:** (04) 4635266

**Availability:**

Monday 2:00- 5 pm

Wednesday 10:00 -2 pm

Or by appointment. E.Mail will be answered daily

**Email:**

[lalita.rajasingham@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:lalita.rajasingham@vuw.ac.nz)

**URL:** <http://www.sim.vuw.ac.nz/staff/lalitarajasingham.aspx>

#### **Class Times and Room Numbers**

**Seminar Times:** Thursday: 5:40 7:30 pm.

Room: RLWY 129

Tutorials: This will be via email and Blackboard

#### **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 information theory, cybernetics and systems theory to communications and information phenomena of any kind.

(a) 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.  
Come prepared to critique these theories during class.

- 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.

(b) 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 1 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 theories and apply one theory to a subject or phenomenon given. This will be a 20minute presentation, followed by a 10minute 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.

(c) Enabling objectives

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

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

Assignment 2 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 second assignment, the critique should be a scholarly, well researched and referenced written paper that could be published.

## **Course Content**

The topics covered in the twelve seminars, the course schedule and assignments can be found in the interactive 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.

MMIM 551 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: Information Theory, Cybernetics, and Systems Theory  
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.

## **Readings**

Readings should be done **before**, and not **after** each seminar.

Set Text: Stephen Littlejohn & Karen Foss (2005) *Theories of Human Communication* Eighth Edition, California: Thomson Wadsworth You need to purchase this textbook from the Victoria University Book Centre Pipitea Campus.

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.

In addition, there more than 50 texts in the area we are studying, in the Closed Reserve section of VUW Library, Pipitea Campus. Most of these are references cited in the set text and provide enrichment to Communications Theories and applications in MMIM 551, and are highly recommended.

## **Assessment Requirements**

This is an internally assessed course. Course members will not be assessed against each other. All assignments will relate to the Course Objectives, Lectures and Readings. Grading schedule: 85%+ is A+; 80-84 is A; 75-79 is A-; 70-74 B+; 66-69 B; 60-65 B-; 55-59 C+; 50-54 C (the pass grade).

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.

## **Mandatory Course Requirements**

To 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. Marks will be deducted for exceeding word and time limits.
- Attend not less than 8 of the 12 seminars

### **Workload**

Students participating in MMIM 551 can expect to spend:

- Two hours per week in seminars; and 10-14 hours per week on reading, researching, Webbing, and assignments.

### **Communication of Additional Information**

The seminars take place on Thursdays between 5.30-7.40 pm. 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 via email (Listserver TBA) and Blackboard are for opportunities to discuss and clarify the concepts and ideas you are dealing with and resolve any difficulties you have with them. You must have access to an Internet connected computer and printer for sufficient time each week to carry out the Web searching and Email Blackboard 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.

All students are automatically enrolled on a listserver, TBA and Blackboard. Any message posted to this channel 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 email and Blackboard 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.

## **Faculty of Commerce and Administration Offices**

### Railway West Wing (RWW) - FCA Student and Academic Services Office

The Faculty's Student and Academic Services 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. To check for opening hours call the Student and Academic Services Office on (04) 463 5376.

### Easterfield (EA) - FCA/Education/Law Kelburn Office

The Kelburn Campus Office for the Faculties of Commerce and Administration, Education 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 is available for the following:

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

To check for opening hours call the Student and Academic Services Office on (04) 463 5376.

## **General University Policies and Statutes**

Students should familiarise themselves with the University's policies and statutes, particularly the Assessment Statute, the Personal Courses of Study Statute, the Statute on Student Conduct and any statutes relating to the particular qualifications being studied; see the Victoria University Calendar available in hard copy or under 'About Victoria' on the VUW home page at [www.vuw.ac.nz](http://www.vuw.ac.nz).

## **Student 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 are to be taken if there is a complaint. For information about complaint procedures under the Statute on Student Conduct, contact the Facilitator and Disputes Advisor or refer to the statute on the VUW policy website at [www.vuw.ac.nz/policy/studentconduct](http://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](http://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; class representatives may be able to help you in this. If you are not satisfied with the result of that meeting, see the Head of School or the relevant Associate Dean; VUWSA Education Coordinators are available to assist in 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 at [www.vuw.ac.nz/policy/academicgrievances](http://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. The University defines plagiarism as follows:

*The presentation of the work of another person or other persons as if it were one's own, whether intended or not. This includes published or unpublished work, material on the Internet and the work of other student or staff.*

It is still plagiarism even if you re-structure the material or present it in your own style or words.

*Note: It is however, perfectly acceptable to include the work of others as long as that is acknowledged by appropriate referencing.*

Plagiarism is prohibited at Victoria and is not worth the risk. Any enrolled student found guilty of plagiarism will be subject to disciplinary procedures under the Statute on Student Conduct and may be penalised severely. Consequences of being found guilty of plagiarism can include:

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

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

### **Students with Impairments**

The University has a policy of reasonable accommodation of the needs of students with disabilities. The policy aims to give students with disabilities the same opportunity as 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, 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 (DSS) to discuss your individual needs and the available options and support on a confidential basis. DSS are located on Level 1, Robert Stout Building, telephone (04) 463 6070, email [disability@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:disability@vuw.ac.nz). The name of your School's Disability Liaison Person is in the relevant prospectus or can be obtained from the School Office or DSS.

### **Student Support**

Staff at Victoria want students to have positive learning experiences at the University. Each Faculty has a designated staff member who can either help you directly if your academic progress is causing you concern, or quickly put you in contact with someone who can. Assistance for specific groups is also available from the Kaiwawao Māori, Manaaki Pihipihinga or Victoria International.

In addition, the Student Services Group (email [student-services@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:student-services@vuw.ac.nz)) is available to provide a variety of support and services. Find out more at [www.vuw.ac.nz/st\\_services/](http://www.vuw.ac.nz/st_services/).

VUWSA employs 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 (tel. 04 463 6983 or 04 463 6984, email [education@vuwsa.org.nz](mailto:education@vuwsa.org.nz)) is located on the ground floor, Student Union Building.

**Manaaki Pihipihinga - Maori and Pacific Mentoring Programme (Faculty of Commerce and Administration)**

This is a mentoring service for Maori and Pacific students studying at all levels. Weekly one hour sessions are held at the Kelburn and Pipitea Campuses in the Mentoring Rooms, 14 Kelburn Parade, and Room 210 and 211, Level 2, Railway West Wing. Sessions cover drafting and discussing assignments, essay writing, and any questions that may arise from tutorials and/or lectures. A computer suite networked to Cyber Commons is available for student use.

To register with Manaaki Pihipihinga, please contact one of the following:

Puawai Wereta  
Room 210, Level 2  
Railway West Wing  
Tel. (04) 463 8997  
Email: [Puawai.Wereta@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:Puawai.Wereta@vuw.ac.nz)

Fa'afai Seiuli  
Room 109 B  
14 Kelburn Parade  
Tel. (04) 463 5842  
Email: [Faafoi.Seiuli@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:Faafoi.Seiuli@vuw.ac.nz)