

Utah State University
Department of Languages, Philosophy and Communication Studies
COMST 2110-007: Interpersonal Communication

Fall 2017
Monday, Wednesday, Friday
10:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.
Location: Huntsman 126

Instructor: Dr. Kristina M. Scharp

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Course Description & Goals

This course is designed as an introductory course on face-to-face communication in our social and personal relationships—our acquaintanceships, friendships, romantic partnerships, and relations with other (dis)liked/(hated)loved ones. The basic premise of the course is that one is positioned to maximize communicative effectiveness in these relationships with **knowledge** about how communication functions combined with **application** of communication practices and experiences.

The majority of our meetings will emphasize the knowledge component, but each week we will also engage in discussions and assignments where you will be asked to apply what you've learned. The textbook is knowledge-centered and the team/class assignments will be application-centered. The exams will emphasize the knowledge component and the written/oral assignments will emphasize the application component.

Specific goals of the course include:

- Gaining factual knowledge (key terminology in interpersonal communication)
- Learning fundamental principles and interpersonal communication theories
- Learning to apply course materials to your everyday life
- Set the foundation for more advanced communication studies courses

Required Text

The following required text can be purchased in the University Bookstore:

Sanders, M. (2012) *Becoming a learner: Realizing the opportunity of education*. Hyde Park, UT: Institute for Communication & Leadership. ISBN-13: 978-1-4675-3634-9

Course Evaluation

Typically, I do not change grades unless there is a *mathematical error*. My reasoning is that applying subjective standards after the fact invalidates the standards applied to the entire class and is unfair to every student. I am willing, however, to discuss your work.

Points will be distributed as follows:

- **Participation: 60 points**
- **Discussions: 30 points (10 points each)**
- **Irreplaceable Presentation: 50 points**
- **Learner Essays: 45 points (15 points each)**
- **Exams: 90 points**
- **Interpersonal Development Project: 225 points**
 - **IDP Proposal: 25 points**
 - **IDP Annotated Bibliography: 100 points**
 - **IDP Interaction Analysis: 100 points**

Total: 500 points

Grading Scale

A	94-100	B-	80-82	D+	67-69
A-	90-93	C+	77-79	D	63-66
B+	88-89	C	73-76	D-	62-60
B	83-87	C-	70-72	F	<60

Participation: I will take attendance at the beginning of every class period. Class discussion will be graded based on the content of the discussion. In other words, it not only matters THAT you contribute but it matters WHAT you contribute.

You can earn a possible 60 points over the course of the semester. I will give you an update on that grade after each exam. In other words, you can earn up to 20 points by each exam. If you are unhappy with your first grade, you have time to improve!

20 points: You never miss class and regularly contribute meaningfully to class discussion and always have your printed PPTs to take notes.

15 points: You hardly ever miss class and regularly contribute meaningfully to discussion and always have your printed PPTs to take notes.

10 points: You hardly ever miss class and participate in discussions regularly

5 points: You miss multiple classes and sporadically participate in discussions

0 points: You miss multiple classes and rarely contribute to conversations

*If you miss more than three classes over the course of the semester, you will lose 1 percent of your final grade for each subsequent absence.

Discussions: Sometimes we do always know what to say in class or a great idea comes to us later. In these instances, you will have the opportunity to also contribute to discussion via written posts. Each post should contain a discussion of two course concepts and how you applied them to your relationships. This is in addition to the work you are doing with your IDP person.

Discussion posts that earn all ten points will exhibit a mastery of the concepts and illustrate how you are actively applying what you know.

Irreplaceable Presentation: Students should bring in (picture/object/etc.) that is irreplaceable/invaluable to you. Tell the class a story about this object and discuss how it has shaped your identity and your relationships with others. (see more details on Canvas)

Learner Essays: Over the course of the semester you will be asked to write three 2-3 page reflections. The first will pertain to the book *Becoming a Learner*, the second will be about course application, and the third will be about the team activities you will be engaging in with your partner. (see more details on Canvas)

Exams: Exams will be based on the lectures and class discussions (anything we discuss is fair game.) Questions will (be multiple choice and the second exam is NOT cumulative. Exams cannot be made up or taken early (unless the circumstance is dire).

Study Guides: Students study for exams in different ways – create a study guide that is going to best help you (and your teammate) prepare for the exam. I will not grade you for this assignment but students who prepare for the exams typically do better than those who do not.

Interpersonal Development Project:

The purpose of CMST 2110 is to help you understand how to improve your relationships with others by understanding your own communication choices and how changing your communication choices can positively influence your relationships. Too often our natural inclination is to want or expect others to change. We usually do not think about how our own communication plays a significant role in our interpersonal conflicts.

The Interpersonal Development Project (IDP) is designed to help you create this self-awareness. The project is based on consulting models used in organizations to help executives improve their relationships with their co-workers and their own families. Corporate America spends billions of dollars each year to help very competent people learn how to communicate more effectively. I have seen these programs work on individual and group levels, and I am constantly amazed at how such competent and successful people lack a basic knowledge of interpersonal communication. These people have significant troubles at work and with their families. However, people can come out of these programs with improved relationships and increased work and family success if they take their learning seriously.

The goal of this project is to enable you to learn how to be successful in all your relationships. It is important that you develop this knowledge now because it will enable you to avoid costly mistakes in the future. So, I encourage you to take this project very seriously and work very hard. I am hopeful that the flexibility you have in how you approach this project will increase the meaningfulness and impact it will have in your life.

There are several steps to the IDP. Each one builds upon the next. This process allows you to get the maximum amount of feedback and help along the way. (see more details on Canvas)

***All Assignments – should be turned in on Canvas BEFORE class. Any deviation will not be accepted UNLESS arranged ahead of time.**

Course Policies

- **Assignment Due Dates:** Late work will NOT be accepted. Any work that is not turned in on time will result in a zero for that assignment. In certain instances that are unavoidable, students may request an alternative due date. This must be negotiated BEFORE the assignment is due.
- **Learning Environment:** The classroom should be an environment where everyone feels comfortable sharing their experiences. Thus, it is my expectation that students actively listen to their peers and respect their experiences. We learn about ourselves when we communicate with other responsibly and you can expect the same from me.
- **Grade Management:** I will provide grades as quickly as possible but it is your responsibility to keep track of your grades. No grades will be shared via e-mail.
- **Extra Credit:** It is possible (but not guaranteed) that an opportunity for extra credit might arise. This opportunity will be research-related. In the event you do not qualify for the study, another opportunity will be made available.
- **Academic Misconduct:** Plagiarism is not tolerated in any course. Students are required to complete their own work and give credit (both in writing and orally) to any source used in completing an assignment. All citations should be APA 6th edition style. Instances of academic misconduct will be reported to the University and I will determine appropriate sanctions.
- **Computer/Technology:** Technology can be a great asset to learning but research suggests that students who don't use laptops consistently outperform their peers. Thus, semester I am asking that you keep your laptops/iPads/other technology at home (or tucked away in your bags). Please take a minute to read this article for more explanation: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2014/12/30/this-year-im-resolving-to-ban-laptops-from-my-classroom/>
Or this one:
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/wp/2014/09/25/why-a-leading-professor-of-new-media-just-banned-technology-use-in-class/>
*Special exceptions can be made (please contact me if you have a particular need to use a computer/certain technology)
- **Students with Disabilities:** Any student in this course who has a disability that may prevent him/her from fully demonstrating his/her abilities should personally contact me at the beginning of the semester or as soon as possible so that necessary accommodations can be made. Students are responsible for contacting Disability Resource Center and filing all necessary paperwork so that the disability can be properly documented.

Course Schedule

This schedule is subject to change if the demands of the course require it. All assignments are due at the beginning of class.

Week	Session	Discussion Topic	Due
1	M - 08-28	Introduction to the Course	
1	W - 08-30	IDP Project and Becoming a Learner	Becoming Book
1	F - 09-01	Library Day (Room 122)	Learner Essay I
2	M - 09-04	Labor Day Break	
2	W - 09-06	Library Day (Room 122)	Relationship Idea
2	F - 09-08	Coming Together	
3	M - 09-11	Needs, Attachment, and Attraction	IDP Proposal
3	W - 09-13	Liking and Love	
3	F - 09-15	Intimacy Acceleration Activity (Team)	Diversity Keynote
4	M - 09-18	Symbolic Interactionism, Identity, and EVT	
4	W - 09-20	Social Exchange Theories and Activity	Discussion I
4	F - 09-22	Irreplaceable (Class)	Presentation
5	M - 09-25	Intimacy Acceleration Activity (Team)	
5	W - 09-27	Exam I (Online)	
5	F - 09-29	Information Management	
6	M - 10-02	Uncertainty Management	
6	W - 10-04	Relational Maintenance	Learner Essay II
6	F - 10-06	Info/Uncertainty Management Activity (Class)	
7	M - 09-09	Family Communication Patterns (Tim Curran)	
7	W - 09-11	FCP and Applying What We Know (Team)	
7	F - 10-13	Connecting with IDP Person (Individual)	IDP Annotated
8	M - 10-16	Narrative Approaches	DV Keynote
8	W - 10-18	Narrative Approaches and Activity	
8	F - 10-20	Fall Break	
9	M - 10-23	Kristina at FYE	
9	W - 10-25	Supportive Communication Activity	Discussion II
9	F - 10-27	Irreplaceable (Class)	Presentation
10	M - 10-30	Exam II (Online)	
10	W - 11-01	Conflict Styles versus Process	
10	F - 11-03	Conflict Activity (Class; Clair Canfield)	
11	M - 11-06	Relationship Dissolution	
11	W - 11-08	Family Distancing	
11	F - 11-10	Forgiveness and Letting Go and Activity (Class)	
12	M - 11-13	Relational Dialectics Theory	
12	WF - 15-17	Kristina at NCA	
13	M - 11-20	Difficult Conversations (Loss, Sex, Finances)	Learner Essay III
13	WF - 22-24	Thanksgiving Break	
14	MWF 27-01	IDP/Exam III	Discussion III
15	M - 12-04	Exam III Discussion and Becoming a Learner	IDP Final Paper
15	WF - 06-08	Irreplaceable (Class)	Presentation