COURSE SYLLABUS

COURSE TITLE: Communications Workshop: Managing Stress

COURSE NUMBER: COMS 505

INSTRUCTOR: Michele McMaster

CREDIT HOURS: One (1.0)

TRIMESTER: Fall, 1995
September 22-23, 1995

PROPOSED CATALOG DESCRIPTION: Designed to apply concepts of human communication to stress management. Focus is on developing in the workshop participants practical knowledge and skills of communication that are crucial to stress reduction.

PREREQUISITES: None

RATIONALE: This course is designed to identify the role of interpersonal and intrapersonal communication in the creation, maintenance, and reduction of stress. A practical approach will be used offering multiple tools for stress management.

INTENDED AUDIENCE: Any graduate or undergraduate student in any discipline wishing to understand stress management and improve their communication competence.

EXPECTED STUDENT OUTCOMES: This course will enhance awareness of the elements necessary to the creation and reduction of stressful situations. At the end of this course students should be able to:

1. identify personal stressors
2. develop strategies to enable them to reduce/manage stress
3. recognize and verbalize thought patterns that they possess that contribute to their stress
4. recognize stressful interactions and personal life events.

INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES: The course will be conducted like a

1. Seminar-type class with some lectures to broaden knowledge base and discussion.
2. Tests: there will be some paper and pencil self-discovery and stress inventory tests.
3. Meditation: to alter the focus of consciousness, which reduces stress.
4. Relaxation activities: ways to remove tension from the physical body.
5. Thinking: to make comparisons between what the student currently
knows and the materials presented in class requires a degree of self-awareness and thinking.

6. Fun: is not always frivolous, but always pleasurable. Class involvement is a process where it is anticipated that students will find personal satisfaction and enjoyment in their learning.

7. Excellence: is being the best that you can be in every moment, to always strive to know and be more. This brings personal happiness and delight. This is different than perfection which only brings guilt and a sense of failure.

LEARNING (TEACHING) PHILOSOPHY: Learning is fun. It makes your mind stretch and wrinkles your brain. It shows you how excellent you are and that thinking is a challenging and enjoyable activity.

TEXT: Optional
Some readings will be provided.

COURSE OUTLINE: The course will cover the following topics:
Discovering how much stress each individual is experiencing.
Discovering the role of communication in maintaining or reducing a stressful life style.
Practical experience in relaxation and meditation.
Exploring the role of introspection in stress management.
What is the role of positive thinking and how does that reduce stress?
Identifying the impact of stress on the body and things that can be done to lessen this.
Learning to manage self in relation to time.
Discover how emotions and personal values and beliefs contribute to stress.

EVALUATION: Students will be evaluated in the following basis:
Participation: Students expected to participate in class discussions and activities. 10%
Attendance: Students will be expected to attend both class meetings to pass the class. 10%
Journal: Students will be expected to keep a journal everyday for one week (7 days) immediately after the class ends. For each day there should be a full 8 1/2 x 11 page, dated entry discussing the stress incurred or the stress avoided each day. Include the causes of the stress or the stress avoided, your physical symptoms (if any), your emotional response, and what perceptions are held that maintain or interrupt it (thoughts). After you complete this journal, write a one or two paragraph summary (typed) noting any patterns to your stress that you may have observed and any other insights or thoughts about your stress. This is not to be a list of the events of your day. See the attached sheet for further explanation. Submit the journal and this short summary. This can be hand-written, legibly. 40%
Paper: Before the students leave class, they will be expected to develop and submit a list of three (3) stressors in their life. These are to be simple, straightforward stressors, not complicated, multi-leveled ones. The students will then take the next month and explore ways to reduce each of these using techniques, tools, and ideas developed in class. This paper will briefly include each identified stressor, the emotions experienced, a list of
possible techniques to reduce it, techniques tried, the outcome, and the reasons the outcome was or was not successful. 40%

Note: Students are expected to apply the tools and techniques they have examined in class to handle their stress and evaluate the outcome. This requires that they identify things that are stressors and understand stress as a communication issue.

This paper is to be typed, double-spaced. It, and the journal entries (sent together), are to be mailed to me at the following address:

Michele McMaster
Division of Liberal Arts
College of Arts and Sciences
Governors State University
University Park, IL 60466-0975

If you wish to drop it off on campus, you can put it in my box in the Communications office or slide it under my office door (E2560). If you would like your work returned to you, please enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelop. Your work is to be in my box by 5:00 p.m. or postmarked by Friday, October 27, 1995. For every day past this date, you will lose 1 point from your grade. Make at least one an additional copy of everything you send to me. The post office is not always a reliable shipper.

Students should wear casual clothes. Snacks and drinks will be allowed if they are in the realm of University rules.

Grading: A point scale is used. I have, on occasion, given D's and F's. If your grade does not fall within the grade you think you should have, you will be given the grade in the appropriate range. In other words, a 79 will not earn you a B. The scale is as follows: 90 - 100 = A, 80 - 89 = B, 70 - 79 = C, 60 - 69 = D, below 60 = F.
Daily Stress Awareness Diary

Some parts of the day are more stressful than others, and some stressful events are more likely to produce physical and emotional symptoms than others. Certain types of stressful events often produce characteristic symptoms. It is useful to keep a record of stressful events as well as symptoms that may have been a stress reaction.

Keep a stress awareness diary for one week. Make a note of the time that a stressful event occurs, your emotional response, the thoughts you had at the time, and the time you notice a physical or emotional symptom that could be related to the stress.

The following is an example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Stressful Event</th>
<th>Symptom</th>
<th>Emotion</th>
<th>Thoughts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:00 a</td>
<td>Alarm didn’t go off, late rushing</td>
<td></td>
<td>worry (fear)</td>
<td>They are going to write me up. This alarm clock never works right.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:30 a</td>
<td></td>
<td>Slight headache</td>
<td>annoyance (anger)</td>
<td>I hate being late.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00 a</td>
<td>Customer is rude and insulting.</td>
<td>Tightness in stomach</td>
<td>anger</td>
<td>I’m tired of being treated rudely. This customer needs to be taught some manners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:00 p</td>
<td>Return of 3 big ticket items, much paper work</td>
<td>slight headache</td>
<td>Self-doubt (anger, fear)</td>
<td>I wonder if I covered everything. Why can’t people figure what they want before they buy it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:15 p</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>depression (anger)</td>
<td>People should watch where they are going. What are they in such a big hurry for? What am I? invisible!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:30 p</td>
<td>Heavy traffic while commuting home.</td>
<td>tense jaw</td>
<td>anger</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:30 p</td>
<td>wife defends son</td>
<td>irritable with son</td>
<td>impatient (anger)</td>
<td>Why are people so judgmental?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:35 p</td>
<td></td>
<td>tightness in stomach</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>