



COMM 5304.002 – Communication in Human Relations (GRADUATE)
Fall 2014
Course Syllabus

Instructor: Joseph Velasco
Office Hours: MW 2-3:00 p.m.; TTh 8:30 a.m.-9:30 a.m. *or by appointment*
Office Location: FAB 206B
Telephone: 837-8370
Email Address: jvelasco@sulross.edu
Class Schedule: 12:30 p.m. - 1:45 p.m. Monday & Wednesday
Classroom Location: LH 201
Required Text: Guerrero, L. K., Andersen, P. A., Afifi, W. A. (2014). *Close encounters: Communication in relationships* (4th ed.). Boston: Sage.

Always bring applicable reading material to class with you.

Introduction

How do people maintain their romantic relationships?

How are some relationships different from others?

Why do we form friendships and why am I more close to some friends and not others? In what ways do people develop closeness with friends, siblings, parents, etc.?

How can I communicate more effectively when in conflict with others?

A field within the diverse discipline of communication, relational communication is a well-established intellectual area, complete with a base of knowledge, theories, and research developed by communication scholars. In recent years, interest in relational communication has mushroomed, making it one of the largest and most vibrant areas in the discipline. Reflecting the intellectual maturity of the field, communication theory and research offer rich insight into the impact of relational communication on individual identity and personal, social, and professional relationships.

This course offers an in-depth examination of human relationships which goes beyond understandings of human communication typically found in introductory interpersonal courses. This course, then, extends our knowledge of interpersonal communication while also refocusing our examination with what we will call a *relational perspective*.



Section I. Course Objectives

The general objectives for this course are to *further enhance your competence and knowledge of human communication in myriad interpersonal and relational contexts*. As a student, your learning objectives are to:

- 1) Identify and explain various theories in the fields of relational and interpersonal communication.
- 2) Comprehend various concepts and discuss them in an intellectual manner.
- 3) Discuss complex concepts of human relationships in light of your own personal experience(s).
- 4) Analyze your communication and the communication of others.
- 5) Demonstrate proficiency with synthesizing concepts from multiple readings in conversation with other students.
- 6) Develop proficiency with writing which demonstrates the exploration and development of an academic *voice*.
- 7) Contribute to a collection of academic journal article reviews, thereby constructing a community of scholars amongst your course colleagues.

Section II. Program Learning Outcomes

This course is designed to meet one or more of the program learning outcomes applied to all Communication majors:

The graduating student will demonstrate:

- 1) competency for appropriate oral communication in public presentations.
- 2) competency for appropriate use of presentation software – specifically power point.
- 3) the ability to analyze arguments including identification of the major elements of the argument such as claims, warrants, data and backing
- 4) competency in appropriate discipline specific written communication.
- 5) the ability to apply communication theory to the analysis of communication situations.
- 6) competency in the use of media technology including video, audio and web technologies.
- 7) general knowledge of communication concepts and terminology

Section III. Course Requirements, Assignments, and Grading

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Points Possible</u>
Readings, Contributions	200
LSEs	400
Article Summaries (3)	150
Final LSE	50
Literature Review	200
Total	1000

Grade Description (Points)

A = 900-1000
B = 800-899
C = 700-799
D = 600-699
F = < 600

Readings and Contributions. In this course **reading is critical**. It may be helpful to think of our class as a reading group. In addition to reading for key terms, you may find it helpful to read for the following information:

- Key ideas and concepts
- Points that you dis/agree with based on other readings (from this course and other courses), scholarly evidence, current events and personal experience
- How the writer's conception of, and/or assumptions about communication may be applied to the analysis of a text or artifact; or how they may relate to a current research project you are working on

Learning Self-Evaluations (LSEs). In order to receive credit, this must be emailed to me by **Friday at midnight** every week. Your responses should thoughtfully and accurately represent your participation and thoughts. You should demonstrate the ways in which your participation contributed to the class discussion and activities and what you learned from the class session. Be sure to answer each question. Otherwise, you will lose points. Finally, as a general rule, a good length for each question is 5 sentences (but I don't like counting sentences, so just do each justice).

Article Summaries. You are required to search the online database (provided by the library) and find three scholarly journal articles that both interest you AND relate to the field(s) of relational and/or interpersonal communication. You will then write a one-page summary of each article and **submit one on the designated days in your course calendar**. Please bring a one-page copy for each of your class colleagues. Half of the class will present articles to the class. Basically, you will have to teach the class about the content of the article, informing us of any key concepts, the methods employed, the findings, and discuss the implications of the study. In addition, you will need to prepare two discussion questions to pose to the class concerning your topic. All of this should be included in your handout.

Final LSE. The final exam will be in the form of a final LSE (see above). In this final LSE, you will consider your contributions and the content of the course throughout the entire term. Whereas you are held to a 5-sentence minimum per LSE prompt on your weekly LSEs, the final LSE will require you to write a MINIMUM of 15 sentences per prompt. This is your chance to really demonstrate what you have learned and how far your writing has developed. Push yourself! ☺

Literature Review. You will choose a topic which interests you and can be understood from a small-group communication perspective. You will then survey the relevant literature written about your topic (primarily in the discipline of Communication Studies and its journals) and then organize it thematically. As you review your literature and themes emerge, you should be thinking about what gaps exist and where you might go in your research. **By Friday, November 7th**, you will email me a draft (saved as a Word document and attached to your message) of your

literature review so that I can give you feedback before the Thanksgiving holiday. **Your literature review is due on Wednesday, December 10th.**

The following is provided to further familiarize you with what a review of literature is:

A review of literature is one component of traditional research writing utilized in most academic journal articles and most theses and dissertations. Briefly, academic pieces have five major sections:

- I. Introduction/Rationale
- II. Review of Literature
- III. Methodology
- IV. Results
- V. Discussion/Conclusions/Limitations/Future Research

The purpose of a review of literature (also known as a *literature review*) is to prepare your reader for your investigation by discussing the research that has already been done on major facets of your research topic. In this way, the writer/researcher informs the reader of the prior research that is guiding our current understanding(s) of a particular topic and, further, indicates GAPS in the literature that either the current study attempts to address or where future research COULD address.

Other professors may require you to carry out research and write it up using the above format. Others may have you write what is often called a *Research Proposal* which consists of writing the first three or four sections though making it clear through your language that this is in fact a proposal and not research that HAS been done. That is, instead of saying in section IV that you “sampled 232 college students,” you would likely say “The sampling goal for the proposed study is 250 participants.”

YOUR ASSIGNMENT for this class, however, is to write a review of literature (Which is easier ☺, though still tough ☹). This is NOT a research proposal. It can take on proposal-like language, if you like. Mainly, I want you to know that you are required to provide sections I & II. Why also section I? Literature reviews deserve a proper introduction and a rationale for research. Here’s a tip: write section-I last. First write the lit review and then go back and put a nice introduction/rationale at the beginning.

The organization of your literature review should look something like this:

I. INTRODUCTION/RATIONALE (Write this section after you have written the literature review)

The introduction to the proposal should have a scope of sufficient width and depth to provide adequate answers to the following questions:

- A. **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:** What problem does the proposal focus on? Briefly, how is the problem typically viewed by communication scholars? What are the specific aims of the study? In other words, you are defining the parameters of your study.

- B. **SPECIFIC PURPOSE:** What facet of the problem area are you going to confront and what portion of the problem area do you not intend to confront? In other words, what is the main focus of your study? What issues are you concerned with?
- C. **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:** What will your study accomplish? In what way will your study clarify or test specific theoretical information? How will your study add to the existing body of knowledge? Why is this study important? (This may also be called: dealing with the “so what” issue.)

II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The review of the literature should cover the relevant bodies of theory and/or research that provide information about the problem area. It should address the specific approaches that are likely to provide the most beneficial means for understanding the problem area. It should demonstrate how your study represents the appropriate “next step” toward understanding the problem area.

This section should be organized in a way that is appropriate to your topic and its relevant literature. Most literature reviews take either a thematic/categorical or chronological organization pattern.

Thematic/Categorical

Most of your topics may be better organized thematically. That is, you may see certain themes or categories of information that emerge from the literature that deserve separate sections in your paper. For example, a study which examines personality similarities/differences that same-sex best friends have may review the literature in chunks. For example, there may be a section discussing the relevant literature on ways to measure personality, then a separate section specifically addressing the conceptualization of ‘personality’ (e.g., attachment style, Myers-Briggs, astrological sign, etc.) that you are using in this study and why. Further, you might need to have a separate section which reviews the current literature on ‘friendships’ and possibly ‘friendship attraction’ (i.e., how/why people choose certain people to be their friends). This study could require a few more (or different) sections, but this is just to give you an idea.

Chronological

If your review follows the chronological pattern, you could write about your topic according to when particular pieces of the surrounding literature were published. For instance, you could begin a review of the literature on human emotion by first discussing the contributions of Charles Darwin in the cataloguing of emotions. You could then trace the work on human emotion over time, discussing major works and how they inform the topic. As your review progresses it would culminate in

reviewing the most recent literature on human emotion, perhaps indicating cutting-edge advances in the field.

IMPORTANT: Regardless of the pattern you choose, remember this: Your goal is not to address each individual article or book one-by-one; instead, put the works in conversation with one another. I will provide you with a few examples.

This section requires that you spend a great deal of time in the library. You need to be acquainted with the citation indices which are relevant to your field. For example, you need to know how to use: **Communication and Mass Media Complete, Academic Search Complete, Humanities Full Text, Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collection, PsycINFO, SAGE Journals Online, Social Science Full Text, World Cat Dissertations and Theses, and ERIC/RIE.** You can find journal articles online through the Sul Ross library at the following link:

<http://www.sulross.edu/library/databases.php>

When performing a computer literature search you need to know what indices you want to search and you need to have key words identified. Most important, if you feel lost or are stuck while conducting your literature review, **ask the Reference Librarian for help.**

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Section IV. Policies

Attendance. I expect you to be in class. You are responsible for everything that goes on, including announcements, lecture material, assignments and modifications to the course schedule – *this includes required reading in subsequent class meetings.* Arrange with someone in the class wherein you will notify each other of relevant items in the event that one of you must be absent. Having more than two unexcused absences may result in a lower grade.

Classroom Demeanor. I expect the environment during class meetings to be conducive to learning. I have little tolerance for students talking among themselves when they should be listening to someone else speak. It is particularly disturbing when students talk among themselves when one of their classmates is presenting a speech, giving a report, making a comment, or observing or asking a question. I understand that some comments pertain to class material; I encourage you to share these comments with the class as a whole. Also, I would rather that cell phones, pagers, etc. **not** disrupt class – make sure your communications technology is **shut down** when class begins.

Academic Integrity. I expect and assume that as students you conduct yourselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty. Sul Ross State University reserves the right, through due process, to place on probation, suspend or expel any student who violates academic integrity and regulations by *plagiarism, classroom misdemeanor, or academic dishonesty*. Plagiarism includes doing and/or taking credit for someone else's work, presenting the ideas and work of others as your own, and not citing your sources if you utilize the ideas of others. Classroom misdemeanor includes cheating, allowing others to cheat, and interfering with others' ability to succeed in the course. Academic dishonesty includes procuring examination materials illegally, doing unauthorized group work, and handing in your own work for which you have already received academic credit (see Student Handbook, p. 66).

Late Work. *You are responsible for handing in assignments when they are due.* While I am willing to "hear you out" when unforeseen and/or difficult circumstances impede with your course work, I do not generally accept late work, *and especially* if you have not notified me that you're having problems before the due date arrives. If you miss a due date, you will be given full credit *only* if the assignment was missed because of a University-excused absence – which includes hospitalization or a *serious* medical condition, a family or personal *emergency*, or a University-sponsored activity. In order to be able to make up the assignment, you must notify me beforehand *and* have supporting documentation from a relevant authority that the situation or event occurred. *NOTE: There is nothing in this syllabus that requires me to accept late work; if you submit work late, then receiving credit depends on my allowing you to turn it in. If I do accept late work, it will likely be at half-credit.*

Section V. Notes on University Programs and Policies

ADA. It is Sul Ross University policy to provide reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities. If you would like to request such accommodations because of a physical, mental, or learning disability, please contact the ADA coordinator for Program Accessibility located in FH 112 or call 837-8203.

Calendar
(This calendar is subject to change)

Week	Date	Topic	Chapter	Assignment/Activity
One	Aug 25	Intro. To Course	N/A	Introductions
	Aug 27	Relational Communication	1	
Two	Sept 1	LABOR DAY – NO CLASS		
	Sept 3	The Social Self/Identity	2	
Three	Sept 8	Attraction	3	
	Sept 10	Managing Uncertainty	4	
Four	Sept 15	Relational Changes	5	
	Sept 17	Privacy & Disclosure	6	
Five	Sept 22	Communicating Closeness	7	Article Summary 1
	Sept 24			
Six	Sept 29	Love	8	
	Oct 1	(More) Love	8	
Seven	Oct 6	Sex	9	Blackboard Discussion
	Oct 8	(More) Sex	9	Blackboard Discussion
Eight	Oct 13	Relational Maintenance	10	Article Summary 2
	Oct 15			
Nine	Oct 20	Coping with Conflict	11	
	Oct 22	(More) Conflict	11	
Ten	Oct 27	Influence	12	
	Oct 29	Dominance	12	
Eleven	Nov 3	Relational Transgressions	13	
	Nov 5	Hurtful Messages	13	
Twelve	Nov 10	Healing	14	
	Nov 12	Forgiveness	14	
Thirteen	Nov 17			Article Summary 3
	Nov 19	Outcomes of <i>Ending It</i>	15	
Fourteen	Nov 24	Ending Relationships	15	
	Nov 26	Thanksgiving Holiday (no class)		
Fifteen	Dec 1	LAST CLASS		TBA
	Dec 3	DEAD DAY (no class)		

The Final Exam is scheduled for December 10th at 12:30 p.m.-2:30 p.m.

Sample LSE

NAME

DATE

LSE #

1. Today's class connects to my course project because my inquiry deals directly with the concepts of *affect transmission* and *movement*. Erin Manning's book works through the concept of *movement* (as inspired by Brian Massumi) by demonstrating how physical movements of all sorts are linked to our corporeal and incorporeal experiences of affect. To affect and be affected are certainly at the crux of her argument of what a body can do, however, her book goes further to hint at how *movement* and *affect* create bodies of relation – and more importantly to my work – bodies *in* relation. I am not certain, but I think a deeper analysis of these concepts could help me examine how soldiers returning to their families also bring home with them all the traumas that were experienced in wartime.
2. My most important contribution built off of Dawn Marie's line of questioning that interrogated the mapping of *intervals* situated within a context of race or the politics of race. I recall her asking where or how could such mapping begin. "What would it look like?" To me, mapping the intervals within systems of power brought to mind the talks I've had with friends and students about privilege. For me, it is easier to explain privilege through a metaphor. I choose to describe privilege by describing a person's movement through an unknown building while wearing a blindfold. Everything about the building is unknown less its perception beyond the person's sight. In fact, the person does not even know it is a building. Any and all perceptions of this space are due to the person's movements and the barriers that are bumped into. Some people bump into more walls than others. Some get slammed constantly and fall down stairs with no railings. Other people are not even sure that a building exists around them because they mostly experience smooth surfaces under their feet and rarely a wall in their face.

To me, mapping the intervals of affect and movement within the context of racial politics could be envisioned similarly. People relate to each other according to each other's rhythms, whether they are in sync or not. People move about in anticipation or with little expectation to feel affective and bodily barriers. Their intervals, pulses, and other movements may be characteristic of power and privilege acting on them (or moving with them, alongside, under their feet, in their face). Perhaps this can explain how bodies may react when power differences and privilege differentials are co-present. Bodies react, they quiver with uncertainty. The asynchronous rhythms create intervals that are unpredictable, uncomfortable, and foreign. It's difficult to relate to someone with a different rhythm. We've all heard someone say or themselves described their relationship with another person as being "out-of-sync" or "not meshing well" or "we don't gel". Maybe this is part of why people feel that way.

3. Now that I think about it, I wish I had said something when Kathryn was talking about transformation as being a state of being that, to her, seems very final like a terminus that someone accomplishes and movement (and development or progress) can be assumed as

over. When she was talking about this, I thought of creating a new term: *transformation*. Perhaps this can account for people's constant movement and constant becoming, but may speak more to those moments when more movement occurs than usual and the body enters a different rhythm. The body moves into a different state of resonance similar to giving off a different musical tone or pitch due to differences in vibration or other movements.

4. The topic I was most interested in was thinking about how my sub-discipline might be different if Manning were taken seriously in interpersonal and family communication. Just having Manning's work taken seriously, I believe, is not enough to create a major paradigm shift. At this point, something really revolutionary would have to happen for us to completely shift our focus away from messages and meanings, but I do think some interesting things would happen to current theory. For example, systems theory might be tweaked to include a different understanding of what a system is.

Briefly, systems theory emphasized the interconnected and interdependent nature of family relationships. Traditionally, a family is assumed to be a system by their family-ness. According to family communication scholars (see Whitchurch & Dickson, 1999), the definition of family is not rooted in a bio-genetic model, rather in communication. Applying Manning's emphasis on movement to attend to relationships, the definition of family might be adjusted to include the language of movement, perhaps emphasizing shared rhythms and deeply felt and shared intervals of affect (be it positive or negative). With such a change to the definition of family, the definition of 'system' could morph into something that acknowledges varying degrees of system-ness (based on affect and movement within the system). Thus, influenced by Manning's work, scholars could move toward interrogating, for example, rhythms that constitute varying levels of family-ness and system-ness.

5. I still want to know more about Darrin's discussion of attention. Darrin talked about how people are only able to jointly construct something together if they are not focused on themselves or another person. The focus has to shift to something between people. This had me thinking about how people attend to relationships. Is the relationship a separate entity that can receive attention other than the 'I' or the 'you'?

6. Now that I know how well LSEs help me to reflect on my own learning and experience of the classroom, I will certainly make use of them in my future course designs. I admit that when I first started writing them last quarter in Kate's course on the everyday, I felt like I was catching a bit of a case of the freshmen seminars. About halfway into that quarter I began to realize how much LSEs were helping me grasp the material and reflect on my own contributions. Keep it up.

LEARNING SELF EVALUATION FORM
(due every Friday by midnight)

1. **Today's class connects to my previous knowledge (either from this course or previous courses), beliefs, and/or experience in that...**

2. **My most important contribution to today's class was...**
(Supply enough detail to jog my memory. Be specific. Be sure to locate your contribution within the larger conversation with me and classmates online or face-to-face.)

3. **Now that I think about it, I wish that I had said...**

4. **The topic I was most interested in or touched by was...**

5. **I still wonder or want to know...**

6. **Now that I know ---, I have new ways to think, articulate, and/or act in regards to...**