
COMM 470:

Interpersonal Communication



Course Syllabus Fall 2016

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Office hours: Tues/Thurs 9-10am and by appointment
Class Meetings: Tues/Thurs 11:00am-12:15pm CBA 206

Course Overview

Interpersonal communication is the foundation of and constitutes our personal and professional lives. It is in our communication that we relate with others, negotiate our problems, and come to understand our world. The choices we make in our communication with those around us are among the most important choices we make each day in that they serve to shape ours and others' identities and senses of self, help us make sense of difficult experiences, and develop and maintain personal relationships so important to our health and well-being. In this way, the quality of our communication is linked to the quality of our lives (Stewart, 2012). Given this, the study of interpersonal communication in personal relationships is well worth our time and attention. The research, theory, and practice of interpersonal communication is a well-established, exciting part of our discipline and over the course of this semester, we will study multiple theoretical, conceptual, and methodological approaches. This is an upper-division course for those wishing to study interpersonal communication theory and research in an advanced way and students are expected to have a working knowledge of reading and writing research and theory.

This semester we will work together to increase our *social and personal agency* by studying interpersonal communication theory, research, and skills. In understanding and applying these three—research, theory and skills together--- we can learn to both *recognize* and *claim* the personal agency each interaction affords us in shaping our quality of life. We can engage in much more effective interpersonal communication, ensuring we make effective and responsible communicative choices in our relationships with others. We will accomplish our goals by reading, attending class all sessions, applying materials to communication behaviors outside of the classroom and through case studies, participating in class discussions, and experiencing research opportunities.

Course Objectives

By the end of the semester, you should be able to demonstrate:

- (1) General understanding of interpersonal communication theory: how it is used in research and practice
- (2) In depth understanding of specific interpersonal communication theories used to understand identity, relationship, and sense-making processes
- (3) Familiarity with interpersonal communication theorizing research related to identity formation

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- (4) Familiarity with interpersonal communication theorizing and research related to relationship development and maintenance
- (5) Familiarity with interpersonal communication theorizing and research related to sense-making

Required Textbooks:

Braithwaite, D.O. & Schrodt, P. (2015). *Engaging theories in interpersonal communication: Multiple perspectives*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Braithwaite, D.O., & Wood, J.T. *Casing interpersonal communication. Case studies in personal and social relationships*. Dubuque, IA. Kendall Hunt Publishing (available as an e-book from the publisher online)

Required Reading Packet Will Be Provided Online Including Excerpts From: (you can print if you wish at your expense)

Griffin, E., Ledbetter, A., & Sparks, G. (2015). A first look at communication theory. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Guerrero, L.K., Andersen, P.A., & Afifi, W.A. (2014). *Close encounters: Communication in relationships*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage

Smith, S.W., & Wilson, S.R. (2010). *New directions in interpersonal communication research*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.

Required Reading Pack Will Also Include These Peer Reviewed Articles:

Danielson, C.M., & Emmers-Sommers , T.M. (2016). "It was my fault": Bullied students' attributions in bullying blogs. *Journal of Health Communication*, 21, 408-414.
doi: 10.1080/10810730.2015.1095817

Hecht, M.L., & Miller Day, M. (2007). The drug resistance strategies project as translational research. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 35, 343-349.
doi: 10.1080/00909880701611086

Miller-Day, M., & Hecht, M.L. (2013). Narrative means to preventative ends: a narrative framework for designing prevention interventions. *Health Communication*, 28, 657-670. doi: 10.1080/10410236.2012.762861

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Wagner, P.E., Kunkel, A., & Compton, B.L. (2016). (Trans)lating identity: Exploring discursive strategies for navigating the tensions of identity gaps. *Communication Quarterly*, 64, 251-272. doi: 10.1080/01463373.2015.1103286

Zhang, S., & Stafford, L. (2008). Perceived face threat of honest but hurtful evaluative messages in romantic relationships. *Western Journal of Communication*, 72, 19-39.

Mission Statement of the Department of Communication Studies

The mission of the faculty and students of the Department of Communication Studies is to examine human symbolic activity as it shapes and is shaped by relationships, institutions, technology, and culture. This work concerns the creation, analysis, and critique of messages ranging from face-to-face to digital media contexts.

The department's research and teaching devote particular attention to scholarly initiatives aimed at understanding and explaining the role of communication in (a) facilitating civic engagement, mediating public controversies, and organizing for social change, (b) constituting individual and family health, promoting healthy behaviors, and helping persons navigate relational challenges, and (c) creating, maintaining, and challenging personal, social, and community identity in a complex and diverse world.

Learning Management System: CANVAS

This semester, this course will be taught using the Canvas learning management system. You may have experience using the Blackboard LMS (known on this campus as MyUNL). Canvas is a system that offers many of the same tools as Blackboard. UNL is piloting the Canvas system this semester to determine if all UNL courses should switch from Blackboard to Canvas.

When you login to this course's Blackboard site, you will see that there is no content there – only a link that will direct you to Canvas. You can access Canvas by going to canvas.unl.edu. When you do, you can login using the same username and password you typically use to login to Blackboard. Once you login to this course's Canvas site, you will see that there is a module in the course dedicated called Intro to Canvas. This section will provide an overview of the Canvas LMS, give you access to

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resources about Canvas, and provide you with information about how to get help using Canvas.

Course Expectations

Required Reading. The assigned reading is one of the cornerstones of learning in this course. Thus, I expect you to come to class prepared to discuss the assigned materials. This means that you have completed the reading assignments for that day and have given some thought as to how this material relates to your personal, professional, and academic pursuits. Students should be prepared every class period to discuss their insights about the assigned material.

Attendance and Participation. Another cornerstone of learning is active engagement. Thus, it is important that students come to class and be actively involved in class discussions – in other words, I expect each of you to contribute to our learning experience in COMM 470. In addition to taking notes (when needed), I expect each of you to contribute your understanding of the material as it relates to your academic, professional, and personal experiences. I also expect each of you to listen with an open mind and respect the opinions of others in class. In the event you must miss class due to unavoidable circumstances, please contact a reliable classmate for notes, handouts and his/her insights about that day's discussion.

Perspectives. We may be exposed to perspectives different than our own in our readings, class experiences, or from what class members discuss in the class. Class members are asked to treat respectfully the opinions and experiences of others in the class. One does not need to agree with another person to be able to treat them respectfully. Please talk with the professor if you have concerns.

Assignment Submission and Deadlines. Meeting deadlines is very important and is an expectation in this course. All assignments are due before the start of class on the assigned day. All assignments should be submitted via the Canvas Learning Management System AND turned in via hard copy at the start of the class on which the assignment is due. Late assignments will be docked 10% of the total point possible for every calendar day they are late, beginning the minute class begins on the date the assignment was due. Assignments will not be accepted more than four calendar days past the due date.

Exams and in-class point-bearing assignments missed due to an *excused* absence must be made up no later than 1 week following the excused absence, at the convenience of your instructor (in office hours, by appointment, etc). Failure to make assignments up within 1 week of the excused absence will result in a loss of the opportunity to make up the

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assignment and will result in a zero. Exams and assignments missed due to an *unexcused* absence cannot be made up.

Academic Honesty. Academic honesty and integrity are expected in this course. Any student who is found to have engaged in an act of academic dishonesty (e.g., cheating, plagiarism, complicity, misrepresenting excuses for missing class for turning in late work) will automatically fail the assignment. Additionally, he or she may fail the course and/or be reported to his or her academic advisor and the Dean for further action.

Ignorance of the rules is not an excuse for academic dishonesty. Please read **Article 3, SectionB -1 of the UNL Student Code of Conduct**

<http://stuafs.unl.edu/DeanofStudents/Student%20Code%20of%20Conduct%20May%20Review%202014%20a.pdf>) for definitions of what constitutes academic dishonesty. If you have questions, please come to talk with me before engaging in behavior that could be construed as academic dishonesty.

Plagiarism: Given the number of written assignments required for this course, it is very important that you understand what plagiarism is and do what is necessary to avoid engaging in it. *The use of any uncited sources, presenting someone else's words or ideas as your own, using falsified sources, or submitting someone else's work as your own and/or submitting work that is not original for this course this semester constitutes plagiarism. Further, improperly citing sources constitutes plagiarism.* Thus, for all written assignments, I expect you to cite your sources according to the 6th edition of the American Psychological Association's (APA) Style Manual. More importantly, be very clear when you are quoting vs. paraphrasing sources. If you have questions, please talk with me.

Technology. Please turn off cell phones while present in class.

Pass/No Pass Option. If you have elected the pass/no pass option in this course, you must receive at least a grade of "C" in order to pass. A grade of "C" also is needed in order to count this course toward your major. If you are taking this course to fulfill the requirements for a Communication Studies major or minor, you must take the course for a grade.

Statement of Special Needs Accommodation. Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the instructor for a confidential discussion of their individual needs for academic accommodation. It is the policy of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to provide flexible and individualized accommodation to students with documented disabilities that may affect their ability to participate fully in course activities or to meet course requirements. To receive accommodation services,

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students must be registered with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office, 132 Canfield Administration, (402) 472-3787 voice or TTY.

Assignments, Exams, and Quizzes: Your final grade will be determined based on your performance on the following. You are expected to read all assignment descriptions, grade rubrics, and pay attention to your in-class instructions for all assignments. *Each assignment is an assessment of your mastery of and ability to connect key ideas and concepts presented in class via the textbook, other assigned readings, lectures, and in-class discussions as directed in the assignment description.* You are encouraged to work with me to clarify questions prior to completing your work. Full details for each assignment will be posted on Blackboard. You are expected to do your best work on each test and assignment.

Course Engagement Points (30pts). Over the course of the semester, you will be given opportunities in class to demonstrate your engagement with the course readings and concepts. These opportunities will come in the form of in-class reading quizzes over assigned material, successful completion of in-class activities that require demonstrating your understanding of the day's assigned reading, or they may be opportunities to explain how you have applied course concepts to situations outside the classroom. These are unannounced and cannot be made up—you must be present in class and prepared having read the assigned material on the days they are administered in order to earn them.

Exams (3 @ 100 points each). Three exams will be administered in this course. These exams will be short answer and essay and will test your comprehension of the vocabulary of interpersonal communication theory and research as well as your ability to apply interpersonal communication theories and concepts to interpersonal cases and situations.

Team Theory Presentations (50 pts). One objective of this class is to familiarize you with specific theories that guide interpersonal communication research and practice. Thus, in assigned teams, you will choose a particular theory of interpersonal communication to learn about, apply, and teach it to the class on the designated day.

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Interpersonal Communication Interest Paper (100 points). A key objective of this class is to familiarize you with communication theory and research centered on interpersonal communication processes. Further, one goal I have for you in studying interpersonal communication processes is understanding how these processes shape the overall health, well-being, and quality of life of people across populations. Thus, you will write a paper on an area of interpersonal communication research that is of interest to you that includes a literature review of a particular area of IPC.

Translating Your Knowledge: Final Project (100 points). Working either on your own or with a partner, you will be asked to produce an in-depth proposal for a research project OR a translational project aimed at improving communication processes in a specific population. Details to follow.

Grading Criteria for all Written Assignments

There are a variety of writing assignments in this course aimed at helping you to engage interpersonal communication theory and research. All of these assignments provide practice working with the language of interpersonal communication as you connect the ideas being learned in class to your own experiences and research interests. Your work on these assignments also lets me know how well you are understanding the course materials. In addition to assessing how well a written assignment meets key requirements and demonstrates your understanding of key ideas, when grading written assignments, I generally look for four things:

1. Does the paper illustrate a good understanding of key concepts and ideas?
 2. Does the paper demonstrate an ability to synthesize key ideas and concepts in ways that enable an in depth, nuanced understanding of the content area?
 3. Does the paper demonstrate a developing expertise in the content area?
 4. Is the paper reasonably well written? Are ideas clearly presented? Is the paper relatively free of typos and grammatical errors?
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Total Points and Final Grades

It is possible to earn a total of 580 points in this class. You can use the following to keep track of your points:

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|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| Course Engagement Points | _____ (30 points total) |
| Exam 1 | _____ (100 points) |
| Exam 2 | _____ (100 points) |
| Exam 3 | _____ (100 points) |

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| Team Theory Presentation | <u> </u> (50 points) |
| Interpersonal Communication Interest Paper | <u> </u> (100 points) |
| Translating Your Knowledge | <u> </u> (100 points) |
| TOTAL | <u> </u> (580 points) |

Here is the grading scale for the course:

| <u>Percentage</u> | <u>Minimum Points</u> | <u>Grade</u> |
|-------------------|-----------------------|--------------|
| 98-100% | 569 | A+ |
| 93-97 | 540 | A |
| 90-92 | 522 | A- |
| 87-89 | 505 | B+ |
| 83-86 | 482 | B |
| 80-82 | 464 | B- |
| 77-79 | 447 | C+ |
| 73-76 | 424 | C |
| 70-72 | 406 | C- |
| 67-69 | 389 | D+ |
| 63-66 | 366 | D |
| 60-62 | 348 | D- |
| less than 60 | 347 or less | F |

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TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

| Date | Course Content | Assignments/Readings Due |
|---|---|--|
| Theory in Interpersonal Communication | | |
| Tuesday 8/23 | Course Overview: Learning Objectives, Course Structure, Assignments | |
| Thursday 8/25 | Foundations: Overview of IPC Theory | Forward and Ch 1 Braithwaite & Schrot |
| Tuesday 8/30 | Foundations: What is Theory? | Ch 1 and 2 Em, Griffin, & Ledbetter (2015) |
| Thursday 9/1 | Foundations: IPC and Relationships | Ch 1 Guerrero, Andersen, Afifi |
| Interpersonal Communication and Identity | | |
| Tuesday 9/6 | Communicating Identity | Ch 2 Guerrero, Andersen & Afifi pp. 25-35 |
| Thursday 9/8 | | Ch 2 Guerrero, Andersen, & Afifi pp. 35-52 |
| Tuesday 9/13 | Communication Theory of Identity | Ch 13 Braithwaite & Shrot Wagner, Kunkel, & Compton (2016) |
| Thursday 9/15 | | Read Case From Case Book-Assigned in Class |
| Tuesday 9/20 | Face Theory and Politeness Theory | Ch 17 Braithwaite & Schrot Ch 20 Braithwaite & Shrot Zhang & Stafford (2008) |
| Thursday 9/22 | | Read Case From Case Book-Assigned in Class |

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| Tuesday 9/27 | <i>Readings TBA</i> | Team 1 Theory Presentation Team 2 Theory Presentation |
| Thursday 9/29 | | Exam 1: Theory and Identity and IPC |

Interpersonal Communication in Relationships

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|------------------|--|--|
| Tuesday 10/4 | Changing Relationships: Stages, Turning Points, and Dialectics | Ch. 5 Guerrero, Andersen, & Afifi pp.105-119 |
| Thursday 10/6 | Changing Relationships: Stages, Turning Points, and Dialectics | Ch. 5 Guerrero, Andersen, & Afifi pp. 119-129 |
| Tuesday 10/11 | Relational Dialectics Theory | Ch 21 Braithwaite & Schrot (2015) Baxter & Braithwaite (2010) |
| Thurs 10/13 | Relational Dialectics Theory | Read the Case from Case book- Assigned in Class |
| Tuesday 10/18 | FALL BREAK-NO CLASS | FALL BREAK-NO CLASS |
| Thurs 10/20 | Relational Turbulence Model | Ch 28 Braithwaite & Schrot (2015) Solomon, Weber, & Steuber (2010) |
| Tuesday 10/25 | Relational Turbulence Model | Read Case From Case Book- Assigned in Class |
| Thurs 10/27 | <i>Readings TBA</i> | Team 3 Theory Presentation Team 4 Theory Presentation |
| Tuesday 11/1 | | Exam 2: Interpersonal Communication and Relationships |

Interpersonal Communication and Sense-Making

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|------------------|---------------------------|--|
| Thursday 11/3 | Making Sense of Our World | Ch 4 Guerrero, Anderson & Afifi pp.80-92 |
| Tuesday 11/8 | Making Sense of Our World | Ch 4 Guerrero, Anderson, & Afifi pp. 92-103 Interpersonal Interest Paper Due |
| Thurs 11/10 | NCA-NO CLASS | NCA-NO CLASS Work on Final Paper |

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| Tuesday 11/15 | Attribution Theory | Ch 3 Braithwaite & Schrodt (2015) Danielson & Emmers-Sommers (2016) |
| Thurs 11/17 | Attribution Theory | Read Case From Book-Assigned in Class |
| Tuesday 11/22 | Narrative Theories | Ch 19 Braithwaite & Schrodt (2015) Hecht & Miller Day (2007) Miller-Day & Hecht (2013) |
| Thurs 11/24 | THANKSGIVING BREAK-NO CLASS | THANSGIVING BREAK-NO CLASS |
| Tuesday 11/29 | Narrative Theories | Read Case from Book-Assigned in Class |
| Thursday 12/1 | <i>Readings TBA</i> | Team 5 Theory Presentation Team 6 Theory Presentation |
| Tuesday 12/6 | | Final Translating Your Knowledge Project Presentations All Papers Due Today |
| Thursday 12/8 | Where do We Go From Here? Summary and Future Directions | Final Translating Your Knowledge Project Presentations |
| Wednesday 12/14 3:30-5:30 (Finals Week) | | EXAM 3 Interpersonal Communication and Sense-Making |

Note: Schedule is tentative and subject to change as determined by the instructor.