GOVERNORS STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
DIVISION OF LIBERAL ARTS

COURSE SYLLABUS

Course Title: Communication Workshop: Family Communication
Course Number: COMS 534 VB
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DESCRIPTION

"Family Communication" explores family interaction patterns. Through discussion, exercises, video guests and in-studio guests, "Family Communication" examines the ways in which family members communicate, make decisions, settle conflict, and learn to relate to one another. This course is especially relevant because of the profound changes that are currently affecting the family unit. "Family Communication" features many leading theorists and researchers. It will be a treat for you to see and hear so many key researchers! Enjoy!

DISABILITY STATEMENT

Students who have a disability or special needs and require accommodation in order to have equal access to the classroom, must register with the designated staff member in the Division Of Student Development. Please go to Room B-1202 or call (708) 534-4090 and ask for the coordinator of Disability Services. Students will be required to provide documentation of any disability when an accommodation is requested.

OBJECTIVES

On completion of this course you will be able to:

1. Analyze a family as a communication system using a functions framework.
2. Identify communication patterns and rules in real families or families portrayed in the media.
3. Explain the characteristics and communication issues of a range of family types.
4. Explain the role of multigenerational influences in family functioning.
5. Explain the role of culture in multigenerational communication patterns.
6. Identify and recognize the importance of the role of communication rituals in families.
7. Explain the characteristics and communication patterns of typologies of couples and families.
8. Describe the constructive and destructive styles of family conflict.
9. Describe key communication patterns and issues unique to different family forms.
10. Identify ways to improve communication within families.
11. Understand developmental change as it relates to communication in families.
12. Understand the relationship between family stress and communication.

FORMAT
This is an independent study course. It consists of 26 half-hour long videotapes, a Study Guide complete with readings and exercises, and a textbook. As you progress with your studies, if you have any questions or comments that you would like to share, please either email or phone me, and I will return your message as soon as possible!

VIDEOTAPES

Check the Governors State University Division of Extended Learning schedule of classes for cable viewing possibilities. Videotapes can also be purchased at the bookstore, which many students find a convenient alternative.

TEXTS


*Family Communication Study Guide. 2nd Edition*

ASSIGNMENTS

There are two written assignments for this course, a Journal Assignment and a Final Paper. Please refer to the sections below for details. Late journal assignments 1-12 will receive a grade penalty for every day that the assignment is late. Journal assignments not received after two days will not be accepted or graded.

Journal assignments 13-26 and the final project **MUST BE RECEIVED BY THE INSTRUCTOR** by the due date specified. Late assignments (journals 13-16 and the final project) will **NOT** be accepted.

Journal assignments must be turned in at the time of the midterm and final exam. Long distance students may mail the written assignments to the Division of Extended Learning or to the instructor’s home. E-mails containing the written assignments will not be accepted.

Long distance students MUST make arrangements to ensure assignments reach the instructor by the due dates.

EXAMINATIONS

There are two examinations, a Mid-term and a Final examination. The **midterm** will cover classes 1-12 and textbook chapters 1-6. The **final** will cover classes 13-26 and textbook chapters 7-15. **Taking an exam later than the scheduled time may result in a lower grade.**

*Note: Initially students find reading and reviewing of the tapes slightly confusing in that the textbook does not follow the same sequence as your study guide. The study guide is in sequence with the tapes. For study purposes I would suggest you rely on your textbook as well as the
tapes for the mid-term and final examination. Journal assignments tend to reflect concepts discussed in the tapes. Your mid-term and final examinations test your knowledge of concepts and general information found with the tapes, study guide, and textbook, so be careful.

EXAM /ASSIGNMENT DATES

Midterm: Friday, October 21, 2005, 5:30 pm
Journal Assignments 1-12 are due Friday, October 21, 2005, 5:30 p.m.

Final Exam: Friday, December 2, 2005, 5:30 pm
Journal Assignments 13-26 and Final Paper are due Friday, December 2, 2005, 5:30 p.m.

GRADERS

The weighting of the assignments and examinations is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Journal assignment</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-term examination</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final paper*</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final examination</td>
<td>20%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

90%-100% = A
80%-89%  = B
70%-79%  = C
60%-69%  = D
0-59%    = F

Incompletes will only be considered if 50% of the work has been completed (logged in and in the instructors hand). If you run into difficulty before this mark, please keep the drop date for the course in mind.

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

The Journal Assignment

In each chapter of the Study Guide you will be asked to write about your current family, a family that is close to you, or a fictional family. You will also be encouraged to work with a partner as you complete your journal - either a fellow student or someone who shares your interest in exploring the dynamics of family communication. At the end of each lesson you will be asked to answer four questions in your journal. If you are like most students, you will come to find that your journal becomes a very valuable record, which you will treasure long after this class is over.
The answers to your journal assignment questions should reflect thought and should be answered in detail. The length of your responses will be determined by the elements mentioned above. Each answer should be typed and double-spaced. Please begin with the number of the class and journal question followed by your response, and put your name on every page of your journal.

You will submit your journals at only two times during the semester.
You will turn in journals 1-12 all together and at the same time.
You will turn in journals 13-26 all together and at the same time.

Final Project

*There are 2 different final paper assignments. One is for graduate students and one is for undergraduate students. Only complete the assignment that applies to you.*

Graduate Student Final Project

This assignment is twofold.

#1: You will do an analysis on a fictional family. Select a movie depicting a family. A list of possible movies are listed on page 97 of the Teleclass Study Guide.

Your analysis should include all of the following 4 concepts:
A. An analysis of the family as a system using at least 3 concepts from Chapter 3 of your text and/or in Class 4.
B. An analysis of the adaptability and cohesion in the family system using concepts from Chapter 2 and/or in Class 2.
C. An analysis of communication patterns such as rules or secrets that influences family meanings. These concepts are discussed in Chapter 4 of the text and in Class 7.
D. An analysis of the conflict that appears in the family and the constructive or destructive ways that the family manages conflict situations, using concepts outlines in Chapter 10 of your text and/or in Class 18.

Your paper should also include an analysis of any two of the following concepts that appear to apply:
E. power and decision making
F. sexuality
G. rituals
H. family stress
I. work/family juggling act
J. intimacy and self-disclosure
K. relationship an family typologies
Therefore, you will be analyzing four different concepts in first part of your paper (A – D and two of (E – K). This paper should be between 6- 7 pages, typed, double-spaced.

#2: You will also library research and write a literature review as described below:
A. Choose one of the classes from the course that particularly interests you (e.g., Communication Rules and family Secrets)
B. Find between 5 – 7 data based articles on this topic (you may use the empirical articles listed in the bibliography section following each class), and
C. Write a 4 – 6 page literature review paper (excluding references, tables, etc.) about this area.

By “data-based,” I mean that the authors of the article conducted a study in which they gathered some type of data and analyzed it. You should not simply summarize an existing literature review. For the literature review, please summarize the major themes in the topic area (e.g., common questions, issues, or trends in the area) and the conclusions that may be drawn from this research. Do not simply summarize each article. Then evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the research: How well does this body of research answer the questions asked? Do these researchers offer descriptions, predictions, and explanations of the phenomena of interest? Are there particular strengths and weaknesses in the methods typically employed? Finally, suggest future directions for research and practical implications for what we currently know. The future directions, for example, may involve a related set of research questions yet unaddressed by this body of research. Also, you might want to point out how scholars in this area can address any weaknesses in the extant literature. You may suggest several different directions for future research and several different practical implications. Communication Yearbook regularly publishes literature reviews that you can examine for ideas of how to structure your paper (although your review will likely be briefer than most Communication Yearbook chapters).

Your grade will be based on: (1) scope and focus of your work, (2) conciseness and clarity, (3) organization, (4) knowledge of the topic, (5) depth of the review, (6) writing style, and (7) use of references, and conformity with APA style guidelines. Consult the Publication Manual for the American Psychological Association for a guide to APA style. Also, it is very important that you summarize the themes in the literature rather than write distinct summaries of a series of individual articles.

Undergraduate Student Final Project

For this paper you will do an analysis on a fictional family. Select either a movie or television series depicting a family. A list of possible movies and television shows are listed on page 97 of the Teleclass Study Guide.
Your analysis should include all of the following 5 concepts:

a. An analysis of the family as a system using at least 3 concepts from Chapter 3 of your text and/or in Class 4.
b. An analysis of the adaptability and cohesion in the family system using concepts from Chapter 2 and/or in Class 2.
c. An analysis of communication patterns, such as rules or secrets that influences family meanings. These concepts are discussed in Chapter 4 of the text and in Class 7.
d. An analysis of the conflict that appears in the family and the constructive or destructive ways that the family manages conflict situations, using concepts outlined in Chapter 10 of your text and/or in Class 18.

Your paper should also include an analysis of any two of the following concepts that appear to apply:

e. power and decision making
f. sexuality
g. rituals
h. family stress
i. work/family juggling act
j. intimacy and self-disclosure
k. relationship and family typologies

Therefore, you will be analyzing 6 different concepts in your paper (a - d & two of e-k). This paper should be between 6-7 pages, typed and double-spaced.