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COMM 110.50: Introduction to Interpersonal Communication

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COMM 110-50
Introduction to Interpersonal Communication
Spring 2005

Instructor: Julie Benson-Rosston
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Phone: 406.459.3041

Required Materials
- Regular access to a computer, Microsoft Word, the Internet, and an email account.
- Attendance at the required orientation on Tuesday, January 25 from 7 - 8:30 p.m. in LA 206.

Course Description

COMM 110 is an overview of the process of human communication with special emphasis on analyzing communication patterns. Students will learn skills designed to improve interactions in family, social, and professional relationships. Concepts include an introduction to communication theory, self-concept, perception, language, nonverbal communication, listening skills, relationship enhancement, and conflict management.

Course objectives are met entirely via the Internet. Students will read the text and/or content modules, visit websites, write papers, submit quizzes, and participate in group activities and online discussions. Offering the course via the Internet affords students a flexible schedule by removing the constraints of time and location of a traditional classroom.

Course Objectives

1. Compare and contrast several models of interpersonal communication.
2. Describe how perceptions of self and others affect your communication.
3. Learn how different backgrounds and situations influence how we communicate.
4. Be aware of how to be clear when you communicate.
5. Understand the nature of language and its impact on communication.
6. Describe how nonverbal behavior affects interpersonal communication.
7. Explain several types of listening skills and non-listening behaviors.
8. Tell how self-disclosure affects communication with others.
9. Explain how relationships begin, negotiate and terminate.
10. Describe ways to strengthen communication with family, friends and co-workers.
11. Compare and contrast interpersonal conflict styles and management techniques.
12. Discuss the role technology plays in our interpersonal communication.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Online Participation
You may be wondering how a communication course can be taught without ever coming face to face with the other students or the instructor! Let me assure you that it is possible, and, while different, effective. We have class interaction online. We have insightful discussion, share examples, and learn together. Research shows that students learn more when they interact with not only the content of the course, but with each other and the instructor. As such, your involvement in the online discussions is required and graded (100 points).

Some weeks (not all), I will post a forum in the Discussion Board on the course website. Access the Discussion Board by clicking on the "Communication" tab on the course homepage and then clicking on "Discussion Board." In each forum, I will post 1-2 questions for you and your classmates to discuss. We will carry on what is called a "threaded discussion." A threaded discussion is an asynchronous "chat." This means that you can write ("post") your responses to my question(s) and to the responses of your classmates at any time. It is not a "live" chat (something with which you may already be familiar). This is one of the many benefits to taking a course online. You may do your work when it is convenient for you.

Generally, I will post an Announcement on the course homepage when there is a new forum on the Discussion Board. I will also explain the timeline for the forum. That is, you must participate within specific forums by the posted due dates in order for your comments to count toward your online participation grade.

In terms of grading your online participation, I will be looking for quantity AND quality. For quantity, you are required to provide a minimum of one response to all of my posted questions. Further, you are required to respond to at least two of your classmates' "posts," per question. For example, if I pose two separate questions in one forum, you need to reply once to each of my questions (two total responses). Additionally, you will need to respond at least twice to classmates for each question (four total responses). In summary, then, if the Discussion Forum contains two questions, you will need to "post" at least six responses. However, if I have posted only one question for the week, your minimum requirement would be a total of three responses. In some cases, it maybe appropriate to post more than the bare minimum. For quality, I will be looking for responses that (a) demonstrate you have read the textbook, (b) reflect on content and/or classmates' responses and (c) stimulate further class discussion.

Quizzes
In order to have effective class discussions and productive in-class activities, students must remain current on the assigned readings. As such, you will take six 20-point quizzes on the course website. Each quiz will cover two chapters in your text, *Interpersonal Communication: Relating to Others*. I will drop your lowest quiz score (in case you miss
Your five best quizzes will count toward your final grade (100 points).

Quizzes, which consist of true-false and multiple-choice questions, will be given on every Wednesday from Week 2 through Week 7. They will be available during a 48-hour window— from 12 a.m. Wednesday until 11:55 p.m. on each of the accompanying Thursdays. Consult the course Calendar for specific dates. You can access the quizzes by clicking first on Assignments, then Quizzes, then Quiz 1, Quiz 2, etc. The quizzes are timed. When you log in to the quiz, you will have 20 minutes to complete it. Although you will have access to your text while taking the quiz, reading the material thoroughly prior to the quiz is highly recommended.

If you encounter technological difficulties (occasionally, this occurs, but not too frequently), contact me immediately, preferably by phone (459.3041) or email (jbensonrosston@aol.com). Sometimes I am able to "fix" some of the problems—it they occur within Blackboard, the course management system. So let me know right away.

Papers
You will write two papers for the course. The first essay (3-4 pages) will be your response to watching a film that highlights the role of perception in interpersonal communication (50 points). The second paper (6-7 pages) is an analysis of a significant interpersonal relationship in your life (100 points). The purpose in writing these papers is to help you see how the ideas we discuss in class apply to your everyday life. They will lead you to think about the way you presently communicate and how you might improve. Details for each assignment can be found by clicking on Assignments, then Papers (Two papers = 150 points).

Group Activities
You will work in groups to complete two activities during the semester. The first project, the Interpersonal Website Search, is worth 40 points. The second project, the Gender Scavenger Hunt, is worth 60 points. Details for both of these assignments can be found by clicking on Assignments, then Group Activities. The course website contains a link called "Group Pages," where your group will have its own page. Here you will have access to a private Discussion Board, a live chat room (called Collaboration), as well as email and file exchange capabilities. These features allow students who live in different locations and/or have opposite schedules to easily interact and successfully complete group projects (Two projects = 100 points).

GRADING POLICIES

1. Final Grades
Your final grade will be determined based on the following scale:

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<tr>
<th>Score Range</th>
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<tr>
<td>405 - 450</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>360 - 404</td>
<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>315 - 359</td>
<td>C</td>
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<td>270 - 314</td>
<td>D</td>
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2. **Late Work**  
You are responsible for turning your work in on time. Late written work (hopefully, you won't have any of this, but just in case...) will be penalized 20% of the possible points. Late work will not be accepted after ONE WEEK beyond its due date.

3. **Missing Quizzes**  
Quizzes *cannot* be made up. If you must miss a quiz, I will automatically "drop" that quiz as your lowest grade. Missing additional quizzes will result in a score of zero for each quiz. Be sure to check the calendar for scheduled quizzes. If these dates do not work for you, you should take this course another semester. On the positive side, a perk to the online course is that as long as you have access to the Internet, you can take the quiz from anywhere!

4. **Meeting Deadlines**  
When managing your time to complete assignments, please anticipate that you may experience unpredictable circumstances—your computer could freeze up, your Internet provider might not be working properly, or any number of other possible technology problems could occur. These are not acceptable excuses for turning in late assignments. Always plan extra time to complete assignments in order to prevent submitting late work. Most importantly, always have a *back-up plan*—another computer to use, another place to get online and take a quiz, etc.

5. **Discussing Grades**  
If at any point, you would like to discuss a grade you have earned or any other concerns you have, please call me right away. Because of the enormous opportunity for misinterpretation and frustration when communicating via email, I prefer to discuss students' grades, or any other conflict, in person—at least on the phone, or arrange for a face-to-face appointment. You may call my cell phone (459-3041) or email me with your phone number and a good time to reach you, and I'll call you (so you won't have to incur a long-distance phone bill).

In addition to my policy of not discussing grades via email, please abide by the following guidelines: (a) Wait 24 hours after an assignment/quiz has been returned to you to contact me; (b) Write out your concerns so we can both look them over, or you can read them to me on the phone; (c) If you wish to contest a grade, you must make an appointment to do so within one week after the assignment has been returned.

**SUBMITTING COURSEWORK**

Please save all written work in a Microsoft Word file and submit as a Microsoft Word file via the Digital Drop Box on the course website. Do not submit your written work to me via my email account. After grading your work, I will return it as a new attachment, complete with in-text feedback and a grade.

In order to utilize the Digital Drop Box, click on Tools on the course homepage, then Digital Drop Box. You must click on "Add File" to keep your assignments accessible to
you throughout the course and to maintain a record of your postings (so you and I know they were turned in on time, etc.). However, to actually SUBMIT your paper, you must then click on "Send File" and select the appropriate assignment to send. A common student error is to Add the File, but not "Send" it; Do both to ensure you receive credit for your homework. Your files should be titled exactly as I name them when I give you the assignment, so it's clear to me what you are sending. Also, be sure that in the text of any assignment, you include your FULL NAME.

**CORRESPONDENCE and ASKING QUESTIONS VIA EMAIL**

First and foremost, when communicating with me via email, **be sure to sign your full name and the course you are in**. I teach three different courses, and many of you have email addresses that do not indicate your name. Signing your name and including the class you are in will help me respond most effectively and in a timely manner.

If you have a question related to an assignment or the course in general, please title your email "Questionabout______." In the email be sure to tell me which assignment you are asking about and which course you are in. When responding to student emails, I will respond to "question" emails first--to ensure that you receive a prompt answer and may move ahead with your work.

Please allow 24-48 hours (on average) for an email response from me. Sometimes I will be able to respond more quickly. Other times during the semester, it may take me longer to respond--for example, during heavy grading times or if I am attending a conference.

**CALENDAR**

The schedule of quizzes and due dates for all assignments are available in the Course Calendar. Access the Calendar by first clicking on Tools on the course homepage, then on Calendar. Former students (and I) recommend that you check your calendar very regularly. You can view the Calendar in Daily, Weekly, Monthly and Yearly formats. You may want to print the View Month versions of each month of the semester. That way, you can have a hard copy of all the assignment deadlines.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Announcements are available on the welcome page of our course website. I regularly post announcements regarding assignments, quizzes, new forums on the discussion board, reminders, problems with the websites and/or other technological issues, suggestions, questions, etc. I highly recommend that you frequently read the announcements.
ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

All students taking this course must adhere to the University of Montana’s academic dishonesty policy as presented in the Student Conduct Code (SCC). As noted in the code, students are expected to practice academic honesty. Any actions that include, but are not limited to, the following behaviors are reasons for pursuing academic and university sanctions: plagiarism, copying another student’s exam, allowing another student to copy form your exam or work, sharing information with another student during testing sessions, acquiring or possessing an exam without the instructor’s permission, tampering with course materials or resources (including library references) submitting false information (data, quotations, citations, etc.), representing someone else’s work as your own, etc. Anyone caught in any act of academic dishonesty will, at the very least, receive 0 points for the assignment. In addition, steps will be taken to initiate University sanctions, as provided for in the SCC. You are responsible for reading and understanding this code – if you have any questions, please contact me or the department chair, Alan Sillars.

The SCC can be viewed at www.umt.edu/studentaffaris/sccAcademicConduct.htm#9

HOW TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN AN ONLINE COURSE

Please read the next two pages. The first is an Online Readiness Questionnaire, and the second is a Checklist for Surviving an Online Course. They will help you achieve success in this course.
ONLINE READINESS QUESTIONNAIRE

Congratulations! You have signed up for an online course! Maybe it's your very first one, or perhaps you are an experienced online learner. Either way, the following questions are to help you assess your personal readiness for taking a course via the Internet.

Technical skills

1. Do you have regular access to a computer and an email account?
2. Are you comfortable writing, sending, and receiving email messages?
3. Do you know how to send and open documents as attachments via email?
4. Can you create, save and manage files on your computer?
4. Are you able to navigate and research the Internet using a browser?
5. Do you know how to participate in an online "chat room?"
6. Can you download files?
7. Are you able to install software on your computer if you need to?
8. Do you feel knowledgeable in "netiquette?"

If you answered "no" to more than two of the technical questions, you may want to reconsider taking an online course. At the very least, you will need to learn some technology skills in addition to the course curriculum. More importantly, will you have the time to do this? The motivation?

Study skills

1. Are you motivated to read, complete and submit assignments on your own?
2. Do you like reading and writing as primary (although not the only) channels for learning information--in contrast to spoken and visual channels?
3. Are you willing to set aside as much time in your schedule for completing your online coursework as you would for a "traditional" course?
4. Do you believe you have good overall time management skills?
5. Do you stay on task without direct supervision?
6. Are you able to work ahead, rather than procrastinate?

If you answered, "yes," to the majority of the study skills questions, your learning style may be well suited to online learning. If, however, you answered no to more than two questions, you may find that online learning is frustrating and difficult for you. However, this assessment is only a guide, it does not determine absolutely whether or not you will be a successful online learner.
Checklist:
How to Survive an Online Course

1. Register early.
2. Read as much of the course's textbook as possible before the class actually begins.
3. Log in to the course website several days before the class begins. That way, if you have any technical difficulties, you can work them out early and leave time to complete the first week's assignments.
4. ATTEND the orientation! Past experience reveals that students who miss the orientation spend a lot of time playing "catch up." Often times, this leads to poor performance and/or dropping out of the course.
5. Set aside blocks of time daily and/or weekly to be "in class." This includes time to read assignments, complete homework, participate in class discussions and take quizzes and/or exams.
   a. One of the biggest mistakes online students make is just "going to class" when they have a few minutes here and there, or with too many distractions (such as other students or family members being in the same room, etc.). "Go to class" in an environment that is conducive to studying.
   b. A good guideline for the amount of time you should spend per week is the number of credits you are taking (e.g. 3 hours) plus the amount of time you need for homework (at least another 3-6 hours).
6. Participate in class discussions!
   a. Don't do it just because you are being graded. Research shows that students who participate in class discussions do better than those who do not.
   b. Post responses to my questions, as well as reply to classmates' responses.
7. REGULARLY check the Announcements page and the Course Calendar (You can find the calendar by clicking on the Tools button on the homepage).
8. Email or call me when you need help!
9. Ask one or more students to be your study partner, or form a study group.
10. Save your assignments in one easily accessible place, even after you've submitted them to be graded.
11. Take responsibility for your own learning!
   a. Just like a face-to-face (f2f) class, you are expected to spend time out of class doing homework, asking pertinent questions, and participating in class activities.
   b. Avoid making the mistake of treating this class as a correspondence course--just reading and taking quizzes. You must be "present" in online courses, just like in f2f classes!
   c. The computer and I cannot be responsible for your success. Only you can!
12. Allow for extra time for technological difficulties. Instructors rarely accept these (or unfamiliarity with online instruction) as excuses for late or missing assignments.
13. Understand you will experience some dissonance about this experience. Sometimes it will be fun, other times frustrating, and sometimes both. This will improve as you become more proficient as an online student!