

# CMST 3140

## Family Communication

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**Office:** Old Main 073 (in IELI)  
**Office Hours:** Tues & Thurs 10:45am-Noon,  
By appointment

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### Course Expectations:

My expectations for you are high, but certainly not unreasonable, and I like to see my students succeed. Nonetheless, do not take this class unless you are willing and able to, at a minimum, do all your readings and to complete all your assignments on time. The readings/assignments will be the springboard to our class discussions, and much of what will be discussed in class will not make much sense to you if you have not read. Further, keep in mind that this is an upper level course, and some degree of academic rigor is a necessary condition for success in this course.

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### Course Readings:

The required readings for each week will be posted on our Canvas course site.

Turner, L., & West, R. (2013). *Perspectives on family communication* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). McGraw-Hill.

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### Course Objectives:

The goal of this course is to provide you with the opportunity to learn about family communication in an abstract way (via readings and class discussions), through reflection on your own family communication (via the storytelling project), and in a more concrete “hands-on” fashion (via the final research project). Specifically, the course objectives are to:

1. Give you an understanding of the complexities and implications of defining family and understanding the process of family communication
2. Introduce you to theories and scholarly research in the field of family communication

3. Deepen your understanding of the research process, and the purpose, strengths, and limitations of various methods and approaches to family communication research
4. Inspire you to reflect on how your own family experience impacts your understanding of family communication theory/research and vice versa

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## Course Policies:

### 1) Attendance

Due to the small size of our class, your attendance is crucial to the success of this course. Furthermore, regular attendance is essential for *your* success in this class.

#### What counts as an absence?

- If you miss more than 30 minutes of a class meeting, you will be counted as “absent” for the day. However, you can still earn participation points for in-class activities if you are present.
- There are no excused or unexcused absences for this class. Therefore, if you are going to miss class there is no need to let Lisa know in advance. You can miss up to two class periods without penalty to your classroom participation grade.

#### How does attendance count toward my final grade?

- A portion of your final grade is composed of your participation points during class. You cannot make up these participation points if you are absent from class, given that you were not participating if you are not present.
- You have two “free” absences; in other words, you can miss two class periods and still earn full participation points. You can assume that each class period counts as about 6.5 participation points. Students who will need to miss more than two class periods for university activities (e.g., athletes) will need to discuss this with Lisa during the first two weeks of the semester.
- If you are absent for more than 3 days of class, 5 points will be automatically deducted from your final semester grade for EACH subsequent absence (excused or unexcused) except under excruciating circumstances.
- Physical presence in class does not guarantee full participation points for that day. Please see the section below on earning full marks in participation points.

#### What happens if I miss a class in which I have a reading assignment due?

- Missed assignments CANNOT be made up, except under documented excruciating circumstances (e.g., you were in a car accident).

#### What should I do if I miss class?

- You are responsible for collecting any missed materials or class notes from a classmate during days in which you are absent. You do not need to inform Lisa about why you were absent. Feel free to contact Lisa if you have specific questions about the notes you received from your classmate, but please do not contact Lisa and ask her what you missed or if you “missed anything important.”

## 2) Email:

**I think that email is an excellent invention and tend to use it frequently. I am expecting that everyone checks their email at least every other day. When I send out an email, it is because it contains important information that you need to know and that may not have been covered in class. If email is not a typical means of communication for you, please talk to me and we will work something out. Telling me that you “didn’t see the email” is not a valid excuse.**

## 3) Late Work Policy

- **All assignments are due ONLINE before class starts on the assigned date.**
  - All assignments will be turned in through Canvas. Emailed or paper copies will not be accepted.
  - Late assignments will receive a ten percent deduction for each 24 hour period it is late.
- If you will be absent from class or away from your computer when something is due, you need to turn in your assignment **PRIOR** to your absence/lack of computer access.

## 4) Grades

- I will not discuss grades until 24 hours after you have received them. Please stop by my office hours or schedule an appointment to discuss your grades.
- After you have received a graded assignment, you have two weeks to discuss them with me. **In general, grades are changed only due to a miscalculation.**
- Final grades are based on a point system (NOT a percentage system), so there is no “rounding up.” For example, an 899/1000 is a “B+” and *not* an “A-.”

## 5) I’m here to help YOU! ☺

- Please use my office hours or schedule an appointment with me. I want you to do well as you possibly can and am here to help you do so!
- Email is a great way to get in touch with me. I will always try to respond to your email messages within 24 hours. If you do not receive a response within 24 hours, please send your message again.

## 6) Academic Dishonesty

- Don’t do it. Plagiarism or cheating will result in a minimum of a ZERO on the assignment or exam and may result in consequences that are more serious.
- “Plagiarism includes knowingly representing by paraphrase or direct quotation, the published or unpublished work of another person as one’s own in any academic exercise or activity without full and clear acknowledgment. It also includes the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials” (*Student Code* page 10). If you have any questions about whether work you submit is plagiarized, contact your instructor *before* you hand it in. **In addition, in this course, you may not hand in the same paper for two classes. Please contact your other instructors; some instructors may have a different policy regarding what is sometimes called “self-plagiarism.”**

## 7) Equal Access and Disability Services

- Students who need special accommodations should talk to me at the beginning of the semester.
  - The Americans with Disabilities Act states: "Reasonable accommodation will be provided for all persons with disabilities in order to ensure equal participation within the program. If a student has a disability that will likely require some accommodation by the instructor, the student must contact the instructor and document the disability through the Disability Resource Center (797-2444), preferably during the first week of the course. Any request for special consideration relating to attendance, pedagogy, taking of examinations, etc., must be discussed with and approved by the instructor. In cooperation with the Disability Resource Center, course materials can be provided in alternative format, large print, audio, diskette, or Braille."
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## Course Requirements:

### Reading Assignments (200 points total)

You will sign up for four days that you will be doing reading assignments on the first day of class (2 days for eye openers, and 2 days as a discussion leader). You cannot do an eye opener and be a discussion leader on the same day.

**Eye Openers.** Eye openers are worth 30 points each. You will do the readings for the day that you signed up for, and pick one quote, idea, or section that was particularly interesting to you. Type out the quote or paraphrase the idea if it is long (you **MUST** include the source and page number). Then explain 1) why this idea interested you, 2) how it applies to your life, and 3) a "research question". The research question should just be a question extending the idea, but that is not answered in the text. It might be something that you would be interested in learning the answer to if you were to research this topic. Eye openers must be turned in via Canvas before class starts on the day that they are due.

**Discussion Leader.** Being a discussion leader involves two main components: creating a list of discussion questions for the class (based on the readings for that day), and leading the class discussion. The list of discussion questions is due **by 5pm the day before you are assigned to be the discussion leader**. So, if you sign up as discussion leader on Thursday, Sept 5<sup>th</sup>, your discussion questions are due (via Canvas) by Wednesday, Sept 4<sup>th</sup> at 5pm. You should have at least 6 well thought-out discussion questions. Questions can pertain to facts about the readings, ways in which the ideas from the readings apply to your classmates' lives, critiques/thought-provoking questions, and extending the ideas into other areas. However, you should not have more than three questions that pertain to facts about the readings. In other words, you are not to write a quiz on the readings, you are to think of things that inspire discussion. You may include the link to a video that is representative of the readings as a replacement for ONE discussion question, if you wish.

### **Reading Participation (150 points)**

You are expected to complete all readings before class and give them careful and considerate thought. To demonstrate that you are completing this portion of your assignment (and to prompt your memory in class), you will keep a notebook in which you will write the main ideas of the readings, interesting tidbits, questions you may have about the concepts, wording, statistics, etc., and thoughts or discussion questions. These notes are meant to demonstrate to me that you are engaging with the readings, and to serve as a guide for you during class discussions. You will hand in your notebook at various points in the semester to be graded. Your grade will be determined based on their breadth, depth, and quality/critical thinking (do the notes go beyond outlining what was in the chapter and include thoughts that you had while reading, applications of the material to your own life or media examples, and/or questions of clarity, future directions, and critique?). You should bring your notebook to every class with you.

### **Classroom Participation (150 points)**

Your contributions in class are extremely important! Simply showing up to class will not suffice. Please come prepared to actively engage in our course material, pose questions, and make thoughtful contributions in discussion sessions. Your participation grade will reflect the overall **quality** of your class participation throughout the semester. If you are texting, talking during class, sleeping, haven't read the material, or not paying attention, you will not earn your participation points for that day.

### **Story Project (200 points)**

The story project will require you to spend at least an hour interviewing a member of your family who is at least one generation older than you (e.g., aunt, father, grandparent). You will interview this family member on the stories and oral history of your family. After the interview, you will write a paper that summarize and reflects on your experience. Further directions on this assignment will be given.

### **Final Research Project (300 points)**

The final project will pertain to parent-child advice about physical activity. This will be a chance for you to participate in a research project, hone your interviewing skills, and connect the theories that we have discussed in class to a particular topic (advice on health issues). This project will be broken into three main parts: CITI certification, an interview, and a paper using the information from the interview.

**CITI Certification.** You must complete CITI certification BEFORE participating in the final research project (the interview and paper). If you do not complete this certification, you will receive a zero on all portions of the final project. To conduct research with human participants at Utah State University, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) requires that all researchers be certified via the CITI program. The CITI Program provides research ethics education to all members of the research community. To be certified at Utah State University, a set of modules must be completed via the CITI website with an overall score of 80%. The only module required for USU researchers is **Social & Behavioral Research Investigators and Key Personnel, Basic Course**. Once completed, CITI will issue you a "completion certificate." This certificate must be

saved and submitted to Canvas. This assignment is all or nothing – you will earn all 50 points if you successfully complete the certification by the due date. Instructions on how to complete this portion are found here, under “new users”:

<http://rgs.usu.edu/irb/htm/training/certification-procedures>

**Interview with a College Student.** You will be responsible for recruiting a college student that is not in this class, interviewing that person, and turning in the audio recording of the interview and a 1 page reflection paper on your experience as an interviewer. The interview should last about 30 minutes to 1 hour, depending on how much your interviewee elaborates. You should conduct the interview in a quiet location where there will not be a lot of background noise, but also where your interviewee will be comfortable. We will discuss interviewing techniques in class, and you will be given a list of interview questions. If you have a cell phone that has an audio recorder, this can be used to record the interview, as long as it provides a quality recording. Computers also often have a microphone and audio recorder. If you do not have access to these options, you can check-out an audio recorder from Lisa. It is a good idea to use more than one recording device during the interview, just in case one malfunctions.

The interview reflection paper will be one page, double-spaced (Times New Roman, size 12, 1” margins, no headers apart from your name and a title). You will reflect on how the interview went (NOT the content of the interview). You might describe things that went well and didn’t go well (e.g., Were there distractions? Did you ask enough follow-up questions? How do you think you did as an interviewer? What would you keep the same if you did this interview again? What would you do different next time, if anything?).

**Final Research Paper.** For the final research paper, you will use the data from your interview and write a full research paper using this data (lit review, method section, results section, and discussion section). You will receive a zero for this paper if you have not completed an interview. You may choose to work individually or work in a group of up to four people. The paper will be written in the same format and graded in the same manner for group and individual projects. The one difference in the paper is that individuals will only be using one interview (the interview that person conducted), where groups will be using multiple interviews (e.g., if there are three group members, then three interviews will be used). **If you choose to work in a group**, 35% (70 points) of your grade will be determined by the averaged evaluations that your group-mates give you for your contributions. The other 65% (130 points) of your grade will be determined by the grade of the paper; all group-mates will receive the same grade on this portion, except in extenuating circumstances as determined by Lisa. If you work by yourself, all of your points will be determined by your paper grade. Further directions on this assignment will be given.

### **Extra Credit**

Around the halfway point in the semester, Lisa will provide you with a link to an online survey. The survey should take less than a half hour to complete and is about parent-child communication. You must complete this survey by the assigned date (25 points), as well as

recruit another college student (who is not in the class) to complete the survey (25 points). The purpose of this assignment is to give you the opportunity to experience “research” firsthand, first as a survey participant, and then as a researcher when we discuss the results in class. You are required to recruit a friend so that we will have enough statistical power to discuss the results and so that there is sufficient anonymity if we look at individual responses. (You must take the survey for credit in this course. However, if you wish for your responses to be excluded from possible future research projects, you must email Lisa before taking the survey.)

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## Grading

<b>Reading Assignments (20%)</b>	
Eye Opener	30
Eye Opener	30
Discussion Leader	70
Discussion Leader	70
<b>Participation (30%)</b>	
Reading Participation	150
Class Participation	150
<b>Story Project (20%)</b>	200
<b>Final Research Project (30%)</b>	
CITI Certification	50
Interview a College Student	50
Final Paper	200
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<b>Total Points</b>	<b>1000*</b>

\* Grades will NOT be curved or rounded up.  
In general, grade changes will only be made due to a calculation error.

## Grading Scale:

<b>A</b>	<b>930-1000</b>
<b>A-</b>	<b>900-929</b>
<b>B+</b>	<b>870-899</b>
<b>B</b>	<b>830-869</b>
<b>B-</b>	<b>800-829</b>
<b>C+</b>	<b>770-799</b>
<b>C</b>	<b>730-769</b>
<b>C-</b>	<b>700-729</b>
<b>D+</b>	<b>670-699</b>
<b>D</b>	<b>630-669</b>
<b>D-</b>	<b>600-629</b>
<b>F</b>	<b>599 or lower</b>