

Department: Communication

Course No. SC 155

Title of Course: Fundamentals of Interpersonal Communication

Revision: X

I. Catalog Description and Credit Hours of the Course:

Consideration of the elementary principles involved in effective person to person communication. (3)

II. Interdisciplinary Nature of the Course: None.

III. Prerequisite(s): None.

IV. Purpose or Objectives of the Course:

A. To increase understanding of the communication process and the ethics involved. (University Studies Objectives 1, 3, & 9)

B. To improve speaking & listening/feedback skills. (University Studies Objectives 1, 2, 3, 5, & 9)

C. To provide students with a basic understanding of the major research, principles, and theories of interpersonal communication and how various factors promote or hinder communication effectiveness. (University Studies Objectives 1, 2, 7, 8)

D. To improve the ability of students to achieve their communicative purpose in a wide range of social (e.g., familial) , professional (e.g., technical work; advising), and cultural contexts (e.g., collectivist vs. individualistic cultures). (University Studies Objectives 1, 2, 3, 6, 9)

V. Expectations of Students:

A. Complete all assigned reading material.

B. Participate in class discussions, exercises, and activities.

C. Perform satisfactorily on examinations and quizzes.

D. Complete all assigned papers and presentations.

- Unit 9: **Listening & Feedback** 3 hrs.
 (University Studies Objectives 2, 3, 5, 9)
 The class will discuss the benefits of effective listening and how to be a responsible communication partner/participant. Some students will locate, gather, and report on the latest research regarding problems created by faulty listening as well as the ethical dimensions of listening.
- Unit 10: **Relational Communication and Relationships** 3 hrs.
 (University Studies Objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9)
 The class will discuss how relationships are formed, nurtured, or degraded by communicative behaviors & processes.
- Unit 11: **Emotions & Power in Interpersonal Relationships** 3 hrs.
 (University Studies Objectives 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9)
 The class will discuss, and experience via activity, how emotions impact relational communication and relationships, and how power arises and is managed—effectively or ineffectively.
- Unit 12: **The Art of Disagreeing without being Disagreeable** 3 hrs.
 (University Studies Objectives 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9)
 The class will discuss what constitutes conflict and how it can be beneficial, if managed properly via particular communicative tactics. The class will also discuss the ethical implications for communication partners/participants. Some students will locate, gather, and report on the latest research regarding interpersonal conflict and conflict management for relational partners/participants.
- Unit 13: **Building Trust in Families** 2 hrs.
 (University Studies Objectives 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9)
 The class will examine how family membership impacts the communicative behaviors of family members with one another and with “outsiders.” Particular attention is given to the element of trust and how it is nurtured or degraded and to what impact.
- Unit 14: **Improving Intercultural Communication** 4 hrs.
 (University Studies Objectives 1, 2, 3, 5, 9)
 The class will take a closer look at general characteristics of some of the world’s most prominent cultures and how these characteristics impact their communicative behaviors & rules, and how we might more effectively communicate with them and the pragmatic and ethical outcomes of doing so.
- Unit 15: **Your Interpersonal Future** 2 hrs.
 (University Studies Objectives 2, 4, 9)
 This final unit has students reflect upon what insights they have gained into the centrality of communication for their relational, communal, and professional well being, and how functioning responsibly (i.e., being ethical) in each of these environments is not only internally rewarding but generally externally rewarding as well.

VII. Textbook:

Beebe, Beebe, & Redmond, (2002). Interpersonal Communication: Relating to Others. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

VIII. Basis of Student Evaluation:

A. Tests: There will be four exams (@ 15%) during the course of the semester. Three exams will cover assigned readings and class lectures. The final exam will be comprehensive.

B. Course Papers: Each student will be required to research, draft, and present two short reports (4-7 pages @ 10%). Students will be evaluated on their ability to define a concept or variable, ability to research related studies, ability to synthesize and organize these findings, and to draw appropriate conclusions from the research. Students will be graded, in part, on delivery and oral style.

C. Oral Presentations: Each student will be required to present two extemporaneous presentations derived from their written reports (7-10 minutes, @ 5%). Students will be evaluated on their ability to craft a presentation that exhibits appropriate structure, good audience adaptation, good oral style, effective delivery, and ability to field questions.

D. Participation (10%): Each student will be evaluated on contributions to class discussions, active participation in class discussion, activities, impromptu presentations, reflection papers (and presentation of them), as well as quizzes.

IX. Justification for Inclusion in University Studies Program:

A. How Course Content, Teaching Strategies, Student Assignments, and Evaluation of Student Performance, Addresses and Integrates University Studies Objectives

Objective 1: Demonstrate the ability to locate and gather information.

Emphasis: Significant

Content: Much of the content of this course relies on empirical research from several disciplines. Lectures and the text include material from the most significant journals and works where interpersonal communication research is found. (e.g., *Journal of Communication*, *Communication Monographs*, *Human Communication Research*, *The Handbook of Interpersonal Communication*)

Teaching Strategies: Lectures, discussions, and activities are designed to prepare students to study and research interpersonal communication, utilizing such databases as *Proquest* and *CommSearch*. Students will be given a hands-on exercise that familiarizes them with and requires them to use the databases.

Student Assignments: The assignments require the student to do considerable research in the library. Footnotes or endnotes are required in all of the written assignments, and sources must also be cited orally during presentations. In addition, students are encouraged to conduct an empirical study in a specific variable in interpersonal behavior.

Evaluation of Student Performance: A substantial part of the evaluation of written work is based on the extent to which the student demonstrates research skills.

Objective 2: Demonstrate capabilities for critical thinking, reasoning and analyzing.

Emphasis: Significant

Content: The text discusses conflicts and problems in the research within the study of interpersonal communication. Lectures include material about discrepancies in research and how they might be attributable, in part, to the methodology employed by the researcher(s). For example, we examine a conflict in the research exploring human sensitivity to facial expressions.

Teaching Strategies: Lectures and discussions are designed to assist students' understanding of interpersonal communication and prepare them for analyzing interpersonal behaviors. Students are often asked to discuss and analyze interpersonal communication transactions, focusing on one or more particular elements.

Student Assignments: Written assignments require students to contemplate what researchers have discovered about one or more aspects of communication behavior.

Evaluation of Student Performance: A significant portion of student grades on the written assignments is based on their ability to critically contemplate research in interpersonal communication, especially in terms of its application(s) and usefulness.

Objective 3: Demonstrate effective communication skills.

Emphasis: Significant

Content: The major portion of the text and classroom instruction deals with what contributes to effective interpersonal communication. For example, a discussion of eye behavior discusses the importance of eye contact with listeners and its impact on perceptions of friendliness, competence, persuasiveness, and so on, as well as how eye behavior is regarded differently in other cultures.

Teaching Strategies: The lectures, discussion, and activities are designed to encourage students to think about their own ability and types of communication. Research confirms the conclusion that studying and learning about communication improves a student's sensitivity and skill in communicating.

Student Assignments: In one of the written assignments students are asked to apply a body of research and method of analysis to the study of an actual interaction. They are asked to analyze the communication behaviors and patterns of the participants. This assignment is designed to improve their analytical and listening skills. Students must also make several oral presentations.

Evaluation of Student Performance: Students are evaluated on their presentations as well as on their understanding of communication principles and types and applications.

Objective 4: Demonstrate an understanding of human experiences and the ability to relate them to the present.

Emphasis: Some

Content: The text spends considerable time discussing past human behaviors and relates them to present contexts. For example, communication scholars Richmond, McCroskey and Payne write: "We find ourselves in many kinds of relationships. Of major importance to most of us are family relationships—our relationships with our parents, our mate, our children. Early in life our school environment creates many relationships with our teachers and peers. . . . These relationships, both individually and in combination, determine the quality of our lives. . . . Communication, then, is the process which makes us what we are." The lectures and the text make inferences about present behaviors and contexts from past ones. Every unit examines the application of communication principles in various interpersonal settings, as well as often considering the implications for public communication.

Student Assignments: Selected readings and writing assignments are designed to increase the depth of understanding concerning the diversity of human experience and what we learn about humans from their communicative behavior. For example, we focus on what contributes to effectiveness in communication as well as what comprises ethical communication. Throughout the course, students are asked to contemplate, test, and apply principles.

Evaluation of Student Performance: The nature of the written assignments requires students to relate theoretical concepts and principles to real life experiences. Students are expected to discuss in their papers the applicability of these concepts and principles to what they know from personal experience and observation and further investigation.

Objective 5: Demonstrate an understanding of various cultures and their interrelationships.

Emphasis: Some

Content: The study of interpersonal communication includes consideration of intercultural factors. Cultural differences are also identified and discussed in almost every chapter of the text as well as in lectures.

Student Assignments: While students are not required to write papers specifically on intercultural communication, various intercultural issues in interpersonal communication are suggested as possible topics. It is expected that some students will choose to write papers on these topics. In addition, assigned readings include discussions of intercultural communication.

Evaluation of Student Performance: Several questions on the exams are directly related to the intercultural factors discussed in the text and in class.

Objective 6: Demonstrate the ability to integrate the breadth and diversity of knowledge and experience.

Emphasis: Some

Content: Texts in interpersonal communication, including the course text, provide scholarly investigations and material from a wide variety of academic disciplines.

Teaching Strategies: The lectures specifically discuss the integration of material from a wide range of academic disciplines and provide potential conclusions that can be drawn from related research. Students are asked to participate in discussions about these issues. The exam questions are designed to prompt students to demonstrate the ability to integrate this material into logical and cohesive conclusions.

Student Assignments: The written assignments require students to sift through a wide diversity of information, to report research from several academic disciplines and to draw or reach reasonable conclusions from them.

Evaluation of Student Performance: A considerable portion of the grade students receive on their written assignments is based on their selection of research to support their conclusions. They are also graded on their ability to integrate and to draw conclusions from a wide range of research from different disciplines.

Objective 7: Demonstrate the ability to make informed, intelligent value decisions.

Emphasis: Some

Content: Throughout the text and lectures the importance and significance of specific interpersonal behaviors and research findings are discussed and proposed.

Student Assignments: Students are expected to evaluate the significance and importance of research in their written assignments. In each of these instances the students are expected and instructed to give reasons, explain the criteria, and the rationale for making these evaluations or judgments. In addition, the selection of research to support claims is often a form of value decision. In other words, students are asked to choose those studies that they believe to be the most important and relevant to the topic or thesis of their paper.

Evaluation of Student Performance: The grade a student receives on a research-based assignment will hinge, in part, on their selection/evaluation of source material.

Objective 8: Demonstrate the ability to make informed, sensitive aesthetic responses.

Emphasis: Some

Content: The text discusses the importance and impact of physical attractiveness as well as a discussion of the quality and attractiveness of environments in human interactions.

Student Assignments: One assignment specifically requires students to consider the influence of environmental factors upon the effectiveness of the communication.

Evaluation of Student Performance: Because one of the written assignments includes factors related to aesthetic responses students are evaluated on their ability to make informed, sensitive judgments.

Objective 9: Demonstrate the ability to function responsibly in one's natural, social and political environment.

Emphasis: Some

Content: The text and lectures and in-class discussions focus frequently on the ethical dimensions of communication, both in terms of producing messages and receiving them.

Student Assignments: Because students will be required to consider the ethical dimensions of their communication and the communication of others, they are in fact learning to function more responsibly and given a greater appreciation for their accountability to do so.

Evaluation of Student Performance: The grade a student receives on a research-based assignment will hinge, in part, on their meeting their accountability to acquire responsible knowledge and base all their claims and conclusions upon solid data and careful thinking.

X. Background:

The instructor assigned to this course should have a background in interdisciplinary studies with a special emphasis in communication and research methods. Extensive training in communication theory, interpersonal and small group communication, nonverbal communication, effective oral communication, and social-psychological studies, would be desirable.

XI. Class Size:

The course objectives in this course can be achieved with a class enrollment not to exceed 25. In-class presentations by students require a minimum number of days. Enrollment exceeding 25 would prohibit adequate speaking experiences.