

CMM 300: Interpersonal Communication
Dr. April Trees

People are born into relationships and live their lives in webs of all kinds of relationships.
-- Dindia & Duck (2000, p.1)

Course Description

This is a course in interpersonal communication that emphasizes the theory and practice of interpersonal communication in a variety of contexts. With a particular focus on relational communication, our goal is to better understand some of the factors affecting communication in relationships and to appreciate the impact of communication on our relational lives. We will examine how we perceive self and others, how we use information we gather about self and others to guide our interactions, and the essential role of communication in the development, maintenance, and deterioration of human relationships. This course provides the opportunity to develop a theoretical understanding of human communication processes and to improve interpersonal communication skills. Research indicates that personal relationships of all types play an important role in our physical and mental well-being, emphasizing the importance of understanding the connection between communication and the nature of our relationships.

Goals: This course is intended to help you become more aware of the processes of interpersonal communication. My goals are for each of you to:

1. develop a more complex understanding of communication processes
2. critically examine interpersonal communication events, drawing on theories of communication and essential concepts in the literature.
3. make active, thoughtful choices in your communication based on your understanding.

Structure: Communication is a part of our everyday lives, and understanding it at both a theoretical and experiential level is central to your learning in this course. To accomplish this, the class will include both lecture, class discussion, and activities designed to elaborate on and go beyond the material from the assigned reading.

Expectations: The contributions that we bring to the classroom will affect the quality of the learning that takes place. This is particularly true given the use of class discussion and activities for learning in much of this course. *Preparation prior* to class and *attentiveness* to your communication in class will be important. Because of this, I expect that you will be present *both* physically and mentally, complete all assigned readings prior to discussion, complete all assignments on time, be involved, use discretion, and maintain a degree of sensitivity and respect during class discussions. As this is a summer session course, one day of class is close to one week of class in a regular semester. That means that there is reading assigned every day except exam days and the class moves quickly through a large amount of material in a short amount of time. You will need to work hard to keep up with the pace of the class.

Required Readings

A set of readings from a variety of sources serve as the reading material for this course. Each assigned reading is outlined below and is available through the libraries electronic reserves – the password is relationships.

Assignments and Grading

Exams: There will be two exams during the class. They are designed to test your understanding and application of the concepts presented in the readings and in class. They will consist of both multiple choice and essay questions and give you an opportunity to apply, analyze, and synthesize the course content. I will provide a study guide prior to each exam, and we will have an exam review during the class period before the exam.

Application Papers: There are two writing assignments that involve interviewing someone about a specific set of interpersonal communication issues. There are three interview options. Students can choose which two of the three options they would like to complete for the class. Interview papers are

due in class the day that we discuss those issues so that students can bring their insight from the interview paper process into class discussion on those days.

Activities and Participation: Finally, because of the nature of the class and the importance of class discussion for the learning that will take place here, a portion of the final grade will be determined by your participation in class discussion and completion of specific assignments and activities designed to promote useful discussion of course concepts. Information on these activities and assignments will be provided as we progress through the class. Involvement is a necessary, important, and *required* part of this course. Please read this section thoughtfully and carefully. This is not a class for students desiring to be a passive part of the learning experience. Your involvement is a large part of what will make this class worthwhile for you and for everyone else. Showing up is the first step to class participation. However, good involvement is not equal to quantity of participation in class. Rather, I am looking for quality of involvement (i.e., not only engaging fully in class discussion, but also listening effectively to/with others, participating in activities, asking helping questions, integrating the reading into class discussions, providing examples of course content, etc.). Participation includes, but is not limited to, the following:

1. Attend class regularly and *on time*
2. Be focused, “plugged in”, and practice good listening skills.
3. Contribute to group discussion, thinking ahead about discussion questions and providing examples to illustrate ideas.
4. Participate *relevantly* and actively in class exercises.
5. Talk with me about class concepts, skills, and issues.
6. Find and bring in material related to class for discussion.
7. Do not monopolize the discussion.

Participation Evaluation: This grade will be based upon a combination of three different assessments. The weighting for each of these components is provided below along with a description of each. A baseline expectation is that you will show up for class.

- ? **Activities** (20%): There will be small assignments throughout the term that are designed to provide material for class discussion and will be worth participation points. These generally will not be time intensive, but will help to stimulate thought on a particular topic. These assignments are not posted on the semester schedule, but will be assigned week by week.
- ? **Class Preparation** (30%): For each assigned reading, you will need to turn in a *short, typed* response to a question or set of questions that I will provide in advance. These questions will help you make sense of the readings and prepare for class discussion. I will use these as a measure of preparation for class (although I expect your preparation will also be reflected in your participation), and they may also contribute to observations that you make during class discussion.

I will evaluate your activity and preparation material based upon whether or not you have made a good faith effort to complete the work – this is the area of class where effort counts in the grade *z*.

- ? **Class Participation** (50%): I will evaluate your participation in class each day using the following categories: excellent, very good, satisfactory, unsatisfactory, no credit. The quality of your involvement in the class will affect this evaluation.

Grading: Activity	Points	Grading Scale:			
Exam #1	25%	93%-100%	A	77%-79%	C+
Exam #2	25%	90%-92%	A-	73%-76%	C
Interview Papers (2)	30%	87%-89%	B+	70%-72%	C-
Activities/Participation	20%	83%-86%	B	60%-69%	D
		80%-82%	B-	59% and below	F

Miscellaneous Notes and Policies

Deadlines and Make-up Exams: Make-up exams will be allowed only under extraordinary circumstances where verification (e.g., a physician's statement) can be provided. Late activity assignments will not be accepted (the point of these assignments is to generate discussion in class on the day they are due). Late written assignments will receive a deduction of 10% for each calendar day they are late.

Academic Ethics: Plagiarism--presenting work written by other individuals as your own and failing to cite the source--is unacceptable and will result in a 0 for the plagiarized assignment. Cheating on exams will also result in a 0 for the exam. Violations of academic ethics will be reported.

Classroom Behavior: Students and faculty each have a responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Students should refrain from engaging in disruptive or inappropriate behavior in the classroom. Be respectful community members.