

# Comm 396: Communication and Gender

Spring, 2016

Sec. 1: Thursdays, 5:00-7:30pm in CAC 201

**Instructor:** Amanda Ferrante  
**Office:** 0234 CAC  
**Office Hrs:** before Thursday class, and by appointment  
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## **Course Description:**

The study of communication behaviors as they affect and are affected by gender. Communication exists everywhere, both implicitly and explicitly. Throughout this course we will discuss various critical perspectives/lens that can facilitate the exploration of gender construction in our society. The study of gendered rhetoric, discourse, and theories can also help inform how disempowered groups use their communication to gain power and create social change.

## **Course Objectives:**

Students who complete the course successfully should be able to:

- 1.) describe ways that gender organizes communication in culture;
- 2.) understand how gendered life experiences and power structures shape perceptions, identities, and communication practices;
- 3.) better understand and manage gendered conflict;
- 4.) clarify your own values related to gendered communication;
- 5.) be empowered to contribute to solutions to gendered social problems; and
- 6.) become a critical consumer of American culture and discourse.

## **Class Text:**

Wood, J.T. (2013). *Gendered lives: Communication, gender, and culture*. 10th Ed. Boston: Wadsworth Centage (text rental)

\*\*\*Occasionally, you will also be asked to read a handout or academic article (either paper or online). Please check email and D2L site regularly.

## **Resources:**

1. This syllabus, which is intended to give you an overview of the course.
2. Class time: Attendance is required, and failure to come to class will affect your participation grade. There are two reasons for this:
  - a. I will be providing a significant amount of information and explanation in mini class lectures.
  - b. This class is not only about learning basic concepts or knowing specific theories. Rather, you will be asked to critically engage discourse.
3. Readings: There is one required book for this class, listed above. Other readings are available on D2L. Complete all of the scheduled readings before you come to class, and bring a copy of all the assigned readings to class with you each meeting. Keep copies of articles with you throughout the semester—we may return to them in discussing a different topic.

4. The instructor: Please talk with me if you have ANY concerns or questions. I enjoy talking to students, and the earlier in the semester you come and talk to me the better able I am to adjust the class to meet your needs. I want everyone to learn in the class, so I am willing to adapt the course to your individual learning needs—if you ask, and give me a compelling reason. The best way to reach me is email and office hours.
5. Your fellow students: The classroom should be a safe and cooperative environment where we support and challenge each other in our exploration of communication and gender. As a result, your active participation in class discussion and respect for other students is essential.

### **Other Course Policies:**

1. Check out <http://www.uwsp.edu/centers/Pages/policies.aspx> for university policies.
2. All written work must be typed, and it should conform to high standards of composition. Clarity of organization and style, correctness of grammar, spelling and sound mechanics or composition will be factors in my evaluations.
3. Academic dishonesty is strictly prohibited. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to: turning in as your own any individual graded work that you did not produce entirely on your own; looking at another's work during, or otherwise cheating on, an exam or quiz; turning in an assignment for which you have received or will receive credit in another course; failure to document references completely and properly (including appropriate use of quotation marks, presenting full citations, etc.). Any student who uses, without proper acknowledgment, all or part of another's work as if it was his or her own or who allows others to use his or her work as if it was their own will face severe penalties (e.g., grade reduction; course failure; being reported for college disciplinary action).
4. If religious observances will prevent you from completing assigned work on a scheduled date, you are responsible to discuss this with your instructor WITHIN THE FIRST WEEK OF CLASS to make appropriate arrangements.
5. If you have a health condition or disability that may interfere with your attendance or your ability to complete course requirements, you should take the following steps. First, if you have not done so already, you should contact Disability Services and arrange to meet with a counselor who will help you determine whether your condition qualifies you for accommodations and to complete a form describing the approved accommodations. Second, you should inform your instructor of your need for accommodation and provide the instructor with a copy of the completed accommodations form. You are expected to complete these steps within the first three weeks of class or as soon as possible after learning of the need for accommodation, unless legitimate circumstances prevent you from doing so. Please visit <http://www.uwsp.edu/disability/Pages/faculty/accomodations.aspx> for more details.
6. All grades are final. Unless a mathematical error has occurred, the grade you receive will not be changed. After a grade is returned, you have one week to resolve questions about the grade with the instructor. After that, all grades remain final. (This time period precludes end of the semester attempts to renegotiate all prior grades.) Questions about a grade must be submitted in writing. The written request should describe, with specific examples and adequate documentation, the reasons the student believes another grade is warranted. Students should email the written request to the instructor and make an appointment so that we can talk in person. Please keep in mind that I want all my students to succeed, and thus spend a great deal of time grading and providing feedback on your assignments, so that you can improve for following assignments. All grades are earned by students, rather than given by me the instructor.
7. Do not wait until the end of the semester to attempt to engage me in a discussion over your final grade, and avoid making generic appeals for a better overall grade at the end of the term. If you want to earn a particular overall grade in the course, I encourage you to monitor your progress through D2L and utilize me as a resource.

**Privacy:**

**You are never required to disclose personal information if you choose not to.** When we discuss narratives in class, each student will be expected to share with the class something significant about the assigned topic. You may choose to discuss what you wrote, or you may choose to discuss only part of what you wrote, or you may talk about something else altogether. You may choose to share your own experience, but to describe it as something that happened to someone that you interviewed.

**Grading Scale and Weightings:**

**Possible Points**

Personal Narratives (12)	60 points
Quizzes (top 8 of 10)	40 points
Outreach Project	30 points
Final Exam	30 points
Analytical Essay	20 points
Attendance	15 points
Participation	15 points
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Total	210 points

**Letter Grades**

200-210	A
196-199	A-
192-195	B+
184-191	B
179-183	B-
175-178	C+
167-174	C
163-166	C-
158-162	D+
150-157	D
145-149	D-
<145	F

**Personal Narratives (60 points):**

Throughout the semester, you will write short, typewritten, narratives about your own experience/perceptions of gendered communication. These narratives will allow you to personalize our class activities, so that you control and assess your own learning process.

- How you (or someone you know) learned something about gender.
- How someone's standpoint made it impossible to know something.
- Your response to a women's or men's movement issue/argument.
- Listening to gendered conversation.
- Observing gendered nonverbal communication.
- Reflection on gendered identity.
- Observing gender in education.
- Interview with a participant in a wedding shower, bachelor party, or bachelorette party.
- Interview with someone who experienced, observed, or was accused of

sexual harassment.

Observing gendered media

Interview with someone who has experienced gendered violence.

Self-assessment of your learning process throughout the semester.

Narratives will be graded as follows:

--2 points if the narrative addresses the topic assigned;

--1 point if the narrative makes a meaningful and direct connection between your observations and concepts or information in the assigned reading for the day;

--1 point if the narrative includes a personal reflection on the significance of what you have written;

--1 point if the narrative is written in good English and typed in double space.\*

**\*Narratives with multiple writing errors will be graded lower. If you are not confident about your writing, you are welcome to get help at the Tutoring-Learning Center.**

Generally it will take 1½--3 pages to accomplish these goals. Narratives are graded for the quality of the content, not the number of words or pages. If you cannot be in class, you can get credit for a narrative turned in before class as an email attachment. No narratives will be accepted after the class is over.

### **Quizzes (40 points):**

Instead of a midterm exam, there will be 10 quizzes throughout the semester. Your top 8 quiz grades will be counted. If you miss a quiz, there is no opportunity to make it up. However, you need to take only 8 of the 10 quizzes throughout the semester. Quizzes will cover the chapter assigned, and may include concept pairs, short answer, and occasionally an essay question. Questions will generally be short answer. Key terms and questions at the end of each chapter can be useful in preparing for quizzes.

### **Outreach Project (30 points):**

After a tour of the Family Crisis Center, we will meet in the Center meeting room to get information on your outreach project. You will be given a case study of a client who needs help to enable her to leave and to stay free from an abusive situation. Your job will be to analyze this person's circumstances and the obstacles, and to develop a detailed plan to help that individual to become independent and to stay safe. You will work with one or two other students to analyze the challenges and to gather practical information on how the challenges can be overcome.

You will do research on options, and you will complete the planning form provided by the Family Crisis Center, using the first person, "I." You are to put yourself in the place of the person assigned to you, so you will plan your path to independence, using the perspective of the person assigned to you. Your team will report briefly to the class on your circumstances and your action plan, and you will turn in a copy of your plan.

Your outreach project will be graded on the following criteria:

--Goals are practical and realistic, given your circumstances;

--Plans are detailed and well researched;

--You attach documentation of the research you have done, including names and contact information for helpful people, photocopies from websites for useful information, etc.

### **Final Exam (30 points):**

The final exam will be a take-home final that you will turn in no later than May 12<sup>th</sup>. The final will consist of essay questions designed to assess your comprehension of ideas discussed in the course, your ability to integrate and synthesize these ideas, and your ability to apply them to the situations provided in the essay questions.

### **Analytical Essay (20 points):**

In reading and analyzing your chosen artifact(s), consider the following questions:

1. What are the purposes of the discourse?
2. What are the characteristics of the audience invoked or implied by the text?
3. What is the tone of the discourse?
4. How is the discourse structured?
5. What kinds of evidence are used?
6. What linguistic or argumentative strategies are used to support the purpose?
7. What aspect of the text seems most interesting or important to you? Why?

In organizing and writing your paper, use your answer to question 7 to help you frame an argumentative thesis about the text. Then develop a written argument to support your thesis, incorporating responses to some or all of the other questions as evidence for your claims, as needed.

*Option A:* The first option will be a critical analysis of an interview that you will conduct with a person who is at least forty-five years old and who has lived in the United States for at least ten years. To prepare for the interview, you will develop a list of questions about the person's experiences as they relate to gender movements and themes discussed in this class. Then you will write a paper analyzing the interview as a rhetorical artifact. The paper is not simply a report of the interview, but an analytical discussion of the interview, providing adequate examples from the interview to support your claims. Include contextual research to support your arguments. Attach a list of your interview questions to the paper.

*Option B:* The second option will be a critical analysis of a rhetorical artifact used in a women's or men's movement not assigned for class that was produced in the United States between 1830 and 2016 that addresses some aspect of gender. It may be a speech, a persuasive pamphlet or other document, a web site, a film, a television program, a newsmagazine, a radio program, a set of buttons or posters, etc. I encourage you to consult with me about locating suitable texts. If possible, attach a copy of your chosen artifact to the paper.

\*Expect to accomplish this essay within 3-4 pages successfully. As always in academic writing and research, it is far more valuable to maintain quality of content over quantity of words.

### **Attendance (15):**

**To be considered present for class, you must be here for the entire class. If you arrive more than 5 minutes late or leave more than 5 minutes early (even for a good reason), you will be marked absent for the class. There are no exceptions.** Please do not ask for permission to come late or to leave early.

**You** are the one who decides if you miss all or part of class. I am just the one who records it. If you miss a class, you are likely to miss a quiz, and there are no opportunities to make up quizzes. One absence will result in reduction of one attendance point. A second absence will cost two points. A third absence will cost 3 points. A fourth absence will cost 4 attendance points.

### **Participation (15):**

Four factors contribute to your participation grade: class attendance, participation in discussion and activities, your contribution to the outreach project, and contribution in the discussion of personal narratives and the result of your analytical essay or someone else's.

## Tentative Course Schedule

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Read before class</b>
<b>Jan. 28</b>	Introductions; syllabus; Middle Sexes	
<b>Feb. 4</b>	<i>Communication, gender, and culture</i> <u>PERSONAL NARRATIVE 1.</u> How you (or someone you know) learned something important about gender.	Wood, intro. and chapter 1
<b>Feb. 11</b>	<i>Theoretical approaches to gender</i> <u>PERSONAL NARRATIVE 2.</u> How someone's standpoint made it impossible to know something.	Wood, chapter 2
<b>Feb. 18</b>	<i>Women's and men's movements</i> <u>PERSONAL NARRATIVE 3.</u> Your response to a women's or men's movement issue.	Wood, chapters 3 and 4; On D2L: Andrews, Ch. 1 "Nature of Criticism"
<b>Feb. 25</b>	<b>*Analytical essay due;</b> short discussion/presentation of your analytical essays and ideas.	
<b>Mar. 3</b>	<i>Gendered language</i> <u>PERSONAL NARRATIVE 4.</u> Listening to gendered conversation.	Wood, chapter 5
<b>Mar. 10</b>	<i>Nonverbal communication</i> <u>PERSONAL NARRATIVE 5.</u> Observing gendered nonverbal communication.	Wood, chapter 6
<b>Mar. 17</b>	<i>Becoming gendered</i> <u>PERSONAL NARRATIVE 6.</u> Reflecting on gendered identity.	Wood, chapter 7
----- <i>Spring Break</i> -----		
<b>Mar. 31</b>	<i>Gendered education</i> <u>PERSONAL NARRATIVE 7.</u> Observing gender in education	Wood, chapter 8 On D2L: TBA

- Apr. 7** *Gendered close relationship* Wood, chapter 9  
PERSONAL NARRATIVE 8. Interview with a participant in a wedding shower, bachelor party, or bachelorette party.
- Apr. 8** *Gendered organizational communication* Wood, chapter 10  
PERSONAL NARRATIVE 9. Interview with someone who experienced or was accused of sexual harassment.
- Apr. 14** Tour of Family Crisis Center; discussion of Outreach Project
- Apr. 21** *Gendered Media* Wood, chapter 11  
On D2L: Gerhard, “Sex and the City”  
PERSONAL NARRATIVE 10. Observing gendered media.
- Apr. 28** *Gendered violence* Wood, chapter 12  
PERSONAL NARRATIVE 11. Interview with someone who has experienced gendered violence.  
**\*Outreach Project is due. Each team gets 5 minutes to present.**
- May 5** *Thinking about what you’ve learned* Wood, epilogue  
FINAL PERSONAL NARRATIVE 12. Self-assessment of your learning process.  
**\*Take home final exam is given out.**
- May 12** **Your take home final exam is due via D2L by 11:59pm.**