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# Teaching Systems Theory in the Communication Classroom

Kevin Jones

*George Fox University*, [kevinj@georgefox.edu](mailto:kevinj@georgefox.edu)

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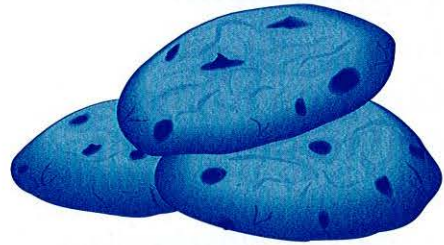
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# Teaching Systems Theory in the Communication Classroom

**Goal:** To provide students a practical and visual means of understanding systems theory.

I make chocolate chip cookies for the class. I enter class with a large box full of ingredients and an old toaster oven. I write "SYSTEMS THEORY" on the board, then proceed to take the ingredients for the cookies, and line them up on a table. When all of the ingredients are displayed, I proceed to make the dough. Using a cookbook placed in front of me, I take each ingredient, one at a time, and talk about it as I place it into the mixing bowl. Once I have mixed the ingredients, I take the large lump of dough from the mixing bowl and place it on the tray for the toaster oven which I have removed from the oven. I place the tray into the oven while at the same time I take out a plate full of already baked cookies and pass them around the class.



While enjoying the cookies, we talk about the whole notion of systems theory. I review terms such as input, throughput, output, interdependence, and non-summativity. Each ingredient in the dough can serve several functions or even be used by itself. When put together synergistically—a new and improved and perhaps even better system emerges.

**Kevin T. Jones, Azusa Pacific University, California**