COURSE DESCRIPTION – This course is designed to answer two fundamental questions: how do we communicate? And how did we become communicators? The latter question is more primitive and will require a discussion of the phylogenetic origins of communication in the evolution of collaboration and cooperation. We will also look at the process of communication itself, wherein communication is seen as a process through which two people bring about between them a state of understanding. The class will help students develop a basic understanding of communicative codes and the properties via which we can compare and contrast them. The concepts of media and mediate are discussed from a functional perspective, helping students see the functional continuity of a sheet of paper, a terabyte hard drive, and an LCD computer screen. These basics will provide the context for discussions concerning human information processing and the constraints on our processing abilities. Finally, various theoretical approaches examining natural language processing, implicature, inference-making, resolution of ambiguity, and deception will be discussed.

OBJECTIVES

Through class discussions and written assignments it is expected that the student will become more deliberate and intentional in the use of language in communication. Class activities will develop a greater awareness of and sensitivity to the process of communication in daily interaction. An examination of the research in the area will allow the student to develop a better understanding of the relationship between cognition and communication.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students who have consistently attended and fully engaged in the readings, discussions, and assignments of COMG371 should be able to:

- Demonstrate a basic understanding of communicative codes and media
- Demonstrate a basic understanding of the evolution of cooperative behavior and its relationship to communication
- Demonstrate a basic understanding of common ground and the grounding process
- Demonstrate a basic understanding of biological, neurological, social, and cultural constraints on communication
- Demonstrate a basic understanding of the various theories explaining implicit and explicit message processing
- Demonstrate a basic understanding of various theories of inference-making and implicature in communication
ASSIGNMENTS & EXAMINATIONS

- Midterm and final 30% each
  - Examinations will be multiple choice, short answer, and essay
- Research study and final paper 30%
  - Groups of students (no more than four students per group) will conduct a study or experiment of their own design
- Presentation of study 5%
  - Groups will present their studies to the class in a professional manner (i.e., consistent with a 10-12 minute conference presentation)
- Research participation 5%
  - In order to satisfy the research mission of the department, data are often collected in our classes. Five percent of your total grade will be based on your attendance on the days data are collected. This includes data collected by your student colleagues

*NOTE – I will provide up to 75% of your grade for the completed paper; the other 25% will be determined in consultation with the other students in your group.

ALL papers will be prepared following APA format. Poorly and/or hastily prepared work will be graded accordingly.

SCHEDULE -- The following schedule is subject to change as need arises.

- Week 1  Introduction to course; Message processing definition of communication
- Week 2  Codes, media, and messages
- Week 3  Ontogenetic origins of communication
- Week 4  Phylogenetic origins of communication
- Week 5  Mirror neurons and communication
- Week 6  Theory of mind
- Week 7  Joint projects, common ground, and the grounding process
- Week 8  Joint projects, common ground, and the grounding process; Midterm
- Week 9  Implicature and inference-making
- Week 10  Speech acts; Face needs and politeness
- Week 11  Relevance theory
- Week 12  Distributed processing and relevance
- Week 12  Implicit and explicit processing
- Week 13  Message processing theories summary
- Week 15  Misunderstanding and deception
- Week 16  Review for Final

FINAL EXAM

Tuesday May 13th  12:00pm – 2:00pm
EMPIRICAL RESEARCH PROJECT

This project involves your investigating some area of research and designing and implementing a study that will replicate a study or further that line of research. You may find some area of research has several unanswered questions, in which case you would design a project meant to answer one or more of those questions. You may find that two different projects in the same area resulted in findings that are contradictory. In such cases you will want to design an experiment that will resolve the problem. You may simply find an area of research under-represented in the literature and design a study to collect important basic data. Replication is not sufficient; you must find a way to go beyond the finds of any study you use as a basis for your project.

Format -- Practically any article you look at will provide a useful example of the format your paper should take. They all begin with a very selective literature review and rationale that leads the reader through prior relevant research, up to the point where research questions and/or hypotheses (i.e., predictions) are generated. This will be the manner in which your paper begins. Next, you will provide a detailed discussion of your research methodology that describes how you went about testing your hypotheses. This will include information about your sample, procedures, what was measured and how it was measured. Details should be precise, clear, and complete enough that somebody could replicate your study without your guidance. Other research papers/projects in the same area will serve as good guidelines for your methodology. It is best to be consistent with prior research methods wherever possible. Next you will have a results section that describes in detail the findings of your statistical analysis of your data. Finally your paper should have a discussion section that interprets your findings. The discussion should discuss the ramifications of significant and nonsignificant findings, as well as integrate your findings with the line of research on which your study was based.

This paper will be about 15-25 typed, double-spaced pages. You will meticulously follow the current APA format (see the publication manual of the American Psychological Association -- most journals you consult will use this format), free of grammatical/spelling problems. Proper subheadings, visual organization, and evident structure should be used; the final paper should be "reader friendly." The paper you turn in as your "final" paper should absolutely not be the first draft. ** IF I FIND MYSELF CORRECTING YOUR GRAMMAR AND SPELLING ON YOUR FINAL PAPER I WILL RETURN IT TO YOU WITH A Failing GRADE.**
RESEARCH REPORT STRUCTURE

The following outline should serve as a general guide of what belongs in a research report and what organizational pattern it should follow.

I. **Introduction and rationale** (note: this is not a subheading in your paper)
   
   A. Identification of general area of study
   B. Importance of your specific investigation
   C. Review of previous research/thinking that is relevant to your question/hypothesis
   D. Reasoning and evidence that leads to your specific hypothesis
   E. Statement in concise terms of each hypothesis (each one should specify a cause leading to an effect or the nature of the relationship between two or more variables.)

   Examples:  
   1. An invasion of personal space leads to more negative attitudes toward the intruder.
   2. An eye contact increases, distance between interactants increases.
   3. Given an equal status relationship, increased frequency of touch will lead to more liking.

II. **Method**

   A. Identification of subjects (how many, how selected, how assigned to experimental conditions)
   B. Identification of independent and dependent variables in operational terms (eg. what constitutes an invasion of personal space, how is eye contact defined and measured, how is liking measured).
   C. Experimental procedures or observational methods (carefully explain what, observed. The setting should also be described.)

III. **Results**

   A. Report results in tabular form or in a summary
   B. Report any statistical tests used
   C. State whether results confirm or fail to confirm hypothesis

IV. **Discussion**

   A. Discuss the importance of the findings
   1. What are the implications if the hypothesis is confirmed?
   2. What are the implications if the hypothesis is not confirmed?
   B. Evaluate the method you used
   C. Make suggestions for future research