

Utah State University  
Department of Languages, Philosophy, and Communication Studies  
**COMST 2110-009: Interpersonal Communication**

Fall 2017, Tuesday/Thursday  
12-1:15 PM, Engineering 206

Instructor: Mollie Murphy

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Office: Old Main 341

Office Hours: Tuesdays 9:30-11:30 or by appointment (appointments must be made at least 48 hours in advance)

**Course Description**

This course will cover theories and practices of communication as it occurs in two-person and small group settings. Primary concern will be given to understanding how an individual can use verbal and nonverbal communication to improve relationships and derive maximum social rewards. Topics covered will include (but are not limited to),

- The fundamental elements of the communication process.
- The role of culture in communication.
- The dimensions of verbal and nonverbal communication.
- The role of perception and emotion in the communication process.
- The dimensions of close relationships and how communication is defined in close relationships and how communicators develop, maintain, and terminate close relationships.
- The moral and ethical implications of a variety of communication situations.

Students will apply core concepts in written work and in exams that contribute to the course grade.

**Required Text**

McCornack, S. *Reflect and relate (2016): An introduction to interpersonal communication.* Bedford/St. Martin's.

**Points Distribution**

Exams (50%)

Exam 1	15%
Exam 2	15%
Final exam	20%

Reading Quizzes (10%)

Six total, lowest dropped – all given on Canvas

Interpersonal Development Project (40%)

Proposal	5%
Annotated Bibliography	10%
Final Paper	25%
TOTAL =	100%

## **Grading Scale and Policies**

### Grading Scale

92.95-100%	A	72.95-76.94%	C
89.95-92.94%	A-	69.95-72.94%	C-
86.95-89.94%	B+	59.95-69.94%	D
82.95-86.94%	B	59.94% and below	F
79.95-82.94%	B-		
76.95-79.94%	C+		

\*Grades are rounded to the nearest tenth. That means that an 89.95 is an A- and an 89.94 is a B+. This models the numerous courses that are out of 1,000 points, in which an 899.5 is an A- and 899.4 is a B+. This policy is non-negotiable and there will be absolutely no exceptions.

In order to uphold a fair and ethical course for all students, I do not change or reconsider a grade unless there has been a mathematical error. If you are ever unhappy or confused about a grade, please make an appointment to meet with me about it in person.

Although I evaluate assignments based on the criteria discussed in class and on written instructions, many factors that contribute to excellent work—insight, creativity, originality—cannot be reduced to technique. That is why there is no “recipe” for getting an A on an assignment, and it is why A work is the exception rather than the rule. At the same time, evaluating assignments is not a purely subjective process. Instructors do use objective criteria to make basic distinctions during grading. I grade written assignments according to the following general guidelines in addition to the specific individual requirements of each assignment.

*To earn a C:* The assignment must be complete, thoughtful, and meet the basic requirements of the assignment. It should conform to the page limit, be free of basic grammatical errors and typos, and should exhibit clear organization.

*To earn a B:* The assignment must be executed well. It must meet the criteria of C work, but must also be well written, insightful, and supported by credible outside sources.

*To earn an A:* The assignment must be outstanding in its execution. It will exhibit exceptional effort, polished writing, and must go beyond the basic substantive requirements of the assignment in some way, perhaps by demonstrating a new, thoughtful or creative way of understanding the course material, or by illustrating an especially meaningful application of the course material. Importantly, A work is not earned by going “beyond” in terms of page length. Aim for concise, polished writing.

*Grades of D and F* are earned by failing to meet the basic criteria of the assignment. Work that lacks clear focus, is very poorly written or lacking in organization, or is obviously unfinished, unedited, or inappropriate for the assignment or course will earn a D or F.

\*The starting assumption for grading is that with moderate effort, everyone is capable of earning a C in the course. The movement of your grade from that midpoint is largely in your hands.

## **Specific Course Assignments**

### **Exams**

Exams cover material found in the text and class discussion. Exams may involve multiple choice, matching, and short answer questions. Exams are non-cumulative. I will post study guides to Canvas for each exam on dates noted below. If you arrive to take our exam after someone else has already finished, your exam will be subject to a minimum 10% deduction. You will not receive extra time for the exam.

### **Reading Quizzes**

Quizzes will be given on Canvas. Quiz closing dates and times are listed on the syllabus. It is not the responsibility of the instructor to remind you to take a quiz or to allow you to make up a quiz should you forget. Like the exams, quizzes will direct your attention to important aspects of the readings and encourage you to critically engage with course material. Reviewing quizzes will help you to study for exams. There will be six quizzes total and your lowest quiz score will be dropped.

### **Interpersonal Development Project**

Though valuable, exams, quizzes, and class discussion alone cannot measure whether you are capable of applying what you have learned to your own relationships. Thus, this class will involve a semester long project designed to help you change your communication in ways that will have a positive impact on your personal relationships. Too often, we expect others to change *their* communication behaviors. The Interpersonal Development Project is designed to help you think about how *your* communication plays a critical role in shaping your relationships. If you work to foster self-awareness of your communication behaviors and take on the challenging, ongoing task of modifying them, it will prove invaluable to your professional and personal relationships.

I will “check in” with you two times before you submit your final paper. This will help to ensure that you are on the right track and that your final project is of high quality and maximum benefit. Detailed guidelines will be provided.

*Proposal:* A two-page description of a relationship you would like to improve during the course of the semester. You should select a relationship that is *meaningful* to you; it should be of high personal importance (perhaps a parent, sibling, friend, romantic partner, or a co-worker you have known for some time). Choose a relationship with a person you will be able to have some interaction with during the semester.

*Annotated Bibliography:* A list of 3-6 scholarly sources *in addition to your textbook* that you think will be useful for your interaction analysis. I expect four *strong* sources that are very relevant to the relationship you will work to improve. You will include a citation for each source followed by a 1-2 paragraph summary and explanation of how it will be useful to your project. Outside sources will help you to explain the circumstances and

dynamics of your relationships and interactions. You will obtain these materials from scholarly articles or books. We will discuss how to go about finding “good” sources.

*Final Paper:* Your final paper will be a culmination of the above assignments, and will also include an analysis of an interaction you had with the person identified in your proposal. The paper will be 6-8 pages in length (double spaced, 12 pt. Times New Roman, 1” margins). It will begin with a brief intro, followed by a ~2 page review of the scholarly sources/research on the context (from your annotated bibliography, but may also include the textbook). Next, you will include a ~1 page description of the relationship you sought to improve. The final component of the paper will be your analysis: a ~3 page discussion of how you actively changed your communication behaviors in attempt to improve this relationship and the outcome of these efforts. It will end with a brief conclusion. The purpose of this analysis is for you to apply what you learned through the course and your independent to your own relational communication.

## **Course Policies**

### **Attendance**

I will take attendance only 6-8 days during the semester. If you are absent on one of these days, your final grade will be subject to a 1% deduction (if you are absent two of these days, you will be subject to a 2% deduction and so forth). These days will be random—I will not announce in advance whether or not I will be taking attendance. Exceptions to this policy will *only* be made in the case of absences related to participation in a University-sanctioned event as an official representative of USU, for classes missed in observance of a religious holiday, or for a **documented** emergency or other extenuating circumstance. All exceptions for religious holidays and participation in University events must be approved **one week in advance**. If you are sick or have some other sort of emergency, you must get in touch with me as soon as possible and provide documentation upon returning to class (it must say that you were unable to attend class). If you are frequently tardy or leave class early, your final grade will also be subject to a deduction.

### **Plagiarism**

Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Students must complete their own work and given credit (written and oral) to any outside sourced used to complete an assignment. Lack of knowledge of the academic policy is not a reasonable explanation for any form of academic misconduct. Plagiarism includes—but is not limited to—copying and pasting another person’s work, failing to give credit to information derived from another person’s work, paraphrasing another persons’ work in a way that misrepresents the original claims, having another student complete your work, and completing another student’s work. Questions related to the course assignments and the academic honesty policy should be directed to the instructor. Follow the APA 6<sup>th</sup> edition for citing sources. I will report any case of academic misconduct to the University after which I will determine the appropriate outcome.

### **Exams**

No exam will be given early or at a different time unless changed by the University. Mark your calendars and make your travel plans accordingly.

### **Learning Accommodations**

Any student who needs special accommodations for learning or who has particular needs is invited to share these concerns or requests with me as soon as possible. Disabilities must be documented through the Disability Resource Center; it is your responsibility to contact the DRC and fill out the necessary paperwork. Formal requests for accommodations must be completed before the scheduled assignment.

### **Respect and Etiquette**

*In-class:* In this class we will cover topics such as race, gender, culture, sexuality, etc. I expect all students to show respect; comments that are disrespectful will not be tolerated. College courses are a place to learn and grow. A comfortable, supportive environment is critical to everyone's success in the course.

*Email:* You may address me as Mollie, or as Ms. Murphy if you are more comfortable with a formal tone. Adopting a formal tone when constructing emails is a good practice for academic and other professional environments. Write an email similar to how you would write a letter (include salutation: "Hello Ms. Murphy/Dear Mollie" sign your name "Regards, Nadia/Best, Miguel"). This model is useful to learn for other classes (and your professional careers) as well. If you are providing information that does not necessitate a reply, I may not reply. I will reply if a question is asked. I'll also reply if there is a request for me to confirm receipt of your email. I will typically respond to an email within 24 hours. If you email me in the evening, expect that I will reply the following day. There is no set turn-around time on weekends. I would ask that you, too, check and respond to email in a similar time frame.

*Cellphone/Computer Use:* Computers and cellphones are not allowed in class. Although technology has its place, research shows that students who do not use laptops in class consistently outperform their peers. I am willing to make special exceptions if necessary – see me if you have a valid reason for needing a computer/technology.

### **Late Work**

All papers are due to Canvas at the beginning of the class for which they are assigned. Work submitted after a ten-minute grace period will receive a 10% point deduction. An additional 10% will be deducted for every 24 hours it is not turned in.

### **Course Schedule**

*Note:* This is a *general plan* for the course. Deviations may be necessary, and will be announced either in class or via email.

<b>Day</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Reading (done by this day)/ Major Assignment Info</b>
Aug 29	Course Introduction	
Aug 31	Intro to IPC	Ch. 1 and syllabus
Sept 5	Intro to IPC; discuss IDP	

Sept 7	Culture	Ch. 5 Quiz 1 due by 11:59 PM (Ch. 1 & 5)
Sept 12	Culture	
Sept 14	Considering Self	Ch. 2
Sept 19	Considering Self	<b>Paper Proposal Due</b>
Sept 21	Perceiving Others	Ch. 3 Quiz 2 due to by 11:59 PM (Ch. 2 & 3) <i>Exam 1 study guide will be posted over the weekend</i>
Sept 26	Emotions	Ch. 4
Sept 28	Emotions	
Oct 3	<b>Exam 1</b>	
Oct 5	Listening	Ch. 6 Quiz 3 due by 11: 59 PM (Ch. 4 & 6)
Oct 10	Library day: meet in library room 122	
Oct 12	Verbal	Ch. 7
Oct 17	Verbal	
Oct 19	<b>No class; Friday class schedule</b>	
Oct 24	Nonverbal	Ch. 8 <b>Annotated Bibliography Due</b>
Oct 26	Nonverbal	Quiz 4 due by 11:59 (Ch. 7 & 8) <i>Exam 2 study guide will be posted over the weekend</i>
Oct 31	Conflict and Power	Ch. 9
Nov 2	Conflict and Power	
Nov 7	<b>Exam 2</b>	
Nov 9	Romantic Relationships	Ch. 10

Nov 14	Romantic Relationships	
Nov 16	Romantic Relationships; Discuss final papers	Quiz 5 due by 11:59 PM (Ch. 10))
Nov 21	Family Communication	Ch. 11
Nov 23	<b>Thanksgiving – no class</b>	
Nov 28	Family Communication	
Nov 30	Family Communication	
Dec 5	Friendships	Ch. 12
Dec 7	Friendships	<b>Final paper due!</b> Quiz 6 due by 11:59 PM (Ch. 11 & 12) <i>Final exam study guide will be posted over the weekend</i>
<b>Final Exam</b>	Dec 14 (Thursday) 11:30 am – 1:20 pm <i>The final will not be given at an earlier or different time unless changed by the university</i>	