

COMMUNICATION AND PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

FALL 2019

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“RELATIONSHIPS ARE THE CRUCIBLE IN WHICH OUR LIVES UNFOLD AS THEY SHAPE OUR LIFE STORY, MOLDING OUR IDENTITY AND GIVING BIRTH TO THE EXPERIENCE OF WHO WE ARE, AND LIBERATING – OR CONSTRAINING- WHO WE CAN BECOME.”

-DR. DAN SIEGEL

All of humanity is caught up and bundled into relations with one another, and these relations affect our lives in real, concrete ways. This course seeks to better familiarize you with the basic communication processes that occur within the context of a particular kind of relations: close relationships. We will draw information from a variety of disciplines, including family studies, social psychology, and of course, communication studies. The focus of this course will reflect that of the close relationship research that has been done to date; namely, primarily romantic relationships. However, we will also discuss friendships, family relationships, and general research and theory that can be applied to both intimate and nonintimate relationships.

Course Objectives:

1. Develop an understanding of how communication is used to initiate, maintain, and terminate personal relationships.
2. Study specific communication patterns and issues that occur in personal relationships; such as attraction, self-disclosure, conflict, relational investment, jealousy, power, etc.
3. Become competent in utilizing library and other resources to find and interpret scholarly research on communication in personal relationships.
4. Complete a comprehensive investigation about a socially and theoretically significant question pertaining to personal relationships, in order to determine what answers have been provided, what answers must still be sought, and what study can be designed to further explore this question.

Required Readings:

-  Guerrero, Andersen, and Afifi's *Close Encounters: Communicating in Close Relationships*. 5th Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
-  Readings posted to our Moodle supplement page

Personal Statement:

I am committed to the endeavor of teaching, whether that is online or in a classroom atmosphere. I believe that I can meet my goals for teaching this course and you can meet your goals in taking this course, especially if we communicate about those goals in class and office hours. It will be my goal throughout this class to encourage you to interact and to engage in this course as fully as possible.

Policies:

Deadlines: To keep you caught up in the course and to allow me adequate time to provide you feedback there are deadlines by which each assignment must be completed. Assignments may always be completed earlier than the deadline, but any assignment that is not submitted at the start of our class time on the deadline will be considered late. If you are the type of person who is often last-minute in getting things done, or you know

that you have a work schedule that will make meeting deadlines difficult, do yourself a favor and write down each deadline as existing two days before it actually is written in the syllabus. That way, you have already bought yourself a two-day extension. Do your very best to get assignments in as early as you complete them, and communicate with me early on regarding any difficulties you foresee in meeting a deadline. If you require any accommodations other than those listed here due to work with DSS be sure to contact me and make me aware of this within the first week of the course. **LATE WORK may be submitted in this course up to a week past the due date, accruing a 10% deduction for each 24 hr. period past the deadline, up until the last week of the course. No assignments for this course will be accepted or graded beyond the final date of the course.**

Academic Integrity: The University of Montana and the Department of Communication Studies strongly believe in academic integrity; thus cheating and plagiarism are not tolerated. Students will be charged with academic dishonesty for any breach of these standards, including sharing their work (**in any form**) with other students, claiming another individual's work as their own, or attempting to thwart the examination process in any way. No work done for credit in any other class may be turned in for credit in this class (whether it is your own work for this course taken previously, or anyone else's work). The *minimum* consequence for engaging in cheating or plagiarism is failure on the related assignment, but this type of activity usually results in failure in the entire course. At worst, academic misconduct can result in expulsion, denial of your degree, and/or revocation of a degree that has already been awarded. See the Student Conduct Code for definitions and consequences of cheating and plagiarism. The unabridged student conduct code is located at: <https://www.umt.edu/student-affairs/dean-of-students/Student%20Conduct%20Code%20-%20FINAL%20-%208-24-18.pdf>

Technology: A known fact of technology is that it sometimes fails. Computers crash, Internet connections falter. In order to control for these failures your guiding principles should be to think ahead and be prepared. Save your work often, and in several places. Leave yourself time before assignments are due to allow for connection errors, and familiarize yourself with computer resources in your area in case you need to use them as a back-up to complete your assignments.

Consideration: The overall atmosphere in the class should be that of respect – for yourself and everyone else in the class. In the course of our interactions, personal information may be disclosed. Please do not repeat this information or use it to harm others. Help foster an atmosphere where a priority for education and a respect for all students are valued by engaging in comments that relate to course content and show tolerance (if not acceptance) for opinions different from your own. Please understand that whether it occurs in a face-to-face or online environment, harassment of any kind is both inappropriate and intolerable, and disciplinary action will be taken should it occur.

Students requesting alternate options –

If you require consideration not mentioned in this syllabus (perhaps you are a student athlete, a student working with DSS, a graduate student seeking graduate credit, etc.) please contact me within the first week of class so that we can see if your needs can be met in this course. I cannot guarantee any alternate options in this class if you do not meet me with documentation during this time period.

Contesting Grades: I am willing to go over any assignment with you to discuss your concerns. Please wait 24 hours after receiving an assignment before you contact me. When you do contact me, please write down your specific concerns and your backing for these concerns, and I will research your situation. We'll take it from there to schedule a discussion where we can share our perspectives and come to understanding.

Grading and Assignments:

Scholar paper	25 pts
Discussion article	20 pts
Classroom participation	25 pts
Justification paper	25 pts
Revised Justification and Lit. Review	75 pts
Complete Research Paper	100 pts
Midterm Exam	100 pts
Final Exam	100 pts

A= Exceptional work, far exceeds expectations
 B= Very good work, results better than average
 C= Average work, results meet expectations
 D= Flawed work, results less than average
 F= Poor work, results far short of expectations

I do not use the +/- system in this class

Total Points 470 pts

Basic Needs Statement:

Any student who faces challenges securing food, housing, or health care and believes that this could affect their performance in this course, is urged to contact any or all of the following campuses resources:

- **Food Pantry Program**
 - UM offers a food pantry that students can access for emergency food. The pantry is open on Tuesdays from 9 to 2, on Fridays from 10-5. The pantry is located in UC 119 (in the former ASUM Childcare offices). Pantry staff operate several satellite food cupboards on campus (including one at Missoula College). For more information about this program, email umpantry@mso.umt.edu, visit the pantry's [website\(https://www.umt.edu/uc/food-pantry/default.php\)](https://www.umt.edu/uc/food-pantry/default.php) or contact the pantry on social media (@pantryUm on twitter, @UMPantry on Facebook, um_pantry on Instagram).
- **ASUM Renter Center**
 - The Renter Center has compiled a list of resources for UM students at risk of homelessness or food insecurity [here: http://www.umt.edu/asum/agencies/renter-center/default.php](http://www.umt.edu/asum/agencies/renter-center/default.php) and [here:https://medium.com/griz-renter-blog](https://medium.com/griz-renter-blog).
 - Students can schedule an appointment with Renter Center staff to discuss their situation and receive information, support, and referrals.
- **TRiO Student Support Services**
 - TRiO serves UM students who are low-income, first-generation college students, or have documented disabilities. TRiO services include a textbook loan program, scholarships and financial aid help, academic advising, coaching, and tutoring.
 - Students can check their eligibility for TRiO services online [here: http://www.umt.edu/trioss/apply.php#Eligibility](http://www.umt.edu/trioss/apply.php#Eligibility).
- **Curry Health Center** (Dental, Mental Health, and Medical)
 - Curry Health Center provides quality, affordable, accessible health care for students at the University of Montana. They promote a healthy campus by treating students with dignity and respect and through collaborating and sharing expertise. They offer online appointments and online screening tools, and same day walk-in appointments if needed: <http://www.umt.edu/curry-health-center/>

If you are comfortable, please come see me with concerns you have and I will do my best to help connect you with additional resources.

Research Paper Overview:

Articulate a question about interpersonal communication in personal relationships that has social and theoretical significance (although I anticipate you will brainstorm on your own, you are welcome to consult with me regarding your ideas before settling on your final question). Conduct a comprehensive review of research (mainly in peer-reviewed communication journals, but information from a few other journals or book chapters are also acceptable) to see what answer(s) have already been articulated. Then, construct a paper that organizes the results of your search in a cohesive and integrated paper, and provides an idea for future research. Your paper should have three main sections, which will be turned in to me in increasingly complete sections:

1. Justification of your question – why is the question you’ve selected to research both socially and theoretically interesting? Why is this an important question to answer? You’ll probably find yourself citing current events/popular press coverage, though you must also cite academic articles to argue why this question is important. You should look to the articles you’re citing and the readings we’ve done on theory to establish how your question relates to the current state of theory, and to argue for the theoretical significance of your question. Will your review show that the question is primarily answered by one theory? Could be explained by competing theories? Is currently not studied in relation to any particular theory? Remember that you are trying to be both persuasive and factual in making a case for why this question deserves investigation. (This section should run about 2 pages in length)

2. Literature review – what academic research have you found that helps to provide answers to your question? Your library search may meander through innumerable abstracts before you find sources that are of use to you, but be sure you end up reviewing at least 10 articles from peer-reviewed communication journals in this section. Remember that all of the studies you review should say something about the thesis that you have chosen for this paper.

- Specifically, in a literature review such as this you SHOULD:
 - Integrate your sources (synthesize findings when appropriate)
 - Compare and contrast the findings of different research studies
 - Give only brief backgrounds on the studies or opinions you’re reviewing, as necessary to understand the results and implications of the work
 - Put the results or meaning of the study in your own words, as they pertain to your question
- You should NOT:
 - Simply review studies one after another without linking them
 - Give the entire background of a study (the entire set-up of the study, a full description of participants, etc.)
 - Use extensive quotes from the articles themselves

This section should run approximately 8-10 pages in length. You will add these pages to the justification document you have already begun. Please use track changes function in Microsoft Word to show me what you have changed in your justification; the literature review section should not use track changes at this time.

3. Research proposal – what further work would you suggest to help answer this question? After having read many research articles in your own research and in class, you will become familiar with the process of proposing research. Although I do not assume that you have all had a research methods course, I do want you to take a stab at setting up a study of your own. You should be sure to articulate:

- Who you will recruit as research participants
- How you will collect your data
- How you will use this proposed research to aid in answering your question

Your question should be central in planning your proposal – don’t discount a research method because you don’t know it well or fear that you couldn’t execute it well. Use your articles from your literature review as

well as consultations with me as your guides in creating an idea for this future research. I want you to be as original, comprehensive, and complete as possible in outlining this proposed project. This section should run approximately 2-4 pages in length. You will add these pages to the justification and literature review document you have already begun. Please use track changes function in Microsoft Word to show me what you have changed in your justification and literature review in this round of revision; the proposal section should not use track changes.

Since, combined, the versions of this paper makes up a large portion of your grade, I cannot emphasize enough how important it is for you to START EARLY on your topic brainstorming and your researching. I also strongly encourage you to contact me to discuss the progress of your paper with me as you work on it. I am happy to discuss ideas with you and to help you work through your paper. You are expected to be able to write this paper in clear 6th edition APA style at a collegiate level befitting a 400 level class (an APA title page and reference section are necessary; an abstract is not). If you have doubts about your abilities to write this paper, please consider my assistance, or that of the Writing Center on campus. I have high expectations for these papers.

OVERALL INFORMATION FOR WRITING:

Portions of papers from other classes CANNOT be used for this paper - your research and insights should stem from your original work for this class only. Of course, all work should be entirely your own – any papers containing portions of others' work will result in failure from the course, at a minimum.

EVALUATION OF PAPERS (explanation borrowed from Paul Mongeau)

Evaluation Criteria

The primary criteria used to evaluate your paper will include completeness, organization, clarity, and validity. **Completeness** refers to the extent to which you provide an adequate description of the literature and methods (if applicable). This will include the extent to which you describe the existing research and theory development relevant to your topic. **Organization** refers to the extent to which your various ideas flow together. Sentences should blend effectively into paragraphs, while paragraphs should blend well in the major sections of your paper. **Clarity** refers to the extent to which you present your ideas in an understandable manner. This would include the extent to which you word your own (and other researchers' and theorists') ideas clearly. Finally, **validity** refers to the extent to which the arguments you provide follow in a clear and organized manner. Evaluation will also tap the technical (or stylistic) issues including APA style issues.

CRITERION 1: CLARITY

The primary criterion that I use when I evaluate a paper is clarity. Simply put, are you communicating whatever it is that you are trying to say unambiguously? It does not matter if you are trying to describe a relationship that you have been part of, a reaction to a lecture, or reviewing the theoretical literature on relationship development, you must do so clearly. Saying something simply is better than saying something using complex, convoluted, language. Do not feel as though you have to use long sentences or extraordinary vocabulary to make your point. This can often end up confusing your point rather than clarifying. If I consistently cannot understand what you are trying to say, your grade is going to suffer as a result. Use traditional English syntax. Include a subject, verb, and object in each sentence.

CRITERION 2: COMPLETENESS

Most of my paper assignment includes multiple parts. I am looking for the extent to which you actually perform each of the tasks that I require. Failure to complete a major part of a paper is a serious error that will result in substantial point deductions. Therefore, it is important that I know what you are doing as you work your way through your paper. It is in your best interest to inform me where you are and what you are doing in your paper. Signposting and transitions between parts helps immensely in keeping me informed as to what you are doing in your paper. The question here is how well did you perform each of the tasks required? How completely you should describe something, of course, depends on the nature and length of your paper.

CRITERION 3: ORGANIZATION

The third criterion I use in evaluating papers is organization. Your ideas should develop in a logical manner. Words should fit together to form phrases. Phrases should fit together to form sentences. Sentences should fit together to make paragraphs. Paragraphs should fit together to form the major sections of your paper. What I do not want is a paper that rambles from point to point without any connection between them. The paper assignments suggest a particular organizational scheme for the major parts of your papers and I strongly suggest that you stick to them. Within major sections, the choice of an organizational scheme is up to you.

CRITERION 4: VALIDITY

The fourth major criterion I use in grading papers has to do with the validity of the presented arguments. The arguments that you make in your papers must be valid. This means that the conclusions of your arguments must follow from the premises. Further, the premises and conclusions that you draw should be explicit. I should not have to dig through a paper to identify and understand the arguments you are trying to make.

Part of the validity of an argument has to do with the data supporting a particular conclusion. Specifically, properly document all statements of fact from a reputable primary source. For example, if you are making the claim that men and women communicate differently in some important ways, you need to support that conclusion (or claim) with a reference from a reputable and primary source. Your papers will largely be arrangement of facts, and EVERY statement of fact must be properly cited.

CRITERION 5: MECHANICS

My evaluation also focuses on the technical (or stylistic) aspects of the paper. I expect that submitted drafts should be devoid of grammatical errors, typographical errors, misspellings, punctuation errors, sentence fragments, and so on. In this respect, it would be helpful to develop the habit of completing rough drafts of your work and then spending time cleaning and polishing your writing. If you try to write the entire paper the last day or two before it is due, you will almost certainly encounter stylistic problems, not to mention substantive ones.

I will also evaluate the format of source citations and references provided (if any). The format of the paper, source citations, and reference lists must be consistent with the sixth edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*.

**Thank you for reading this far, and for making sure you have a good grounding in this class!
If you choose to remain in this class beyond the first day, you are agreeing to abide by
the principles and requirements set forth for this class, and I'm thrilled that you're here.**

COURSE SCHEDULE

Section 1

Tues, Aug 27 - Introduction

Thurs, Aug 29- Conceptualizing Relational Communication – Chapter 1

Tues, Sep 3 – Theoretical Frameworks for Study Relational Communication – Duck & Montgomery

Thurs, Sep 5 – Methodological Approaches to Studying Relational Communication - Ickes

Tues, Sep 10 – Library Training Day

Thurs, Sep 12 – Self and Identity in Relationships – Chapter 2

Tues, Sep 17 – Writing Training Day

Thurs, Sep 19 – Interpersonal Neurobiology

Section 2

Tues, Sep 24 – Attraction and Flirtation – Chapter 3

Thurs, Sep 26 – Reducing Uncertainty and Predicting Outcomes – Chapter 4

Tues, Oct 1 – Relationship Development – Chapter 5

Thurs, Oct 3 – Writing or observation

Tues, Oct 8 – Self Disclosure and Privacy – Chapter 6

Thurs, Oct 10- Consolidation and Review

Tues, Oct 15 – Midterm exam

Section 3

Thurs, Oct 17- Communicating Closeness – Chapter 7

Tues, Oct 22 – Relationship Types – Chapter 8

Thurs, Oct 24- Writing or observation

Tues, Oct 29 – Communicating Sexually – Chapter 9

Thurs, Oct 31- Relationship Maintenance – Chapter 10

Tues, Nov 5 – Relationships at a Distance/Intermittent Relationships

Thurs, Nov 7 – Conflict Communication – Chapter 11

Section 4

Tues, Nov 12 – NCA – Writing Workshops with Peers/Writing Center

Thurs, Nov 14 – NCA - Writing Workshops with Peers/Writing Center

Tues, Nov 19 - Relational Dominance and Power – Chapter 12

Thurs, Nov 21 Relational Transgressions – Chapter 13

Tues, Nov 26 Relational Repair – Chapter 14

Thurs, Nov 28 – **Thanksgiving – no class**

Tues, Dec 3 Relationship Ending – Chapter 15

Thurs, Dec 5 – Consolidation and Review

Final – 10:10-11:30 Wednesday, Dec 11th