

A First Look at
COMMUNICATION THEORY

Communication
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Ninth Edition

Em Griffin | Andrew Ledbetter | Glenn Sparks

A FIRST LOOK AT COMMUNICATION THEORY

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A FIRST LOOK AT COMMUNICATION THEORY, NINTH EDITION

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CONVERSATIONS WITH

COMMUNICATION THEORISTS

The “Conversations” sections at the end of the chapters listed below connect the theories to 17 original video interviews conducted and produced by the authors. These videos appear on the book’s Online Learning Center, www.mhhe.com/griffin9e, and the author-driven website, www.afirstlook.com.

Chapter 6	Barnett Pearce—Coordinated Management of Meaning (Em)
Chapter 7	Judee Burgoon—Expectancy Violations Theory (Em)
Chapter 9	Chuck Berger—Uncertainty Reduction Theory (Em)
Chapter 10	Joe Walther—Social Information Processing Theory (Em)
Chapter 11	Leslie Baxter—Relational Dialectics (Em)
Chapter 12	Sandra Petronio—Communication Privacy Management Theory (Glenn)
Chapter 17	Randy Hirokawa—Functional Perspective on Group Decision Making (Em)
Chapter 21	Stan Deetz—Critical Theory of Communication in Organizations (Em)
Chapter 30	Max McCombs—Agenda-Setting Theory (Em)
Chapter 31	Howie Giles—Communication Accommodation Theory (Andrew)
Chapter 32	Stella Ting-Toomey—Face-Negotiation Theory (Em)
Chapter 33	Gerry Philipsen—Speech Codes Theory (Em)
Chapter 36	Cheris Kramarae—Muted Group Theory (Em)
<i>Archive</i>	Scott Poole—Adaptive Structuration Theory (Em)
	Jesse Delia, Brant Burleson & Jim Applegate—Constructivism (Em)
	David Buller—Interpersonal Deception Theory (Em)
	Byron Reeves & Clifford Nass—Media Equation (Em)

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GLENN SPARKS

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Em Griffin is Professor Emeritus of Communication at Wheaton College in Illinois, where he taught for over 35 years and was chosen Teacher of the Year. He received his M.A. and Ph.D. in communication from Northwestern University; his research interest is in the development of close friendships. Em is the author of three applied communication books: *The Mind Changers* (persuasion), *Getting Together* (group dynamics), and *Making Friends* (close relationships). For three decades, Em has been an active volunteer with Opportunity International, a nonprofit development organization providing financial solutions and training to empower people living in poverty to transform their lives. He also serves as a mediator and coach at the Center for Conflict Resolution in Chicago. Em's wife, Jean, is an artist and a musician. They recently celebrated 50 years of marriage and have two adult children, Jim and Sharon, and six grandchildren, Josh, Amy, Sam, Kyle, Alison, and Dan. You can reach Em at em.griffin@wheaton.edu.

Andrew Ledbetter is an Associate Professor of Communication Studies at Texas Christian University. He received his M.A. and Ph.D. in communication studies from the University of Kansas. His research addresses how people use communication technology to maintain their interpersonal relationships. A related interest concerns how parent-child communication predicts health and well-being. Andrew has published more than 35 articles and received recognition for teaching excellence from both the National Communication Association and Central States Communication Association. His wife, Jessica, is a former attorney who teaches business law at Texas Christian University. With their daughters, Sydney and Kira, they enjoy involvement in their church, playing board and card games, reading, cooking, and following the TCU Horned Frogs and Kansas Jayhawks. You can reach Andrew at a.ledbetter@tcu.edu, visit his blog at www.andrewledbetter.com, or follow him on Twitter via [@dr_ledbetter](https://twitter.com/dr_ledbetter).

Glenn Sparks is a professor in the Brian Lamb School of Communication at Purdue University in Indiana, where he has taught for 28 years. He received his Ph.D. in communication arts from the University of Wisconsin-Madison; his research focuses on the effects of media. Glenn is the author of *Media Effects Research: A Basic Overview* and a personal memoir, *Rolling in Dough: Lessons I Learned in a Doughnut Shop*. He's co-author of *Refrigerator Rights: Our Crucial Need for Close Connection*. Glenn is an avid sports fan and also enjoys trying to increase his skill playing the theremin. He is married to Cheri, a developmental therapist; they have three adult children, David, Erin, and Jordan, and one grandchild, Caleb. You can reach Glenn at sparks@purdue.edu.

DEDICATION

We dedicate this book to our wives, Jeanie, Jessica, and Cheri, who encouraged us to work together, celebrated with us when the process went well, and comforted us when it didn't. Just as they lovingly supported us in this project, we commit to being there for them in what they feel called to do.

Em, Andrew, Glenn

PREFACE FOR INSTRUCTORS

If you're already familiar with *A First Look at Communication Theory* and understand the approach, organization, and main features of the book, you may want to jump ahead to the "Major Changes in the Ninth Edition" section. For those who are new to the text, reading the entire preface will give you a good grasp of what you and your students can expect.

A Balanced Approach to Theory Selection. We've written *A First Look* for students who have no background in communication theory. It's designed for undergraduates enrolled in an entry-level course, regardless of the students' classification. The trend in the field is to offer students a broad introduction to theory relatively early in their program. But if a department chooses to offer its first theory course on the junior or senior level, the course will still be the students' first comprehensive look at theory, so the book will meet them where they are.

Our goal in this text is to present 32 communication theories in a clear and interesting way. After reading about a given theory, students should understand the theory, know the research that supports it, see useful applications in their lives, and be aware of the theory's possible flaws. We hope readers will discover relationships among theories located across the communication landscape—a clear indication that they grasp what they're reading. But that kind of integrative thinking only takes place when students first comprehend what a theorist claims.

With the help of more than 200 instructors, we've selected a range of theories that reflect the diversity within the discipline. Some theories are proven candidates for a Communication Theory Hall of Fame. For example, Aristotle's analysis of logical, emotional, and ethical appeals continues to set the agenda for many public-speaking courses. Mead's symbolic interactionism is formative for interpretive theorists who are dealing with language, thought, self-concept, or the effect of society upon the individual. Berger's uncertainty reduction theory was the first objective theory to be crafted by a social scientist trained in the field. And no student of mediated communication should be ignorant of Gerbner's cultivation theory, which explains why heavy television viewing cultivates fear of a mean and scary world.

It would be shortsighted, however, to limit the selection to the classics of communication. Some of the discipline's most creative approaches are its newest. For example, Sandra Petronio's theory of communication privacy management

undergirds much of the research conducted in the field of health communication. Leslie Baxter and Barbara Montgomery's theory of relational dialectics offers insight into the ongoing tensions inherent in personal relationships. And Robert McPhee's communicative constitution of organizations describes how the principle of social construction works in an organizational context.

Organizational Plan of the Book. Each chapter introduces a single theory in 10 to 15 pages. We've found that most undergraduates think in terms of discrete packets of information, so the concentrated coverage gives them a chance to focus their thoughts while reading a single chapter. This way, students can gain an in-depth understanding of important theories rather than acquire only a vague familiarity with a jumble of related ideas. The one-chapter-one-theory arrangement also gives teachers the opportunity to drop theories or rearrange the order of presentation without tearing apart the fabric of the text.

The first four chapters provide a framework for understanding the theories to come. The opening chapter, "Launching Your Study of Communication Theory," presents working definitions of both *theory* and *communication*, and also prepares students for the arrangement of the chapters and the features within them. Chapter 2, "Talk About Theory," lays the groundwork for understanding the differences between objective and interpretive theories. Chapter 3, "Weighing the Words," presents two sets of criteria for determining a good objective or interpretive theory. Based on Robert Craig's (University of Colorado) conception, Chapter 4, "Mapping the Territory," introduces seven traditions within the field of communication theory.

Following this integrative framework, we feature 32 theories in 32 self-contained chapters. Each theory is discussed within the context of a communication topic: interpersonal messages, relationship development, relationship maintenance, influence, group communication, organizational communication, public rhetoric, media and culture, media effects, intercultural communication, or gender and communication. These communication context sections usually contain three theories. Each section's two-page introduction outlines a crucial issue that theorists working in this area address. The placement of theories in familiar contexts helps students recognize that theories are answers to questions they've been asking all along. The final chapter, "Common Threads in Comm Theories," offers students a novel form of integration that will help them discern order in the tapestry of communication theory that might otherwise seem chaotic.

Because all theory and practice has value implications, we briefly explore a dozen ethical principles throughout the book. Consistent with the focus of this text, each principle is the central tenet of a specific ethical theory. Other disciplines may ignore these thorny issues, but to discuss communication as a process that is untouched by questions of good and bad, right and wrong, or questions of character would be to disregard an ongoing concern in our field.

Features of Each Chapter. Most people think in pictures. Students will have a rough time understanding a theory unless they apply its explanations and interpretations to concrete situations. The typical chapter uses an extended example to illustrate the "truth" a theory proposes. We encourage readers to try out ideas by visualizing a first meeting of freshman roommates, responding to conflict in a dysfunctional family, trying to persuade other students to support a zero-tolerance policy on driving after drinking, and many others. We also use speeches

of Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X, and scenes from *Mad Men*, *The Office*, *The Help*, *Bend It Like Beckham*, and *Thank You for Smoking* to illustrate principles of the theories. The case study in each chapter follows the pedagogical principle of explaining what students don't yet know in terms of ideas and images already within their experience.

Some theories are tightly linked with an extensive research project. For example, the impact of cognitive dissonance theory was greatly spurred by Festinger's surprising finding in his now classic \$1/\$20 experiment. And Philipsen's speech codes theory began with a three-year ethnographic study of what it means to speak like a man in "Teamsterville." When such exemplars exist, we describe the research in detail so that students can learn from and appreciate the benefits of grounding theory in systematic observation. In this way, readers of *A First Look* are led through a variety of research designs and data analyses.

Students will encounter the names of Baxter, Berger, Bormann, Burgoon, Burke, Deetz, Fisher, Giles, Kramarae, Pacanowsky, Pearce, Philipsen, Ting-Toomey, Walther, Wood, and many others in later communication courses. We therefore make a concerted effort to link theory and theorist. By pairing a particular theory with its originator, we try to promote both recall and respect for a given scholar's effort.

The text of each chapter concludes with a section that critiques the theory. This represents a hard look at the ideas presented in light of the criteria for a good theory outlined in Chapter 3. Some theorists have suggested that we are "friends" of their theory. We appreciate that because we want to present all of the theories in a constructive way. But after we summarize a theory's strengths, we then discuss its weaknesses, unanswered questions, and possible errors that remain. We try to stimulate a "That makes sense, and yet I wonder . . ." response among students.

We include a short list of thought questions at the end of each chapter. Labeled "Questions to Sharpen Your Focus," these probes encourage students to make connections among ideas in the chapter and also to apply the theory to their everyday communication experience. As part of this feature, words printed in italics remind students of the key terms of a given theory.

Each chapter ends with a short list of annotated readings entitled "A Second Look." The heading refers to resources for students who are interested in a theory and want to go further than a 10- to 15-page introduction allows. The top item is the resource we recommend as the starting point for further study. The other listings identify places to look for material about each of the major issues raised in the chapter. The format is designed to offer practical encouragement and guidance for further study without overwhelming the novice with multiple citations. The sources of quotations and citations of evidence are listed in an "Endnotes" section at the end of the book.

We think professors and students alike will get a good chuckle out of the cartoons we've selected for each chapter and section introduction. The art's main function, however, is to illustrate significant points in the text. As in other editions, we're committed to using quality cartoon art from *The New Yorker* and *Punch* magazines, as well as comic strips such as "Calvin and Hobbes" and "Dilbert." Perceptive cartoonists are modern-day prophets—their humor serves the education process well when it slips through mental barriers or attitudinal defenses that didactic prose can't penetrate.

While no author considers his or her style ponderous or dull, we believe we've presented the theories in a clear and lively fashion. Accuracy alone does not communicate. We've tried to remain faithful to the vocabulary each theorist uses so that the student can consider the theory in the author's own terms, but we also translate technical language into more familiar words. Students and reviewers cite readability and interest as particular strengths of the text. We encourage you to sample a chapter so you can decide for yourself.

In 13 of the chapters, you'll see photographs of the theorists who appear in "Conversations with Communication Theorists," eight-minute video clips of our discussions together. The text that accompanies each picture previews intriguing comments the theorists made so students can watch the interview with a specific purpose in mind. You can find these videos, as well as auto-graded quizzes, theory abstracts, web links, and crossword puzzles on the book's two websites, www.mhhe.com/griffin9e and the author-driven www.afirstlook.com.

Both sites offer password-protected features for instructors. The most selected resource is Emily Langan's world-class Instructor's Manual, which offers additional commentary, discussion questions, and classroom activities for each chapter. In addition, the McGraw-Hill Online Learning Center contains a test bank, flashcards, and PowerPoint presentations. The *First Look* site offers annotated movie clips that illustrate theories, a comparison chart showing theories covered in major communication theory texts, and chapter-by-chapter changes from the previous edition.

Major Changes in the Ninth Edition. Andrew Ledbetter and Glenn Sparks have become co-authors with Em. They were special consultants for the previous edition, but we now join together as equal partners. Both men are highly recognized scholars in their field—Andrew in computer-mediated communication and family communication; Glenn in media effects and interpersonal communication. Glenn was a student in Em's first persuasion course at Wheaton; Andrew aced the last communication theory class Em taught before he retired from full-time teaching. Despite differences in our ages of up to 45 years, the three of us are close friends and colleagues who have published together before. Each of us vets and edits what the other two write and offers advice on what to cover. We believe this interactive process ensures that students will read up-to-date information presented in the same "voice" that has characterized the book throughout eight editions.

Responding to instructors' desire to have at least one more organizational theory, we've added a chapter on Robert McPhee's theory, the *communicative constitution of organizations*. McPhee's conception of four flows of communication that create and sustain an organization is just one of several versions of CCO, but we think it's the account easiest to understand and most useful for students. In order to make room for McPhee's theory, we've moved our coverage of Delia's *constructivism* to the theory archive at www.afirstlook.com.

We've made a concerted effort to update examples that no longer have the explanatory power or appeal they did when introduced in previous editions. References to old films are a case in point. As apt as these movies are to illustrate *symbolic interactionism* or *critical theory of communication in organizations*, the majority of college students aren't familiar with *Nell* or *Erin Brockovich*. We've replaced many of these examples with cultural material more relevant to students.

Half the chapters in the book have undergone major additions, deletions, or alterations. Here's a sample:

- In the **"Talk About Theory"** chapter, Glenn's and Marty's analyses of the most popular commercial of the 2013 Super Bowl telecast highlight the differences between objective and interpretive scholarship.
- In the **"Weighing the Words"** chapter, a discussion of communication apprehension now illustrates the explanation-of-data standard for objective theories.
- The chapter on the *coordinated management of meaning* has been completely rewritten. It's shorter, less complex, and faithful to the new direction the theory has taken. The CMM Institute will use it on its website to introduce the theory.
- In the **"Uncertainty Reduction Theory"** chapter, the section on *anxiety/uncertainty management theory* has been replaced with an in-depth section on the *relational turbulence model*, which is on the cutting-edge of research in the URT tradition.
- The revised chapter on *social information processing theory* begins by referencing the hit 2010 movie *The Social Network* and then uses an ongoing example of a Facebook friendship to illustrate key components of the theory. Walther's hyperpersonal perspective is applied to online dating.
- The "Three State-of-the-Art Revisions" section of the **"Cognitive Dissonance"** chapter has been largely rewritten. The edits more clearly differentiate among the three revisions and use the example of President Obama's struggle with smoking to illustrate those differences.
- In Deetz' **"Critical Theory of Communication"** chapter, there's an extensive elaboration of his Politically Attentive Relational Constructivism (PARC). This is followed by an account of how Deetz applies the theory to his work with the International Atomic Energy Agency to prevent nuclear plant meltdowns.
- We've made a major reorganization of the chapter on Burke's *dramatism*. The order of the first four sections is now (1) an expanded presentation of the dramatic pentad, (2) a new section on language as the genesis of guilt, (3) the guilt-redemption cycle, and (4) identification as the necessary condition for persuasion to occur.
- In the chapter on *cultural studies*, we rewrote the section on broadcast and print news supporting dominant ideology, using Obamacare as a case study. We then discussed satire as a possible form of resistance to the dominant ideology, using *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report* as examples.
- In the **"Genderlect Styles"** chapter, we replaced the *When Harry Met Sally* example with new material on rules of conversation that boys and girls learn early in life, and discuss how childhood speech communities may be the origin of genderlect.
- The revised chapter on *muted group theory* introduces Orbe's co-cultural theory, which charts how muted groups desire assimilation, separation, or accommodation.

Bottom-line numbers on important features of the text are an index of additional changes we've made in this edition. We've created **two** new "Conversations

with Communication Theorists” videos—Glenn interviewing Sandra Petronio about her *communication privacy management theory* and Andrew discussing *communication accommodation theory* with Howie Giles. We’ve selected **six** new application logs that show how students use theories in their lives, and captured **seven** new cartoons that cleverly highlight a crucial claim of a particular theory. You’ll also find **50** new annotated citations in the “Second Look” feature at the end of the chapters.

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Acknowledgments. We gratefully acknowledge the wisdom and counsel of many generous scholars whose intellectual capital is embedded in every page you’ll read. Over the last 27 years, hundreds of communication scholars have gone out of their way to make the book better. People who have made direct contributions to this edition include Ron Adler, Santa Barbara City College; Ed Appel, Lock Haven University; Ryan Bisel, University of Oklahoma; Dan Brown, Grove City College; Kristen Carr, Texas Christian University; Ken Chase, Wheaton College; Stan Deetz, University of Colorado; Chip Eveland, Ohio State University; Darin Garard, Santa Barbara City College; Howard Giles, University of California, Santa Barbara; Cheris Kramarae, University of Oregon; Glen McClish, San Diego State University; Max McCombs, University of Texas; Marty Medhurst, Baylor University; Rebecca Meisenbach, University of Missouri; Melanie Mills, Eastern Illinois University; James Olufowote, Boston College; Mark Orbe, Western Michigan University; Doug Osman, Purdue University; Kim Pearce, CMM Institute for Personal and Social Evolution; Sandra Petronio, University of Indiana–Purdue University Indianapolis; Gerry Philipsen, University of Washington; Russ Proctor, Northern Kentucky University; Linda Putnam, University of California, Santa Barbara; Derrick Rosenoir, Vanguard University; Alan Rubin, Hebrew University of Jerusalem; Christa Sloan, Pepperdine University; Jordan Soliz, University of Nebraska; Stella Ting-Toomey, California State University, Fullerton; Mina Tsay, Boston University; Paul Witt, Texas Christian University; Robert Woods Jr., Spring Arbor University. Without their help, this edition would be less accurate and certainly less interesting.

Em has great appreciation for two Wheaton undergraduate research assistants. David Washko juggled his responsibilities while playing two seasons of varsity football at Wheaton. Laurel Porter constructed the comprehensive index that contains thousands of entries—a task no one should do more than once in life. Glenn is grateful for Lewis Day and Beth Stanley, two Purdue student production assistants who made recording his conversation with Sandra Petronio possible.

Our relationships with the professionals at McGraw-Hill have been highly satisfactory. Susan Gouijnstook was our initial Development Editor, but a maternity leave and well-deserved promotion to Director of Communication brought Adina Lonn to the Development Editor role. Both women were incredibly responsive to our needs, and their care for the entire project matched ours. They were backed up by Lisa Pinto, Executive Director of Development; David Patterson, Managing

Director; Penina Braffman, Managing Editor; Jessica Portz, Project Manager; and Jamie Daron, Brand Coordinator. Other authors are envious when they hear of our experience working with these professionals.

We've been fortunate to work closely with four outside contractors: Jenn Meyer, a commercial computer artist, created and revised figures on 24-hour notice; Judy Brody achieved the impossible by making the extensive permissions process enjoyable; Robyn Tellefsen, freelance writer and editor, was my student research assistant for the fourth edition of the book and proofreader for editions six through eight. When others saw her abilities and thoroughness, they recommended she be the copy editor for this edition. She also edited a book Glenn wrote. Robyn is quite familiar with communication theory and is someone whose edits we trust implicitly. Thus, the book your students read is better than the one we wrote. Rebecca Lazure is a project manager at SPi Global who took our comments on Robyn's edits and guided the manuscript and images through the production process and ultimately turned over the final digital package to the printer. She did it well and with grace.

We offer a special word of appreciation to Emily Langan, Em's former student who now teaches the courses he taught at Wheaton. This edition is Emily's fourth as writer of the ever-evolving Instructor's Manual that is famous among communication theory instructors. Em recalls the time when he first introduced Emily at a National Communication Association short course on teaching communication theory. The participants stood and applauded. Now, at the NCA short courses, she introduces Em. The three of us are grateful for her wisdom, dedication, creativity, and friendship.

Em Griffin
Andrew Ledbetter
Glenn Sparks

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