

COM 220: INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION
SPRING, 2004

Prof. Houston
206 Reese Phifer Hall
348-8078
appointment

Student Conference Hours:
TTR 2:00-4:00
Other times by

mhouston@com.ua.edu

Catalogue description

Study of verbal and nonverbal communication in the evolution of human relationships
(General Studies Core: SB)

Course Objectives

- To understand the centrality of everyday, interpersonal communication to all aspects of human social life
- To understand the many ways in which diversity intersects with interpersonal communication
- To understand basic concepts and theories that provide frameworks for comprehending the challenges of interpersonal relationships
- To understand basic communication strategies that can enhance interpersonal relationships

Required text , cd-rom & online resources

Wood, Julia T. (2004). *Interpersonal Communication: Everyday Encounters*. 4th edition. Belmont, CA:

Wadsworth.

Everyday Connections (cd-rom included with text)

Online resources:

Everyday Connections website: <http://communication.wadsworth.com>

InfoTrac College Edition

Other online resources as indicated in the text

Point system for course activities and assignments

<u>Activity/Assignment</u>	<u>Maximum Points</u>
Active Participation in Class	200
Test 1	150
Test 2	200
Final Examination	250
Inter/Media oral & written reports	<u>200</u>
Total Possible Points	1000

Grade Equivalents:

A+ = 98%	980-1000	C+ = 77%	770-799
A = 94%	940-979	C = 74%	740-769
A- = 90%	900-939	C- = 70%	700-739
B+ = 87%	870-899	D+ = 67%	670-699
B = 84%	840-869	D = 64%	640-669
B- = 80%	800-839	D- = 60%	600-639

NOTE: *Students in C&IS must earn a “C” or better in all required and elective courses in the major. A “C” or better is required in all external courses required by the major whether they serve as a prerequisite to a major course or are simply required by the major. This means a “C” of any kind.*

Details of Major Assignments

1. Participation (200 points). A successful learning experience in this course depends on your being prepared for and actively involved in *each* class meeting. Participation points may be earned in the following ways:

(a) **Discussion.** You are expected to demonstrate your preparation for *each* class by making contributions *informed by course readings* to all oral or written discussions.

(b) **In-class experiences.** Simulations and other in-class experiences will be dispersed throughout the term; each is designed to reinforce the concepts in readings and lectures. In-class experiences *will vary in point value*; points are earned when you engage actively, cooperatively, seriously, and reflectively in the experience. Some experiences may require brief, written homework assignments. *In-class experiences cannot be “made-up;” written materials that accompany in-class experiences cannot be submitted late for credit.*

2. Examinations (600 points). The three examinations will be a mix of objective items (multiple choice, true-false, identification, etc.) and essay questions. Tests 1 & 2 will each cover the materials indicated on the syllabus; the final examination will be cumulative, including some material from earlier units. **NOTE:** Questions about selected inter/media oral reports will appear on the tests and final exam; please see the explanation below.

3. Inter/Media reports (200 points). The study of interpersonal communication involves learning “practical wisdom,” knowledge that is useful in our everyday lives. Evidence of this can be found in the many discussions of the key concepts and communication strategies covered in this course in the popular media (e.g., in magazines, newspapers, television documentaries, and websites). The Inter/Media reports assignment gives you the opportunity to further explore media discussions of interpersonal communication.

(a) 3-minute oral reports (50 points).

The beginning of class sessions marked with an asterisk (*) will be devoted to student presentations and class discussion of media reports on interpersonal communication. You will have an opportunity to select a day to present a **3-minute oral report** on a media item, published between January 1, 2002 and April 28, 2004. The item must be related to a topic being discussed at that point in the class.

In giving your report, you should state the source, date, and author, and *clearly highlight its relevance to one or more specific theories, key concepts, or strategies being discussed by the class at that time*. To receive credit for the item, you must also submit an original, word-processed, **one paragraph** summary of the information you present orally **and** a clipping, printout from the internet, or video excerpt of the item itself.

Because inter/media oral reports relate to the issues discussed at a particular point in the course, “make-up” opportunities will be limited. Thus, you should make every effort to present when assigned. Written summaries will not be accepted late or in lieu of an oral report.

NOTE: Questions about selected inter/media oral reports will appear on the quizzes and final exam.

(b) Final written reports (150 points). There are two parts to the final written inter/media report:

Part 1: Summaries (75 points): Gather *one* print, internet, or electronic media item related to *at least one* key concept in *six of the eleven* chapters of *Everyday Encounters*. Each report should be accompanied by a one-paragraph summary as described above (6 one-paragraph reports). Place the media items and summary reports in a paper or plastic report folder (no hard-sided notebooks, please), organized in a coherent manner (i.e., I must be able to tell the key concept or strategy to which each item is related).

Part 2: Self-Reflection Paper (75 points): Select *one* of your media items that is particularly relevant to one of your own interpersonal relationships. Write a more extended (3-5-page) discussion that: (1) emphasizes the relevance of the item to one or more key concepts and/or communication strategies studied in the course; (2) explains *how* the item *and* the key concept or strategy are related to your relationship; and (3) reflects on ways you might apply what you’ve learned about the key concept or strategy to enhance your relationship. This paper should be placed at the beginning of your report folder.

Course Policies and Procedures

- 1. Communication Climate.** At a public institution with a diverse student population, such as the University of Alabama, one is bound to encounter differences in beliefs about some of the sensitive personal issues that are

necessarily the focus of this course. To promote a communication climate in which a diversity of ideas can be freely expressed and examined, you are expected to fairly and accurately represent the ideas presented in readings, lectures, videos, or other course materials, even when you disagree with them, and to communicate respect for the values and beliefs of the professor and your classmates, even if they conflict with your own.

Your **active** support of a cooperative learning environment in the classroom will be assessed as part of your participation grade. As professor, I reserve the right to publicly address students whose behavior I judge as disrupting the learning environment.

NOTE: *The University of Alabama Code of Student Conduct requires that students behave in a manner that is conducive to a teaching/learning environment. Students who engage in behavior that is disruptive or obstructive to the teaching/learning environment will be subject to disciplinary sanctions outlined by the Code of Student Conduct. Disruptive/obstructive behavior is not limited to but may include the following: physical abuse, verbal abuse, threats, stalking, intimidation harassment, hazing, possession of controlled substances, possession of alcoholic beverages.*

2. **Attendance/Excessive Absences.** You may accrue **three (3)** absences without penalty. For each absence after the third, **fifty (50) points** will be deducted from your participation grade up to the total of 250 points. In counting absences, ***I do not distinguish between “excused” and “unexcused” absences***; instead, I expect you to reserve your absences for illness and other exceptional, unanticipated circumstances. You are responsible for all information, activities, and assignments given during your absence. Students with perfect attendance (no absences or tardies *for any reason*) will receive 10 bonus points at the end of the course.

Attendance is taken via a sign-in sheet; it is *your* responsibility, not that of the professor, to make sure that you sign in each day.

PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING C&IS POLICY: *Students who do not attend the first two meetings of a Tuesday-Thursday course or the first three meetings of a Monday-Wednesday-Friday course may be administratively disenrolled.*

3. **Late assignments & make-up work.** Problems with submitting work on time or taking exams as scheduled should be discussed with me at least two class meetings prior to the due date. Because **inter/media oral reports** relate to the issues discussed at a particular point in the course, “make-up” opportunities will be limited. Thus, you should make every effort to present when assigned. Make-up examinations will be given at the professor’s discretion and convenience, and must be taken no later than the next class meeting; with rare exceptions, any make-up exam will incur a penalty of 33% of the points earned. A student will be granted no more than one (1) make-up exam.

- 4. Penalty for not completing all assigned work:** The assignments for this course work together to provide and optimal learning experience. The point system is intended to make it easier for you to monitor your progress toward a final grade; it is not an opportunity to select from among the assignments those one wishes to complete and to avoid others. A **500 point penalty** will be assessed any student who does not take each of the three exams, complete the inter/media reports, and participate actively in all in-class experiences for which she or he is present.
- 5. Academic Honesty.** *All students in attendance at the University of Alabama are expected to be honorable and to observe standards of conduct appropriate to a community of scholars. The University expects from its students a higher standard of conduct than the minimum required to avoid discipline. Academic misconduct includes all acts of dishonesty in any academically related matter and any knowing or intentional help or attempt to help, or conspiracy to help, another student.*

The Academic Misconduct Disciplinary Policy will be followed in the event of academic misconduct.
- 6. Disability Accommodation.** *Students with disabilities are encouraged to register with the Office of Disability Services, 348-4285. Thereafter, you are invited to schedule appointments to see me during my office hours to discuss accommodations and other special needs.*

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE¹

¹ Subject to revision; please be alert to changes made as the course progresses.

Unit I: Chapter 1-4

Thurs. Jan. 8	Introduction to course policies and content
Tues. Jan. 13	EC, Introduction, pp. 1-9
Thurs. Jan. 15	Interpersonal Communication in a Diverse Society: EC, Chapter 1, pp. 9-17
Tues. Jan. 20	Models, definitions, and basic principles of interpersonal communication EC, Chapter 1, pp. 17-41
*Thurs. Jan. 22	Communication and the Creation of Self EC, Chapter 2, pp. 43-55
Tues. Jan. 27	Differences that matter: race, class, gender, sexuality EC, Chapter 2, pp. 56-70
*Thurs. Jan. 29	The process of human perception EC, Chapter 3, pp. 88
Tues. Feb. 3	Improving perception EC, Chapter 3, pp. 89-98
*Thurs. Feb. 5	Principles of verbal communication EC, Chapter 4, pp. 99-114
Tues. Feb. 10	Speech Communities EC, Chapter 4, pp. 115-126
Thurs. Feb. 12	Review; catch our breaths
Tues. Feb. 17	TEST 1 (150 points)

Unit 2: Chapters 5-8

Thurs. Feb. 19	Nonverbal communication EC, Chapter 5, 128-136
*Tues. Feb. 24	Types of Nonverbal Communication EC, Chapter 5, 136-152
Thurs. Feb. 26	Analysis of Professorial Space (in-class experience: 15 points)

Tues. Mar. 2	The Listening Process EC, Chapter 6, pp. 154-165
*Thurs. Mar. 4	Effective Listening EC, Chapter 6, pp. 161-179
Tues. Mar. 9	Emotions and Communication EC, Chapter 7, pp. 181-194
*Thurs. Mar. 11	Communicating emotions effectively EC, Chapter 7, pp. 195-208
Tues. Mar. 16	Communication Climate EC, Chapter 8, pp. 210-227
*Thurs. Mar. 18	Creating and Sustaining Healthy Climates EC, Chapter 8, pp. 228-236
Tues. Mar. 23	Review; catch our breaths
Thurs. Mar. 25	Test 2 (200 points)
Mar. 29 & Apr. 1	SPRING VACATION
<u>Unit 3: Chapters 9-11</u>	
Tues. Apr. 6	Managing conflict EC, Chapter 9, pp. 238-250
*Thurs. Apr. 8	Responses to conflict EC, Chapter 9, pp. 251-266
Tues. Apr. 13	Committed Romantic Relationships EC, Chapter 11, pp. 293-311
*Thurs. Apr. 15	Challenges to sustaining romantic relationships EC, Chapter 11, pp. 314-324
*Tues. Apr. 20	Friendships EC, Chapter 10, pp. 268-279
Thurs. Apr. 22	Class Will Note Meet: Final Written Inter/Media Reports Due (parts 1& 2)

Tues. Apr. 27 **Friendships**
EC, Chapter 10, pp. 280-291

Thurs. Apr. 29 Final Review; catch our breaths

TUESDAY MAY 4, 9:00-10:30: FINAL EXAMINATION