Course Description
This course examines the role of interpersonal communication in human relationships. The focus of the course is a relational view of communication. We will explore theories and principles of interpersonal communication with emphasis on models of communication, verbal and nonverbal systems, and analysis of how relationships are created, negotiated, maintained, and terminated.

Class sessions will include guided discussions, lectures, student presentations, and guest speakers.

Course Objectives
• To distinguish interpersonal communication theory building from other communication contexts;
• To understand how interpersonal theories and constructs are developed;
• To explore the nature and role of perception of self and other in interpersonal interactions;
• To examine how interpersonal relationships are affected by cultural context and a relational culture;
• To understand how communication is used to develop, negotiate, maintain, and terminate relationships; and
• To examine specific communication competencies and strategies to enhance interpersonal communication effectiveness in relationships.

Course Requirements
Successful completion of COMM 200 is a firm course prerequisite. This is Communication Department policy. If you believe that an exception should be made, please contact Dr. Anne Nicotera (anicoter@gmu.edu).
Grading Rationale

Weekly quizzes (0-100 points)
Final exam (0-100 points)
Presentation on a communication theory (0-100 points)
Presentation on a communication workshop (0-100 points)
Communication analysis paper (0-100 points)

If you miss more than 25% of class sessions, you will not be able to pass the course regardless of your other scores.

450-500: 490-500 = A+; 470-489 = A; 450-469 = A-
400-449: 435-449 = B+; 410-434 = B; 400-419 = B-
300-399: 370-399 = C+; 300-369 = C
250-299 = D
0-249 = F

Text: Please bring your textbook to class sessions as a reference tool for our discussions. Student Study Guide, [http://www.sagepub.com/guerrero3e/]


Taking a relational approach to the study of interpersonal communication, this text focuses on issues that are central to understanding close relationships, particularly between romantic partners, friends, and family members. While it draws on interdisciplinary research, the book maintains a focus on communication.

[http://www.sagepub.com/authorDetails.nav?contribId=610823]

Class Participation is important for success in the course. Students have a responsibility to prepare, attend, and contribute to class sessions. The nature of the communication discipline demands that learning occur through discussion and experience.

In accordance with national standards of accreditation, attendance is required. Please note the following hard realities of life: There are no excused absences. Unfortunately, even serious illness or a major crisis doesn’t make up for the fact that missing class means missing important participation. The best excuse in the world doesn’t change the fact that a person who is absent misses the content and experience of the course. If you miss more than 25% of class sessions, (i.e., four classes), you will not be able to pass the course regardless of your other scores. Excessive tardiness and early departures will also be considered when determining your participation. Students who find themselves in a situation where they might miss significant amounts of class time should consult with the instructor as soon as possible, and consider withdrawing from the course.

Weekly Quizzes (0-100 points): Each week you will have a quiz on the concepts covered in
the course during the previous week and/or on assignments for the current week. These quizzes are designed to reward you for attending, preparing, and reviewing information about the foundations of interpersonal communication. Quizzes are based upon assigned readings, class discussions, and other assignments. Maintain copies of the quizzes to study for your final examination.

Each quiz is worth 0-10 points. At the end of the semester, only your top ten quiz grades will be calculated. Unfortunately, you may not make up a quiz for any reason including lateness, sickness, transportation, weather, or emergencies. Please do not request a make-up quiz.

**Final Examination (0-100 points):** Using the weekly quizzes, class discussions, readings, and class presentations, this multiple-choice, 50-question scantron test will be held during the final examination session. It is cumulative. Each answer is worth 2 points. Bring your own 50-answer scantron form and a pencil to the examination session.

**Presentation on a Communication Theory (0-100 points)** Together with 1-2 others, prepare and present to the class a 10-minute presentation that demonstrates five major concepts related to a communication theory. You must have 5-10 slides (PowerPoint only, please). You may choose from the following theories:

- Attachment theory (Fritz Heider and Mary Ainsworth)
- Attribution theory (Fritz Heider, Harold Kelley, Edward Jones, and Bernard Weiner)
- Communication competence (Brian Spitzberg and William (Richard) Cupach)
- Constructivism (Jesse Delia)
- Coordinated management of meaning (W. Barnett Pearce and Vernon Cronen)
- Equity theory (John Stacey Adams)
- Expectancy violations theory (Judee Burgoon)
- Face negotiation theory (Stella Ting-Toomey)
- Interactional view (Paul Watzlawick)
- Interdependence (Caryl Rusbult)
- Interpersonal needs theory (William Schutz)
- Politeness theory (Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson)
- Relational dialectics/Dialectical perspective (Leslie Baxter and Barbara Montgomery)
- Relational stages (Mark Knapp)
- Rhetorical sensitivity (Roderick Hart)
- Self-disclosure (Sidney Jourard)
- Social comparison (Leon Festinger)
- Social exchange theory (John Thibaut and Harold Kelley)
- Social identity theory (Henri Tajfel and John Turner)
- Social penetration theory (Irwin Altman and Dalmas Taylor)
- Symbolic interactionism (Herbert Blumer)
- Uncertainty reduction theory (Charles Berger and Richard Calabrese)

Your presentation will be evaluated upon the following:

0-50 points – Comprehensive and accurate description of the theory
0-20 points – 5-10 slides that clearly illustrate the theory
0-20 points – Clarity of presentation (introduction, discussion and conclusion); and
0-10 points – Teamwork and evidence of cohesiveness.

**Group Presentation on a Communication Workshop (0-100 points):** Working with 2-3 others, develop a 10-20 page workshop guide for a group of college students. Plan, practice and present a 10-15 minute panel discussion of this workshop project. As a group, select a project from the list below:

- Develop a workshop guide for college age men and women interested in responding to a friend who have been sexually assaulted.
- Develop a workshop guide for college-age adults who are preparing for parenthood.
- Develop a workshop guide for engaged couples who want to assess and improve their communication skills.
- Develop a workshop for college students who want to communicate more effectively with elderly family with Alzheimer’s Disease.

Work with our reference librarian, Jen Stevens, to find resources to share with the class. You are welcome to use audio-visual support in your presentation. A promotional video is an option. Please prepare a handout/brochure for your classmates as well.

Here is how your assignment will be evaluated:

- 0-40 points for your workshop manual. This must include an agenda, workshop topics that are based upon research, a bibliography for additional resources and information, and clarity, accuracy, and visual appeal.
- 0-10 points for your handout/brochure promoting your workshop.

Your presentation will be evaluated upon the following:

- 0-20 points – Comprehensive and practical description of the workshop
- 0-20 points – Clarity of presentation (introduction, discussion and conclusion) and handout; and
- 0-10 points – Teamwork and evidence of cohesiveness.

**Communication Analysis Paper (0-100 points):**

Analyze your close personal and voluntary relationship with another and consider how the key insights about interpersonal communication can be applied to the way that you relate to this person.

Prepare an 8-10, double-spaced, typewritten pages of original prose and, when citing sources, use either the current APA style guide.

Select at least five sources we’ve explored in this course and examine how the insights you gain from this course and your reading can be applied to understanding yourself as an interpersonal communicator.

The following criteria will be used to evaluate your assignment:
Content (0-50 points): Does the paper directly address the issues raised in the essay? Is the paper comprehensive and complete? Does the paper demonstrate understanding of the particular concepts or issues developed in the essay? Did you cite your sources?

Clarity (0-50 points): Is the paper clearly, correctly, and coherently written using APA style? Do you have a clear introduction, discussion, and conclusion? Are specific examples used to illustrate theoretic concepts and key terms developed in the essay?

Note: Per the University Honor Code, original work is expected; any outside sources used in the papers must be properly credited using the APA style guide.

**Part One** (2-3 pages): Orient the reader to your purpose and format. Explain the communication concepts developed in the readings and discussions;

**Part Two** (2-5 pages): Describe and assess how the insights from these readings apply to you as an interpersonal communicator; and

**Part Three** (3-5 pages): Analyze your close personal and voluntary relationship with another and consider how the key insights about interpersonal communication can be applied to the way that you relate to others. Use concrete examples from one or more of your personal relationships to describe how you relate and to evaluate the effectiveness of your relationship. Make sure you are focusing on the relationship and its dynamics instead of on individual communication behaviors only. Be sure to provide a summary and conclusion for your paper.

Please be sure to add a cover page to the final paper as per APA style.

**Communication Theory Video (Extra Credit Option)** Worth 0-25 points – Interview an interpersonal scholar on the topic that we’ve discussed this semester. You’re welcome to interview one of the textbook authors or a scholar in our Communication Department, or a professor at another institution.

Be sure to explore her/his research prior to the interview! Create and submit a 3-5 minutes digital presentation. Post the interview on the Blackboard site, within the Discussion Board.

**Part One:** Introduce the purpose the video, the expert (including her/his credentials), and the communication theory/concept that the scholar will discuss. Outline the questions that you will/have asked the expert.

**Part Two:** Demonstrate that you have fully researched the communication concept/theory and from your questions and/or the organization of your interview that you understand your topic well.

**Part Three:** Discuss how the viewer can learn more about interpersonal communication by watching this video interview.

**Course Infographic (Extra Credit Option)** Worth 0-25 points – Create and submit an infographic that summarizes key concepts from this course. (c.f. http://dailyinfographic.com/)

COMM 301, Spring 2013, Page 5
OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Honor Code: The integrity of the University community is affected by the individual choices made by each of us. GMU has an Honor Code with clear guidelines regarding academic integrity. Please see the Office for Academic Integrity for a full description of the code and the honor committee process. Three fundamental and rather simple principles to follow at all times are that: (1) all work submitted be your own; (2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and (3) if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment, ask for clarification. No grade is important enough to justify academic misconduct. Plagiarism means using the exact words, opinions, or factual information from another person without giving the person credit. Writers give credit through accepted documentation styles, such as parenthetical citation, footnotes, or endnotes. Paraphrased material must also be cited, using APA format. A simple listing of books or articles is not sufficient. Plagiarism is the equivalent of intellectual robbery and cannot be tolerated in the academic setting. If you have any doubts about what constitutes plagiarism, please see me and/or Jen Stevens.

Email: Students must use their MasonLIVE email account to receive important University information, including messages related to this class. See http://masonlive.gmu.edu for more information.

Accommodations: To provide an equitable learning environment for each student, I will adjust to those students who may have special needs. If you are a student with a learning or physical disability and you need academic accommodations, please contact the Office for Disability Services (ODS) at SUB I, Rm. 4205, 993-2474, http://ods.gmu.edu. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS. If you qualify for accommodation, the ODS staff will give you a form detailing appropriate accommodations. Please share this with me and we will discuss how I can facilitate your learning.

Class Climate: This class will adhere to all published university policies regarding sexual harassment and equal opportunity, and this class will follow all appropriate university regulations. University policy dictates that all students need to turn off cell phones and pagers before class. You are welcome to put your phone on vibrate or silent.

Emergencies: Mason Alert is an information system designed to give all users timely access to emergency announcements, notifications and updates. To register for this, go to http://alert.gmu.edu/.

Get Involved with a Professional Communication Association! Join Lambda Pi Eta, a national undergraduate communication honor society that recognizes and rewards outstanding scholastic achievement while promoting and encouraging professional development among communication majors and stimulating interest in the field of communication. Professor Susan Tomasovic is our faculty advisor.

Eastern Communication Association
International Listening Association
International Association for Relationship Research
Library Help

- Communication InfoGuide: [http://infoguides.gmu.edu/communication](http://infoguides.gmu.edu/communication)
  Ms. Jen Stevens, our liaison librarian for the communication department, is available at [jstevens@gmu.edu](mailto:jstevens@gmu.edu) and 703.993.2211, A244 Fenwick Library.
- Check the stacks in Fenwick for interpersonal communication books, P94.7
- For quick links to periodicals, go to [http://library.gmu.edu/resources/socsci/perabs.htm#commrelated](http://library.gmu.edu/resources/socsci/perabs.htm#commrelated)
TENTATIVE SCHEDULE
COMM 301.001 meets Tuesdays 4:30-7:10 p.m. in Robinson Hall 228

January 22
What would you like us to know about you?
What are we going to learn in this course?
Laura Guerrero, http://humancommunication.das.asu.edu/content/laura-guerrero
Peter Andersen, http://communication.sdsu.edu/pages/faculty.html#andersen
How do you know who you are?
How do you share yourself with others?
Conceptualizing relational communication, Chapter 1
Communicating identity, Chapter 2
Orientation to course and classmates
Communication and personal relationships
Relational meanings
Check PatriotWeb to verify that you are registered for this course.
Quiz #1

January 29
Drawing people together: forces of social attraction, Chapter 3
Making sense of our world; managing uncertainty, Chapter 4
Getting closer: initiating and intensifying relationships, Chapter 5
What draws you to others?
Quiz #2
Last day to drop without tuition penalty

February 5
Group Presentations
Quiz #3

February 12
Communicating closeness: affection, immediacy and social support, Chapter 6
Making a love connection: styles of love and attachment, Chapter 7
Communicating sexually: the closest physical encounter, Chapter 8
Complete text quizzes pages 133, 158-159, 174-175, and 199-200
Quiz #4
Last day to drop with 33% tuition penalty

February 19
Staying close: maintaining relationships, Chapter 9
Quiz #5
Feb 22 - Final drop deadline

February 26
Exchanging rewards and costs: interdependence and equity in relationships, Chapter 10

COMM 301, Spring 2013, Page 8
Influencing each other: dominance and power plays in relationships, Chapter 11
Complete text quizzes pages 234, 247-248
Quiz #6

March 5
Getting too close for comfort: privacy and secrets in relationships, Chapter 12
Complete text quizzes pages 286-287
Quiz #7

March 11-17 Spring Break

March 19
Hurting the ones we love: relational transgressions, Chapter 13
Complete text quizzes pages 323-324
Quiz #8

March 26
Coping with conflict: when relational partners disagree, Chapter 14
Complete text quizzes pages 336-338
Quiz #9

April 2
Friendship and interpersonal communication
Quiz #10

April 9
Family communication
Quiz #11

April 16
Group presentations
Quiz #12

April 23
Ending relationships: disengagement and termination, Chapter 15
Prepare and exchange compliments with your classmates for April 30. Please plan a 20-30 second commendation and bring in a tangible "gift" (under $2) to give to your recipient. Please keep the name of your recipient a secret until you make your presentation.
Quiz #13

April 30
Putting it all together
Communication paper is due – (hard copy)
Assessing our progress this semester
Quiz #14: Commendations

May 7 Reading Day – no classes

COMM 301, Spring 2013, Page 9
May 14
Final examination

Grades are available on Patriot Web. If you have a concern about your final grade, please contact Ms. Peck, npeck@gmu.edu, within two weeks.
Degree conferral date is May 18