SPEECH 781 - SEMINAR IN RELATIONAL COMMUNICATION
The “Darker Side” of Relationships
Wednesdays 3:00 - 5:30 pm
George Hall 215/Speech Conference Room (George Hall 335)

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This graduate seminar is designed to provide an in-depth survey of social scientific research on the darker side of communication in relationships. Basic conceptual foundations will be reviewed and followed by a discussion of such topics as conflict, sexual coercion, obsessive relational intrusion, fatal attractions, hurt, embarrassment, gossip, deception,equivocation, jealousy, infidelity, verbal aggression, violence, demand-withdraw patterns, topic avoidance, relational dissolution, forgiveness, and relational repair.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. Students will have a working knowledge of the latest research trends on the “darker” aspects of communication in relationships.
2. Students will be able to critique and synthesize the scholarly literature on relational communication.
3. Students will gain practice conducting a research study on relational communication.

COURSE FORMAT

This course will be conducted in a modified-seminar format. The professor will provide basic lecture on each unit which will evolve into a discussion of issues raised in the readings. Your participation in class means that you will ask intelligent questions about the readings, raise pertinent issues for discussion, make helpful contributions to the discussion, and answer pointed questions posed by the instructor. Thus, it is essential that students carefully read the assigned readings PRIOR to each class meeting. Completion of the required readings is a prerequisite for attendance in class; do not show up if you have not done the readings. Before attending class, turn off all cellular/digital phones and other portable electronic devices that can ring or “sing” and generally disrupt the class.

All written work and class assignments must be turned in on the due date at the beginning of class. Late work will not be accepted. No excuses. No exceptions. Written work should be typed, double-spaced, follow APA style (most recent edition) and the guidelines described in SUGGESTIONS FOR WRITING PAPERS included in this syllabus.

ASSIGNED READINGS

Each student is responsible for obtaining the articles and book chapters included in the reading list in this syllabus.
RECOMMENDED READINGS


EVALUATION

The final grade in this course will be based on five assignments and participation in class discussions and activities.

1. **Cell Phone Interruptions in Relationships Analysis** (50 points or 5% of grade): Students will gain a better understanding of the communication and relationship dynamics associated with cell phone use.
   a. Observe people interacting and watch for instances when cell phones interrupt their conversations.
   b. Interview people about their use of cell phones when they are already engaged in a conversation with others. How do they manage this situation? What are their thoughts about how others should manage this situation?
   c. In a 3-5 page paper, describe how you collected your “data”, describe your sample, discuss what general patterns, principles, interpretations, reasons, and emotions were prevalent in your observations and interviews.
   d. Papers will be graded on your writing ability, your insightfulness, and your analytic skills.
   e. **Papers are due on January 18, 2006**.

2. **Measurement Profile** (200 points or 20% of grade): The goal of this assignment is to become familiar with one measurement instrument that is used in relational communication and one which may be useful in the class research project. You will develop a measure profile similar to those found in “Communication Research Measures: A Sourcebook” which is edited by R. B. Rubin, P. Palmgreen, and H. Sypher (1994).
   a. You give a 30-40 minute presentation on their chosen measure. To ensure no duplication and appropriateness of topics, please gain approval of your measurement choice as soon as possible.
   b. On the presentation day, profilers will provide every class member with a copy of the measure and instructions on how to complete. Note, profilers may choose to select a portion of the measurement instrument to profile.
   c. Profilers will duplicate and provide an assigned reading on the measure for each member of the class on the week before the scheduled profile presentation: **Due on January 25**.
   d. Profilers will write a 4-6 page paper which describes the measure (and any applicable subscales), its uses, and estimates the time required to complete the measure. Profilers will also discuss research on the reliability and validity of the measure and include additional comments regarding the utility of the measure, how often the measure is used in research, and the types of research that uses the measure. At least FOUR references which document studies that have used the profiled measure are expected.
   e. Presentations, TWO copies of the paper to the instructor, and an electronic version (via email or disk) of the measure, instructions, and scoring information to every member of the class are **on February 1**.

3. **Lecture Presentation** (300 points or 30% of grade): The goal of this assignment is to become well-versed in a particular aspect of the “darker” side of interpersonal communication beyond the planned lecture content of Speech 781.
   a. Students will develop and design a 50-75 minute, formal in-class presentation on their chosen area for an advanced undergraduate course on the “darker” side of interpersonal communication.
   b. Students will provide a self analysis of the goals they hope to accomplish with the presentation.
      b1. Consider your personal, academic, and professional goals for this project. Think about what you hope to accomplish and demonstrate in your presentation. **Due on the date of presentation, either April 26 or May 3**.
      b2. In 1-2 pages, list and explain 3-5 goals for your presentation.
c. At minimum, students will provide the class with an outline of their presentation, a bibliography of references, questions for discussion, a quiz (with answers), and a well-conceptualized and executed presentation that incorporates an application exercise and multimedia examples. **Due on either April 26 or May 3.**

d. Students will provide a self assessment of the outcomes achieved during the presentation. **Due on the date after the presentation, either May 3 or May 10.**
   1. In at least 1-2 pages, discuss whether your goals for the presentation were accomplished.
   2. Consider the following questions: Did you meet the goals you specified a priori? Did your goals change along the way? How so? Did anything unexpected happen? If your goals were not met, why? How would you improve?

e. Lecture topics must offer a unique and complementary perspective to the planned research literature of the course. To ensure no duplication and appropriateness of topics, please gain approval of your lecture topic as soon as possible.

f. Students are required to duplicate 1 article/book chapter for each member of the class as “Assigned Readings” for their presentation day. These articles must be distributed at least ONE WEEK BEFORE the presentation day. **Due on either April 19 or April 26.**

4. **Research Study** (300 points or 30% of grade): The goal of this assignment is to develop a research paper which will be submitted to a communication conference. Students will participate in all aspects of designing and conducting a research study. Students will be graded on their initiative, quality of work, attention to detail, attitude, timeliness, and problem solving ability. Additionally, on the last day of class, each student will write the discussion section (e.g., summary of results, explanation of findings, implications of findings, limitations to study, future directions, and conclusion) that could be used in the class research paper and give an oral report of their discussion.

5. **Reading Analysis** (100 points or 10% of grade): The goal of this assignment is better prepare you for productive and stimulating class discussions on the readings.
   a. Each student will summarize 1-2 readings per week for approximately 11 weeks.
   b. Each student will write discussion questions for all of the assigned readings for the class. Make sure you have thought through how you would respond to your questions before using them for class discussion.
      b1. Students will write at least 1-2 discussion questions for each of the readings.
      b2. Students will write 1-2 integrative discussion questions (which reflects on issues addressed in several articles).

6. **Initiative and Active Participation** (50 points or 5% of grade): Because this is a graduate seminar, you are expected to be fully prepared for each class session and contribute meaningfully and productively to the class discussion.

**GRADING SYSTEM**

Each graded assignment earns points, not letter grades. However, your final grade will be a letter grade. This grade will be awarded as follows:

- **High Achievement**
  - A = 1000 - 900
  - A+ (970)
  - A (935)
  - A- (900)

- **Meets Expectations**
  - B = 899 - 800
  - B+ (870)
  - B (835)
  - B- (800)

- **Below Expectations**
  - C = 799 - 700
  - C+ (770)
  - C (735)
  - C- (700)

- **Inadequate Performance**
  - D = 699 - 600
  - D+ (670)
  - D (635)
  - D- (600)

- **Failure**
  - F = 599 - 0
  - F (0)
SUMMARY OF COURSE WORK

I. Cell Phone Interruptions in Relationships Analysis (50 points) 5%

II. Measurement Profile (200 points) 20%
   A. Paper (100 pts)
   B. Instrument (50 pts)
   C. Presentation (50 pts)

III. Research Study (300 points) 30%

IV. Lecture Presentation (300 points) 30%
   A. Outline of Presentation (100 pts)
   B. Bibliography (50 pts)
   C. Presentation (100 pts)
   D. Exercise (25 pts)
   E. Multimedia (25 pts)

V. Reading Analysis (100 points) 10%

VI. Initiative and Active Participation (50 points) 5%

SUGGESTIONS FOR WRITING PAPERS

1. All papers must be typewritten. Please double space. Do not use 1-1/2 space. Leave 1" margins at the side, top, and bottom so comments may be made on the paper without great difficulty.

2. Your papers should look clean and neat. Make sure that you use new typing ribbon/toner cartridges. You may also need to clean your typeface. Do not type over typographical errors. Do not cross out errors. Do not write in corrections. Please use correction fluid or correction paper. Do not use erasable paper--it tends to smear. If using a computer printer, please do not use draft quality print.

3. Do not place papers in booklet covers. Staple or paper clip the pages together. Please do not use decorative clips, and please do not dog-ear the pages.

4. You are responsible for correct grammar, punctuation, spelling, and format. If you have not done much writing before, consult a style handbook (e.g., The Complete Stylist and Handbook). You should also regularly consult a dictionary for spelling. If you are using a word processing package, please remember to use your spell checker. Do remember, however, that a spell checker will not catch all spelling errors.

5. In general, follow the suggestions for composition in the Publication Manual of the APA (the most recent edition). Be particularly attentive to proper referencing within the text and on the reference page.

6. Please check subject-verb agreement and the agreement of pronouns and their referents. Remember that "criteria" and "phenomena" are plural nouns which do not agree with "it."

7. Please use gender neutral language when possible. However, try to avoid awkward phrases such as "s/he" or "his or her." In the case of indefinite references, it is perfectly acceptable to use third person plural pronouns (e.g., "they," "their," or "theirs") as a gender neutral substitute for third person singular pronouns (e.g., "he," "she," "her," or "his").
8. Avoid splitting verb phrases. Whenever possible, place the modifying adjectives or adverbs before or after the verb phrase rather than in the middle of it.

9. Make sure that you use proper punctuation. Remember that brackets indicate your interpolations in a quotation whereas parentheses represent interpolations in the original. Be sure to leave spaces between the three dots in an ellipsis. Be sure to check whether it is proper to place punctuation inside or outside the quotation mark.

10. Papers should be regarded as exercises in scholarly writing. Narrative material on how you discovered your topic, why the phenomenon you have chosen is personally important to you, and why you enjoy the course is neither necessary nor appropriate.

11. A major purpose of any writing assignment is to develop a clear and concise writing style. Remember, paragraphs should have thesis statements. The material in the paragraph should develop that thesis statement. Check to see that what you write is pertinent to a main point and that what you write follows a clear, orderly pattern of development. You should be able to outline in statement form the entire content of your paper.

12. Remember, a scholarly paper is argumentative and reflective. It should not be treated as simply a vehicle for the assertion of personal feelings, beliefs, or reactions. Individual interpretations require public justifications. Criteria for cogent arguments apply to your own paper as well as to the material you might be analyzing. Claims made in the paper need to be developed and defended. Descriptions should be elaborated. Opinions must be clarified and justified. In short, claims made in the paper should be presented and supported in a way that is understandable and convincing to a potential reader--and not just to yourself.

13. Sources of information should be properly referenced. Wording and phrasing borrowed from other sources should be so indicated. Ideas or the outline of ideas should also be properly acknowledged if these are obtained from someone else. There is nothing unethical about using information or ideas that you found through research or discussion if you properly credit the source. Failure to do so, however, constitutes plagiarism.

14. Avoid unnecessary quotations. Especially for assignments in this class, quotations are rarely appropriate. If you must use a quotation, make it as brief as possible. Unless the quotation is written in a particularly elegant way or is needed to demonstrate the author's position on some issue, you will usually be better off simply paraphrasing it. Make sure that any quotation is used to support your own analysis, and not to replace it.

15. It is generally a good idea to keep for yourself a photocopy of your paper. Please turn in the original if you cannot get a professional looking copy.

16. Do not leave papers to be written until the last minute. Please have consideration for your reader as well as pride of authorship, and allow yourself enough time to prepare the paper so that your ideas may be expressed in clear, succinct, and stylistically appropriate prose.

17. Proofread your papers!!!
TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

(Please note that it is sometimes necessary to make changes in the schedule in terms of material covered. These changes will be announced in class.)

January 11  Overview of Interpersonal Communication and the Dark Side of Relationships

Readings


January 18  Relational Themes

DUE: Cell Phone Interruptions in Relationships Analysis

Readings


January 25  Conflict  

DUE: Readings from Measurement Profile Presenters  

Readings  


February 1  Measurement Profile Presentations  

DUE: Measurement Profile  

Readings  

To be provided by Measurement Profile Presenters  


February 8    Seduction

Readings


February 15    Confusion

Readings


February 22  Deceiving and Vagueness

Readings


March 1  Relational Threats

Readings


March 8  Research Study Day

March 15  Research Study Day
March 22      Abusing

Readings


April 5      Withdrawing

Readings


April 12  Relationship Disengagement

Readings


April 19  Relational Repair

DUE: Readings from April 26 Presenter

Readings


April 26  Lecture Presentations

DUE: Readings from May 3 Presenters

Readings  To be assigned and provided by Presenter


May 3  Lecture Presentations; Course Evaluations

Readings  To be assigned and provided by Presenters

May 10  Reflections on Research Study

DUE: Discussion Section & Oral Report