

Communicating about Relationship Challenges
(a.k.a., THE DARK SIDE OF CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS)

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COURSE OVERVIEW

The line between what is considered normal and pathological is often frightfully thin, especially in close relationships. For example, when does a person who texts after a date cross the line from being protective to possessive? When does a person who is appealing become appalling? Or when does a person who is nurturing become smothering? Personal relationships are fraught with paradoxical and often confusing situations, challenges, and interactions. This class addresses relational issues ranging from lying to transgressions, privacy violations to deception, hurtful messages to abuse, and jealousy to relational obsession.

Using the dark side metaphor this class will investigate important, yet often neglected, issues of personal relationships. The dark side metaphor will allow consideration for the hidden and forbidden as well as the contradictory and ironic elements of human relating. More specifically, the class has two main goals—developing understanding of (1) the influence communication has on personal relationships, and (2) how contexts and relational challenges influence perceptions of personal relationships.

In this course, we will identify some of the challenges that people face in their relationships. In addition to experiences that are often characterized as the “dark side” of close relationships, we will also discuss several events that are less “dark” but are challenging to negotiate nonetheless. We also explore the ways in which communication influences and sometimes resolves turmoil within relationships. By the end of the semester, you should be able to:

1. Identify some of the challenging experiences that emerge in close relationships and explain the circumstances surrounding these events and the role of interpersonal communication in resolving those events.
2. Demonstrate competency in library research and an ability to integrate resources to understand a relational phenomenon.
3. To be able to listen, think, and write critically about issues pertinent to the study of interpersonal and personal relationships.
4. Analyze more effectively interpersonal and personal behaviors.
5. Increase the array of available choices about interpersonal and personal behaviors.

REQUIRED READING

Cupach, W.R., & Spitzberg, B.H. (2011). *The dark side of relationships II*. New York, NY: Taylor and Francis.

Spitzberg, B. H., & Cupach, W. R. (1998). *The dark side of relationships*. Mahwah, NJ: LEA.

All readings should be completed prior to class time on the day that they are assigned in the syllabus.

RECOMMENDED READING

Kowlaski, R. M. (Ed.) (2001). *Behaving badly: Aversive behaviors in interpersonal relationships*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Spitzberg, B. H., & Cupach, W. R. (2011). *The dark side of interpersonal communication, 2nd Ed*. New York, NY: Routledge.

There will be additional supplemental readings during the semester.

Attendance:

We will be involved in a number of in-class exercises and discussions; therefore, your presence is necessary for class. In addition, your contributions to the class will increase the understanding and retention of the class material for you and your classmates. You will also have in-class activities/quizzes assignments that entail points that cannot be made up if you miss class. You must be present to earn the points.

Announcements and Class Information:

You are responsible for any announcements given in class concerning changes in due dates, schedule, and/or supplemental readings. If you miss a class, you are responsible for obtaining the notes from a classmate in order to be familiar with information covered that day.

Special Needs:

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

Title IX/Clery Act Notification:

Sexual misconduct (including sexual harassment, sexual assault, and any other nonconsensual behavior of a sexual nature) and sex discrimination violate University policies. Students experiencing such behavior may obtain confidential support from the PEACC Program ([852-2663](tel:852-2663)), Counseling Center ([852-6585](tel:852-6585)), and Campus Health Services ([852-6479](tel:852-6479)). To report sexual misconduct or sex discrimination, contact the Dean of Students ([852-5787](tel:852-5787)) or University of Louisville Police ([852-6111](tel:852-6111)).

Disclosure to University faculty or instructors of sexual misconduct, domestic violence, dating violence, or sex discrimination occurring on campus, in a University-sponsored program, or involving a campus visitor or University student or employee (whether current or former) is not confidential under Title IX. Faculty and instructors must forward such reports, including names and circumstances, to the University's Title IX officer.

For more information, see the Sexual Misconduct Resource Guide

(<http://louisville.edu/hr/employeerelations/sexual-misconduct-brochure>).

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. Papers that are more than five days late will not be accepted and the student will receive a grade of zero for that assignment. If you fail to come to class on an exam day, you will receive a zero for the exam, unless an alternate due date has PREVIOUSLY been approved.

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 as your own.

Cell Phones and Beepers:

Turn your cell phones and beepers off when you enter the classroom unless you have prior approval. These interruptions are distracting. In honor of my late colleague Ken Hardy, if your cell phone rings you will be asked to stand and sing "I'm a Little Tea Pot" or a song decided by the class.

Email:

I frequently use email as a means for getting in touch with the entire class; therefore it is important that you have a working email address that you have on record with the university and check on a regular basis.

Access:

Please come to my office hours or make an appointment to speak with me if you are having trouble in this class. I am more than willing to help students who are open about their needs. If you are having trouble understanding the material or if you have issues in your personal life that are impeding your ability to perform in this class as you normally would it is vital that you speak to me about it before you begin to fall behind. I never like to see students slip through the cracks if it can be prevented. So please see me the moment you feel you need some help.

Course Requirements and Grading

Participation: 50 pts

Your attendance and participation during class meetings is encouraged and expected. You are expected to respond to course material and to complete and discuss exercises that are conducted during class. Thus, 50 of your participation points will be awarded based on your engagement in the material and your contributions to conversations during weekly class meetings. You MUST be in class to complete these assignments. There are no “make-ups” under any circumstances.

In Class Participation Educational Opportunities: (Must be present to earn points)

- Extra! Extra! Read All About It: More information to be given in class. You will bring a headline/pop culture article to class. (10 pts)
- Fact or Fiction: More information in class. You may need access to the internet during class (20 pts)
- Minute to Win It: Students will be given 60 seconds to talk about a dark side topic. More information to be given in class (20 pts)

Reading Experts: 500 pts

- Everyone Reads: Everyone will bring in a thoughtful reaction (or discussion question) from each reading. You may choose to write about what was muddy/clear about the reading, what surprised you, what you learned, what you wonder about . . . You will turn in your question/reaction for every reading. You do the question/reaction in addition to your other assigned another role(s). (You must be present to get these points total of 150 pts)
- Follow the Leader: You will be assigned a class reading to lead. Your role is to ensure the class discusses and engages in the material. Your job is NOT to talk the entire time nor review the entire chapter.
 - o You will do a **very short summary** of the chapter, have an activity, and have questions to lead a thoughtful discussion. You will incorporate a Powerpoint to help the class discuss the material.
 - o Your job is to also incorporate the other leaders. You will want to talk with them ahead of class to see how much time they need, what they are discussing, and put it in an appropriate order for the day. You will turn in your “plan” for the day along with your summary, activity, and/or Powerpoint.
 - o You should find a way to make this assignment **engaging and interactive (i.e., activities)**.
 - o You will incorporate a discussion of how a specific theory helps/hinders our ability to understand the topic
- Ankle Deep in Research: You will be assigned a topic in which you are to bring in additional current research.
 - o You will find one quality research article, summarize the findings, critique the research, and relate the material to the class reading/topic. When possible relate to theory.
 - o You should find a way to make this assignment engaging and interactive.
 - o You will turn in a one page summary, the article, and how you related the article to class. (total of 50 pts)
- Turning that Frown Upside Down: You will be assigned a class reading in which you are to bring in contradictory research to the topic.
 - o You will find one quality research article, summarize the findings, critique the research, and relate the material to the class reading/topic. When possible relate to theory.
 - o The research article should be **in contrast** to the class reading. You should find a way to make this assignment engaging and interactive.
 - o You will turn in a one page summary, the article, and how you related the article to class. (total of 50 pts)
- Talk to Me Ted: You will be assigned a class reading in which you are to bring in a TED Talk that best represents an idea from the class reading or compliments the class reading.
 - o You will turn in a short summary and analysis of the TED Talk and how you related it to the class reading.
 - o Do not show the entire clip – find a few moments from the talk that best captures the topic of the day and ways in which we can discuss the TED Talk and topic (total of 25 pts)
- Bono Approved: You will bring in a song and/or video that relates to the topic.
 - o You will turn in a short summary and analysis of the song and how it related to the class reading. The lyrics and/or video may be used as your basis for analysis. (total of 25 pts)

Make the World a Better Place (Final Project): 150 pts

Throughout the semester, you will conduct a “scavenger hunt” to find 10 interesting and varied illustrations of issues relevant to the dark side of communication as you can. These scenarios will serve an important function in our class meetings as we apply scholarly literature to concrete examples.

What:

- o Choose a topic that interests you

- What is the master narrative that surrounds the topic? How do you know this is the master narrative? What evidence do you have to support your master narrative perspective? Do we need to change the master narrative surrounding this topic? Why? If we don't need to change the master narrative, explain why, too.

When:

- What do we know about the topic?
- What did research say about this topic 15-20+ years ago? Find 2 research articles that support what we knew about the topic many years ago.
- What are 3 current research findings about this topic? What are the findings? How are they same/different than what we knew years ago?
- Translate the research into something tangible. How can we use the research? What could we do with the information?

Who:

- Who is affected by this topic? Who is silenced by this topic? Who is an advocate for this topic?
- Interview 2 people that will help you better understand the topic. You are not a therapist so please be mindful of your interviews. I would like to approve your chosen interviewees.

Where:

- How is Kentuckiana addressing this issue? If relevant, what are local statistics about the topic? UofL? City? State?
- Please attend one relationship event offered by UofL or in the community during the semester (such as Take Back the Night, violence prevention, etc.). Summarize your observations and how it relates to class (specifically, i.e., theory, concepts).

How:

- How could we serve Kentuckiana in relation to this topic? What are 3 volunteer or service opportunities are available? What are the pros/cons of the opportunity?

Put a Bow on It:

- Ted Talk – now it's your time to shine. Make the world a better place. Inform and persuade others. Your Ted Talk should be no more than 5-7 minutes

Grad Students:

Discussion Leader: In addition to the assignment, you will analyze your topic theoretically in a short paper. More information will be given during the semester. Also, you will do each of the assignments solo.

Make The World Better: In addition to the assignment, you will analyze your topic by applying theory to your topic. More information will be given during the semester.

Final Grade

Your final grade will be determined by summing scores on all assignments completed this semester.

Participation	50 pts
Chapter Reactions	150 pts
Discussion Leader	75 pts
Current Research	50 pts
Contradictory Research	50 pts
Ted Talk	25 pts
Song	25 pts
Final Project	<u>200 pts</u>
	Total = 625 pts

Final grades will be assigned according to the following scale:

Grading Scale:

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 three 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 so that we can both look them over as we meet. 3) Please approach me only during office hours or during an appointment that we've scheduled - discussing your grade in class violates your privacy and doesn't provide an environment where I can adequately focus on your concerns. Please do not ask to have your grade changed for reasons other than mathematical error. Applying subjective standards after the fact invalidates the standards applied to the entire class and is unfair to every student.

Extra Credit:

Let the Games Begin: Worth 15 points

Working solo or in teams of no more than four you will create a board game that teaches the "players" about the dark side of personal relationships.

The game should highlight facts, information, research learned from the course readings/books.

Be prepared to present your game – more information will be given in class

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

COURSE SCHEDULE

Tues, Jan 10	Introductions & Discussion of Syllabus
Thurs, Jan 12	Sign up for Chapters Defining the “Dark Side” and Relationship “Challenges” DS – Preface DS II – Ch. 1
Tues, Jan 17	Fairytales and Tragedies – CS 2
Thur, Jan 19	Chapter Reading
Tues, Jan 24	Chapter Reading
Thur, Jan 26	Chapter Reading
Tue, Jan 31	Chapter Reading
Thur, Feb 2	Chapter Reading
Tue, Feb 7	Chapter Reading Fact or Fiction
Thur, Feb 9	Chapter Reading
Tue, Feb 14	Make The World Better Day
Thur, Feb 16	Make The World Better Day
Tue, Feb 21	Chapter Reading
Thur, Feb 23	Chapter Reading
Tue, Feb 28	Chapter Reading
Thur, March 2	Chapter Reading
Tue, March 7	Chapter Reading
Thur, March 9	Catch Up Extra! Extra! Minute to Win It
Tue, March 14	Spring Break
Thur, March 16	Spring Break
Tue, March 21	Chapter Reading
Thur, March 23	Chapter Reading

Tue, March 29	Work on Make the World Better
Thurs, March 30	Chapter Reading
Tue, April 4	Chapter Reading
Thur, April 6	Catch Up Make the World Better
Tue, April 11	Make the World Better
Thur, April 13	Make the World Better
Tue, April 18	Make the World Better
Thur, April 20	Make the World Better (celebrate my birthday with the class)