Family Communication Graduate Seminar
Spring, 2020

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LA 358
Office Hours: 10:00-10:50am MF, 3:00-4:00pm W
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We will undertake this graduate course in several separate sections, each with a cognitive approach to studying family communication rather than a personal application approach. While we may use our own familial experiences or those we’ve witnessed as brief prompts or exemplars, our overriding focus in the class will be on comprehension and analysis of family communication patterns at the theoretical level. This course is directed at students who have not had extensive graduate coursework in family communication, and will trace the way that family scholars (primarily psychologists and communication scholars) have conceptualized and studied families.

We will familiarize ourselves with both early and more recent works related to family communication. The first section of the course focuses upon theories used to study family communication. Since many of these theories originated interdisciplinarily we will read some seminal pieces from outside of our own area(s) or consolidated accounts in book chapters, but we will supplement these each week with articles that you choose from current communication studies peer-reviewed journals. You will create a detailed outline of your article to bring to class to turn in to me and to aid you in introducing the contributions of this article to the class. This will help us to find a balance between understanding how we arrived at our current approaches to family communication while also familiarizing ourselves with notable works of current scholars.

In the second section of the course we will move away from the primary focus on theory and examine work (both past and present) on particular family subsystems. We will read a preset list of articles/chapters for each week, and you will submit discussion questions via Moodle in advance of class to help us develop themes and discussions for our class time together.

In the third section of the course we will identify current “hot topics” in family communication, and we will study these in light of the background we’ve gained in the first two sections of the course. You will each be responsible for choosing a hot topic/contemporary issue, assigning readings to the class on this topic, and guiding our discussion of this topic.

Throughout the class we will each be proposing, planning, and executing a writing project relevant to family communication. While the particular format of these projects may vary from student to student, each should be something that is possible to submit to a major academic conference or academic journal in communication studies.

Assignments:

Your participation in this course is vital both to the success of our class and to your educational journey. Attendance every week is expected, and participation will be graded regularly throughout the course. The points in this course that will be used to calculate your final grade are derived from several sources:
Contemporary article outline (6 @ 20 pts each) & 120 pts  
Participation in theory discussions (6 @ 10 pts each) & 60 pts  
Discussion questions on subsystems (must be submitted in advance, 3 @ 10 pts each) & 30 pts  
Participation in subsystem discussions (3 @ 10 pts each) & 30 pts  
Lead day on contemporary issues (assignment of articles and leading discussion) & 50 pts  
Explanation of course writing project and plan for completion & 60 pts  
First draft of course writing project & 150 pts  
Final draft of course writing project & 200 pts  

Total course points & 700 pts

**Policies:**

All work done in this class should be original; please consult with me regarding the appropriateness of using any material prepared previously, and do not consider turning in anything in this course that you have not created exclusively on your own.

All students taking this course must adhere to the University of Montana’s academic dishonesty policy as presented in the Student Conduct Code (SCC). You are responsible for reading and understanding the Student Conduct Code – the SCC can be viewed at: [www.umt.edu/studentaffaris/sccAcademicConduct.htm#9](http://www.umt.edu/studentaffaris/sccAcademicConduct.htm#9)

I very rarely give extensions or incompletes, especially in graduate courses. Do not plan on these in this course, but instead prepare to work ahead of time on assignments if you know that you have difficulty with writing under a deadline.

You are expected to know 7th edition APA style for formatting, citations, and references in all submitted papers. If you are unfamiliar with this style, please let me know at the start of the course and I will help point you to materials that will help you learn this writing style.

The overall atmosphere in the class should be that of respect - for yourself and everyone else in the class. In the course of our discussions if personal information is disclosed, please do not repeat this information or use it to harm others.

Help foster a space where a priority for education is valued by turning off all cell phones or other noise-making devices. As much as possible endeavor not to use screens in our class, and instead come prepared to engage in face-to-face conversations based largely on your understanding of the readings, notes you’ve taken, and perhaps even printed copies of these articles. Use of laptops in class is distracting to you, to me, and to your classmates.

Please understand that harassment of any kind towards instructors or students is both inappropriate and intolerable, and disciplinary action will be taken should it occur. If you need/will potentially need consideration due to travel plans for university-sponsored activities or for university documented disability accommodations, please let me know within the first week of class.

**Changing Grading Option** - As per departmental practice, you may not drop or change your grading option after the 45th instructional day except in the following situations: a) documentable accident or illness, b) no evaluation record for the course, c) documentable family/personal emergency, and d) documentable change in employment schedule that prevents completion of course.
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) 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 and here: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/triosss/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.
Course Topics and Chapter Readings

(Additional readings are posted to Moodle for each topic and are also required)

Section 1: Theoretical Frameworks and Family Conceptualizations:

January 22: Family communication patterns (13) and stories/narratives (6, 19)
January 29: Dialectics (22), Attachment (4)
February 5: Structuration (27) and Evolutionary (2, 28)
February 12: Privacy management (8), systems theory (15)
February 19: Attribution theory (5), and Appraisals (3)
February 26: Social exchange (25) Social learning theory (26), Stress (29)
March 4: Feminist and Power theories (10, 11, 16)

Section 2: Family Subsystems:

March 11: marriage/couple relationships
March 25: parent and child/child and parent subsystems
April 1: grandparent and sibling subsystems

Section 3: Contemporary Issues:

April 8: contemporary issue day 1 (you will choose these readings)
April 15: contemporary issue day 2 (you will choose these readings)
April 22: contemporary issue day 3 (you will choose these readings)
April 29: contemporary issue day 4 (you will choose these readings)

To be scheduled during finals week: One additional meeting to discuss final papers