

Communication 389/589
The Evolution of Family Communication

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Office hours: By appointment (physical and online)

Course Description

The Evolution of Family Communication is an advanced course designed to help illuminate how our historical context shapes our perceptions of family and how we communicate about and within families. Drawing from historical and communication research (as well as a dash of sociology and psychology), this course will focus on three major areas that are pertinent to our understanding of the evolution of family communication, specifically: (a) society at large, (b) marriage, (c) parenthood.

Throughout the course you will: (a) become familiar and knowledgeable with the academic literature pertaining to family communication; (b) engage in active learning; (c) demonstrate your understanding of readings and concepts through assignments and quizzes that encourage you to apply course material to everyday life; and (d) complete a two-part paper that allows you to demonstrate your understanding of course material within the context of your own family.

Understanding modern day family communication through a historical lens will allow you to pull back and see the big picture of the American family landscape as well as zoom in and explore the distinct gradations of the same terrain, such as your own family experiences.

Course Learning Outcomes

After completing this course students will *be able to*...

- Apply historical and social science perspectives to contemporary issues and practices regarding family and family communication.
- Explain how the individual or groups of individuals (e.g., families) are influenced by social, cultural, or political institutions in their own culture.
- Identify the role of human agency (i.e., communication) in shaping events and historical change.
- Understand how historical shifts have impacted their own family relationships and family communication.

Enduring Understanding

After completing this course students will *understand* that...

- The American family has and will continue to evolve, making the “ideal” family an obsolete concept.
- The historical evolution of the American family has shaped communication norms within modern family relationships.
- Communication about family has influenced our historical understanding of the American family.

Essential Questions

- How have historical shifts impacted family communication patterns and norms?
- How does communication shape historical and modern perceptions of the American family?
- How can history and communication help us understand and assess more or less effective family communication?

Assignments and Grading

Required Readings:

All required readings will be posted to D2L. Readings are a mixture of empirical articles, chapters from scholarly texts, and pop culture readings.

Class Structure:

Although this is an online course, I try to create some structure so students can get the most out of the course, stay on pace, and do not procrastinate. As a result, content is released on a weekly basis starting at 6:00 p.m. Sunday evening. Students then have until 5:00 p.m. the following Sunday to listen to all lectures, complete the readings, and take the micro-test (more info below). Thus, you have seven days to listen to lectures and complete all required readings and assignments.

Materials covered in online lectures complement, but do not reiterate the readings. Thus, reading the assigned articles as well as listening to online lectures is critical to your success in the course. Quizzes will cover both lecture and readings. All written assignments are expected to adhere to American Psychological Association (APA) 6th edition style guidelines. Copies of the manual can be purchased at a reasonable price through amazon.com. I encourage you to purchase a copy.

Grading Philosophy:

My primary aim is for you to understand course material and its utility and application in your daily life. As such, I view grades as a means to an end, not an end themselves. In other words, I want you to be focused on learning rather than simply receiving a high grade. If you focus on the latter this course will seem onerous, assignments and quizzes will seem like obstacles, and your motivation will quickly evaporate. If you focus on the former, however, you are more likely to stay engaged, involved, and motivated. And, in more cases than not, this intrinsic desire and motivation often goes hand-in-hand with higher marks.

Based on my philosophy, I view grading as a tool that allows me to (a) assess your demonstrated competence of particular content area, and (b) provide you feedback on how well you appear to comprehend course material. Unfortunately, I cannot assess or assign a grade to effort or time. Even if you worked “really hard” on a paper or spent “hours” studying for a test, I can only evaluate how competently you demonstrate knowledge and understanding of lecture and textbook material. If you are unhappy with your grade, I am happy to meet with you to discuss your approach to learning, such as how you prepare for class, assignments, and exams.

Additionally, students often ask why points were deducted from a writing assignment. This question suggests that you began the assignment with a 100%. I take the approach that all student assignments begin at a 0% and students earn rather than lose points.

Grading:

Your grade will be calculated based on your scores from weekly micro-tests and your two papers:

Micro-tests: 30% of final grade

Paper 1 (Genogram & description): 30% of final grade

Paper 2 (Genogram interview & application): 40% of final grade

Grading Scale:

The following grading scale is used to determine your final grade.

100% - 94% = A	79% - 77% = C+	59% or less = F
93% - 90 = A-	76% - 74% = C	
89% - 87% = B+	73% - 70% = C-	
86% - 84% = B	69% - 67% = D+	
83% - 80% = B-	66% - 60% = D	

Micro-tests:

Weekly multiple choice/true-false “micro-tests” will assess your general understanding of course material through questions testing your ability to remember, understand, and apply course material. As this is an online course, micro-tests are, by default, open book/notes/lecture.

Tests will be online and randomly generated (meaning no two students will receive the same questions). Additionally, all micro-tests will be timed and must be completed within the given 1-hour time frame, no exceptions. Therefore, I encourage you to do all the readings and listen to the lectures *before* beginning the tests. Also, it should be noted that you only have ONE attempt at the micro-test. As soon as you begin the test that counts as your one attempt and your timer starts. Thus, you cannot attempt to peak at the test in advance. Finally, *micro-tests must be completed by 5:00 p.m. every Sunday.*

Paper 1—Genogram and description:

Your first paper will ask you to provide the historical landscape of your family by creating a genogram (or family tree, so to speak) of three generations of your family (e.g., your generation,

your parent's generation, your grandparent's generation). You will then provide a brief description of your family by reflecting on family, relationships, major events (at the familial or societal level), or BLAH that help contextualize your family experience. More details and an example are provided on a separate handout and explained in a short video.

Paper 2—Genogram interview and application:

Your final paper will ask you to expand on your genogram by using course material to contextualize interview data from family members to reflect how issues discussed in class have influenced your own family's evolution. More details are provided on a separate handout and explained in a short video.

Graduate Students:

The requirements for graduate students differ slightly from those of undergraduates in the course. Graduate students are required to complete a research proposal regarding an aspect of marital/romantic relationship communication. All topics must be approved by me. Graduate students must contact the professor for additional information.

Course Guidelines and Policies

Attendance and Late Work

As this is an online course, you can “attend” class whenever and wherever you like! However, as previously noted, all micro-tests must be completed and submitted by 5:00 p.m. every Sunday evening. There are no exceptions. Micro-tests will close at 5:00 p.m. on Sunday evening.

Grade Inquiry for Quiz Items and Writing Assignments

Students are encouraged to take action if they believe a quiz question or paper section was scored inaccurately. Students should submit a typed essay within one week after the quiz or paper is returned in class. Essays should cite class material to convincingly argue for why the quiz answer or paper section should be re-evaluated.

Email Etiquette

Email is a quick and convenient way for us to communicate outside of class. Remember, however, that you are still communicating with your professor. That being said, I expect all emails to be professional and courteous. Please make sure that all emails include a subject, a salutation (e.g., Dear Dr. Mikucki-Enyart, Hello Professor, etc.), content that is free of grammatical and spelling errors, a close (e.g., From, Sincerely, etc.), and your name. Also, be mindful of the tone of your email. I will not respond to any emails that lack any of these basic elements of email decorum.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is central to the mission of higher education in general and UWSP in particular. Academic dishonesty (cheating, plagiarism, and helping others commit violations) is taken very seriously and will not be tolerated. The *minimum* penalty for a violation of academic integrity is a failure (zero) for the assignment. Students who violate the university's academic code will be rigorously sanctioned. For more information, please visit:

<http://www.uwsp.edu/stuaffairs/Documents/RightsRespons/Academic%20Integrity%20Brochure.pdf>

To protect against cases of academic dishonesty, all writing assignments will be submitted through Dropbox via D2L and checked against Turnitin.

Disability Issues

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal law requiring education institutions to provide reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. For more information about UWSP's policies, please visit:

<http://www.uwsp.edu/stuaffairs/Documents/RightsRespons/ADA/rightsADAPolicyInfo.pdf>

If you have a disability and require classroom and/or exam accommodations, please register with the Disability and Assistive Technology Center and then notify me in writing within the first two weeks of the semester. I am happy to help in any way that I can. For more information, please visit the Disability and Assistive Technology Center, located on the 6th floor of the LRC. You can also find more information here: <http://www4.uwsp.edu/special/disability>