

# Theories of Communication and Persuasion

COMM2112



# Introducing...

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Tutes 4,5,6

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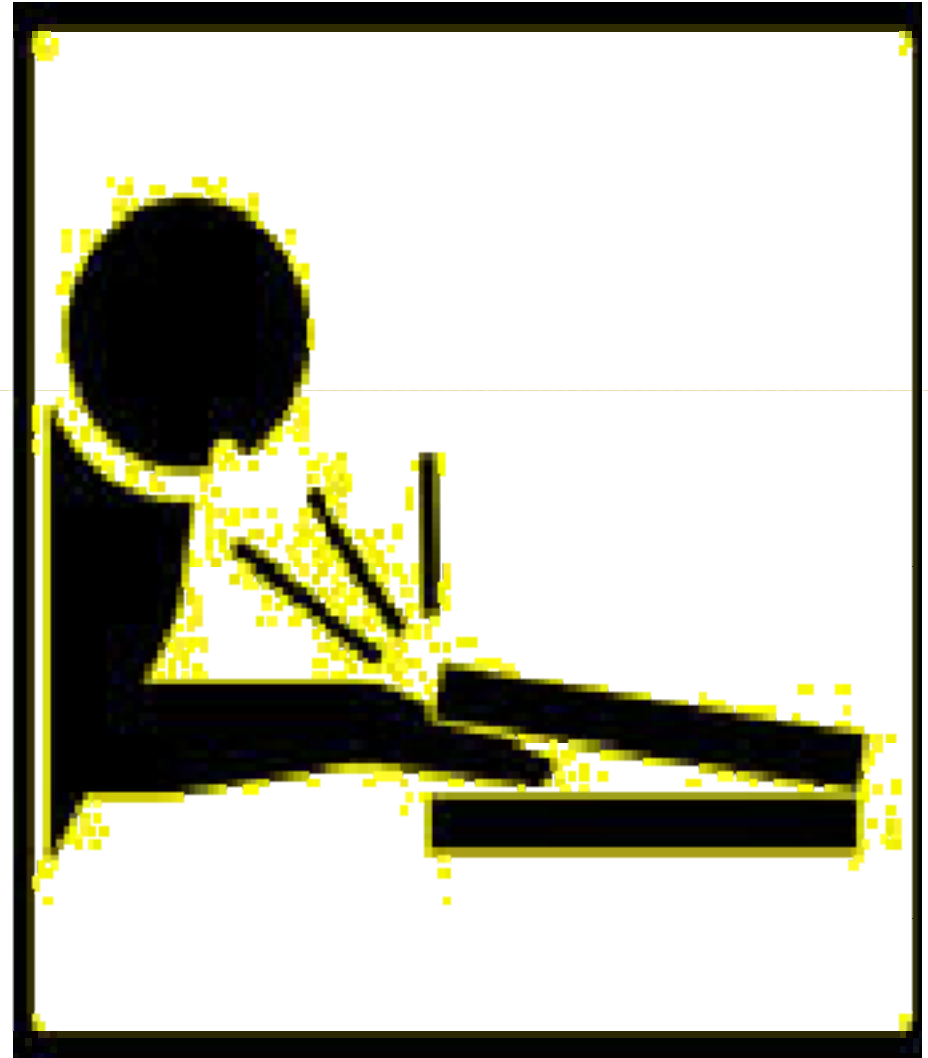
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Tute 3

blah  
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# Aims

- Understand some major theories about communication
- Have skills in reading, comprehending and making an opinion about different theories
- Be able to ask questions about different forms and sites of communication and their impact on people



# Not about media

About what we THINK about media...

- Intra-personal communication
- Two-way communication
- Small-group communication
- Public communication
- Organisational communication
- Mass communication

# Assessments

- Class test – 1 hour – 3 short answers and one long answer – 20% held 28 May
- Tutorial presentation – 20%
- Research journal – 4 entries at 200 words each – 20% due 7 May
- Essay – 40% due 10 June

# Tutorial presentation

- Work in couples or groups of 3
- One theory discussed in that week
- Either debate or dialogue
- May use audiovisual or print media as an example for your case

# Research journal

- Weekly reflection on the theories presented and discussed in lectures, tutorials and dossier
- Consider the following questions:
  - What contribution does this theory offer to my understanding of communication?
  - What assumptions does the theory make about the media industry, current communication technologies, or contemporary society?
  - What further questions does the theory raise for one exploring communication theory?
- Submit four favourite entries in hard copy

# Essay

- Consider one of the theories explored in our semester
- Consider its strengths and weaknesses in its application to any one piece of media (of your choice)
- This is **NOT** an essay about a piece of media
- **ESSENTIAL** that you make a time to talk about your idea with your tutor

# How to pass this course with flying colours

- READ
- TALK
- Get to know the library and its online resources
- Please be present

# Today

- Communication
- Theory
- Model

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- Communication as process

# Communication

- From Latin meaning to be in common
- Happy tension between
  - Commonality
  - Difference
- Through communication, humans place their position among others and in the world

# Principles

- Communication is cultural
- Communication is dynamic
- Everything does and must communicate
- Communication is contextual
- Communication is power

# What is a theory?

- An idea
- Based on observable facts to describe or explain their presence, relationships to other knowledge
- Theory can predict and control, reform and change

# What makes a good theory?

- **Scope** – can the theory explain and describe many events or situations?
- **Testability** – can it be validated?
- **Parsimony** – is it consistent among many situations?
- **Utility** – is it useful?
- **Heurism** – does it generate new insight?
- **Power** – whose interests does it serve?

Physical body and environment

Technology

Communication

Language

Culture

# Considering theory

What are we thinking about when exploring and evaluating theory?

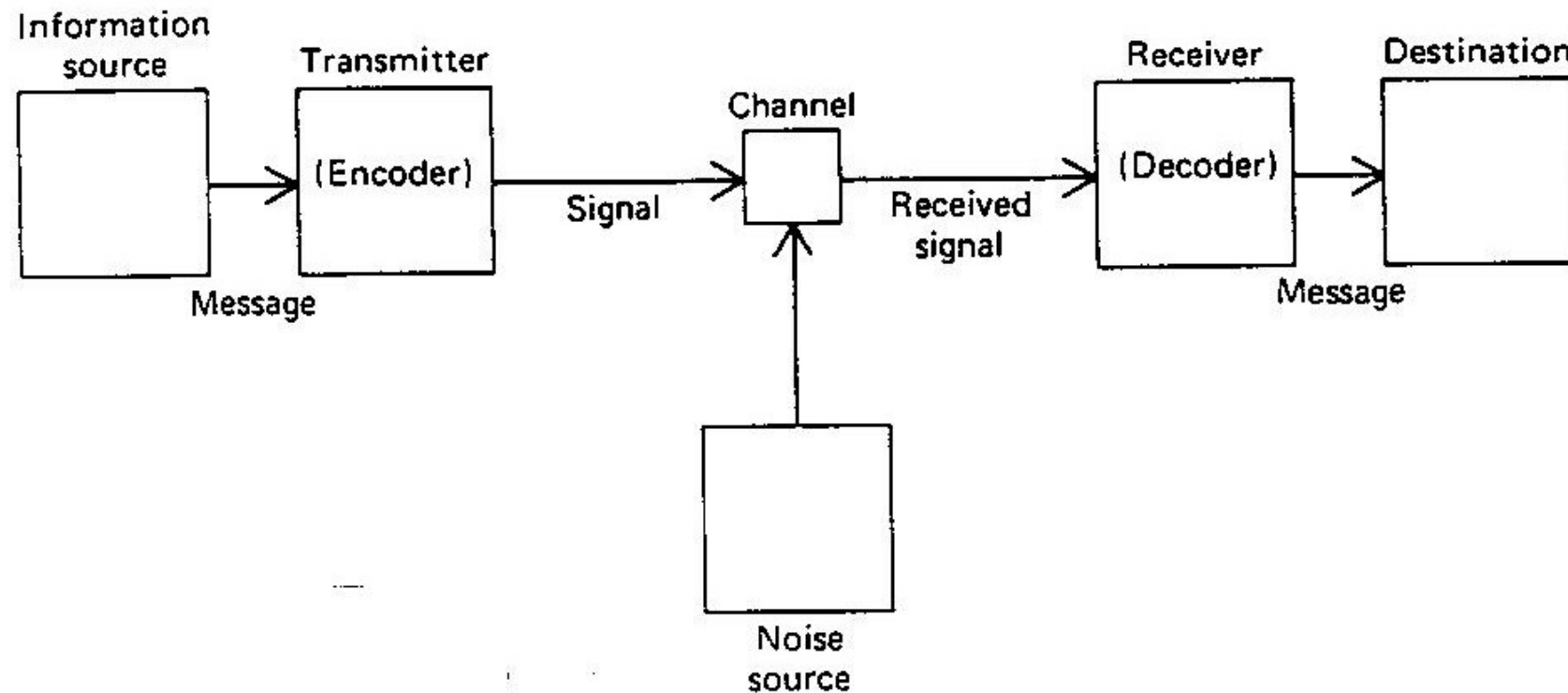
- What are its concerns?
  - The act or process of communication
  - Text and meaning
  - Tools and technologies
  - People and relationships (e.g. Power, class, gender, ethnicity)
  - Production and consumption
- What assumptions does it make (about, say, any of the above)?
- What assertions does it make?
- What questions arise for you (for further investigation)?

# Model

- Representation of a theory
- Simplification of pattern of events in the real world
- Lens through which we see the world

# Shannon and Weaver (1949)

## The process or instrumental theory of communication



# Concepts

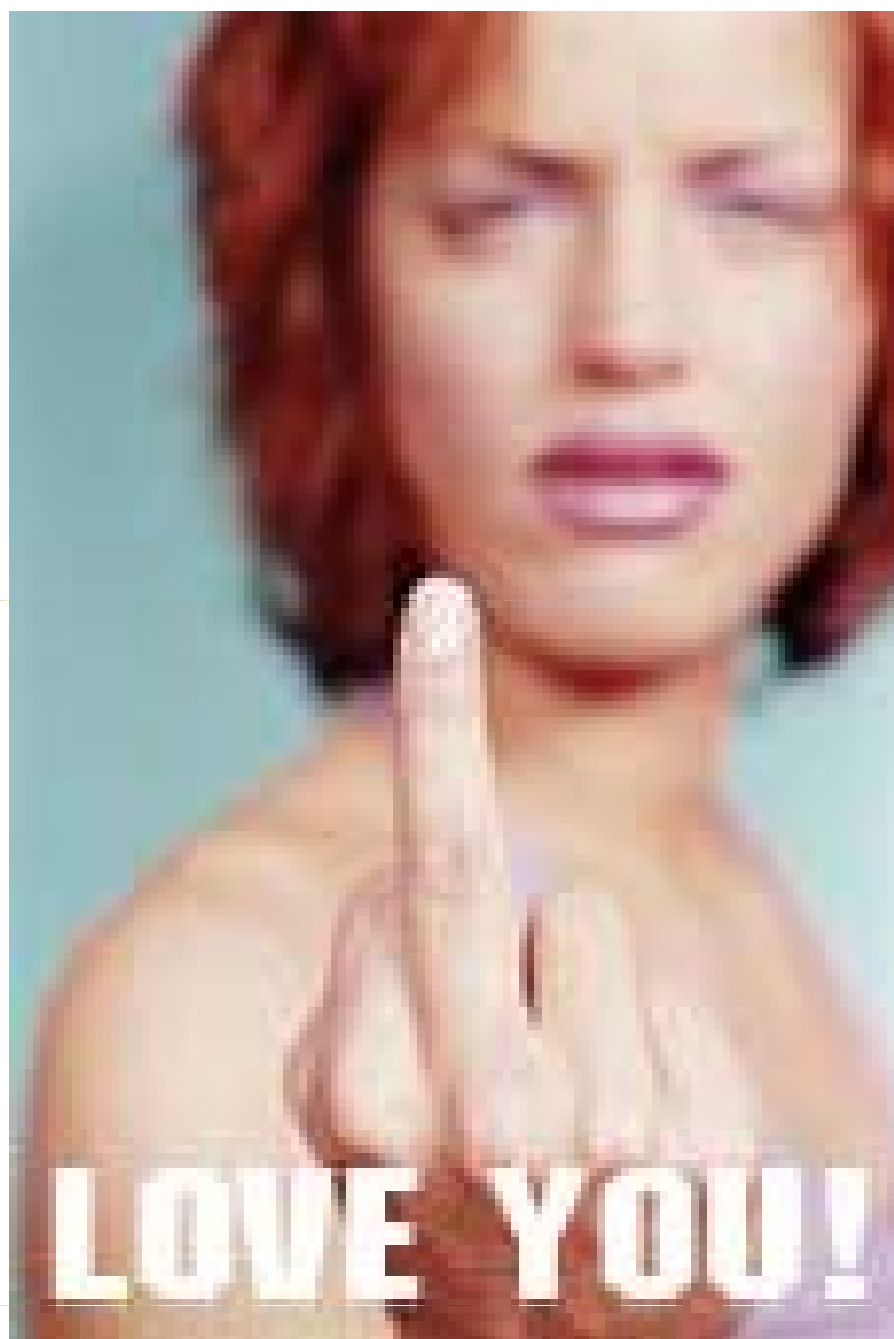
- **Entropy**
  - a measure of the amount of uncertainty in the message – i.e. those elements new to the person receiving it
- **Redundancy**
  - A measure of repetition - the elements in a message that add no new information, but simply repeat what is known.
- **Effectiveness of communication**
  - comes from finding a balance between the unexpected and the predictable.
- **Noise:**
  - Any additional signal that interferes with the reception of information.
- **Channel capacity:**
  - The upper limit of information that any communication system can handle at a given time.

# Benefits

- Simplicity and elegance
- High relevance
- Reflected scientific theory – quantifiable and measurable
- Heuristic value

# Limitations

- Very mechanistic
- Concern with technical functioning
  - ignores semantic meaning and cultural contexts
- Relatively static and linear
  - inadequate for handling the complexity of communication.
- Focus on communication as discrete and intentional acts



# Phone conversation

Caller 1: Hello?

Caller 2: Mate...

C1: Mate... How ya doing?

C2: Good, good mate, yeah, you?

C1: Yeah nah good, all good, 'sup man?

C2: Nothing much. Usual. Yourself?

C1: Nah nothing mate, nothing at all. Shithouse, eh?

C2: Too right mate. So, are you coming?

C1: What? Huh? Oh yeah, to the thing? Yeah, course mate, see you there.

C2: Sweet. It'll be tops.

C1: Yeah mate see you there.

C2: Cool, see you.

C1: See ya.

C2: Oh and mate...

C1: Yeah?

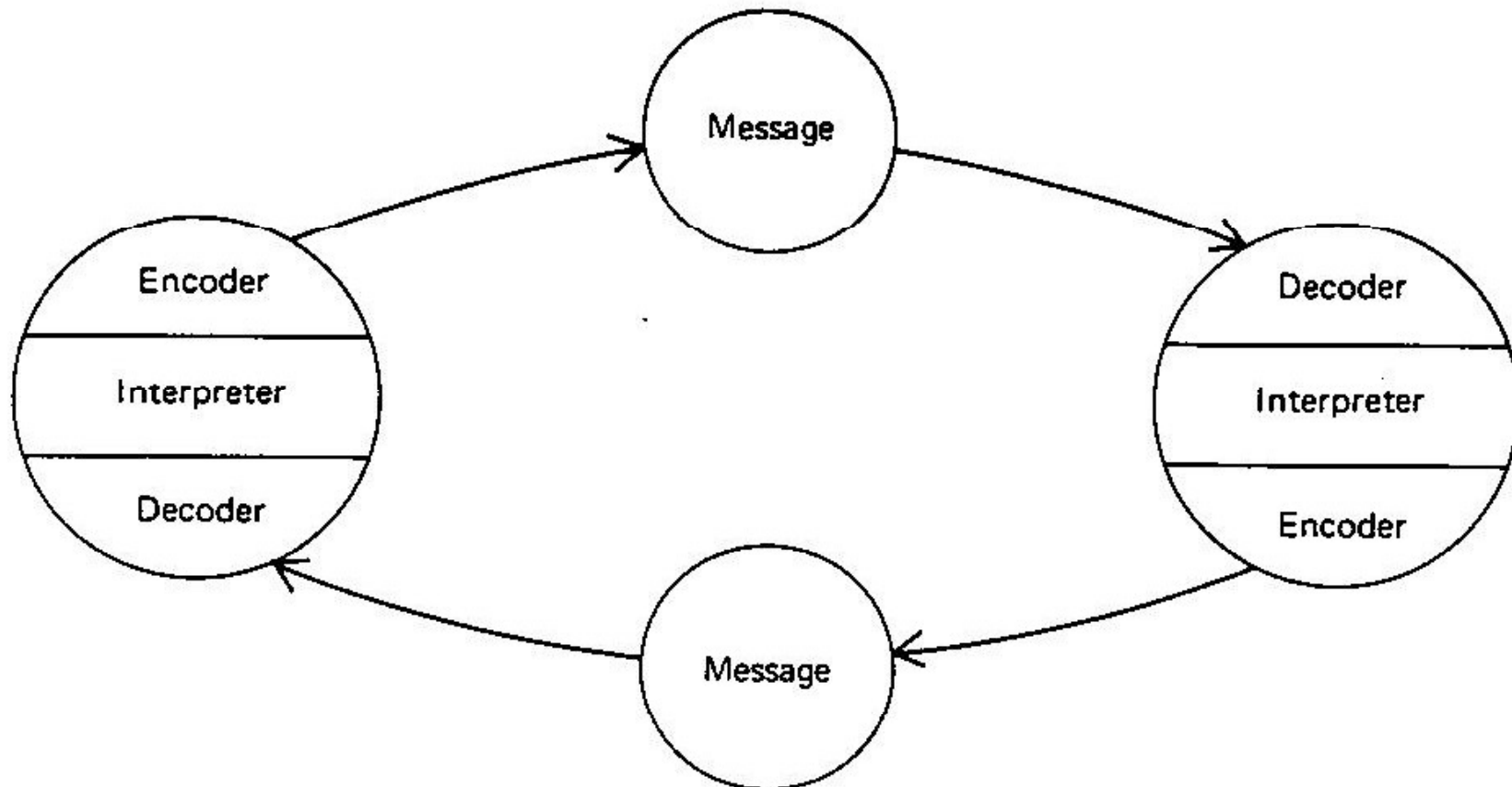
C2: see ya.

C1: Ah ya nuff.

C2: he he he

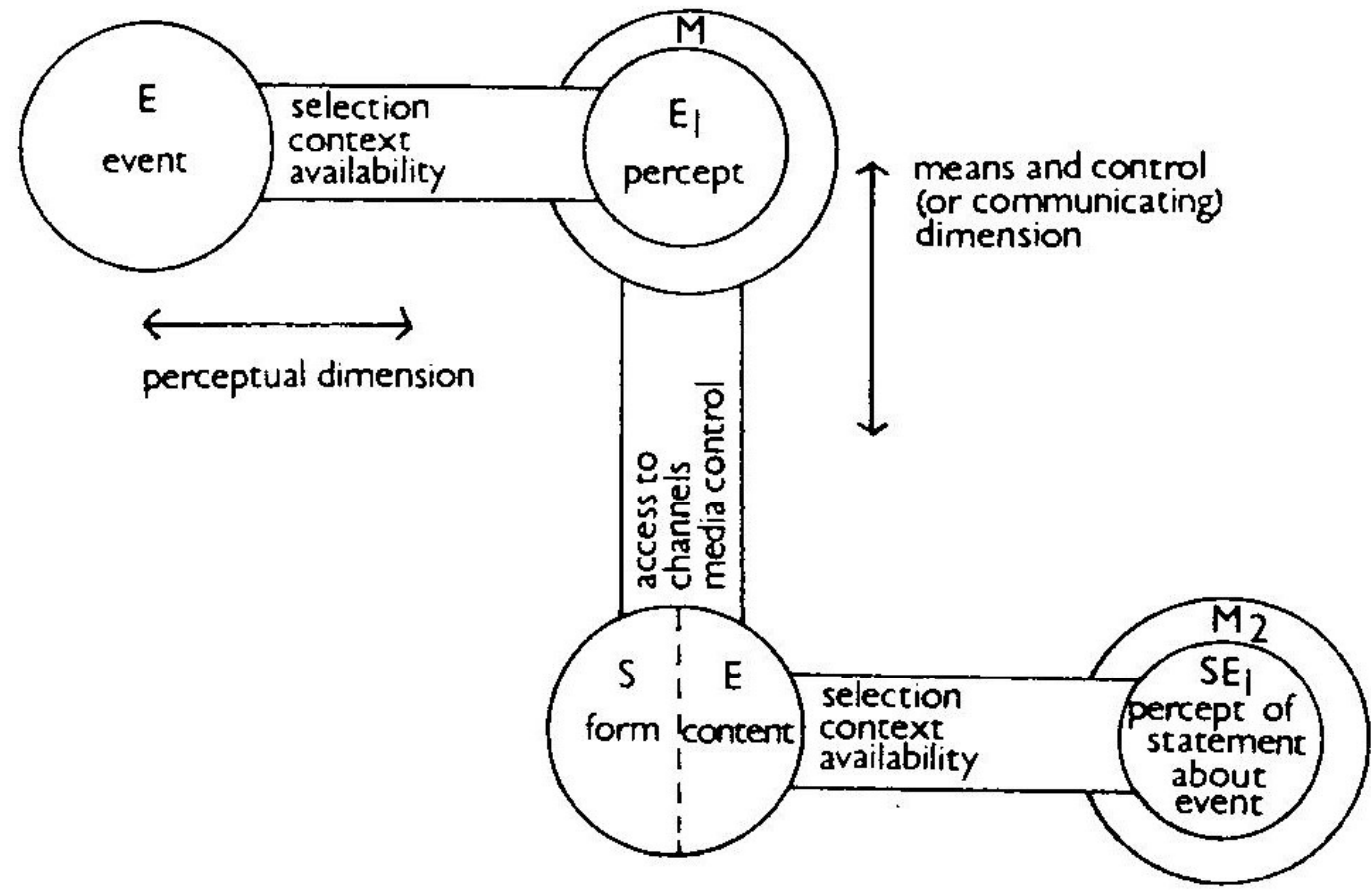
# Wilbur Schramm (1954)

- The notion of sender and receiver designates **particular communicative functions** rather than discreet individuals.



# George Gerbner

- Adds the elements of perception and access



# Critiques

- Works out of an atomistic-scientific understanding of reality
- Takes little account of contextual or structural factors on communication
- Dominant effect is a linear cause and effect paradigm
- Framework is a liberal democratic one
- Assumption there is an external reality, packaged by one person & received by another