COMM 2100 – Introduction to Communication theory

Valdosta State University

Department of Communication Arts

Uncertainty Reduction Theory (URT)

When people meet, their primary concern is to reduce uncertainty about each other and their relationship. As verbal output, nonverbal warmth, self-disclosure, similarity, and shared communication networks increase, uncertainty decreases—and vice versa. Information seeking and reciprocity are positively correlated with uncertainty. *(Socio-psychological tradition)*

Focus Questions

- Why do you want to *know* your partner? Or how much could you handle *not knowing* about them?
- What causes you the most amount of uncertainty: not being able to explain a partner's behavior (current tense) or not being able to predict it (future tense)?
- Do we have any choice or are we just propelled to reduce uncertainty?
- Knowing you cannot trade certainty for uncertainty once it's been reduced, are there times when you would prefer to preserve the unknown?

Reading

- Chapter Nine: Uncertainty Reduction Theory

Slide Deck

- **Uncertainty Reduction, Chapter 9**

Handouts

- Orientation Activity

Discussion Questions

These are potential discussion questions for class

- What are the basic tenants of Uncertainty Reduction Theory?
- Think of an example where URT occurred, provide the facts regarding the situation and explain its connection to URT.

Note: When the course is taught asynchronously I general make the following adjustments:

- The discussion and focus questions are built into the LMS discussion module
- The class activities are built into the LMS assignment module
- The lectures are recorded utilizing short clips (traditional strategy) and make them as entertaining as possible (new strategy)
- Provide a preliminary meeting at the beginning of the assignment window for description of the module and to respond to student questions. The meeting is recorded for students.
- Program notices and tracking (if the LMS has such a module) to remind students of the timeline and to prompt me to look at student efforts.
- Meet with students one on one on a regular basis.