

## **COMX 414: COMMUNICATION IN PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS**

Spring 2019  
MWF 12:00-12:50  
CRN: 33951  
Classroom: LA 204

**PROFESSOR: DR. STEVE YOSHIMURA**

**OFFICE: LA 347**

**OFFICE HOURS: Wednesday 1:00-3:00 and by appointment**

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### **Required Course Materials**

Guerrero, L. K., Andersen, P. A., & Afifi, W. A. (2018). *Close Encounters: Communication in Relationships*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Additional readings available on Moodle.

### **Course Overview**

Welcome to COMX 414, Communication in Personal Relationships. The purpose of this class is to help you learn about the role communication plays in the development, sustainability, and decline of close, personal relationships. The study of communication in personal relationships involves research conducted in psychology, sociology, family studies, and human communication, and much of what we discuss will involve perspectives from all of these disciplines. However, the course has a distinct focus on how interaction between couples lends itself to the process of relating. This course also fulfills the university writing requirement for communication studies majors.

In short, completing this class will give you the ability to:

- Explain how communication plays a role in the development, maintenance, and dissolution of personal relationships.
- Be conversant with the major topical areas of research in the study of communication in personal relationship contexts.
- Independently discover, interpret, and discuss scholarly research on communication in personal relationships.
- Construct a well-written scholarly essay that summarizes and analyzes research on personal relationships.
- Apply your knowledge about theory and research on human relationships to practical problems in personal relationships.

This course fulfills an elective requirement for the Human and Family Development minor. Please see me if you would like more information.

## Assignments and requirements

People in modern societies are surrounded by massive amounts of easily-accessed information about what makes relationships succeed or not. Some of this information is based in credible academic research, but a lot of information is based on other, untestable and unquestionable sources of knowledge, such as someone's personal experience, stereotypes, religious faith, astrology, or other unverifiable sources. Although knowledge from those latter sources can have their time and place, it is important to be able to distinguish those sources from empirical knowledge about communication in personal relationships. The risk of accepting nonverifiable information about relationship practices is that one can never know for sure what the best, most effective or useful course of action might be to take to solve the challenges involved in building and maintaining quality personal relationships. The major assignment for this course is designed to help you determine and communicate what the best, most competent solutions to relationship challenges might be.

### Your Major Assignment\*

The major assignment for this class involves analyzing published academic research for the purpose of providing a set of recommendations. These recommendations will help solve a practical problem that many people might experience in close, personal relationships.

The overall assignment will be completed in separate five parts across the entire semester:

(Part 1) A problem statement and annotated bibliography.

(Part 2) A literature review.

(Part 3) A set of research-based recommendations.

(Part 4) A revised, final submission of the literature review and recommendations.

(Part 5) A presentation of your findings at the end of the semester.

\*These assignments involve writing and talking about academic, peer-reviewed research. Your writing will most effectively be accomplished by spending time familiarizing yourself with the relevant peer-reviewed research (using PsychInfo or Communication and Mass Media Complete) BEFORE you begin writing. So please be sure to budget your time accordingly for each assignment.

**Part One: Problem Statement and Annotated Bibliography (Due: Monday, 1/28 – 20 points)**

**Part Two: Literature Review (Due: Wednesday, 2/20 – 50 points)**

**Part Three: Recommendations (Due: 3/22 – 40 points)**

**Part Four: Revised Literature Review and Recommendations (Final Submission) (Due: 4/19 – 30 points)**

**Part 5: Presentation 4/22-4/26 – 10 points)**

### **Exams 50 points each (150 points total)**

There will be three exams. The questions will be an assortment of multiple choice and short answer questions. I will provide study guides for each exam, and the final will not be cumulative.

### **Grades**

A = 270-300; B = 240-269; C = 210-239; D = 180-209; F = 179 and below, or due to conduct code violations.

**A** - This work is *outstanding* relative to the basic requirements.

**B** - This work is *significantly better* than what was necessary to fulfill the requirements.

**C** - This work *meets the basic requirements* in every respect.

**D** - This work *deserves credit*, even though it does not meet the basic requirements.

**F** - This work *fails to meet the basic requirements*.

## Course Policies and Related Information

- **Attendance and Participation**

Attendance is expected of all students enrolled in this course. In the event that any class is missed, students are expected to contact the instructor as a matter of professional courtesy, continue to meet all deadlines, and obtain necessary materials from classmates. I recommend obtaining notes from missed classes, and then contacting me with specific questions about those notes.

Attendance is mandatory during course presentations at the end of the semester. Three points will be deducted from the total course points for each missed class.

- **Laptop Computer and Electronic Device Policy**

You may bring your laptop and electronic devices to this class. In fact, there may be times at which I ask you to connect your device to the classroom technology for us to examine course-related information.

However, [numerous studies](#) show that taking notes by simply transcribing content into your lowers not only your own test scores, but also those of the people around you. The reasons are simple – people process less information when simply transcribing words and looking at what other people are doing on their devices.

Unfortunately, my experience is that students who open laptops or tablets in class ostensibly for taking notes inevitably move their attention to unrelated content on those devices. Given the research on this issue, and my personal experience, engaging unrelated content in this course (on a screen or otherwise) during class is prohibited.

- **Late Work**

Assignments become late when they are turned in after the class period of their due date. The topic statement and annotated bibliography will not be accepted if it is late. Otherwise, a late assignment will receive a **10% penalty for each weekday** that it is late. The assistants in the main office *do not* mark times or dates on papers that are turned in to them.

Exceptions to the late penalty will not be distributed freely. If you are sick when an assignment is due and want to turn it in late, **you must provide a legitimate doctor's note** that indicates the days that you were unable to attend class. This must be turned in with your completed assignment.

**A Note on Computer Problems:** You are responsible for knowing how your computer works and the potential problems of using it. Save your work frequently, take care of your data storage devices, make sure that your computer is using an updated virus-protection program, and make every attempt to print your papers ahead of time. Given the computer resources on this campus, I cannot reasonably accept computer-related excuses for late work.

- **Exam policy**

Exams are administered only on the days scheduled. Once an exam has been distributed, you may not leave the room until you have submitted your exam for grading. All electronic devices must be turned off during exam times. No exams will be distributed once the first person has submitted her or his exam for grading (don't be late). No exam can be missed and made-up without a valid and legitimate reason (no excuses).

Valid and legitimate reasons never involve non-refundable plane tickets, road trips, concerts, early vacations, outdoor recreation, or any other random and unverifiable absence. If you are sick when an exam is given, **you must provide a legitimate doctor's note** that indicates the days that you were unable to attend class. This must be turned in at the time you take the exam. Dr.'s notes must be originals (no photocopies, carbons, faxes, or emails). **If an absence is known ahead of time, you must make arrangements before the exam is distributed.**

*On the occasion that an exam is taken at a time other than the scheduled time, the exam may be administered in essay format.*

If you will miss class due to a university-sponsored activity, you are required to (a) introduce yourself prior to missing class, (b) provide a copy of your travel schedule that indicates the days you will be missing, and (c) discuss with me your plans for making up the work.

- **Written Work**

Your written work is a nonverbal message about your professional abilities. To that end, all papers for this course must be typed (12-point Times New Roman font), double-spaced, with one-inch margins. Other APA style format issues apply where appropriate. **Always staple your paper in the upper left-hand corner.** It is a good idea to keep a back-up copy of all your assignments.

**What counts as good writing?** Every assignment has its own specific evaluation criteria, but very broadly speaking, I look for four aspects when I evaluate undergraduate student writing. First, I examine the extent to which the paper is *well-written*. To me, this means that the writer: (a) constructs sentences and paragraphs according to conventional writing rules, (b) writes in an active voice, and (c) writes with correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Second, I look to see if the paper is *fully developed*. To me, this means that: (a) the paper is well-researched, (b) the writer responds to the requirements in a way that shows comprehension of the main issues, and (c) the writer's main points are clearly observable and supported by evidence and detail. Finally, I look to see if the paper is *organized*. To me, this means that: (a) the ideas are developed in a logical fashion, and (b) the organization is purposeful and clear. Of course, the quality of content is essential. In this class you will learn to write about relationships in an academic voice, so the content of your papers should be thoughtfully based on academic thought on relational communication.

Have questions about grammar, mechanics, writing vocabulary, or anything else related to academic writing? I encourage you to visit the writing center frequently while working on your papers. **The Writing and Public Speaking Center provides a comfortable environment where students can engage in supportive conversations about their writing and receive feedback at any point during a writing process.** To make an appointment and learn more about The Writing and Public Speaking Center's by-appointment and drop-in hours, visit [www.umt.edu/writingcenter](http://www.umt.edu/writingcenter), or call 243-2266.

- **Academic Misconduct**

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the student conduct code. Please see the Student Conduct Code for definitions and consequences of cheating and plagiarism at: <http://www.umt.edu/student-affairs/dean-of-students/default.php>

According to the University of Montana Bulletin, "Plagiarism is the representing of another's work as one's own. It is a particularly intolerable offense in the academic community and is strictly forbidden. Students who plagiarize may fail the course and may be remanded to Academic Court for possible suspension or expulsion... Students must always be very careful to acknowledge any kind of borrowing that is included in their work. This means not only borrowed wording, but also ideas. Acknowledgement of whatever is not one's own original work is the proper and honest use of sources. Failure to acknowledge whatever is not one's own original work is plagiarism."

Violations of the conduct code also include (a) submitting papers written by yourself for this or other courses without prior consent from the instructors of those course, (b) submitting papers written by someone else, (c) consulting unauthorized materials or otherwise cheating on an exam, and/or (c) engaging in deception with me during any interaction regarding the course material or work.

- **Incompletes and course withdrawals**

See the *University of Montana Catalog* for more information on the policy regarding these options. Incompletes are very rarely granted, and only under the most unique circumstances. You may withdraw from the course until the 30<sup>th</sup> day of the semester. After that, you may petition to withdraw, but only for medical reasons, family emergencies, a change in work schedule, or other uncontrollable reason. It is the policy of the university, department, and this course to not normally grant withdrawal petitions after the 30<sup>th</sup> day without documentation.

- **Auditing and Credit/No Credit options:**

According to the University Catalog, the Credit/No Credit grade option exists "to encourage students to venture into courses where they might otherwise hesitate because of uncertainty regarding their aptitude or preparation...." It does

not exist as protection from poor performance after the 45<sup>th</sup> day of the semester. So, if you decide to audit this class or desire the credit/no credit grade option, you must indicate this decision to me within the first 45 days of the semester. I cannot grant any grade-option changes past that time. *If you wish to apply this course to your general education requirements, you must take it for a traditional letter grade, and earn at least 70% of the course points.*

- **If you participate in University-sponsored activities (e.g., sports, debate, etc.)**

I need a letter from your coach documenting your participation, as well as copy of your schedule indicating which days of class you'll need to miss due to your activity. You are responsible for getting notes and making arrangements to turn in your assignments/take exams.

- **Unique Needs**

I and the University want everyone to have a fair chance at doing well in class. If you have unique needs that help you overcome some challenge to your learning, please contact Disability Services for Students (DSS) in the Lommasson Center (Room 144; 243-2243). They will help you determine what types of resources are available to help you and will provide you with a letter to me detailing those resources. Give me the letter and we will work together to make sure that you begin with a "level playing field" for your performance in this course.

- **Grades and privacy**

If you need grade information, check Moodle or make an appointment with me. Email and telephone are not considered as private communication forums. Email is actually considered a public forum, and I can never guarantee that it is actually you on the other end of a telephone. Thus, I do not discuss grade information over email or telephone.

- **A note on relationship matters:**

Personal relationships are complicated. While they are mostly a source of strength and flourishing, they can also be a source of pain and even trauma. If you believe someone might have persuaded or forced you to engage in undesired sexual interaction, and/or if someone has purposefully hurt you, whether physically or psychologically, please know that there are sources on this campus to help you. The Student Advocacy Resource Center is a good place to call in these situations. They can be reached 24 hours a day at 406-243-6559.

## Course Calendar\*

G. A., & A. = Guerrero, Andersen, & Afifi textbook. Readings not in the text book can be found in the "Course Readings" section of Moodle.

\* Schedule is subject to change as necessary

### **SECTION 1: RELATIONSHIP BEGINNINGS**

**F 1/11:** Course introduction

#### **Week 1**

**M 1/14:** Introduction to relationship science

#### **Readings:**

- G, A, & A: Chapter 1
- Hess, J. A., Fannin, A. D., & Pollom, L. H. (2007). Creating closeness: Discerning and measuring strategies for fostering closer relationships. *Personal Relationships, 14*(1), 25-44. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6811.2006.00140.x>

**W 1/16:** The role of communication in relationships

**F 1/18:** Writing workshop: How to find, read, and write about relationship science (bring the Hess, et al., 2007) article to class today.

**Homework:** Begin finding sources for the Problem Statement and Annotated Bibliography assignment.

## Week 2

**M 1/21:** No meeting – MLK day

**W 1/23:** Attraction

**Reading:** G, A, & A: Chapter 3

**F 1/25:** Strategic misrepresentation in online dating

**Reading:**

- Hall, J. A., Park, N., Song, H., & Cody, M. J. (2010). Strategic misrepresentation in online dating: The effects of gender, self-monitoring, and personality traits. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 27(1), 117-135. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0265407509349633>

## Week 3

**M 1/28:** Relationship initiation/ Managing uncertainty and expectancy violations

**DUE:** Problem statement and annotated bibliography

**Readings:**

- G, A, & A: Chapter 4
- LeFebvre, L. E. (2017). Swiping me off my feet: Explicating relationship initiation on Tinder. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407517706419>

**W 1/30:** Managing uncertainty and expectancy violations, cont.

**F 2/1:** Managing uncertainty and expectancy violations, cont.

## Week 4

**M 2/4:** Models and theories of relationship growth and development

**Reading:** G, A, & A: Chapter 5

**Homework:** Reverse-outline the literature review for the LeFebvre (2017) article from last week – bring the outline and the article to class on Wednesday.

**W 2/6:** Writing workshop: Writing a literature review

**Homework:** Begin organizing, outlining, and writing your literature review.

**F 2/8:** No meeting

## **SECTION 2: RELATIONSHIP MAINTENANCE AND ENHANCEMENT**

## Week 5

**M 2/11:** Relationship growth and development cont.

**Reading:** G, A, & A, Chapter 5

**W 2/13:** Exam 1

**F 2/15:** Relationship maintenance and support

**Readings:**

- G, A, & A, Chapter 10
- Stafford, L., & Canary, D. J. (2006). Equity and interdependence as predictors of relational maintenance strategies. *Journal of Family Communication*, 6(4), 227-254. doi:[http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/s15327698jfc0604\\_1](http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/s15327698jfc0604_1)

## Week 6

**M 2/18:** No meeting – President's Day

**W 2/20:** No Meeting

**F 2/22:** Writing workshop: Developing recommendations from research

- **DUE: Literature Review**

**Week 7**

**M 2/25:** Love and attachment

**Reading:** G, A, & A: Chapter 8

**W 2/27:** Communicating love

**Reading:** G, A, & A: Chapter 8

**F 3/1** Sexual interaction

**Reading:** G, A, & A Chapter 9

**Homework:** Outline and begin writing the recommendations paper

**Week 8**

**M 3/4:** Self-disclosure and privacy management

**Reading:** G, A, & A Chapter 6

**W 3/6:** Privacy management

**F 3/8:** Topic avoidance and secrets

**Week 9**

**M 3/11:** Communicating Affection

**Reading:** G, A, & A, Chapter 7

**W 3/13:** Social Support

**F 3/15:** Using communication to create and reflect closeness

**Week 10**

**M 3/18:** Exam 2

**SECTION 3: RELATIONSHIP CHALLENGES**

**W 3/20:** Conflict in relationships

**Reading:** G, A, & A Chapter 11

**F 3/22:** Conflict styles and patterns

**DUE:** Recommendations

**Week 11**

**M 3/25- F 3/29** Spring Break

**Week 12**

**M 4/1:** Relational transgressions

**Reading:** G, A, & A Chapter 13

**W4/3:** Deception and infidelity

**F 4/5:** Jealousy, stalking, and violence

**Week 13**

**M 4/8:** Investment and accommodation

**Reading:** G, A, & A: Chapter 14

**W 4/10:** Remediation and forgiveness

**F 4/12:** No meeting (NWCA conference)

**Week 14**

**4/15:** Ending relationships

**Reading:** G, A, & A chapter 15

**4/17:** Healing after relationship endings

**4/19:** Due: Final Submission

**Week 15 (4/22-4/26): Presentations**

**Final exam**

10:10-12:10, Friday, May 3