

# **CommRC 0530: Interpersonal Communication**

## **Spring 2001**

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### Assigned Texts:

Sarah Trenholm and Arthur Jensen. (2000). *Interpersonal Communication*, 4th Edition.  
Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Goffman, Erving. (1963). *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*.  
Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Library Reserves: A packet of photocopied readings, as well as several books, is on reserve at Hillman library. There is also a folder of photocopied readings available in the Department of Communications office, 1117 Cathedral of Learning. The photocopies outside my office work on the honor system – they are to be taken to a photocopier and returned as soon as you finish copying. All readings are required.

\*\*other reading material may be added to the course reading list throughout the semester.

### Course Description:

What is communication? What is an individual? What are social relationships? This course is designed to promote a critical understanding of interpersonal communication and the maintenance and development of relationships within diverse institutional contexts from sociological, feminist, philosophical and natural history perspectives. Students are encouraged to think as broadly and creatively as possible in this course; to this end, the course will make use of research and written materials across a wide range of academic fields and contexts that speak to issues within interpersonal communication. Ultimately, the course will equip students to address questions such as those above by providing an opportunity to consider what interpersonal communication is and does from a variety of viewpoints.

This course pays particular attention to the ways in which people present themselves to others and the world through strategies of interpersonal communication, for the most part quite unconsciously. This course is an attempt to bring our unquestioned daily behaviors up for conscious analysis -- to turn what is most familiar to us into something a bit unfamiliar and unusual and see what sense we can make of ourselves. Overall, the primary goal of the course is to improve students' abilities to analyze communication practices from theoretical and applied perspectives. A secondary goal is to improve

student's own competence in interpersonal communication. The course will challenge students to understand all communication -- interpersonal, mass-mediated, networked (telephone, the internet, the postal system!) -- as interaction mediated by the social world we live in.

### **Course Requirements:**

Students are required to come to class prepared to discuss and debate ideas from readings. Below is a general outline of assignments for the semester. The specifics of each assignment will be explained over the course of the semester. The numbers in brackets indicate the cumulative weight of each category in semester grades.

*Quizzes* [10%] In lieu of a midterm or final examination, a number of unannounced quizzes will be administered throughout the course to ensure that students are keeping up with the readings. At the end of the semester, the instructor will throw out each student's two lowest quiz scores, including missed quizzes.

*Short Observation Papers* [15% each, 45% total] Students will write three short (2-3 page) essays applying a single concept from a reading to a real-world context the student observes. Students will be graded on the clarity of the description of the concept and the student's ability to apply and argue for the concept's centrality (or lack thereof) to the behavior being observed. The purpose of the assignment is three-fold: 1) to demonstrate knowledge of concepts from the course; 2) to test ideas from the course in "real-world" observations; and 3) to encourage students to think differently about the interactions they see and participate in on a daily basis.

*Presentations* [15%] Students will give brief group presentations in-class on a course reading. The purpose of the presentation is to stimulate discussion and application of the ideas in the course readings. Presentations will cover three things: 1) A brief, yet substantive summary statement on the author's argument, with examples from the text. 2) A media document (TV clip, film clip, magazine article, etc.) or other material that demonstrates the author's argument. 3) A statement from your group on what you think of the author's argument, including your reasons. Groups will consist of 4 members.

*Final Group Projects* [30%] The course culminates in a group project, which has two graded components: spoken and written. Groups will deliver an oral presentation on their comparative study of two interpersonal communication contexts based upon theories and analysis students have engaged in over the semester. The purpose of the project is for students to demonstrate their knowledge of course materials in an environment that encourages personal and group creativity. Groups choose their own topic and contexts for analysis, with instructor approval. Groups will consist of 4 members.

In cases of what the instructor judges to be exceptional contributions to classroom discussion over the course of the semester, she reserves the right to adjust a student's grade accordingly. Likewise, persistent tardiness or absences can affect a student's grade negatively.

Grades will be based on the standard university grading scale.

90-100% = A range  
80-89% = B range  
70-79% = C range  
60-69% = D range  
0-59% = F

The instructor makes every effort to grade fairly and is always willing to discuss grades given on major assignments. In the event that students feel they received an undeserved grade, they may make their case *in writing* to the instructor within two weeks of receiving the grade.

### **Delinquent Assignments and Other Miscellaneous Rules:**

**Assignments:** Assignments other than quizzes will be announced well in advance of due dates. Extensions will only be granted in exceptional circumstances and for which the student must provide appropriate documentation (e.g., a letter from the dean, doctor, and so on, detailing the circumstances of the emergency). Non-emergency appointments are not excused. Missed quizzes can be made up only after the submission of appropriate documentation. Students are responsible for all class material they miss due to absence.

**Attendance:** The instructor expects that students will attend class, complete required readings, and be prepared to participate in class discussions. Three unexcused absences will result in the reduction of a student's semester grade by one letter grade. Absences in excess of this may result in failure of the course.

**Tardiness:** Students who are more than 10 minutes late to class forfeit their privilege of attending the course for the day and can, under no circumstances, attend another section as "make-up".

## **Course Outline:**

**An asterick\* identifies dates and readings for group presentations.**

### **Introduction: What is Interpersonal Communication?**

**Thur. 1/4:** Introduction to the course and mediated communication

**Tues. 1/9:** Trenholm and Jensen, Chapters 1 (on communication competence) and 2 (on interpersonal communication)

**Thur. 1/11:** Peters, John Durham, "The Gaps of Which Communication is Made"  
*Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 11:2, June 1994, 117-140.  
(photocopy on reserve)

**\*Tues. 1/16:** Hall, Kira, "Lip Service on the Fantasy Lines," in Kira Hall and Mary Bucholtz, eds. *Gender Articulated: Language and the Constructed Self*. New York, NY: Routledge, 1995, 183-216. (photocopy on reserve)

### **Defining Communication in Social Relationships**

**Thur. 1/18:** Trenholm and Jensen, Chapter 7 (on role competence).

**Tues. 1/23:** Goffman, Erving. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1959, 238-255. (book on reserve)

**Thur. 1/25:** Day two of Goffman.

**\*Tues. 1/30:** Eliasoph, Nina "The Mysterious Shrinking Circle of Concern" and "Humor, Nostalgia, and Commercial Culture in the Postmodern Public Sphere," in Eliasoph's *Avoiding Politics: How Americans Produce Apathy in Everyday Life*. Cambridge UP, 1998. (book on reserve)

**\*\*Wed. 1/31\*\*:** Response paper #1 due by 4pm, instructor's mailbox.

### **Constructing the Self through Communication**

**Thur. 2/1:** Trenholm and Jensen, Chapter 8 (on self competence).

**Tues. 2/6:** Goffman, Erving, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc, 1963, Chapters 1 and 2. (book on reserve and available for purchase)

**\*Thur. 2/8:** Goffman, Erving. *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc, 1963, Chapter 4 (book on reserve and available for purchase) **and** Cameron, Deborah, "Performing Gender Identity: Young Men's Talk and the Construction of Heterosexual Masculinity," in Sally Johnson and Ulrike Hanna Meinhof, eds. *Language and Masculinity*. London: Blackwell Publishers, 1997, 46-64. (photocopy on reserve)

**Tues. 2/13:** Trenholm and Jensen, Chapters 3 (nonverbal competence) and 4 (verbal competence).

## Managing Social Differences in and through Communication

**Thur. 2/15:** Trenholm and Jensen, Chapter 9 (on goal competence) **and** Robin Lakoff, “Why Can’t a Woman Be Less Like a Man,” in *Talking Power: The Politics of Language in Our Lives*. New York, NY: Basic Books, 1990, 198-214. (photocopy on reserve)

**\*Tues. 2/20:** Williams, Lena. (2000). “Introduction” and “It’s the Little Things in Public” in *It’s the Little Things: The Everyday Interactions that Get Under the Skin of Blacks and Whites*. New York, NY: Harcourt, Inc., 1-49.

**Practical Applications: Combating Nonverbal and Verbal Harassment with Self-Defense** (Key concepts are consent, assertiveness, de-escalation, choice, and “target hardening”).

**\*Thur. 2/22:** Kramarae, Cheri, “Harassment and Everyday Life” in Lana Rakow, ed. *Women Making Meaning: New Feminist Directions in Communications*. New York, NY: Routledge, 1992, 100-120. (photocopy on reserve)

Recommended: Stanko, Elizabeth, *Everyday Violence: How Men and Women Experience Danger in their Daily Lives*. Harper Collins, 1990. (book on reserve)

**Tues. 2/27:** Powell, Elizabeth, “I Thought You Didn’t Mind” in Emilie Buchwald, ed. *Transforming a Rape Culture*. (photocopy on reserve)

**Thur. 3/1:** Verbal self-defense unit continued.

**\*\*Fri. 3/2\*\*:** Response Paper #2 due by 4pm, instructor’s mailbox.

**Tues 3/6-3/8:** NO CLASS, SPRING BREAK

**Tues. 3/13:** hooks, bell, “Representations of Whiteness,” in *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. Boston, MA: South End Press, 1992, 165-178. (photocopy on reserve)

## Deception and Relationships

**Thur. 3/15:** Trenholm and Jensen, Chapters 5 (on relational competence).

**\*Tues. 3/20:** Bok, Sissela, “Truthfulness, Deceit and Trust” and “White Lies,” in *Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life*. New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1978, 17-31 and 57-72. (book on reserve)

### **Love and Friendship: Communicating Intimacy and Mutual Respect**

**Thur. 3/22:** \*\*Hand out Group Project Assignment and sign up for groups\*

**Tues. 3/27:** Trenholm and Jensen, Chapter 11(on intimate relationships)

**Thur. 3/29:** Foucault, Michel, "Friendship as a Way of Life," reprinted in *Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth*, Vol. I, 1998, 135-40 **and** Graham, Barbara, "The Future of Love," *Utne Reader*, November/December 1996, 47-51. (photocopies on reserve)

**\*\*Fri. 3/30\*\*:** **Response Paper #3 due by 4pm, instructor's mailbox.**

**Tues. 4/3:** Stephen Jay Gould, "A Biological Homage to Mickey Mouse," in *The Panda's Thumb: More Reflections in Natural History*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton and Company, 1980, 95-107. (photocopy on reserve)

**Thur. 4/5:** **\*\*Group Project Proposal Presentations\*\***

### **The Construction of the Family through Communication**

**Tues. 4/10:** Trenholm and Jensen, Chapter 10 (on family communication)

**Thur. 4/12:** Marcia Millman, "Love and Money," "The Work of Love," and "Squaring the Family Circle," from her book *Warm Hearts and Cold Cash*. New York, NY: The Free Press, 1991, 1-15, 133-144, and 161-176. (book on reserve)

### **Group Project Oral Presentations**

**Tues. 4/17:** **Groups #1, #2, and #3.**

**Thur. 4/19:** **Groups #4, #5 and #6.**