

Marriage and Family Communication Syllabus
Communication 329
Summer 2016
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Course Description and Objectives:

This course begins with the understanding that the family is our initial communicative unit. Family shapes our identities, self-concepts, self-esteem, attitudes, values, and beliefs. Furthermore, marital and family experiences affect how we communicate with others, how we react to our communicative environment, and how we present ourselves to others.

Marriage and family continue to be a current issue in the media, politics, pop culture, and higher education – we literally find it debated everywhere. What “family” means has continued to change, and there are emerging new forms, meanings, and expectations. Learning about marital and family communication can increase your self awareness, tolerance, and even appreciation of others and the complexities of one of our most fundamental life experiences.

Marriage and Family Communication is designed as an introduction to communication phenomena in the setting of marriage and family. The overall goal is it help you understand how we develop, maintain, enhance, or disturb family relationships through communication. You will learn verbal and nonverbal skills, which can help promote healthy family and marital communication.

This course will explore the diversity of marital and family situations and systems that we encounter everyday. We will review the major theories, concepts, and research findings in family communication. This course will provide the vocabulary necessary to discuss marital and family communication matters in scientific terms and will expose students to a variety of approaches to the study of marital and family communication.

Expected Course Outcomes:

- To understand and appreciate one’s own marital and family structure, values, development, communication patterns, rules, norms, and hierarchies.
- To become more comfortable with and have more control over one’s own personal situations and more competent and facile in skills related to communication in the family.
- To develop multiple communication strategies concerning marital and family negotiations, lifestyles, ongoing situations, and daily interactions.
- To increase awareness of various options concerning marital and family dynamics and become more accepting of other’s choices
- To be able to apply and incorporate theoretical perspectives and scientific/scholarly observations regarding marital and family dynamics

What this course is NOT:

We will be discussing communication as it relates to a number of issues, even sensitive issues. But it is not the behaviors themselves that will be the focus, but rather, the communication that underlies the situation. It is inappropriate (and dangerous) to use the course as individual therapy to help you solve serious family issues such as abuse in all its forms. If you need help, I will gladly refer you to the counseling center on campus.

Text and Materials:

Turner, L. H., & West, R. (2013). *Perspectives on family communication*, 4th Ed. Boston: McGrawHill.

Additional readings (supplied by instructor)

Personal Statement:

A former professor of mine inspired me by the following message: Perhaps the most important task of a teacher is selecting and/or creating opportunities for student learning. I fear that too often this task is interpreted to mean the selection of curriculum materials without regard to the original intent of the materials or how those materials will be packaged or used with students.

This course is based upon several premises relative to the above. Most important, I believe that students can be a powerful part of the teaching and learning process. I wish for you to comprehend the course's fundamental concepts in a relatively quick time frame. I am committed to the precept that understanding develops and endures through active involvement. Therefore, you are expected to assume a high level of mental activity and responsibility for your own learning. I will do everything I can to make this classroom a rigorous, practical, an enjoyable learning environment. There will be times when you do not agree with me; there will also be times when I do not agree with you. This should be the beginning of mutual learning.

Special Needs:

Students with special learning needs are encouraged to discuss accommodations needs with me early in the semester. Student may be asked to contact the Disability Resource Center to determine academic accommodations (852-6938).

Title IX/Clery Act Notification

Sexual misconduct (sexual harassment, sexual assault, and sexual/dating/domestic violence) and sex discrimination are violations of University policies. Anyone experiencing sexual misconduct and/or sex discrimination has the right to obtain confidential support from the PEACC Program 852-2663, Counseling Center 852-6585 and Campus Health Services 852-6479.

Reporting your experience or incident to any other University employee (including, but not limited to, professors and instructors) is an official, non-confidential report to the University. To file an official report, please contact the Dean of Student's Office 852-5787 and/or the University of Louisville Police Department 852-6111. For more information regarding your rights as a victim of sexual misconduct, see the Sexual Misconduct Resource Guide (<http://louisville.edu/hr/employeerelations/sexual-misconduct-brochure>).

This is an Online Class:

You are NOT required to attend any face-to-face classes. All work is completed online.

Announcements and Class Information:

You are responsible for any announcements given in class concerning changes in due dates, schedule, and/or supplemental readings. All information will be given on Blackboard. Check the announcements page often.

I will also post homework, weekly reflections within the announcements page so I would suggest logging into Blackboard regularly.

Lecture Materials:

I will post lecture material on Monday (unless noted otherwise). It is your responsibility to retrieve the lecture material and any other material I post. All lecture materials (and most assignments) can be located under Course Documents.

Assignment Due Dates:

All papers and exams must be completed and turned in on the date assigned. If you fail to turn in a paper on time you will lose a letter grade for each day it is late. I will always give you a time when a paper is due (e.g., Friday by 5 p.m.)

Plagiarism:

Plagiarism on any assignment will result in a minimum of a ZERO for the assignment.

Plagiarism includes the following:

1. Copying someone else's work and claiming it as your own
2. Paraphrasing someone else's work and claiming it as your own
3. Collaborating excessively with another person and claiming the work solely as your own

*** I am aware of a number of websites where students can download prewritten research papers. As a matter of policy, I regularly browse these sites comparing available papers to my students' papers. Submission of a pre-written paper, even in modified form, will trigger an F for the assignment, F for the course, and referral to student judiciaries.

Course Requirements and Grading:Student Leader Assignment:

Each week I will assign student leaders to lead a discussion on the material due for that week. Each person will be responsible for writing questions related to that week's assigned reading and post the questions in the discussion board forum. The question posts are in addition to the required posts. Leaders will post a minimum of **six** times. For example, if you have three posts required for the week and you are the discussion leader you will have an additional three posts due that week (of course, you can always post more). These posts/questions should be posted no later than Wednesday. There are no extra points given for additional questions (or follow up questions) but I encourage students to present multiple questions to engage other students and keep/maintain an active discussion. The discussion questions should inspire critical thinking. I will post an announcement assigning the discussion leader roles soon –watch for an announcement.

There will be several people assigned as leaders each week. Each person is responsible for doing the assignment. There are plenty of topics that can be covered in the week's readings (supplemental or chapter reading). Each person chooses their concentration from the week's reading material and proceeds accordingly. I do not foresee an overlap in topics – too much material to choose from. If you are assigned as leader, I encourage you to post as soon as possible that week to engage other students and to make sure another leader doesn't choose your preferred topic that week.

There are no make-ups, do-overs, or “mulligans” on the student leader assignment. You are required to be leader on your assigned week.

Genogram Project:

You are to draw a genogram of your family or someone else's family (friends, fictional, or media). This drawing covers four generations and graphs marriages, the number of children in each marriage, birth order, and birth and death dates if applicable.

The creator or “main person” of the genogram is outlined in bold or a double symbol so the eye goes right to this person. Significant relationships between individuals are also shown

You may hand draw or use a computer program to do the drawing. If you hand draw your genogram please scan the drawing so that you can turn in the assignment via "Assignments." I no longer take genopro diagrams. You must complete the assignment in a way that can be downloaded into blackboard. I will include symbols to be used in a folder under "Course Documents."

In the essay you should explain the genogram and comment on patterns and changes in patterns over the generations. These patterns can be communication issues, health issues, longevity, occupations, geographical, religion and spirituality, ethnicity, marital and divorce, and family disorders (e.g., violence). Look for a minimum of three patterns. Discuss how we benefit from knowing about our family-of-origins. You might want to begin by interviewing family members, such as a parent, sibling, or grandparent. Tell me what you learned from doing the genogram and what you would want your family to remember (learn from the assignment). Paper length should be 750-1250 words or 3-5 pages.

Lecture Materials: I will post lecture material every Monday under Course Documents. You are to review these materials. It is your responsibility to retrieve the lecture material and any other material I post.

Discussion Forums:

You are required to visit the course discussion forums at least twice a week and make at least three different posts (please feel free to post more, in fact I encourage you to post often). You can respond to the lecture, readings, discussion leader questions, or to a student's comments, concerns, and/or arguments.

I want at least 150 words in one of your responses with follow up responses having at least 75 words. To earn credit for posts, you cannot simply agree or disagree with a comment. You must make a coherent argument/comment when you post to the discussion forum. For the best posts and one way to add to the discussion in your post is to bring in current events or a research article you may find pertaining to the topic (big hint here – support your arguments/claims/comments with research or concepts from the book. If you find outside research or a good example of a concept in current events, you should add the link when you make the post). In addition, one of your posts should be spaced 24 hours apart from the others. I do not want all your posts on the same day. I also do not want all your posts on the last day of the week. There is no way a discussion can happen if you wait until the last day to post. You have until Sunday midnight to make your posts for each week. After 12:01 a.m. Monday morning I will not read/grade any posts from the following week.

Helpful hints:

- Make three posts
- Make at least one post before Wednesday
- Make at least two other posts before Sunday midnight
- Be coherent, thoughtful, and interesting in your posts

You are in control of how much you share about your own family experiences. You do not have to self-disclose if you do not wish to. Your grade does not depend on revealing personal material. You can always opt to apply the theory to fictional families or other families you have observed if you do not wish to talk about your own family.

Your contributions to the class will increase the understanding and retention of the class material for you and your classmates. As such, I will monitor everyone's posts. I do not respond to discussions unless it is absolutely necessary. I have found that students discuss more thoroughly if I stay out of the discussion.

Due to this course being solely online, if you miss more than six posts (you are to

respond at a minimum three times a week for 10 weeks for a total of about 30 different posts – not including assignments) during the semester your final grade being lowered by one letter for every absence thereafter (A to B). Also, just because you make all your posts does not mean you'll automatically earn an A. I will monitor the quality of your posts as well as the quantity.

Popular Press Book Analysis:

For this assignment, you will select a popular culture **research based** book about marriage and/or family communication (your selection needs to be approved). You will read and analyze the book based on course materials. You will turn in a written paper (approximately 1,000-1,500 words; 6-8 pages). It is your job to compare what the authors say to current research. I recommend conducting an Amazon.com search for books by John Gottman, Gary Chapman, or any book written by a person with a Ph.D. or equivalent education. Please have your book approved by me.

In your paper, you need to cover the following: (1) an introduction, (2), a short summary (very short) of the book, concentrating on the dimensions that you will focus on in your analysis, (3) an analysis of the book based on the course concepts that you are employing, beginning with a very brief summary of each idea, (4) address what we can learn from this book regarding marriage and family communication, (5) address where the book is wrong, needs to be more thorough, or is lacking, and (6) compare the popular press book to class material and 5-10 additional current academic research findings (must be peer reviewed research findings – meaning, you must cite an academic journal not a newspaper), and (6) a solid conclusion. Analyses will benefit from the application of a limited number of concepts (likely 2-3), which will allow for a deeper investigation and discussion of how these concepts inform us about marriage and/or family communication and the assigned book.

Papers will be assessed on both their content (e.g., quality of ideas, application of materials) and format (e.g., grammar, spelling, punctuation). You should carefully edit, proof, and review the paper prior to submitting it. You may want to get peer feedback on the writing from other students in the class.

Possible Topics: Step families, co-dependency, genograms, single-parent families, nuclear families, sexuality, adoption, dialectics, changing family roles, gender roles and family, patterns of violence, resolving conflict, conflict styles, power and decision making, everyday stress and unpredictable stress, mother-daughter communication, father-son communication, mother-son communication, father-daughter communication, sibling conflict, marital satisfaction, parenting styles, daycare, work-family issues, aging family, televised messages about families, divorce, communication about sex, family definitions, dual career couples, sandwich generations, birth stories, courtship stories, family metaphors, etc.

I will evaluate your final reports primarily on the following criteria:

- a. appropriateness and clarity;
- b. demonstrated understanding of course material;
- c. appropriateness of literature chosen;
- d. use of supporting evidence;
- e. depth of analysis;
- f. appropriate application of course concepts;
- g. sound conclusions drawn;
- h. mechanics (spelling, grammar, punctuation); and structure (organization of ideas, paragraph structure, transitions) and style (must comply with the APA 5th or 6th Edition Manual).
- i. turn in your paper via “Assignments”

Quizzes: Instead of tests, I will give weekly quizzes. These are timed quizzes. The quizzes will cover material from the book, lectures, and supplemental reading. The quizzes will be available to take from Monday until Sunday each week. After Sunday 11:50 a.m. the quiz for that week

will no longer be available.

Homework and Miscellaneous Assignments: I will periodically assign homework and/or additional assignments for the class. More information will be given at the time the work is assigned.

All items in this syllabus are subject to change at the discretion of the instructor with or without prior notification or written confirmation

Grading Scale:

Quizzes & Homework	160 points (40%)
Discussion Forums	140 points (20%)
Discussion Leader	25 points (5%)
Genogram	75 points (15%)
Book Analysis	<u>100 points (20%)</u>
	500 points

100- 97 – A+	89-87 – B+	79-77 - C+	69-67 – D+	Below 60 = F
96 – 93 – A	86-84 – B	76-74 – C	66-64 - D	
92-90 – A-	83-80 – B-	73-70 – C-	63-60 – D-	

Contesting Grades:

I am willing to go over any assignment or exam with you to discuss concerns that you might have. I ask that you abide by two guidelines, all of which make it easier for us both to concentrate on your concerns. 1) Wait 24 hours after an assignment/test has been returned to you to contact me. 2) Please write your concerns and your backing for these concerns down and send them to me via email.

Tentative Schedule:

When	Topic	Reading
Week One May 31-June 5	Introduction to Course Introductions To Do: Posts, Get Book, Read syllabus	Read Syllabus
Week Two June 6-12	Providing a Definition for the Study of Family Communication To Do: Readings, Quiz, Posts, Lectures	Read Chapter 1 & 10 Supplemental Reading
Week Three June 13-19	Providing a Theoretical Framework for the Study of Family Comm. To Do: Readings, Quiz, Posts, Lecture	Read Chapter 2
Week Four June 20-26	Telling Stories, Making Meaning, and Creating Family Identity To Do: Readings, Quiz, Posts, Lecture	Read Chapter 6
Week Five June 27-July 3	Communicating Roles and Rules in the Family To Do: Readings, Quiz, Posts, Lectures Gengorams Due, Sunday at 11:59 (due July 3 before 11:59pm) Helpful link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WMoLjfEOzfk	Read Chapter 3
Week Six July 4-10	Communicating Conflict in the in the Family To Do: Readings, Quiz, Posts, Lecture	Read Chapter 7
Week Seven July 11-17	Communicating Intimacy To Do: Readings, Quiz, Posts, Lecture	Read Chapter 5
Week Eight July 18-24	Family Communication and Stress To Do: Readings, Quiz, Posts, Lecture	Read Chapter 8
Week Nine July 25-July 31	Societal Influences on the Family To Do: Readings, Quiz, Posts, Lecture Watch the following clips. Discuss and analyze using class concepts. Clip from Mad Men http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ItMxcOTzvNk Clip from The Kids Are Alright http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WpSG554L8Qs Clip from Crazy Stupid Love http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YFrWPOftuMs Clip from Pursuit of Happyness http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DvtxOzO6OAE Clip from Modern Family http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1aSzTVrP5FQ	Read Chapter 4
Week Ten Aug 1-Aug 7	Managing Challenging Dialogues in the Family To Do: Readings, Quiz, Posts, Lecture, Book Analysis due	Read Chapter 9