

Professor: Dr. Kaitlin Phillips
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Office: 069B Old Main
Office Hours: 12:00-2:00pm Monday and by appointment
Class Hours: 5:30 – 8:00pm T, Old Main 203

Required Texts

Readings will be posted on Canvas and available through a Box link.

Course Description

An important aspect of becoming a more competent communicator is the ability to understand the various communication patterns that characterize those individuals with whom we relate to on a daily basis. Since the family is the first “communication classroom” that we all attend and the first social group we belong to, this course is designed to investigate the nature of family communication. Specifically, this course focuses on family communication patterns and the extent to which different forms of interactions contribute to, and change, familial identity. This semester, we will explore: (a) the changing and complex definition of “family,” (b) family interaction from different theoretical lenses, (c) the role of narratives and mental health in family interaction, and (d) the darkside of family communication.

This is a upper-level class, designed for students who already have a foundation in communication studies and interpersonal specifically. The overall objective of this course is to provide an introduction to the various messages and message strategies that fall within the purview of family communication. In doing so, I also hope to provide you with an opportunity to reflect upon your family’s communication patterns, to think critically about how these patterns influence your own communication tendencies, and to compare and contrast the patterns in your family with those represented in other family forms. In other words, our primary goal this semester will be to expand your understanding of how different communication patterns emerge in different people, and thus make you a more competent communicator. Upon successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

- Describe the changing nature of “family” and use at least four different communication theories to describe family interaction.
- Describe the family as a system, thereby distinguishing between family members as individuals and family members as an integrated whole.
- Distinguish among different communication patterns in various family systems, and from multiple perspectives.
- Evaluate family communication scholarship and apply the findings to both your own personal, familial relationships as well as the familial relationships of significant others.
- Illustrate how rituals, narratives, and stories help family members make sense of their family experiences, and how such symbolic activities help construct a family identity.

Course Expectations, Policies, & Procedures

READING: I expect you to come to class prepared to discuss the assigned materials. This means that you have completed the reading assignments for that day and have given some thought as to how this material relates to your personal, professional, and academic pursuits. Given that participation and critical thinking is essential to success in this course, it is *extremely important* that you keep pace with the assigned readings.

ATTENDANCE/PARTICIPATION: It is important that students come to class and be actively involved in class discussions – in other words, I expect each of you to contribute to our learning experience in CMST 4140. In addition to taking notes (when needed), I expect each of you to contribute your understanding of the material as it relates to your academic, professional, and personal experiences. I also expect each of you to listen with an open mind and respect the opinions of others in class. 100 points will be attached to attendance and participation, this involves actively participating in class discussions, offering thoughtful comments, and making sure to take notes and read prior to coming to class.

This course will implement a discussion-method designed to facilitate critical thinking and classroom participation. Each student is responsible for emailing **two questions** each week based on the assigned readings for a given week. The questions should be either a ***question of clarification***, i.e., a question useful for clarifying confusing material and/or extending our understanding of certain research theories or methods used in the conduct of research, or a ***question of extension*** whereby the student asks a heuristic/thought-provoking question based on the readings (e.g., a question concerning how we might use the findings practically, whether they are relevant, or providing an idea for extending the research). **Email your questions no later than 12:00 noon on the day of each class.** There are 12 sets of readings in weeks 2-7 and weeks 9-15. Each set of questions is worth up to 10 points. However, you may skip 2. 10 sets of questions x 10 points = 100 points. Carefully consider which weeks you need to skip.

ACADEMIC (DIS)HONESTY: It is extremely important that you avoid plagiarism in this course. For all written assignments, I expect you to cite your sources according to the 6th edition of the American Psychological Association's (APA) Style Manual. More importantly, be very clear when you are quoting vs. paraphrasing sources. *The use of any uncited sources, using someone else's words or ideas without quoting, using falsified sources, or turning in work that is not yours and/or is not original for this course will result in immediate failure of the course and a referral to the appropriate campus authorities.* Claiming academic ignorance about standards for writing is not an acceptable excuse for plagiarism committed. If you are unsure about APA guidelines on cited materials, please see me to avoid any problems.

UNIVERSITY REMINDER

Accommodations: Students with ADA-documented physical, sensory, emotional or medical impairments may be eligible for reasonable accommodations. Veterans may also be eligible for services. All accommodations are coordinated through the Disability Resource Center (DRC) in Room 101 of the University Inn, (435)797-2444 voice, (435)797-0740 TTY, (435)797-2444 VP, or toll free at 1-800-259-2966. Please contact the DRC as early in the semester as possible. Alternate format materials (Braille, large print or digital) are available with advance notice.

ASSIGNMENTS (briefly described below)

- 1) Exams (200 points) – students will complete one (or possibly two) exams on all lectures, handouts, and readings covered in class. The midterm exam will consist of essay questions. Students may use one 3x5 notecard (front and back) as a “study crutch” for the midterm exam– more details to follow.
- 2) Theory Quick Hit Assignment (50 points) – students will co-present on a theory based on the week they are assigned—details to follow.
- 3) Policy Paper – students will complete a compare and contrast paper on differences between what policy states and what research suggests-details to follow.
- 4) Darkside blog- students will complete a discussion board post about the darkside of family. Details to follow.
- 5) Intercultural blog – students will compare a US family practice/tradition/norm to that of another culture. Details to follow.
- 6) Family Rituals – students will complete a discussion board post about a recipe that represents a family ritual/tradition/story, and will bring the dish to class and present on it. Details to follow
- 7) Classroom Participation (100 points) - classroom participation is *essential* to a course such as this. As such, participation is expected to display the following characteristics: (1) topical relevance, (2) theoretical relevance, (3) humor and provocativeness for the ongoing discussion, and (4) attendance.
- 8) Discussion Questions (100 points) - extension of the specific materials on the reading list via generation of two discussion questions – one a question of clarification and the second a question of extension.

CMST 4140 Grade Sheet

Use this chart to keep track of your grade in the class.

Type of Assignment	Points Received/Points Possible
Exams	
Exam #1	/100
Exam #2	/100
Theory Quick Hit Assignment	/50
Policy Paper	/100
Darkside Blog	/50
Intercultural Blog	/50
Family Rituals	/50
Class Participation	/100
Discussion Questions	/100
Total Points Earned	/700

These grade percentages are general guidelines for all grades that fall within those 10 percentage points. The plus/minus system will be used in this course. Please note that grades will not be rounded at the end of the semester. In order to calculate your grade take the amount of points you have and divide by total possible points in the class.

A(A-) = 90% - 100% Exemplary performance – greatly exceeds requirements.

B(B+, B-) = 80% - 89%	Shows outstanding levels of effort & thoughtfulness. <u>Advanced performance</u> – exceeds requirements. Shows substantial creativity, effort, & thoughtfulness.
C(C+, C-) = 70% - 79%	<u>Average to deficient performance</u> – simply meets the minimum requirements of the course, but does not exceed them.
F(D+, D, D-) = Below 70%	<u>Poor performance</u> – failed to meet the minimum requirements of the course.