

Communication 740
Current Topics in Interpersonal Communication
Fall 2015

Professor: Dr. Sylvia L. Mikucki-Enyart
Office: CAC 209
Phone: 715. 346. 2267
Email: smikucki@uwsp.edu
Office hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 10:00 – 11:30 a.m.

Course Description: This graduate seminar provides an intensive examination of theories, methods of investigation, and current developments in the area of interpersonal communication. This survey course covers a broad range of topics studied by scholars interested in interpersonal communication.

Required Readings:

American Psychological Association. (2009). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

Selected articles and book chapters posted to D2L.

Course Objectives: After completing this course students should be able to:

- Extract key findings from scholarly articles
- Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of a study and/or theory
- Write in a sophisticated, scholarly manner
- Design and execute a research study

Expect to be challenged. I anticipate you thinking, reading, writing, and verbally articulating your thoughts on a graduate student level. This may, at times, be frustrating and overwhelming. But, I assure you this is part of the graduate school process and will lead to academic and personal growth. We're in this journey together and I will help you along the way.

Assignments and Grading

Students must complete all of the following assignments to complete the course successfully. That is, no one may receive a passing grade (i.e., D or above) without completing all the following assignments.

Class Participation/Discussion Questions (30%)

Class participation. First, I look forward to your constructive participation in class sessions. This course is a seminar course. Seminars are discussion (rather than lecture) classes. Relatively little lecturing will occur. Your active participation is necessary to make this class a

positive learning experience for all students. *This course will work best if you read the assigned readings ahead of time and come to class motivated and able to discuss them.*

You will be evaluated on the quality of your contributions as well as the quantity. You will be expected to ask questions, answers questions, and be responsible for the learning that occurs in class. Courtesy and respect for views expressed by other students is essential if collaborative learning is to occur. It is appropriate to disagree with someone else's position, but the conversation should stay focused on the ideas and the points of disagreement should always be clarified by referring to readings and other data.

Discussion questions. To help facilitate thoughtful discussion and participation, I ask that you compile a set of discussion questions to help spur discussion (see question guideline at the end of the syllabus).

Developing discussion questions allows you to crystallize your thoughts prior to sharing them in discussion or to articulate your questions you may have about a particular study or theory. They also help me to gauge where our collective interests, questions, concerns, and insights may lie so that I can more effectively facilitate our time together.

Theory Paper & Presentation (30%): Students will pick one of seven theories/constructs that they find particularly interesting (see calendar). Once a theory is selected, students will (a) review the prominent and relevant literature from this particular program of research; (b) write a brief paper (4-5 pages), which will provide a general overview of the theory/construct, including general foundation/principles (paraphrased into your own words), major findings from this program of research, major turning points in the theory/construct (if there are any), possible limitations, and potential future directions (as deemed by the student, not scholars); and (c) present their findings to the class in a brief 15-minute presentation before leading the class discussion that evening.

Papers and presentations should include/address the theory/construct's seminal research studies and scholars. Papers and presentations that fail to locate and incorporate the prominent literature for their given theory/construct will not receive higher than a "C" grade.

The theory paper should be prepared in a manner consistent with the sixth edition of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association.

Team Research Project (40%)

As a class, we will conduct a qualitative research study. The idea of the study is to interview adult children (ages 18 +) who have acquired a "stepparent" in adulthood due to late-life parental divorce. We will examine their communication processes and behaviors (e.g., uncertainty, privacy management, and multiple goals,) with their parent(s), new "stepparent," siblings, and other interpersonal ties as they attempt to renegotiate their family form.

This project will entail several major steps. First, you must review the relevant literature (or literatures) regarding the topics of the study. You are then to develop a (set of) testable research

question(s) and/or hypothesis(es) that focus on important issues left unanswered in the literature. Second, you are to gain IRB approval, through formal channels, of the project before collecting data. Third, you are to collect, code, enter, and analyze the data following social science principles and methods. Finally, you are to write a journal quality research report for submission to the instructor (We will decide as a class if we would like to write one group paper, or several individual or small group papers).

The research report should be prepared in a manner consistent with the sixth edition of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association. As such, the research report should have a cover page, abstract, and the traditional sections of a social science research report (e.g., rationale, methods, results, and discussion). Each part of the report (e.g., source citations, references, methods, and statistics) should be prepared consistent with APA guidelines.

The larger goal of this project is to submit a paper to the 2015 National Communication Association Conference which will be hosted in Philadelphia, PA (November 2016) and then to an academic journal.

The conference submission deadline is March of 2016. Thus, continuation of the project will likely require additional work during the winterim and spring semester. Students are not required to continue work on the project, but are encouraged to do so if they would like conference and/or publication experience.

Grading Scale: The following grading scale is used to determine your final grade:

97% - 100% = A+	87% - 89% = B+	77% - 79% = C+	67% - 69% = D+
96% - 94% = A	86% - 84% = B	76% - 74% = C	66% - 64% = D
93% - 90% = A-	83%-80% = B-	73% - 70% = C-	63% - 60% = D-
59% or less = F			

Course Guidelines

Attendance: Daily attendance is mandatory and you are expected to attend every class period. However, I recognize that life sometimes interferes with your ability to attend class. If you do miss a class period *it is YOUR responsibility to obtain all the information presented in class, including assignments, course material, announcements, and schedule changes from a classmate.* If information or content is unclear, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Tardiness: It is unprofessional and disrespectful to come to class late. I understand that occasionally circumstances arise that may prevent you from being punctual; however, please do not make this a regular occurrence. *Remember: Early is on time, on time is late, and late is unacceptable.*

Late Assignments: Late assignments are not accepted. PERIOD. If you fail to turn in an assignment on its due date you will receive a zero.

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.

Disability Issues: Students who require disability-related assistance will be accommodated per university policy. Please notify me in writing within the first two weeks of the semester.

Academic Integrity: Academic misconduct, including cheating, plagiarism, and helping others commit violations will not be tolerated. Students who violate the university's academic code (see <http://www.uwsp.edu/stuaffairs/Documents/RightsRespons/Academic%20Integrity%20Brochure.pdf>) will be rigorously sanctioned.

Religious Holidays: The university does not observe all religious holidays. Students who observe religious holidays that conflict with class sessions should notify me in writing within the first two weeks of the semester.

GOOD DISCUSSION QUESTIONS...

1. Are open-ended. Closed-ended (e.g., yes-no) questions do not give the class any room to discuss ideas (e.g., “do you agree?” “Does this make sense?”).
2. Are clear. Do not use vague terms. Do not use terms from outside class that other students will not know (unless you spend the time to explain them).
3. Are simple. Short questions tend to be clearer than long questions. One thing that can make for unnecessary complexity is that you ask two (or more things at once). Make sure that you are asking only one thing at a time.
4. Do not have objective, verifiable, answer to the question (particularly from the reading). Do not ask questions where the answer is likely to be someone reading from the text (unless you have a good, open-ended follow-up). Good questions are those that give the class a number of directions that they could go.
5. Attempt to identify (and/or challenge) implicit assumptions in a particular piece. These questions force students to look beyond what the authors have to say.
6. Relate back to earlier readings from class. Again, this forces students to go beyond what the authors have to say and to start making connections between concepts and theories. Do not be afraid to bring in concepts from other classes or from your own experience (but be prepared to explain that material or experience).
8. Assumes that students have read and understood the reading. Be prepared, however, to discuss basic issues (e.g., definitions).
9. Might ask for applications of theoretical positions (or theoretical explanations for applied issues).
10. Are questions. Do not make a statement, state an opinion, or read a passage without including a question to accompany it. If you do not ask a question, the class may not know how to respond.
12. Either specific or general. Neither specific nor general questions are always preferred. All of one kind (especially specific) gets somewhat tedious. Make sure that there is some combination of specific and general questions.