

COMX 485: Communication and Health
Spring 2015
CRN: 34098
T/TH 12:40-2
Liberal Arts 302

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Office Hours: Monday 11-12 and Wednesday 3:00 - 4 and always by appointment

Social relationships are the cornerstone of a healthy life. People with whom we formally and informally relate help enhance the quality of our lives in profound ways. Most obviously, they help us accomplish our basic goals in life by providing us with all kinds of “social support.” Less obviously, however, they provide us with opportunities to exchange love, affection, gratitude, humor and forgiveness. Research has recently suggested that these opportunities to communicate provide us with both objective and subjective health outcomes. The purpose of this course is to help you discover how human communication and interpersonal relationships intersect to affect our physical and psychological well-being. More broadly, this class is about how communication can make our lives happier, healthier, and more satisfying lives.

In this class, you will learn:

- Various ways in which health can be defined, and how health relates to social relationships.
- How specific types of communicative behaviors (disclosure, affection, gratitude expressions, etc.) relate to health.
- How intimate communication benefits us, and promotes physical and psychological health.
- Why social relationships are essential to successful aging.
- Why positive emotions are beneficial to experience and express as often as possible.
- How public social policy and discourse can be connected to well-being.
- Various ways in which research on health and communication can be conducted.

Required Readings

Vaillant, G. E. (2002). *Aging well: Surprising guideposts to a happier life from the landmark Harvard Study of Adult Development*. Boston, MA: Little, Brown, & Co.

Additional required weekly readings, and a weekly schedule of those readings are available on the Moodle online course supplement, in the “syllabus” section.

Assignments

This course will have two major written assignments. Both work together to help you understand how and why communication can correlate with health and well-being.

Instructions for all assignments are posted on Moodle.

Graduate students must see me about an additional graduate-level assignment.

Communicating Gratitude 25 points possible

Communication part (the letter) due 3/3, Analysis part (the paper) due 3/10

Your last week in Missoula 50 points possible

Presentation Due: Final week of class 10 points possible

Exams - 150 points possible (50 each exam)

Course Policies

1. Attendance and Participation

Because the course involves discussion of the readings each week, attendance is essential. I will take attendance *at least* six times in this class. Being absent during two of those times (i.e., one full week's worth of class meetings) will reduce your grade by one full letter. Missing four and six classes will reduce your grade by one and two additional letters respectively (thus, missing six classes would result in the highest possible grade being a "C." You must let me know if you know ahead of time that you will be absent. In such an event, *your* responsibility is to find out what you missed and to get the lecture notes from one of your classmates. Once you review those notes, I encourage you to come speak with me about any questions you might have about the discussion you missed.

2. Exam policy

The exams will be taken in class, and can be taken alone or collaboratively with one other person. For each exam, I will distribute an online survey that allows you to declare whether you wish to take the exam alone or collaboratively. If you choose to take the exam collaboratively, you may choose one partner to work with. Your partner must be declared in advance, and both partners must agree to take the exam with each other. You will be allowed to choose a specific partner, or ask me to assign you a partner.

You can choose the same format for each exam, or choose different formats or different partners.

3. **Late Work**

If you know that you will be missing a class, you should make an effort to submit your assignments early. Assignments become late when they are turned in after the class period of their due date. Whereas no quizzes can be submitted after the due date, other 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.

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. Exams will be administered only on the days scheduled. No exam can be made up without a valid and legitimate excuse. Valid and legitimate will be decided on the basis of evidence provided. Note that valid and legitimate never involves plane tickets, vacations, outdoor recreation, or any other random and unverifiable excuses. 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 assignment is due.**

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.

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 discs, 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.

4. **Written Work**

All papers must be typed, double-spaced, and in the appropriate format (APA). It is a good idea to keep a back-up copy of all your assignments.

All papers must be stapled in the upper left-hand corner.

5. **Academic Misconduct**

According to the University of Montana Catalog, "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." I want to add to that it also is not appropriate to submit papers written by yourself for previous or other courses.

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: www.umt.edu/SA/VPSA/index.cfm/page/1321

6. **Incompletes**

See the *University of Montana Catalog* for more information. These are very rarely granted, and only under the most unique circumstances.

7. **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 30th 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 30 days of the semester. I cannot grant any grade-option changes past that time. *If you wish to apply this course to your major, minor, or general education requirements, you must take it for a traditional letter grade.*

8. **Unique Needs**

I 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 see Disability Services for Students (DSS) in the Lommasson Center (Room 144; phone: 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. We will work together to make sure that you begin with a “level playing field” for your performance in this course.

9. **If you participate in University-sponsored activities (e.g., sports, debate, etc.) AND you will be missing assignment due dates or exams for related activities:** 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.

10. **A note about civility**

This is a professional setting, in which your success requires attention, engagement, and respect. I ask this because my success and your success in this class are interdependent, and I can only do my job if I have your attention and cooperation. Civility can be enacted in many ways, but perhaps one of the more recent issues to challenge classroom civility is in the use of electronic communication devices during class time. I reserve the right to impose a no-screen policy in this class if electronic communication devices are being used for non-class related activities. If you have personal issues to attend to during a specific class, it is acceptable to excuse yourself from class and return when you are ready.

Course Calendar

*Calendar is subject to change

Date	Topic	Due dates and Reminders
Week 1 1/27 1/29	Course introduction What is “Health” and Why is Communication Important to it?	Bring to class on Thursday: completed WHO Quality of Life Survey (find on Moodle)
Week2 2/3 2/5	Key terms and concepts for understanding research on health and communication	
Week 3 2/10 2/12	An overview of the health benefits of social relationships Overview of The Harvard Study of Adult Development, and issues around aging well	
Week 4 2/17 2/19	Social support, comforting, and advice-giving	

Week 5 2/24 2/26	Exam 1: 2/24 Expressing gratitude, compassion, and kindness	
Week 6 3/3 3/5	Humor Gratitude night, 3/3, 7:30pm: Specific location TBA	Due on 3/3: Communicating Gratitude – Bring the letter only for gratitude night
Week 7 3/10 3/12	Affectionate communication	Due on 3/10: Communicating Gratitude – analysis paper (attach letter)
Week 8 3/17 3/19	Self-Disclosure	Plan your “last week in Missoula” experience now. Include time for both experiences and research.
Week 9 3/24 3/26	The Role of Space and Design in Well-Being Exam 2: 3/26	
Week 10 3/31 4/2	Spring Break	
Week 11 4/7 4/9	Emotional experience and expressions	
Week 12 4/14 4/16	Love and attachment	Due on 4/14: “Last week in Missoula” paper.
Week 13 4/21 4/23	Love and Attachment, continued. Forgiveness	
Week 14 4/28 4/30	Aging well Closing words on communication and health	Schedule your presentation for next week.
Week 15 5/5 5/7	Presentations	
Final Exam: 1:10pm – 3:10pm Tuesday, May 12		