

## **COMM465: Communication Theory** with Dr. Christina Knopf ("Dr. K.")

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### **Course Description:**

This course examines several broad genres of communication theory and discusses a selection of key theories from interpersonal, intercultural, public, media, and gender communication areas. By the end of the course you should be better able to understand and critically examine what you think you know about communication. For those considering graduate study in communication, this course may help you select a direction and will give you a taste of the kinds of reading and work that are often expected at the graduate level.

### **Course Objectives:**

In taking this class, you will be able to:

- Understand the history of the discipline
- Read & understand contemporary scholarship
- Engage in data collection & analysis of theory
- Recognize and explain the role of communication in society & your own life
- Show knowledge of & evaluate comm theory
- Write in scholastic form/style
- Recognize the place of theory in comm research

### **Texts & Course Materials:**

- *A First Look at Communication Theory*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed, by Em Griffin
- Syllabus & Assignment Packet
- Moodle access (for additional resources to help with the final paper)
- 4x6 index cards – strongly recommended, not required

**Grading:** Tests (4 total): 25%      Midterm Exam: 25%      Final Exam: 25%      Paper: 25%  
*Full assignment descriptions, instructions, explanations, and grading procedures are found in the accompanying "Assignments Packet"*

Final Grades are broken down **in this class** as follows:

- 4.0 = 95-100    • 3.7 = 90-94    • 3.3 = 86-89    • 3.0 = 82-85    • 2.7 = 78-81
- 2.3 = 72-77    • 2.0 = 67-71    • 1.7 = 61-66    • 1.3 = 56-60    • 1.0 = 51-55    • (0.0 = below 51)

☆Work that meets the minimum requirements of an assignment, is completed on time and displays average involvement with the course content is deserving of a 2.0. A 2.0 is a "satisfactory" grade that indicates the minimum has been achieved. Higher grades are awarded to work that goes above and beyond the minimum standards to produce papers or presentations that reflect superior intellectual effort, excellence in critical analysis and overall creativity in the approach towards any given assignment. A 4.0 is attainable but will require much more than minimal effort. ☆

**Challenging a Grade:** If you identify an error in grading, I am always willing to admit to a mistake and correct it. If you want me to *reconsider* a grade, follow these steps:

- Wait at least 24 hours before deciding to seek reconsideration, but no longer than one week.
- Write a 1-2 page explanation of why the grade should be reconsidered identifying what type of change you seek and providing a reasoned argument and evidence in support of that change. The burden of proof in any disagreement over evaluation of your performance rests with you.
- Resubmit the original work (complete with grade & comments) along with the rationale.
- Allow two weeks for reconsideration. Accept the final decision. *I will reconsider each assignment only once.*

**Extra Credit:** Extra credit will not be available as an end-of-semester option to make-up-for or replace work that you did not do throughout the semester. It will never be given on an individual basis.

**Due Dates/Late Work:** LATE ASSIGNMENTS ARE NOT ACCEPTED. *If you know in advance you will not be in class when an assignment is due, turn it in early. If you wake up sick when something is due, please email it by class time.* All due dates are on the course calendar. Any in-class work – whether it is a speech or an exam – should be treated seriously. Make-ups for such assignments will only be granted in rare instances and usually only with documentation of an unavoidable emergency, or with advance notice of college-sanctioned activities or religious observances.

**Attendance:** This is a live, non-virtual, non-mediated, speech communication course. Being present is necessary to communicate. Regular, timely, attendance is expected. Attendance is a job skill: failure to report to work on time can result in lost income, inability to be promoted, or termination. If you cannot consistently be present, on time, for class, you should withdraw. I do not tally absences as part of your grade, but I do reserve the right to adjust your grade if I believe your attendance has been problematic for you and/or for your classmates. You are solely responsible for catching up on work that you miss (always refer to the course calendar and to the potential kindness of classmates).

I will not accept an absence as an excuse for being unaware of any course assignment or expectation. Work will not be accepted late because of an absence, except as indicated above.

**Absences of two or more straight weeks:** If you miss, or will miss, two straight weeks of class (4 consecutive class meetings), you must contact me before or within those two weeks. Four or more consecutive absences without contact will result in an automatic failure of the course.

**Absences of four or more total weeks:** If you miss, or will miss, four or more total weeks of class, particularly if the absences are close together, you must choose one of these options: Withdrawing from the course, or; Taking an Incomplete in the course.

**Attendance for the Final Exam:** Finals week is part of the required number of class meeting hours set by the SUNY system. Final exams, or activities scheduled during the final exam timeslot, will not be rescheduled unless you have 3 or more exams on a single day. (If that happens, please see the policy online at <http://www.potsdam.edu/offices/registrar/exams.cfm>). **You must make travel/work/childcare arrangements around the final exam**, just as you do for normal class meetings. If you do not attend the final exam, be prepared to accept the consequences to your grade. Final exam times are scheduled by the school to ensure that exams do not overlap, therefore the full week is needed – do not blame your professors or the school for end-of-the-week exams; even though regular classes are not in session, the week is part of the semester.

**Incompletes:** Incompletes, or other arrangements for course completion, can be planned only in advance to the semester's end in extreme circumstances with documentation. To receive an incomplete, there must be a serious *emergency* so late in the semester that there isn't time to make up what you miss.

**Academic Integrity & Dishonesty:** As stated in the Undergraduate Catalog, a pledge of academic honesty is made by students at SUNY Potsdam. This pledge is regarded as an indication that you understand and have complied with the requirements and assignments as set forth by the course instructor and as stated in the Academic Honor Code.

**To plagiarize is to pass off ideas or words of someone else as your own or to use created productions without crediting the source. Any time you incorporate the words &/or ideas of another person into your work, no matter what the medium/source, without giving their creator the credit, you have plagiarized.** It is literary and intellectual theft when you present work that someone else did as being new and original. This includes user-generated content on sites like Wikipedia. **I have a zero tolerance policy on plagiarism. In the event of plagiarism on an assignment in this course you will A.) Definitely fail the assignment. B.) Possibly fail the course.** Therefore, you will be responsible for authenticating any assignment submitted in this course. I recommend that you keep copies of all drafts of your work, make photocopies &/or careful notes of research materials, save drafts or versions of assignments under individual file names on computer disks, etc. Other forms of dishonesty or cheating are also not tolerated and will result in a failure of the assignment and/or class. If you think you are engaging in questionable behavior, you probably are, so either don't do it or seek clarification.

**Technology/Electronic Devices:** Technology use is permissible in the classroom IF:

- Your usage is polite. You are taught from kindergarten on that it is not acceptable to carry on personal conversations with others or to pass notes to people during class time.
- Your usage does not interfere with your performance in class. Multitasking is a fact of modern life, but if you're not good at Facebooking and listening at the same time, don't do it.
- Your usage does not bother your neighbors. Be aware of and polite to people near you. Communication devices should always be set to silent & only answered outside the room.
- You are willing to apply your technology use to course materials in productive ways.
- You do not secretly record any portion of a class without seeking permission from all involved parties.

Consider your technology use outside of class, too. If contacting me via email, be professional: use an appropriate and informative subject, address me politely, and use good Standard English. Many (potential) employers will not be impressed by communication like, "hey-idk wuts du 2mrw. tia"

**Etiquette:** The success of this course is directly related to the sense of community that we develop in the classroom. Participation is essential to this process. I encourage you to share your views and listen to those of others. Debate and discussion are an important part of the learning process. While there will no doubt be disagreements, I expect the members of this community (including myself) to challenge ideas in a manner that reflects respect and recognition of opposing viewpoints without attacking individuals.

Any communication – digital or live – that potentially interferes with the learning environment of other students will not be tolerated. Disruptive behavior - even minor disruptions - will result in your being told to leave class. Repeated offenses may result in course failure.

## COMM465: Communication Theory Calendar

*All dates are final, unless discussed and agreed upon in class.*

Tu 8/28: Syllabus, expectations, assignments	Th 8/30: Research supplements on Moodle
Tu 9/4: Ch. 1 & 2	Th 9/6: Ch. 3 & 4
Tu 9/11: computer/library time	Th 9/13: computer/library time
Tu 9/18: Ch. 5 & 6	Th 9/20: Ch. 7 & 8 + <b>Test</b> ch 1-6 & supplement
Tu 9/25: Ch. 9 & 10 + <b>Annotated Bibliography</b>	Th 9/27: Ch. 12 & 13
Tu 10/2: Ch. 14 & 15	Th 10/4: Ch. 16 & 17
Tu 10/9: No class → fall recess	Th 10/11: <b>Test</b> ch 7-10, 12-17 + Paper review mtng
Tu 10/16: <b>MIDTERM + Lit Review Draft</b>	Th 10/18: Ch. 18 & 19
Tu 10/23: Ch. 20 & 21 <small>(last day to withdraw)</small>	Th 10/25: Ch. 23
Tu 10/30: Ch. 24	Th 11/1: Ch. 26 + <b>Analysis Proposal</b>
Tu 11/6: Ch. 27 & 28 = <b>Test</b> ch 20-21, 23-24, 26	Th 11/8: Ch. 29 & 30
Tu 11/13: Ch. 31 & 32	Th 11/15: No class → Dr. K @ conference
Tu 11/20: No class → Dr. K @ conference	Th 11/22: No class → Thanksgiving
Tu 11/27: Ch. 33 & 35	Th 11/29: Ch. 37
Tu 12/4: <b>Test</b> ch 27-33, 35 & 37	Th 12/6: <b>Research/Reflection Paper Due</b>
Tu 12/11 @ 5-7 → <b>Final</b> short-answer <b>Exam</b> . See details in Assignment Packet.	

NOTES: We are skipping chapters 11, 22, 25, 34 & 36.

If you are using the 7<sup>th</sup> edition of the Griffin text you must cross reference the chapter titles/topics and numbers of the book's website at [www.afirstlook.com](http://www.afirstlook.com). Many of the chapters are different between the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> editions.

## COMM465: Communication Theory, with Dr. K. Fall 2012 Assignment Packet

This packet is designed to provide you with all the basic information and instructions to succeed at the graded portions of this course. Instructions and grading schemes for every assignment in this class, for the entire semester, are provided here for you. Use this resource in conjunction with the Syllabus and class meetings. You are responsible for reading the information in this packet just as you are responsible for reading any other assignment in class.

### Readings

Nearly every class day, one or more chapters will be due. To maximize our class time and your learning, you should read the chapters *before* coming to class. This way, our discussions in class will make more sense to you and you will be better prepared to ask questions or contribute to dialogues. As an added bonus for keeping up with the reading, you have to following *option*:

On the day a chapter is due you may turn-in one 4x6 index card with handwritten notes (front & back) from the chapter, which you will be able to use as a cheat sheet on the quizzes/exams:

- You may have only **1 card per chapter** (both sides).
- Cards must be **no larger than 4x6 inches**.
- Notes must be **handwritten**, not typed.
- Your **name** must be on the card.
- Cards will be accepted **only on the day the chapter is due**, no exceptions.

This is approximately a 4x6" box.

If you do not have index cards available, you may cut paper to this size to use.

It may not be any larger than 4x6"

Larger notecards WILL NOT be accepted.

If you don't put your name on it, it will be thrown out.

If you do not have index cards or a ruler, trace this box.

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## Tests

There are 4 multiple-choice tests during the semester, each one covering about 8-10 chapters.

Quizzes will be *approximately* 20 questions each.

There are several ways to prepare for the tests:

- Read the chapters. (Each day a chapter is due you may choose to turn-in one 4x6 notecard for each chapter with handwritten notes from the chapter; these notecards will be returned to you for use on quizzes and exams as cheat sheets; see the section in this Assignment Packet about *Readings*.)
- Listen carefully and take notes in class.
- Use the practice quizzes on the textbook website at [www.afirstlook.com](http://www.afirstlook.com)

*Questions for the midterm and final exams will be taken directly from these tests. You should keep each test when it is returned and carefully study what you got wrong – and what you got right. When a test is over, you can't just forget the information and move on to the next thing.*

## Midterm & Final Exams

To help reinforce the theories and their similarities, differences, and connections two major exams will be used to encourage you to maintain good study and work habits throughout the semester.

The midterm exam will be a short-answer test, consisting of questions pulled from the tests at the midpoint of the semester. The midterm will be about 20-30 questions.

The final exam will be a **cumulative** short-answer test, consisting of questions pulled from all four tests. The final will be about 50-60 questions.

There are several ways to prepare for the exams:

- Read the chapters. (Each day a chapter is due you may choose to turn-in one 4x6 notecard for each chapter with handwritten notes from the chapter; these notecards will be returned to you for use on quizzes and exams as cheat sheets; see the section in this Assignment Packet about *Readings*.)
- Listen carefully and take notes in class.
- Use the practice quizzes on the textbook website at [www.afirstlook.com](http://www.afirstlook.com)
- Carefully review your quizzes throughout the semester.

★ *Good attendance will pay off in having credit that you can use to “buy out” of 1 or more questions on an exam. For every full week of attendance (arriving on time, not leaving early), credit will be earned toward being able to skip questions on the midterm and final.*

Tests and Exams can only be made up when they are missed because of DOCUMENTED emergencies or college-sanctioned events, or for religious observances with notice.

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## Research & Reflection Paper

During the first two weeks of the semester, you will be assigned one of the theories covered in class (based on your interests). During the semester, you will become an expert on this on this theory. You will develop an academic, critical inquiry style, research paper on your assigned theory.

Your goal is to select an important proposition, construct, or variable within the theory and put it to the test. There are multiple steps/components to this project:

1. You will need to collect and explore no fewer than 10 academic sources –primary and secondary resources- about your theory. Textbooks of any kind may be used but will not count as one of the 10 sources. Not counting the time spent reading about the theory in the text, nor counting the time you actually spend writing the paper, you will probably spend at least 10-12 hours researching your assigned theory.

**TIP:** At the end of each chapter, there is a list of important sources on the theory. You can use these. There is also a list of important sources for each theory at [www.afirstlook.com](http://www.afirstlook.com). You can use these, too. Plus, in addition to using library databases like EBSCO's Communication and Mass Media Complete & COMAbstracts, look at the works cited at the end of key articles for other useful resources. You must start this process early; you may need to request articles on Interlibrary Loan.

2. As a first stage, you will complete an annotated bibliography of at least 10 sources (excluding textbooks, websites, films...), formatted according to **APA guidelines** (because these theories are mostly social scientific.) The College Library has resources to help you with APA style and sample APA citations are listed below.

The sources must be scholastic/academic – journal articles and/or books/book chapters. This means no webpages, no textbooks (including Griffin), and no encyclopedias. Those sources are great to give you a better understanding of the theory, but are not appropriate for use in the paper. A step-by-step guide on reading journal articles is found below.

The purpose of the annotated bibliography is to receive feedback from the instructor about the quality of the sources you are using and about your APA formatting and academic writing style. This feedback is meant to help you with the main paper. Also, the annotated bibliography will provide you with the basis of the next stage in the paper-writing-process.

If you are unfamiliar with the format of an annotated bibliography, Cornell University provides excellent resources to help you structure an annotated bibliography <http://olinuris.library.cornell.edu/ref/research/skill28.htm>

**The annotated bibliography is not graded, but failure to submit it on time will result in your final paper grade being lowered one level (ex: 4.0 to a 3.7)**

3. The next step is writing the Literature Review. A literature review is the foundation for any new study. It establishes what has already been researched on a certain topic and helps a scholar to develop new research on the topic. It is, essentially, a 5-7 page report summarizing the theory, the important studies of it, and key developments in it. Unlike the annotated bibliography which is written source-by-source, a literature review is structured thematically. The literature review grounds the unique research of a particular author in the larger field, helping to demonstrate how that research fits into the history/development of a knowledge area.

Every journal article you read about your theory begins with a literature review. Reading those articles will help you to get a sense for the structure and style of scholastic writing. You can also see an example of a student-written literature review, written in APA style, courtesy of Purdue University at [http://faculty.mwsu.edu/psychology/Laura.Spiller/Experimental/sample\\_apa\\_style\\_litreview.pdf](http://faculty.mwsu.edu/psychology/Laura.Spiller/Experimental/sample_apa_style_litreview.pdf)

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A packet of information to help you with the literature review is provided on Moodle.

You will submit an early draft of the literature review to receive instructor feedback before the final paper is complete. The draft is not graded, but failure to submit it on time will result in your final paper grade being lowered one level (ex: 3.7 to 3.3).

4. Based on the new in-depth knowledge you have on your theory, you will write an extended application of the theory to your own experiences or to a media representation. At this stage, you will develop a 1-2 page proposal of how you plan to observe the theory. (See Step 5 for more details and examples.)

The proposal must be as specific as possible: If you plan to look at the theory as it appears in a movie or television show, you must identify the movie or show. If you plan to consider the theory as it relates (or not) to some aspect of your life, you must explain what and why.

You will submit a draft of the proposal to receive instructor feedback and approval before the final paper is complete. The draft is not graded, but failure to submit it on time will result in your final paper grade being lowered one level (ex: 3.3 to 3.0).

5. Once your proposal has been approved, you will set out to observe the theory working (or not) according your plan.

There are two possible approaches for applying your theory:

{A} Explain how you can see the theory operating in your own life – perhaps through interactions with family, friends, lovers, coworkers, employers, strangers, classmates, or teachers wither in the present or in the past. (Do not use incidents that you will not be comfortable sharing the details about.) A very brief example of this kind of approach is below.

{B} Explain how one or more aspects of the theory can be observed through a film, a television show, a novel, or music. A very brief example of this kind of approach is below.

You need to be as detailed and as specific in your explanations as possible; make sure you use the appropriate terminology from the theory, relate your observations directly to findings from the research you read, include quotations where appropriate. You will then develop a 1-2 page conclusion that judges the validity of the theory – using the appropriate criteria outlined in chapter 3 of the text – based on your readings and observations. **Examples are below.**

6. Based on what you find, you will explain, summarize, and discuss what you have learned about the theory.
7. The final stage of the process is the construction and finishing of your paper. The final paper will be 10-15 pages long (not counting the works cited page):
  - 7.1. A brief introduction to the theory and study (about 1 paragraph) followed by the 5-7 page literature review [Note: 5 pages is not 4 pages plus a line. It is not 4.5 pages. It is 5.]
  - 7.2. A 1-2 page methods section (this is your proposal). You will see many samples of methods sections when you do your research; most journal articles you read will explain the method used, following the literature reviews. Your methods are not expected to be as involved or rigorous.
  - 7.3. A 4-6 page discussion of your findings,
  - 7.4. A brief conclusion about what your research suggests about the theory's usefulness or future development or research about the theory.

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## APA Citation Samples – Works Cited Page

### Journal

Last, F.M. (year). Article title: Not every word is capitalized. *Journal Title, issue(vol)*, pp-pp.

#### *EXAMPLE*

Doe, J.J. (2012). Communication theory is sexy: A research analysis. *A Pretend Journal of Communication Studies, 1(1)*, 31-46.

### Journal via Internet

Last, F.M. (year). Article title: Not every word is capitalized. *Journal Title, issue(vol)*, pp-pp. doi #####

#### *EXAMPLE*

Doe, J.J. (2012). Communication theory is sexy: A research analysis. *A Pretend Journal of Communication Studies, 1(1)*, 31-46. doi: 123456789.87.654321

### Book

Last, F.M. (year). *Title of the book*. Place of Publication: Publisher.

#### *EXAMPLE*

Doe, J. (2012). *Communication theory is sexy*. Potsdam, NY: Imaginary Press.

### Book Chapter

Last, F.M. (year). The title of the chapter. In F. Last (Ed.), *Title of Book*, (pp –pp). Place of Publication: Publisher.

#### *EXAMPLE*

Knopf, C.M. (2012). Comm theory is sexy. In J. Doe (Ed.), *The Truth about communication theory* (pp. 100-50). Potsdam, NY: Fictional Press.

**NOTES: Capitalization is important.** Please make sure your citations match the capitalization of the samples. Use the above examples as models.

The DOI number for online journals is always found in the database listing where you got the journal. However, if the journal can also be found in print, you don't necessarily have to use the DOI. Most databases will give you all the citation/bibliographic information you need, but not in the right format.

The first line of a citation is out-dented, the second line is indented.

Within the text of your paper, provide the source/s of general information in parenthetical formats using author name/s and date of publication (Knopf, 2012; Washington, 1776). Knopf (2012), also wants you to know you can cite a source this way.

If you include a direct quote from somebody, “Because their words are really great, you should also give the page number” (Author, 2121, p. 666).



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## How to Read and Take Notes on a Scholarly Journal Article

First, you need to understand that authors of journal articles always have an argument; they are trying to convince you of something. BUT, this does not mean it is biased: Quality academic journals have a rigorous review process to ensure that articles are built on new, research-based information

### How to Approach the Article

When you read journal articles, always remember that YOU are going to write a paper based on what you read. So, do the following:

- Keep in mind your research goal (applying the theory)
- Focus on the information in the article that is relevant to your research question (skim over other parts)
- Think critically about what you read and try to build your own argument based on it

### Steps to Read the Article

1. Look at the structure of the article (most scientific articles follow the same specific format)
  - a) **Abstract** (summary of the whole article)
  - b) **Introduction & Literature Review** (why they did the research & what related research has already been done)
  - c) **Methodology** (how they did the research)
  - d) **Results** (what happened, what was observed)
  - e) **Discussion** (what the results mean)
  - f) **Conclusion** (what they learned)
  - g) **References** (whose research they referenced & built upon – this is a great place to find other articles for your own research!)
2. Read the abstract and conclusion **first** (these have the main points)
3. If you find anything in the abstract or conclusion that is important for your paper, **search** for the information
4. Don't worry about understanding all the details of the methodology, especially if you are unfamiliar with statistics (if used); do try to get a sense of the research approach.

### How to Take Notes on the Article

There are a few major ways to take notes, but this is a personal style choice. Try different ways, but use the one that fits you best. Below are some suggestions for note-taking:

- Pay attention to what each section is about. The Abstract, Discussion, and Conclusion sections usually have the most important information.
- Take notes **while** you are reading (that way you don't have to go back and re-read it when you write your paper)
- Write summarizing notes for main points (in the margin, or on a separate piece of paper)
- Highlight only **very** important quotes or terms
- Look up words you don't understand
- Keep careful track of all citation information: Book title, journal title, article title, author(s), volume/issue, date, publisher, page numbers...

### How to Reference the Article

There are two main ways to reference an article in your paper:

- Quoting
  - Use quotations when the author's original words are so special that you cannot reword it.
  - Usually, use quotations for definitions.
  - A good rule of thumb: 1 quotation per page **maximum**.
- Paraphrasing (Summarizing)
  - Use paraphrasing to tell your reader in your own words what the author had to say, in detail or in general terms.
  - This is most commonly used in academic writing.
  - A good rule of thumb: when writing a literature review, use 2-3 paraphrases **per paragraph**.

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### EXAMPLES OF APPLICATION APPROACHES USING MUTED GROUP THEORY.

*Muted Group Theory says that man-made language aids in defining, depreciating, and excluding women. Women are less articulate in public because the words and the norms for their use have been devised by men. As women cease to be muted, men will no longer maintain their position of dominance in society.*

{A} I've experienced what Kramarae would call muted voice probably once or twice a week. But one of the most frustrating and demeaning situations occurred while I worked at a Mexican Restaurant in San Diego County. I worked my way up from hostess to "server" in six months. This was a reluctant decision even though I was their best hostess on staff. I was considered "not serious." As a server, my relationship/ camaraderie with the wait staff changed somewhat since I was working more closely with them. Most of the servers were and kitchen staff were Mexican males even though there were also a few Caucasian males and females on staff. I was the youngest female server. I was sexually harassed by the Mexican males in the kitchen and from the servers. I was called "caballita, little horsey horsey" along with other derogatory comments—more sexual and demeaning than that. They were just little comments and everyone would laugh—I would generally shoot that person a look, or ask them to stop and the effects of my request wouldn't last long. I was generally counted a 'goody-goody' innocent, and told to lighten up or have a sense of humor. But I was never flattered or amused by their comments. I considered going to the management, but I didn't want to be seen as a bitch, and I certainly didn't want to cause a big stink and get people fired. I felt helpless to do anything and was pretty much laughed into silence. Additionally, one of the supervisors had alluded to sexual things, so I would not have felt comfortable going to him. I felt completely objectified and inferior. I did not joke back with these men, and neither did half of the other women. Additionally, all of the hostess spots and cocktail server spots were taken up by women. Men occupied most of all the other job positions. According to Kramarae's theory, I was a muted black hole in someone else's universe—in this case, the universe of this particular Mexican restaurant. I also felt at a loss to name those particular work relationships. However, I do have the power now to name what I experienced—in this case, the universe of this particular Mexican restaurant. I also felt at a loss to name those particular work relationships. I do have the power now to name what I experienced: harassment and sexual harassment. Also, had I been able to form closer relationships with some of the women at the office, I might have been affirmed in my feelings of frustration and belittlement. With this kind of affirmation I might have been somewhat more proactive about the situation. [Taken from [www.afirstlook.com](http://www.afirstlook.com)]

{B} In *Transformers 2: Revenge of the Fallen* exemplifies the core concept of Muted Group Theory – that the dominant group (men) mostly control the means of communication, and either undervalue, misrepresent or totally ignore women's ideas, actions and feelings as incompetent or unimportant. *Transformers 2* is a movie that is largely populated by males, male figures and male accoutrements. After all, robots, cars, trucks, airplanes, guns, explosions, battles, and their various combinations are traditionally male symbols. All of the Autobots, and their evil counterparts the Decepticons, are male figures, especially their leaders, Optimus Prime and Megatron. The US military establishment, prominently featured in the movie, is shown to have an all-male composition, in spite of the recent figures showing that a vast majority of women have been joining, and rising in the ranks of, the US military.

Of the hundreds of characters that populate this movie, there are actually only three important women characters that one can see. One is an attractive college student who pursues and seduces the male lead, only for the audience to discover that she is not a woman at all, but a Decepticon using a woman's body. Another female character is the mother of the male lead, portrayed in the movie as the loopy, unstable foil to her husband's more responsible personality. The last female character, is the lead male's girlfriend. Dressed revealingly, she accompanies the male lead in his quest, goes through the same life-threatening situations, but never gets the same heroic stature that he does. Thus the movie *Transformers 2* commits the sin of muting women on two levels: first, by making her invisible/absent; and second, by imbuing her with characteristics that show her to be weak, indecisive, sexually objectified. But the movie commits a further transgression. When this movie's women actually act independently, or make intelligent decisions, or perform feats of courage, the movie undervalues the worth of these actions, such that the audience does not appreciate them for the important plot points that they actually are. For example, the female lead is a car enthusiast who is able to fix complex engines, but this skill is rendered unimportant by the sexualization of her work – such as straddling a motorcycle engine in typical calendar girl pose.

Muted group theory argues that muting reinforces the domination of men, and the inferior status of women. Media outlets, such as cinema, serve as instruments to strengthen the worldview of male superiority and female subjugation. It is up to us, students of theory, to apply the feminist lens to our analyses and view the world for what it really is. [Excerpted from <http://absent-teacher.livejournal.com/9340.html>]

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## Paper Grading Rubric

(25 possible points)

<b>Literature Review (8 points)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Does the literature review provide a thematic summary of the research drawn upon? (It should <i>not</i> summarize the articles individually, one at a time.) [2 points]</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Does the paper synthesize the material reviewed into a few main points?</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Is all information factually correct? [2 points]</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Does the review demonstrate that the writer understood the content? [3 points]</li></ul>	
<b>Methods Section (2 points)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Is the problem/question/thesis of the project and its approach clear &amp; logical?</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Does the approach show creativity or thoughtful consideration?</li></ul>	
<b>Discussion &amp; Conclusion (5 points)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Does the discussion clearly describe what the researcher discovered through the test or observation of the theory? [2 points]</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Does the discussion clearly link the findings with the theory – even if the findings did not support the theory? [2 points]</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Does the conclusion indicate areas for future inquiry about the theory?</li></ul>	
<b>References &amp; Citations (3 points)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Are at least 7 scholarly sources cited? [2 points]</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Was APA style used correctly?</li></ul>	
<b>Writing Style (7 points)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Does the paper meet the length requirements? [2 points]</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Is it double-spaced?</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Does it use 12pt Times New Roman font?</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Is the paper (nearly) free of grammatical and punctuation errors?</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Is spelling accurate?</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Is the paper written in an academic tone?</li></ul>	

**Total Points:**