

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: 75 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)

- Fact or Fiction: More information in class. You may need access to the internet during class (25 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 (25 pts)

Reading Experts: 500 pts

- Out of the Hat: Everyone will bring in a thoughtful reaction (or discussion question) from each reading and be prepared to give a 30 second oration to the class or engage in a pair share. 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 (1 minute), **have an activity**, and have questions to lead a thoughtful discussion. You may incorporate a Powerpoint if it would 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
 - o (total of 100 pts).
- Ankle Deep in Research: You will be assigned class readings in which you are to bring in additional current research to the topic.
 - o You will find one quality research articles, very briefly summarize the findings, 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.
 - o (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, 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)

Let the Games Begin, Paper, and Presentation: 200 pts

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

In addition to the game and presentation of the game, each student will analyze a dark theme and write a 7-10 page paper on that topic. You will present a “novel” finding from the research during your group’s presentation day.

Relationship Awareness Event: Please attend one relationship event during the semester or watch a movie/documentary that portrays the dark side of relationships. Attend and prepare a 1-2 page paper which summarizes your observations, how it relates to class (specifically, i.e., theory, concepts), and recommendations from a communication perspective. More information will be discussed in class. (total points 100)

Final Grade

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

Participation	75 pts
Chapter Reactions	150 pts
Discussion Leader	100 pts
Current Research	50 pts
Contradictory Research	50 pts
Ted Talk	25 pts
Song	25 pts
Relationship Event	100 pts
Game	<u>200 pts</u>
	Total = 875 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 schedules - 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.

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

- May 9** **Introductions & Discussion of Syllabus**
Sign up for Chapters
Defining the “Dark Side” and Relationship “Challenges”
DS – Preface & DS II – Ch. 1
- May 10** **Relationship Games/Relationship Event; 1-2**
Fairytales and Tragedies – CS 2 (found under course documents); 3-4pm
- May 11** **Online Dating (MR 3 – found under course documents)**
DL: Dakota
CR: Jordan
FUD: Wes
TED: Taylor
Song: Shelby
- May 12** **Fatal attraction (SC 1)**
DL: Pat
CR: Sally
FUD: Jordan
TED: Alondra
Song: Dakota
- May 13** **Infidelity (CS 7)**
DL: Alondra
CR: Wes
FUD: Dakota
TED: Pat
Song: Jordan
- May 16** **Relationship Game/Relationship Event**
May 17 **Relationship Game/Relationship Event**
May 18 **Swearing (BB 3)**
DL: Wes
CR: Ryan
FUD: Alondra
TED: Shelby
Song: Tyler
- May 19** **Partner Violence (CS 13)**
DL: Shelby
CR: Alondra
FUD: Sally
TED: Jordan
Song: Ryan
- May 20** **Mental Health (SC 11)**
DL: Taylor
CR: Davelle
FUD: Shelby
TED: Ryan
Song: Wes
*****Fact or Fiction**

May 23 **Inlaws (CS 9)**
DL: Tyler
CR: Pat
FUD: Ryan
TED: Dakota
Song: Sally

May 24 **ORI/Stalking (SC 8)**
DL: Sally
CR: Shelby
FUD: Davelle
TED: Tyler
Song: Pat
*****Minute to Win It**

May 25 **Transgressions (BB 9)**
DL: Jordan
CR: Tyler
FUD: Pat
TED: Davelle
Song: Taylor

May 26 **Incarcerated men (CS 11)**
DL: Ryan
CR: Dakota
FUD: Taylor
TED: Sally
Song: Davelle

May 27 **Relationship Games/Relationship Events**