**Course Description**

Message Processing 670 is a graduate-level offering designed to acquaint graduate students of communicology with current theory and research on human message processing. We will pursue phylogenic explanations for our communicative behavior focusing on our development as a cooperative, collaborative species. This will necessitate discussions on theory of mind, grounding and common ground, and implicature and inference-making. The extent to which are brains have evolved to assist communicative processes will be examined. We will discuss monologic and dialogic approaches to theorizing and researching communication. We will examine how the need to employ media constrains our communication behavior, and how codification emerges. Finally, we will discuss various approaches to conceptualizing and theorizing about message processing.

**Learning Outcomes**

Upon successfully completing COMG670, graduate students can be expected to:

- Be able to articulate differences between message processing conceptions of communication and traditional definitions of communication
- Be able to articulate differences between natural science approaches and social/cultural approaches to understanding human communication
- Be able to compare and contrast differences as well as functional assets and liabilities of multiple communicative codes and media
- Be able to compare and contrast multiple message processing theories
- Be able to design, execute, and report on a message processing study or experiment

**Assignments**

1. Groups of students will conduct an empirical research study focusing on some aspect of message processing. The final product will be a paper suitable for conference paper or publication. The paper will be worth 60% of the final grade.

2. Each graduate student will lead a class discussion on a selected topic in message processing. Students are expected to summarize either the area of study or selected research within the domain, as well as raise pertinent questions of theory suggested by the research. Class presentation and materials worth 20% of final grade.
3. Course participation. Each student is expected to come prepared to participate in discussions of materials that make up our course content. Participation is worth 20% of the final grade.

**Schedule** - The readings in the schedule are front heavy, i.e., we’ll do most of our reading and discussing in the first half of the semester. The second half is scheduled lighter to allow more flexibility so that we can incorporate your class presentations and discussions, and/or continue on with materials from prior weeks. Plus, we want to have time to discuss developing projects in class. *Readings with asterisks might be considered sources of research project ideas.*

As we approach each week I will discuss with you my expectations for the readings. Some of them will require more attention than others.

**Week 1**  
**Intro to class; message processing definition of communication**


**Week 2**  
**Evolutionary basis of communication**


**Week 3 Theory of Mind**


**Week 4 Neurological basis of communication**


**Week 5**  
Definition of media; functions of media; properties of media; definition of message; properties of messages

**Week 6**  
Creating understanding; cooperative principle; conversational implicature; inference-making; communicative responsibility


**Week 7**  
Relevance Theory


**Week 8**  
Speech acts & politeness theory

**Week 9**  
Deception


**Week 10**  
Misunderstanding; conversational misalignment

**Week 11**  
Information and message processing theories; implicit and explicit processing; nonconscious processing


**Week 12**  Conscious controlled vs. automatic processing; analytical vs. “mindless” processing; gestalt vs. heuristic processing;

**Week 13**  Catch up

**Week 14**  Summary


**Week 15**  Paper presentations

**Week 16**  Paper presentations