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COMX 414.50: Communication in Personal Relationships

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COMMUNICATION AND PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS: COMX 414

FALL 2021 - ONLINE

Instructor: Dr. Christina G. Yoshimura

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“RELATIONSHIPS ARE THE CRUCIBLE IN WHICH OUR LIVES UNFOLD AS THEY SHAPE OUR LIFE STORY, MOLDING OUR IDENTITY AND GIVING BIRTH TO THE EXPERIENCE OF WHO WE ARE, AND LIBERATING – OR CONSTRAINING- WHO WE CAN BECOME.”

-DR. DAN SIEGEL

All of humanity is caught up and bundled into relations with one another, and these relations affect our lives in real, concrete ways. This course seeks to better familiarize you with the basic communication processes that occur within the context of a particular kind of relations: close relationships. We will draw information from a variety of disciplines, including family studies, social psychology, and of course, communication studies. The focus of this course will reflect that of the close relationship research that has been done to date; namely, primarily romantic relationships. However, we will also discuss friendships, family relationships, and general research and theory that can be applied to both intimate and nonintimate relationships.

Course Objectives:

1. Develop an understanding of how communication is used to initiate, maintain, and terminate personal relationships.
2. Study specific communication patterns and issues that occur in personal relationships; such as attraction, self-disclosure, conflict, relational investment, jealousy, power, etc.
3. Become competent in utilizing library and other resources to find and interpret scholarly research on communication in personal relationships.
4. Complete a comprehensive investigation about a socially and theoretically significant question pertaining to personal relationships, in order to determine what answers have been provided, what answers must still be sought, and what study can be designed to further explore this question.

Course Requirements:

- Successful previously completion of COMX 115
- Guerrero, Andersen, and Afifi's (2021) *Close Encounters: Communicating in Close Relationships*. 6th Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Supplemental reading materials, provided on our Moodle page
- Regular use of a personal computer with Microsoft Word and web browser
- Consistent Internet access and weekly engagement with the Moodle course site

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 before 10:00am Mountain Time the final day of the learning module.
- 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.

Policies:

Participation - Class is conducted entirely online, and our participation will occur through course posting in discussion boards, submission of online assignments, and email.

Think of learning as a chance to grow. Allow yourself to participate in discussions and don't sabotage other people's opportunities for education by discouraging them from participating. Be open to other people and be willing to respond to ideas that are different from what you believe. Dialogue is how we advance knowledge. Believe that your ideas are as important as everyone else's and share them with us.

Deadlines and Accommodation: All assignments and exams (including dates and deadlines) are posted on our Moodle course website. To keep the pace and process of this online course manageable for all of us no assignment or exam may be turned in late nor made up (except for the very rare instance approved by Dr. Yoshimura, generally in advance). If you require additional time for any reason you should plan to work in advance rather than requesting an extension. Please consult if you would like any help in setting up an adjusted, work-ahead schedule for this course.

For requests of alternate testing accommodations through DSS, **please contact Dr. Yoshimura within the first week of class in order to be effectively accommodated** for the entire course. Of course, if documented needs arise through the session you are welcome to initiate a discussion of how we can best meet your needs for the remainder of the semester.

For requests to take the course as a graduate student for graduate credit, please contact Dr. Yoshimura as soon as possible before the class begins or at the very start of the course in the first week.

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. Students will be charged with academic dishonesty for any breach of these standards. No work done for credit in any other class may be turned in for credit in this class. 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-%2008-24-18.pdf) (<http://www.umt.edu/student-affairs/dean-of-students/Student%20Conduct%20Code%20-%20FINAL%20-%2008-24-18.pdf>)

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

Philosophy and Consideration – In this course we are committed to fairness, and 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. Policies in this syllabus are to be applied to everyone in the course –no exemptions, extensions, or extra credit will be granted to one person if we 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.

E-Mail – Since this course is online, our direct contact will occur over email. Please always put COMX 414 in the subject of your e-mail, especially if you are not emailing from your university email account. Please allow up to 24 hours for email replies. 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. You can trust that your reply will be formed in kind.

Contesting Grades - We can go over any assignment or exam with you to discuss concerns that you might have using three guidelines, all of which make it easier to concentrate on your concerns. 1) Please reach out a minimum of 1 hour after an assignment/test grade has been posted and a maximum of one week after an assignment/test grade has been posted. 2) Please write your concerns and your backing for these concerns down so that we can look at your concerns from an objective, factual position. 3) Please consult the assignment directions and feedback carefully as part of your preparation to discuss the grade. Please note that grades on all assignments should be posted on our course website within a week after the assignment has been turned in. Please do not worry or contact me to find out your grade until this week has passed.

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.

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.

Grading

Peer Engagement	70 pts
Weekly quizzes (open book, not timed)	70 pts
Scholar paper	30 pts
Justification paper	25 pts
Literature Review paper	75 pts
Full Research Paper	100 pts
Cumulative Final Exam (open book, timed)	100 pts

Total Points **470 pts**

The class is worth 470 total points. 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 Statement:

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 campus 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/trioss/apply.php#Eligibility](http://www.umt.edu/trioss/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 appointments and online screening tools, and same day appointments if needed: <http://www.umt.edu/curry-health-center/>

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

Class Schedule to Complete Learning Modules on Moodle

All work for module must be submitted before 10AM Mountain Time on the final module date

Module 1: Introducing Relational Communication

August 30-September 7

Read - Chapter 1

Do – Quiz 1 (Setting up your schedule)

Module 2: Theoretical and Methodological Frameworks for Relational Communication

September 7 -September 14

Read – Online readings (Duck & Montgomery, Ickes)

Do – Quiz 2

Module 3: Academic Articles, APA and Using the Mansfield Library

September 14-September 21

Read – Online guides for library research and APA

Watch – Online videos about peer review and literature searches

Do – Quiz 3

Module 4: Self and Identity in Relationships

September 21-September 28

Read - Chapter 2

Do – Quiz 4

Do – Submit Scholar Paper

Module 5: Attraction and Flirtation

September 28-October 5

Read - Chapter 3 and Trost & Alberts online reading

Do – Quiz 5

Module 6: Reducing Uncertainty and Predicting Outcomes

October 5-October 12

Read - Chapter 4

Do – Quiz 6

Do – Submit Justification Paper

Module 7: Relationship Development and Types

October 12-October 19

Read - Chapters 5 and 8

Do – Quiz 7

Module 8: Self Disclosure and Privacy

October 19-October 26

Read - Chapter 6

Do – Quiz 8

Module 9: Maintaining Relationships

October 26-November 2

Read - Chapter 10

Do – Quiz 9

Do – Submit Literature Review

Module 10: Communicating Closeness and Sexuality

November 2-November 9

Read - Chapters 7 and 9

Do – Quiz 10

Module 11: Conflict Communication

November 9-November 16

Read - Chapter 11

Do – Quiz 11

Module 12: Relational Dominance and Power

November 16-November 23

Read - Chapter 12

Do – Quiz 12

Module 13: Relational Transgressions and Repair

November 23-November 30

Read – Chapters 13 and 14

Do – Quiz 13

Module 14: Relationship Ending

November 30-December 7

Read - Chapter 15

Do – Quiz 14

Module 15:

December 7-December 10

Full Final Paper - Due

Module 16:

December 10-December 15

Cumulative Final Exam – Due November 25

NOTE: All readings/lecture notes from this class are copyrighted materials. You may print one copy for your own use, but you may not reproduce or use them beyond your own academic pursuits.

Research Paper Overview (Submitted in Three Sections Throughout the Course)

Articulate a question about interpersonal communication in personal relationships that has social and theoretical significance (although I anticipate you will brainstorm on your own, you are welcome to consult with me regarding your ideas before settling on your final question). Conduct a comprehensive review of research (mainly in peer-reviewed communication journals, but information from a few other journals or book chapters are also acceptable) to see what answer(s) have already been articulated. Then, construct a paper that organizes the results of your search in a cohesive and integrated paper, and provides an idea for future research. Your paper should have three main sections, which will be turned in to me in increasingly complete sections:

1. Justification of your question – why is the question you’ve selected to research both socially and theoretically interesting? Why is this an important question to answer? You’ll probably find yourself citing current events/popular press coverage, though you must also cite academic articles to argue why this question is important. You should look to the articles you’re citing and the readings we’ve done on theory to establish how your question relates to the current state of theory, and to argue for the theoretical significance of your question. Will your review show that the question is primarily answered by one theory? Could be explained by competing theories? Is currently not studied in relation to any particular theory? Remember that you are trying to be both persuasive and factual in making a case for why this question deserves investigation. (This section should run about 2 pages in length)

2. Literature review – what academic research have you found that helps to provide answers to your question? Your library search may meander through innumerable abstracts before you find sources that are of use to you, but be sure you end up reviewing at least 10 articles from peer-reviewed communication journals in this section. Remember that all of the studies you review should say something about the thesis that you have chosen for this paper.

- Specifically, in a literature review such as this you SHOULD:
 - Integrate your sources (synthesize findings when appropriate)
 - Compare and contrast the findings of different research studies
 - Give only brief backgrounds on the studies or opinions you’re reviewing, as necessary to understand the results and implications of the work
 - Put the results or meaning of the study in your own words, as they pertain to your question
- You should NOT:
 - Simply review studies one after another without linking them
 - Give the entire background of a study (the entire set-up of the study, a full description of participants, etc.)
 - Use extensive quotes from the articles themselves

This section should run approximately 8-10 pages in length. You will add these pages to the justification document you have already begun. Please use track changes function in Microsoft Word to show me what you have changed in your justification; the literature review section should not use track changes at this time.

3. Research proposal – what further work would you suggest to help answer this question? After having read many research articles in your own research and in class, you will become familiar with the process of proposing research. Although I do not assume that you have all had a research methods course, I do want you to take a stab at setting up a study of your own. You should be sure to articulate:

- Who you will recruit as research participants
- How you will collect your data
- How you will use this proposed research to aid in answering your question

Your question should be central in planning your proposal – don't discount a research method because you don't know it well or fear that you couldn't execute it well. Use your articles from your literature review as well as consultations with me as your guides in creating an idea for this future research. I want you to be as original, comprehensive, and complete as possible in outlining this proposed project. This section should run approximately 2-4 pages in length. You will add these pages to the justification and literature review document you have already begun. Please use track changes function in Microsoft Word to show me what you have changed in your justification and literature review in this round of revision; the proposal section should not use track changes.

Since, combined, the versions of this paper makes up a large portion of your grade, I cannot emphasize enough how important it is for you to START EARLY on your topic brainstorming and your researching. I also strongly encourage you to contact me to discuss the progress of your paper with me as you work on it. I am happy to discuss ideas with you and to help you work through your paper. You are expected to be able to write this paper in clear 7th edition APA style at a collegiate level befitting a 400 level class (an APA title page and reference section are necessary; an abstract is not). If you have doubts about your abilities to write this paper, please consider my assistance, or that of the Writing Center on campus. I have high expectations for these papers.

OVERALL INFORMATION FOR WRITING:

Portions of papers from other classes CANNOT be used for this paper - your research and insights should stem from your original work for this class only. Of course, all work should be entirely your own – any papers containing portions of others' work will result in failure from the course, at a minimum.

EVALUATION OF PAPERS (explanation borrowed from Paul Mongeau)

Evaluation Criteria

The primary criteria used to evaluate your paper will include completeness, organization, clarity, and validity. **Completeness** refers to the extent to which you provide an adequate description of the literature and methods (if applicable). This will include the extent to which you describe the existing research and theory development relevant to your topic. **Organization** refers to the extent to which your various ideas flow together. Sentences should blend effectively into paragraphs, while paragraphs should blend well in the major sections of your paper. **Clarity** refers to the extent to which you present your ideas in an understandable manner. This would include the extent to which you word your own (and other researchers' and theorists') ideas clearly. Finally, **validity** refers to the extent to which the arguments you provide follow in a clear and organized manner. Evaluation will also tap the technical (or stylistic) issues including APA style issues.

CRITERION 1: CLARITY

The primary criterion that I use when I evaluate a paper is clarity. Simply put, are you communicating whatever it is that you are trying to say unambiguously? It does not matter if you are trying to describe a relationship that you have been part of, a reaction to a lecture, or reviewing the theoretical literature on relationship development, you must do so clearly. Saying something simply is better than saying something using complex, convoluted, language. Do not feel as though you have to use long sentences or extraordinary vocabulary to make your point. This can often end up confusing your point rather than clarifying. If I consistently cannot understand what you are trying to say, your grade is going to suffer as a result. Use traditional English syntax. Include a subject, verb, and object in each sentence.

CRITERION 2: COMPLETENESS

Most of my paper assignment includes multiple parts. I am looking for the extent to which you actually perform each of the tasks that I require. Failure to complete a major part of a paper is a serious error that will result in substantial point deductions. Therefore, it is important that I know what you are doing as you work your way through your paper. It is in your best interest to inform me where you are and what you are doing in your paper. Signposting and transitions between parts helps immensely in keeping me informed as to what you are doing in your paper. The question here is how well did you perform each of the tasks required? How completely you should describe something, of course, depends on the nature and length of your paper.

CRITERION 3: ORGANIZATION

The third criterion I use in evaluating papers is organization. Your ideas should develop in a logical manner. Words should fit together to form phrases. Phrases should fit together to form sentences. Sentences should fit together to make paragraphs. Paragraphs should fit together to form the major sections of your paper. What I do not want is a paper that rambles from point to point without any connection between them. The paper assignments suggest a particular organizational scheme for the major parts of your papers and I strongly suggest that you stick to them. Within major sections, the choice of an organizational scheme is up to you.

CRITERION 4: VALIDITY

The fourth major criterion I use in grading papers has to do with the validity of the presented arguments. The arguments that you make in your papers must be valid. This means that the conclusions of your arguments must follow from the premises. Further, the premises and conclusions that you draw should be explicit. I should not have to dig through a paper to identify and understand the arguments you are trying to make.

Part of the validity of an argument has to do with the data supporting a particular conclusion. Specifically, properly document all statements of fact from a reputable primary source. For example, if you are making the claim that men and women communicate differently in some important ways, you need to support that conclusion (or claim) with a reference from a reputable and primary source. Your papers will largely be arrangement of facts, and EVERY statement of fact must be properly cited.

CRITERION 5: MECHANICS

My evaluation also focuses on the technical (or stylistic) aspects of the paper. I expect that submitted drafts should be devoid of grammatical errors, typographical errors, misspellings, punctuation errors, sentence fragments, and so on. In this respect, it would be helpful to develop the habit of completing rough drafts of your work and then spending time cleaning and polishing your writing. If you try to write the entire paper the last day or two before it is due, you will almost certainly encounter stylistic problems, not to mention substantive ones.

I will also evaluate the format of source citations and references provided (if any). The format of the paper, source citations, and reference lists must be consistent with the sixth edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*.

**Thank you for reading this far, and for making sure you have a good grounding in this class!
If you choose to remain in this class beyond the first day, you are agreeing to abide by
the principles and requirements set forth for this class, and I'm thrilled that you're here.**