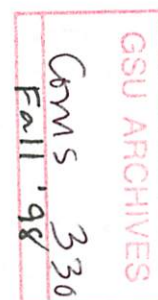


GOVERNORS STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
DIVISION OF LIBERAL ARTS

COMMUNICATIONS PROGRAMS

COURSE SYLLABUS

- Course Title:** Interpersonal Skills
- Course Number:** COMS 330
- Credit Hours:** Three (3.0)
- Instructor:** Michele McMaster
- Trimester:** Fall, 1998
Monday/Wednesday, 11:00 a.m.-12:15 p.m.
- Catalog Description:** Focuses on face-to-face interaction and intergroup relations combining knowledge about human communication with practice in interpersonal skills. Utilizes the laboratory method for learning to establish and develop communicative relationships with others.
- Prerequisites:** None.
- Restrictions:** None.
- Intended Audience:** This is for undergraduate students with an interest in learning to communicate with others effectively. It is an elective for undergraduate communication degree seeking students, except for those in the communication studies track, where it is required.
- Rationale:** This course is designed to help students become aware of the basic skills and principles needed to become effective interpersonal communicators. It is also designed to increase self-awareness because increased self-awareness improves communication skills.
- Expected Student Outcomes:**
1. Describe and outline types of communication behavior; understand concept formation; understand reasons why people communicate and the importance of studying communication as a process; be familiar with some of the vital elements of the communication process using a communication model.
 2. Describe notions of feedback and empathy and their importance in communication situations and identify various listening behaviors and improvements in listening.



3. Verbalize the phenomenon that not two people see the same thing in the same way; understand the differences between inferences, observation, and selectivity processes in people.
4. Compare and contrast the relative effectiveness of different channels of communication and the changes that take place in the message as it is transmitted from person to another.

Instructional Activities:

Class activities will include:

- *Lectures/Discussions* are designed to present new material about communication to the group and then to help students work through the new communication concepts by providing a forum for inquiring. Students will be expected to share their observations about communication in class discussions.
- *Participation* improves learning by trying out ideas that the students are developing. It is expected and encouraged that every student will participate. The classroom setting is structured to be a safe environment.
- *Small group discussions* are designed to assist students to work with others on a project that will require them to apply communication principles to an everyday activity.
- *Written projects* are designed to assist students in developing skill in using these communication techniques. They will be asked to demonstrate their ability to apply what they learned in this class through a series of papers.
- *Journal* is to note the experiential results of the application of the techniques and tools being learned. This is done by students to benefit them in creating their assignments, not to be submitted as an assignment.
- *Application* is important as students look for ways to use the course materials in their daily lives and recognize the impact of the application of the communication tools to their communication environments.
- *Thinking* is expected of students as they reflect on class materials and discover the type of impact these communication theories and skills will have on their everyday lives.
- *Excellence* is what is expected from students in this class. Excellence is defined as the ability students have to live out of their own best abilities and standards and not those of others. What is the most you can *be* or *do* to satisfy and delight yourself? This is excellence. This is different than perfection which only brings guilt and a sense of failure.
- *Fun* is not always frivolous, but always pleasurable. It makes people feel good about themselves. When students are enjoying themselves, generally more learning occurs. Laughter is encouraged.

Teaching/Learning 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. Students can expect:

- assignments will be explained as clearly as possible.
- to inquire if they are still confused about any point discussed in class.
- that communication will be explained as a spectrum of processes.

- ideas to be explained from the general to the specific, from the overview down to the example.
- an atmosphere of acceptance where students can find personal success and delight in gaining knowledge.
- as much as is possible the class will be student-driven.

Some place in Chinese philosophy there is the idea that good teachers do not teach anyone anything but, instead, remind students of what they have forgotten. This is a class about remembering the forgotten.

Text:

McWilliams, P. (1995). *You can't afford the luxury of a negative thought*. Los Angeles: Prelude Press.

Other reading as assigned.

Course Content:

Week 1 - 8/31/98

Discuss syllabus. Look at overview of communication. For what reasons do we communicate? Read McWilliams pp 3-47.

9/2/98

Discuss the common model of interpersonal communication and the *control* and *connect* models of communication. Discuss McWilliams.

Week 2 - 9/7/98

Labor Day Holiday - no class.

9/13/97

Discuss the "levels" of communication we will explore and intrapersonal communication. Read McWilliams pp.48-84.

Week 3 - 9/14/98

Discuss perception and perspective. Explore how that relates to stereotypes. Practice changing perspectives about a topic. Discuss McWilliams.

9/16/98

Discuss models. Continue discussing stereotypes. Discuss cartoons that contain stereotypes. Read McWilliams pp.85-119.

Week 4 - 9/21/98

Discuss emotions. Discuss McWilliams.

9/23/98

Continue the discussion of emotions. Read McWilliams pp. 120-161.

Week 5 - 9/28/98

Discuss beliefs about ourselves and about the world. Discuss needs. Discuss McWilliams.

9/30/98

Discuss and clarify basic premises of communication. Read McWilliams pp. 162-201. **Submit 1st ICA** (interpersonal communication analysis).

Week 6 - 10/5/98

Continue discussions about basic premises. Discuss McWilliams.

10/7/98

Explore the impact of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. Read McWilliams pp.202-239. **Submit 2nd ICA.**

Week 7 - 10/12/98

Discuss language, meaning, and asking questions. Discuss McWilliams.

10/14/98

Discuss observations about language and meaning. Look at the difference between denotative and connotative meanings. Read McWilliams pp. 240-275. **Submit 3rd ICA.**

Week 8 - 10/19/98

Identify people who you know who are good listeners. What makes them so? Discuss McWilliams. **Fifteen cartoons are due.**

10/21/98

Practice listening in class. Read McWilliams pp. 276-319. **Submit 4th ICA.**

Week 9 - 10/26/98

Discuss nonverbal communication. Discuss McWilliams.

10/28/98

Continue discussion of nonverbal communication. Read McWilliams pp. 320-357. **Submit 5th ICA.**

Week 10 - 11/2/98

Discuss self-disclosure. Discuss McWilliams.

11/4/98

Discuss self-concept and self-image. Read McWilliams pp. 358-395. **Submit 6th ICA.**

Week 11 - 11/9/98

Continue with image discussion. Discuss McWilliams.

11/11/98

Discuss the relationship between trust and self-disclosure. Read McWilliams pp. 396-441. **Submit 7th ICA.**

Week 12 - 11/16/98

Examine the ideas of trust. Who do you trust? What made you trust them? Discuss McWilliams.

11/18/98

Discuss unconditional regard and confirmation. Discuss relationships. Look at ways to encourage others. What ways or techniques do you apply to build friendships? Read McWilliams pp. 442-479. Submit 8th ICA.

Week 13 - 11/23/98

Define and discuss assertiveness. Who do you know that you believe to be assertive? What traits do they possess? Discuss McWilliams.

11/25/98

Discuss control and confrontation. Read McWilliams pp. 480-511. Submit 9th ICA.

Week 14 - 11/30/98

Discuss conflict management (harmony maintenance). Read McWilliams pp. 512-534. Submit Interviews.

12/2/98

Discuss gender communication. Listen to presentation on gender communication and see how different points about interpersonal communication come together. Discuss McWilliams. Submit 10th ICA.

Week 15 - 12/7/98

Review materials from the term. Tie up any loose ends. Group will meet to discuss and complete group project.

12/9/98

Continue discussions.

Week 16 - 12/14/98

In class, do a group project and discuss results in class.

Evaluation: Evaluation activities are designed to encourage students to apply the things they are learning in class and in their readings.

INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION ANALYSES (ICA) - Analyze your interpersonal communication. The basic purpose of the ICAs is to help you have better communication and more self-awareness. Better communication comes with more self-awareness. You will become a better communicator the more you see yourself in a communication context and become aware of the contributions you have made to any communication event.

To accomplish writing any form of ICA, first write a few pages of notes (keep a journal). Look at your feelings. Ask yourself how did you handle these situations and did you feel effective in you communication. It really doesn't matter what transpired particularly, as much as it matters how you **PERCEIVED** what transpired. Just write about it. Some things to think about are listed below. After you have done the writing set it aside for a day. Come back and look at it with a fresh perspective. Apply any other

things you may have thought of and then write your ICA. Do not answer these questions as your ICA. They are only for guidelines and may not apply. Some of them may appear redundant, but that is only to help you expand your perspective.

Things to think about as you jot down notes include:

- What emotion(s) did I experience? How did I create the emotional state I was in?
- How did my perspective and perceptions create effect these communication experiences?
- What beliefs, attitudes, thoughts did I hold?
- What did I do to contribute to these situations?
- What did I learn about myself from these experiences?
- What did I think the other person intended? Did they? What other purpose(s) could they have had?
- At the end of these communication situations, did I like myself? What did or did not make this so? What could I have done to change it, if I didn't?
- How could I delight in who I am and be in this situations? If I did, how did this happen?
- How could I have handled these situations to get it to be the way I wanted it to be? If it was the way I wanted it to be, what did I do to get it this way?
- How else could I have handled these events if I did not handle it well? If it went well, what did I contribute to make it so?
- How do I (for the next time) or how did I connect with the other person?
- How did I communicate previously (either positively or negatively) with this person that, in some way, may have led up to this incident?
- What got my attention about these situations? What kinds of things was I aware of during this interchange?
- What stereotypes did I hold?
- What insights did I have?
- What could I apply that I learned from class or the textbooks? How does it connect with what you already know?
- What did my nonverbal communication say?

Below is a list of each of the ten (10) different ICAs you are to do and which on you are to do when. Practice what it says for a minimum of two to three days. As you do these activities, make an effort to pay close attention to the effect and influence they have on you. Consider the questions above and see how and if they apply. Answer any of the questions requested in the specific ICA assignment. Other things to think about:

- How did I feel?
- What insights and awarenesses did I have?
- How did it improve or change my attitudes about the activity or the other person?
- How did it improve or change my communication?

Here is a list of the ICAs you are to do:

- ICA #1 - Pay attention to each time you used your communication abilities to control another person. Examples might include: "fishing for compliments," asking challenging questions, becoming angry (not every time you become angry are you wanting to control), and "the silent treatment." Briefly list these examples and then explain what you thought would happen if you did not use these control mechanisms.
- ICA #2 - Change your perspective and perception by going through you day with the perspective/perception that everything that happens is a wonderful opportunity. Discuss your findings.
- ICA #3 - Identify the emotional responses you had during communication interchanges. How does that relate to your personal power? Discuss the connections.
- ICA #4 - Stop saying the word can't or cannot. Discuss your observations.
- ICA #5 - Stop using the word try. Don't replace it with attempt. Agree to do or not do something and discuss what you learned.
- ICA #6 - Practice the Golden Rule of Communication. What happens?
- ICA #7 - Set a goal before you speak. What happens?
- ICA #8 - Do not ask WHY questions. What did you learn?
- ICA #9 - Listen for day. Be friendly, open, warm, and talk as little as possible. Encourage others to talk. Make sure that you don't act in such a way that others think there is something wrong with you. What did you learn?
- ICA #10 - As often as you think of it in a day tell yourself, "I am an amazingly wonderful human being!" How did this effect you?

There are a couple of alternatives that you can do after ICA #4. You must do 1-4. Please indicate that you are doing the alternate assignment.

- Avoid blame. Blame no one for anything. What happens?
- Do not give advice. Was this difficult? What made it so?

There are 10 if these due, one a week, starting about four weeks into the term. As you learn more about interpersonal communication you will be expected to reflect that learning in your answers. Each ICA should be 1-3 pages, typewritten, double-spaced on 8 1/2" x 11" paper in a standard 10 or 12 point type face. Identify each ICA with a number, 4th, 5th etc. Six (6) points each.

HUMOR AND IMAGE □ - Find 15 examples of humorous cartoons (printed materials) where assumptions we make about people, generalizations, stereotypes are the basis of humor. These humorous pieces might reflect a shift or an inconsistency in image with what we believe the stereotype to be, maybe even more than one. They might over exaggerate a stereotype to make it look humorous. Make a numbered list of each of the stereotypes. There should be a minimum of two stereotypes you recognize for each cartoon. Also identify the source of your humor and the date it was published. One (1) point each.

INTERVIEW three people who you believe to be excellent communicators. You are looking for excellent interpersonal communicators, not people who believe that they are excellent speakers/presenters. Find out the following things:

1. How skillful do they think they are at interpersonal communication and what makes them believe this?
2. To what do they attribute their success (or if they believe so - failure)?
3. What kinds of interpersonal communication techniques have they found to be successful?
4. What do they think they could do to improve their interpersonal communication?

Compile your results in a 3 to 6 page type-written paper. Add your thoughts and ideas to what you have learned from these people. Address the following ideas in your evaluation (along with any other thoughts you have):

- When you compare what each of the three people said, do you see any patterns or consistent ideas in what they expressed.
- How does what they believe and do compare to what techniques etc. that you learned, know, understand, and practice (from this class)?
- How do you think they could improve their communication? 15 points.

PARTICIPATION AND ATTENDANCE is expected. This refers to regular class participation (speaking, discussing, listening, etc.) and attendance. As part of their participation, students are expected, to bring to class two or three questions or comments that occurred to them as they read the assigned chapter of the textbook each week. This is worth 10 points.

At times students have had difficulty with writing the assignments for this class. If this occurs, students will be asked to seek assistance through the Student Development Office at GSU. The ability to write well is an important component of effective communication. Understanding the content of the course is only half of what is required to pass the course. Because this is a communication class, it is expected that students can express themselves well in both oral and written form.

Assignments are due by the end of the class period in which they are to be turned in. After that they will be considered late. Late materials will lose a point per class session that they are late. At times an incomplete may be necessary. These will not be granted unless at least one half of the semester's work has been turned in and the incomplete request has been discussed with the instructor.

Grades are based on a point system totaling 100. The grades will be assessed as follows: 90-100 is an A, 80-89.9 is a B, 70-79.9 is a C, 60-69.9 is a D and below 60 is an F. To calculate your grade at any time in the semester, take the total number of points you have received to date and divide it by the number of points possible to date. The number you receive will correspond to a number on the above scale.

