

# **CMST 2110: Interpersonal Communication**

Utah State University

Spring, 2019

11:30-12:20, Monday, Wednesday, Friday

Old Main 326

Instructor: John Abbott, MS (Interpersonal Comm.)

Office: Old Main 202 Conference Room, Old Main Basement Vending Court, Classroom

Office Hour: Wed., 10:30-11:30 or 1:30-2:30

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**Text: Looking Out, Looking In (15th Edition)**

**Adler and Proctor**

## **Course Description**

CMST 2110 offers three credits while we focus primarily on the relational dynamics surrounding the crucial area of interpersonal communication. Awareness of your interpersonal style and experimenting with different types and styles of responses should occur. Opportunities in discussion include: 1) the impact of perception in our interactions, 2) the impact of self-concept, personality, and temperament, 3) the various conflict styles and healthy conflict alternatives, 4) the influence of nonverbal messages in social contexts on relationship development, 5) the uses of social media and its impact on communication and relationships, and 6) the application of interpersonal communication principles to businesses and business-type situations.

## **Course Objectives**

The objectives of this course:

- 1) To enable you to critically examine interpersonal communication events, drawing on theories of communication and essential concepts in the literature.
- 2) To help you evaluate your own interpersonal communication skills and provide you with opportunities to develop and demonstrate competency in your interactions.
- 3) To allow you to experience and prepare for communication research and literature.
- 4) To apply course material to improve thinking, problem solving, and decision-making in an effort to maximize your satisfaction in interactions and relationships.

## **Course Rationale**

A study sponsored by the US Department of Labor identified oral communication/listening skills and interpersonal skills as two of the seven "basic workplace" skills. Surveys of employers published in Harvard Business Review, Nation's Business, and other publications consistently identify weak oral communication and human relations skills as major deficiencies of many college graduates. One study found that communication/human relations training is the third most frequently offered training program in American industry. Recent surveys of top level executives indicate that, while technical skills were most valuable upon entering a job, interpersonal skills are the most valuable in later careers.

The College Board concluded that speech is one of the six basic competencies required for success in college. The Carnegie Foundation and the Association of American Colleges have both asked colleges to bolster the teaching of speech in college. Research demonstrates that ability to build relationships with students characterizes successful teachers.

Over one of two marriages in the US now ends in divorce (the average marriage lasting approximately seven years) and poor communication is frequently cited as the reason.

Many parents are searching for new and better ways to communicate with their adult children.

Many adult children are searching for new and better ways to communicate with their parents.

Patients often complain that their doctor's bedside manner is atrocious.

Clearly, communication skills are important to success in both careers and life in general. Our few weeks together may not transform our lives, but that has occurred with some individuals. I encourage you to leave yourselves open to some degree of impact. We will work on understanding the process of communication which will enable you, over time, to improve existing relationships and provide a solid footing for new relationships to take off on. Good communicators continue to learn and improve in relationship skills throughout their lives. I hope you will take responsibility for what you learn and attempt to make the course relevant to you personally. The course is geared to create an awareness of communication patterns. It is only another step in becoming a competent communicator. You are encouraged to integrate what you learn from the class with your real-life experiences.

## **Instructional Philosophy**

My years of instruction have led me away from the model that encourages the teacher to function as the primary agent imparting information to a model that encourages the teacher to function as the facilitator in student exploration, evaluation, assessment, synthesis, and inquiry. I believe good teaching and learning come from engaging real-life situations and experiences as much as possible. Therefore, I do not lecture...much, and my teaching requires you to go beyond the textbook as you navigate in-class interactions and out-of-class assignments. I will ask you to examine your own experiences and share them when appropriate, participate with team and project work, and engage in experiential learning as we examine this discipline together.

The purpose of meeting together as a class is to enable you to have experiences and conversations that you cannot get on your own. In other words, class will not be a review of what was read in the textbook. Consequently, there are two kinds of work you need to address in order for you to be successful in this course.

First, complete the "Key Terms" before you read. Then do the reading for each chapter. An "Outline" accompanying the chapter allows you to enter some thoughts, questions, or synthesis of text material as you read. A "Study Guide" is provided highlighting those concepts and key ideas that I want you to know. A "Check Test" (quiz) will only be given after you've had an opportunity to complete these exercises. I will hold you responsible for all this information but we will not have time to discuss everything in class.

Second, do all preparation and activity assignments and complete your journal entries. These more subjective exercises will follow the objective activities discussed in the previous paragraph.

I also tend to be more of a process-oriented individual rather than an exact-schedule-keeper. I realize this may be frustrating to some of you who like to know exactly what to plan and when to plan for it, so I will work hard to alleviate concerns by keeping you well-informed of upcoming events, dates, deadlines, and changes by posting regularly in Canvas.

If you are not comfortable with either my instructional philosophy or process-oriented approach to teaching, I encourage you to find another course that will better meet your needs.

## Major Projects and Assignments

1. You will write 5 - 7 "Journal" entries. Four of those will be generated by "In-class Exercises." The others will be spread between "My Interpersonal Experiments" and "My Interpersonal Communication Goal." The total number of entries will be determined by time constraints.
2. You will respond to a "Check Test" on each of the chapters assigned.
3. You will successfully navigate three unit exams (objective and essay).
4. You will complete selected chapter exercises complementing major concepts of the text and respond in discussion and/or present a "Teach-Back" session often assigned to you and a group of peers during class that day that illustrates a particular concept through improvisation. Only your participation is scored here; not your creativity and improvisational prowess.
5. You, in groups of 7-9, will select one concept discussed in class and prepare a creative improvisational "Reality/... Show" presentation (Family Feud, Bachelor, Bachelorette, Survivor, Amazing Race, Dr. Phil, Oprah, Ellen, etc.) using a full class session highlighting important aspects of the topic. The class and I evaluate the group and the group evaluates each member. This project tends to be more relaxed and a lot of fun but when time gets tight, it is usually the first project to go away.

## Assessment Plan

I don't wait until the end of the semester to apply assignment "weighting." You amass points on various assignments, exercises, and assessments and each of these receives a point-value (weighting) at the time of the assignment so you get a feel for the different impacts these are having throughout the semester. You will also have input in placing point-values to some assignments. Point totals are later converted to a percentage of total-points-possible and your final grade is reached.

## Exams

The exams are designed to assess your command of material covered in class discussions, exercises, and readings. They will consist of true/false, multiple guess (oops, "choice"), and essay questions. Exam #1 covers chapters 1-5; Exam #2 covers chapters 6-8; and Exam #3 covers chapters 9-12. There is **no comprehensive exam.** :o Any questions generated by "Reality/...show" presentations will appear in the last exam. Almost all objective questions on the exams will be covered at some point in class discussions. **Come to class! :) After all, this is an interpersonal communication class. You can't participate in interpersonal interaction and exercises if you are not here. :(**

## Journal

Your "Journal" will be a little different than what you might expect when you normally hear the word. It will consist of three sections. The first section deals with observations and applications of "In-Class Exercises." The second section allows you a shot at trying your hand at a little contrived human behavioral research. Don't worry. It will be fun. Let's call this section "My Interpersonal Experimentation." The last section revolves around a personal goal that you declare in the first week. This goal may change later in the semester. Your entry/entries will consist of observations and analysis as you attempt to achieve your goal. We'll call this section "My Interpersonal Goal." Each entry must be a one-page word-processed document. Sample entries will be modeled in class.

## Reality/...Show...(Reality/Game/Talk/Romance/Late Night/Comedy Show)

This is actually a group presentation of an interpersonal communication concept or skill. This format allows for an interviewer or host, two or three couples or individuals representing different world views or different current issue perspectives or a panel of selected individuals representing various facets of a topic or issue discussed in class, an "expert" or two, and an "audience plant" or two who'll make sure the important questions and/or comments are not overlooked. Of course, these individuals are all group members having fun with an improvisation. Although it is improvised, it will need to be reasonably rehearsed and a tentative outline of the interaction and a list of the reality-show host's questions must be filed with the producer (me). A one-page group paper noting the "Topic," "Brief Research and Information" section along with a brief "Works Cited" section or separate page, and "Justification" or "Rationale" section for the topic focus is due before you present.

Your presentation will be evaluated on five criteria: content, relevance, organization, creativity, and delivery. Your individual contribution to the group will also be evaluated by each group member on ten criteria which we'll discuss later. That evaluation form will be completed after your presentation and handed in that class.

### Approximate Assignment Point Totals

Exam # 1	1000	45%
Exam # 2		
Exam # 3		
Journal	300	14%
Check Tests	400	18%
In Class Exercises	200	9%
Reality/...Show	250	11%
Reality Individual Contribution	50	2%
Total Points	2200 (Approximately)	

### Policies

**Make-up Exam Policy:** No exams will be given after the testing date. I recognize emergencies occur. In the event this happens, I will make arrangements with you to take your exam early. This is not to accommodate your personal agendas, so be prepared to document your emergency.

**Academic Integrity Policy:** The department is committed to the highest standards of ethical conduct and academic excellence. Any student found guilty of plagiarism, fabrication, cheating or purchasing papers will receive a failing grade for the course.

**Cell phone use:** No cell phones are allowed to surface in class. This is an interpersonal communication course. Undivided, unhindered interaction, focus, and discussion are my expectations. I'll likely have a private conversation with you if this appears to be a problem. The flow of class interaction is very important to me.

*I hope you have a great semester!*