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COMX 391.50: Relationships and the Brain

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COMX 391– RELATIONSHIPS AND THE BRAIN
SPRING 2022 - *ONLINE*

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(Please use this method to contact me, rather than by phone or at my office, as I am working remotely for Spring 2021)

The course is based on decades of research showing that the structure and processing of the brain are intrinsically woven with our communication and connections with others in our close relationships. Communication in our relationships help form neural structures and pathways, and in turn our potential to communicate with others is shaped by the structures and processes of our brains. This course will explore the most recent research findings on the many ways that relational communication and the brain are connected. The course does not presume any prior knowledge of communication or neurobiology, and has no pre-requisites or restrictions.

Course Objectives:
- Ability to identify areas of the brain
- Recognition of processes of the brain most closely related to relational communication
- Critical reflection on the praxical relationship between relationships and brain processes and functions
- Integration of the information from this course with other communication studies courses

Required:
- Regular use of a personal computer with Microsoft Word and Google Chrome
- Regular Internet access and weekly engagement with the Moodle course site
- Not required – textbook (all readings will be loaded on Moodle)

Online Course Format:
- Regular online work in our Moodle shell is required for this course. All notes, slides, and assignments will be distributed from me to you via Moodle. All assignments will be turned in from you to me via Moodle.
- You will find our Moodle shell is arranged by week with all of the materials and deadlines clearly listed. The expectation in this course is that you complete the work for each week by Monday, at 9:00am Mountain Time.
- I will be regularly available to you to add depth, clarification, or further resources once you have engaged the materials in our Moodle shell. Please just be sure to contact me via email to let me know what would be helpful to you well *before* the due date for any course work.
  - Please always put COMX 391 in the subject of your e-mail, especially if you are not emailing from your university account. Please allow up to 48 hours for me to reply to any email (though if possible I will reply sooner).

- When emailing, please write professionally and courteously. This means forming complete sentences, with appropriate punctuation and capitalization, as well as formulating your questions or requests in a considerate way. I will reply to you in the same manner. If your e-mail deviates too far from these expectations, I will reply by pointing you back to this section of the syllabus and asking you to try again.

Personal Statement:
I am committed to the endeavor of teaching, whether that is online or in a classroom atmosphere. I believe that I can meet my goals for teaching this course and you can meet your goals in taking this course, even though this may not occur in a traditional classroom setting or in predictable times.

I am also committed to fairness. I generally abide by the ethical system of the categorical imperative – something is just and fair if it can be applied to everyone in the same circumstance. I created the policies in this syllabus to be applied to everyone in the course – I do not grant exemptions, extensions, or extra credit to one person if I cannot do so for the entire class. The entire class is being held to the policies in this syllabus, and the timeline and schedule for this course – please make sure that you are willing to accept this if you choose to continue in the course.

Policies:
Deadlines: Although many of the constraints of time have been released for you in this course, deadlines are still inevitable. To keep you caught up in the course there are deadlines by which each assignment must be completed. Assignments may always be completed earlier than the deadline, but any assignment that is not up-loaded to the website by Monday at 9 am (Mountain Time) will not be accepted.
- Since it is not productive for us to debate the various time orientations each of us in this course may hold, the deadline of 9:00am holds firm – 9:01 am *is* considered late. Please plan to turn in assignments at least a few minutes early so that you do not miss this deadline.
- If you are the type of person who is often last-minute in getting things done, or you know that you have a work schedule that will make this difficult, do yourself a favor and write down each deadline as existing two days before it actually is written in the syllabus. That way, you have already bought yourself a two-day extension!
- No extensions or make-ups are available in this course. Once an assignment deadline has passed, it will no longer appear as available on Moodle and you will not be able to turn it in. I will drop one score in the quiz category and in the reflection vignette category at the end of the semester. You should plan to submit all of your assignments on time and your lowest grade in these two categories can then be dropped. If you miss an assignment, the dropped score will be that missed score.

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 from 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, clicking for someone else in the response section of our course, putting someone's name on work they haven't done, etc. No work done for credit in any other class may be turned in for credit in this class.
- Students will be charged with academic dishonesty for any breach of these standards. The *minimum* consequence for engaging in cheating or plagiarism is failure on the related assignment, but this type of activity usually results in failure in the entire course. At worst, academic misconduct can result in expulsion, denial of your degree, and/or revocation of a degree that has already been awarded.
- See the Student Conduct Code for definitions and consequences of cheating and plagiarism. The unabridged student conduct code is located at: Student Conduct Code (http://www.umt.edu/student-affairs/dean-of-students/Student%20Conduct%20Code%20-%20FINAL%20-%208-24-18.pdf)

Please help foster a course where education and consideration for one another are valued. Please understand that harassment of any kind is both inappropriate and intolerable, and disciplinary action will be taken should it occur.

Technology: A known fact of technology is that it sometimes fails. Computers crash, Internet connections falter. In order to control for these failures, your guiding principles should be to think ahead and be prepared. Save your work often, and in several places. Leave yourself time before assignments are due to allow for connection errors (never plan to submit at the very last minute), and familiarize yourself with resources in your area in case you need to use them as a back-up to complete your assignments.

The only acceptable technology-related excuse for not meeting the requirements of this course is a documented failure of the UM online system – if you find the system is not working, you'll need to e-mail me immediately to inform me of the time at which you believe the system (not your computer or connection) was at fault.   You should then contact the UMonline help desk at 406.243.4999. You should also continue attempting to access the system – any failures in the system are usually resolved within an hour. If documented failures of the system occurred when an assignment was due, we will work together to help you get an assignment in as soon as the system is up again.

Changing Grading Option - As per departmental practice, you may not drop or change your grading option after the 45th instructional day except in the following situations: a) documentable accident or illness, b) no evaluation record for the course, c) documentable family/personal emergency, and d) documentable change in employment schedule that prevents completion of course.

<u>Office of Disability Equity Accommodations</u> – If you require any different reading/testing/writing format accommodations due to work with ODE on campus, please be sure to contact me and make me aware of this within the first week of the course to be accommodated throughout the course. Please note that requests for extra time to work on writing assignments or quizzes will be navigated by having you begin in advance of the rest of the class, rather than turning in assignments later than the rest of the class. **I can help you create a schedule for working as far in advance as you need**, so please let me know if this is a way in which I can support you in this course.

<u>Contesting Grades</u>: I am willing to go over any assignment or quiz with you to discuss your concerns. Please wait 24 hours after receiving an assignment before you contact me. When you do contact me, please email me your specific concerns and your backing for these concerns, and I will research your situation and reply to you within 48 hours.

Assignments and Grading:

Course Gameplan Assignment	14 pts
Course-long Participation	150 pts
Module Quizzes (6 @ 14 pts)	84 pts
Reflection/Application Vignettes (5 @ 48 pts)	240 pts
Final Reflection Paper	200 pts
Total Course Points:	**688 pts**

I do not use +/- grading for this course, and use traditional letter grades where A= 100-90%, B=89-80%, C= 79-70%, D=69-60%, and F<60%.

Grading Criteria:
A= Exceptional work, far exceeds requirements
B= Very good work, results better than required
C= Average work, results meet requirements
D= Flawed work, results less than required
F= Poor work, results far short of requirements

Basic Needs:

Any student who faces challenges securing food, housing, or health care and believes that this could affect their performance in this course, is urged to contact any or all of the following campuses resources:
- **Food Pantry Program**
  - UM offers a food pantry that students can access for emergency food. When regularly functioning, the pantry is open on Tuesdays from 9 to 2, on Fridays from 10-5. The pantry is located in UC 119 (in the former ASUM Childcare offices). Pantry staff operate several satellite food cupboards on campus (including one at Missoula

College). For more information about this program, email umpantry@mso.umt.edu, visit the pantry's [website](https://www.umt.edu/uc/food-pantry/default.php)(https://www.umt.edu/uc/food-pantry/default.php) or contact the pantry on social media (@pantryUm on twitter, @UMPantry on Facebook, um_pantry on Instagram).

- **ASUM Renter Center**
  - The Renter Center has compiled a list of resources for UM students at risk of homelessness or food insecurity [here](http://www.umt.edu/asum/agencies/renter-center/default.php): http://www.umt.edu/asum/agencies/renter-center/default.php and [here](https://medium.com/griz-renter-blog):https://medium.com/griz-renter-blog.
  - *Students can schedule an appointment with Renter Center staff to discuss their situation and receive information, support, and referrals.*
- *TRiO Student Support Services*
  - *TRiO serves UM students who are low-income, first-generation college students, or have documented disabilities. TRiO services include a textbook loan program, scholarships and financial aid help, academic advising, coaching, and tutoring.*
  - *Students can check their eligibility for TRiO services online* [here](http://www.umt.edu/triosss/apply.php#Eligibility)*: http://www.umt.edu/triosss/apply.php#Eligibility.*
- **Curry Health Center** (Dental, Mental Health, and Medical)
  - Curry Health Center provides quality, affordable, accessible health care for students at the University of Montana. They promote a healthy campus by treating students with dignity and respect and through collaborating and sharing expertise. They offer online appointments and online screening tools, and same day walk-in appointments if needed: http://www.umt.edu/curry-health-center/

If you are comfortable, please contact me with concerns you have and I will do my best to help connect you with additional resources.

Course Schedule

Module 1: Framework of Interpersonal Neurobiology
January 18 –January 24: Read all assigned readings and Powerpoints (with notes)
Engage in peer participation
Complete weekly quiz

January 24-January 31: Engage in peer participation
Complete Course Gameplan assignment

Module 2: Structures and Processes of the Brain
January 31-February 7: Read all assigned readings and Powerpoints (with notes)
Engage in peer participation
Complete weekly quiz

February 7-February 14: Engage in peer participation
Complete vignette reflection

Module 3: Attachment Relationships
February 14- February 21: Read all assigned readings and Powerpoints (with notes)
Engage in peer participation
Complete weekly quiz

February 21- February 28: Engage in peer participation
Complete vignette reflection

Module 4: Emotions
February 28- March 7: Read all assigned readings and Powerpoints (with notes)
Engage in peer participation
Complete weekly quiz
March 7 – March 14:   Engage in peer participation
Complete vignette reflection

Module 5: Memory and Narrative
March 14-March 21: Read all assigned readings and Powerpoints (with notes)
Engage in peer participation
Complete weekly quiz
(*Spring Break – no classwork required, though you are welcome to catch up/get ahead as needed*)

March 28- April 4: Engage in peer participation
Complete vignette reflection

Module 6: Trauma
April 4 - April 11: Read all assigned readings and Powerpoints (with notes)
Engage in peer participation
Complete weekly quiz

April 11 - April 18:   Engage in peer participation

Complete vignette reflection

Module 7: Attunement, Resonance, and Connection
April 18-April 25: Read all assigned readings and Powerpoints (with notes)
Engage in peer participation
Complete weekly quiz
April 25- May 2: Engage in peer participation
Complete vignette reflection

Module 8: Synthesis and Completion
Before 5pm on May 10: Write final reflection paper