Introduction

Communication is so vital and so very pervasive in our everyday lives, yet effective communication is something that eludes all of us at some time or another. Part of the problem is that there are too many things that can go wrong when we attempt to communicate. There are so many contributing factors which shape our communication. This does not mean that we should all just throw up our hands and say “Why bother?” when attempting to communicate effectively with another person. What it may be indicative of is a need to either gain a better understanding of other individuals, a better understanding of human-nature, a better understanding of society and its effects on others, a better understanding of one’s own self, OR ALL OF THE ABOVE!

In this course, we will focus our study on human communication as affected by sex and gender. In addition to reading and discussing various topics surrounding gender communication, I have designed this course to empower you by creating opportunities for you to roll-up your sleeves and apply many theoretical concepts to your own lives and to the lives of others through in-depth class discussions. As many of my courses, this course takes an approach which emphasizes both theory and practical application. That is, you will learn theory and research as well as skills to help you become a more competent communicator. This dual perspective approach offers you a course which is designed to make theory come-alive by introducing you to the authors of various theories, giving you a glance of them as real people - not merely a name on a page or someone who lives far off in Communication Neverland. Furthermore, this course requires a commitment to engaging yourself and your colleagues in conversation that is deeply rooted in course material. As a professor, I value the process of learning over the product. Therefore, I want to see you push your writing, reading, speaking, and analytic skills throughout this course.
Section I. Student Learning Outcomes

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

SLO 1: Students will be able to analyze communication content for argument, including identification of major elements, such as claim, warrants, and data.

SLO 2: Students will be able to effectively construct messages appropriate to audience, purpose, and context; including electronic media technologies.

SLO 3: Students will be able to apply Communication theories, perspectives, principles, and concepts to the analysis of communication situations.

Section II. Course Learning Objectives

The general objective for this course is to enhance your competence and knowledge of human communication as affected by sex and gender. As a student, your learning objectives are to:

1. Identify and explain various theories in the field of gender communication.
2. Build and develop skills essential to communicating interpersonally with others.
3. Comprehend various concepts and discuss them in an intellectual manner.
4. Describe your experience as a gendered communicator.
5. Analyze your communication and the communication of others.
6. Demonstrate proficiency with synthesizing concepts from multiple readings in conversation with other students.

Section III. Marketable Skills

This course offers you the opportunity to develop the following skills:

- Informative and Persuasive Speaking
- Audience-centered Writing
- Critical Analysis
- Research
- Effective Message Construction Using Technology

Section IV. Course Requirements, Assignments, and Grading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points Possible</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning Self-evals (6)</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article Summaries (4)</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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, and in-class discussions are vital. 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

In class, you are required to participate in and generate conversations related directly to the course content and reading materials. Because we do not use formal exams in this course, your in-class participation is vital for you to demonstrate that you are keeping up with the reading and that you are attempting to learn the material prior to entering class. If you want to pass this course, you must speak from an informed position. You may not understand every concept, but at least have good questions that demonstrate close reading and academic rigor.

Learning Self-Evaluations (LSEs). In order to receive credit, this must be emailed to me by Friday at midnight every other 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 recent class sessions. Be sure to answer each question. Otherwise, you will lose points. Finally, the minimum length for each response to each prompt 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 four scholarly journal articles that both interest you AND relate to the field of gender 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 of your summary 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.

Section V. 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 not disrupt class. Please turn off your cell phone during class.

**Commitment to Diversity.** I will strive to create a learning environment that supports a diversity of thoughts, perspectives, and experiences, and also one that honors your identities (including race, gender, class, sexuality, religion, ability, socioeconomic class, age, nationality, etc.). It is my expectation that we will be partners in this commitment and so, together, we can create a classroom community that feels welcoming to all.

**Academic Integrity.** Intellectual development requires hard work. Academic dishonesty severely interferes with this development and reduces the value of college degrees. Presenting the ideas or work of others as your own, submitting the same paper for multiple classes, doing someone else’s work, and/or failing to cite your sources when you utilize the ideas of others, are all examples of dishonest academic conduct. As an SRSU student, it is your responsibility to read and understand the university’s expectations about academic integrity. All violations will be taken seriously and handled through the appropriate university process. The policy can be found at: [https://www.sulross.edu/about/administration/university-policies/](https://www.sulross.edu/about/administration/university-policies/)

In addition, please note that plagiarism detection software will be used in this class for written assignments.

**Distance Education Statement.** Students enrolled in distance education courses have equal access to the university's academic support services, such as library resources, online databases, and instructional technology support. For more information about accessing these resources, visit the SRSU website. Students should correspond using Sul Ross email accounts and submit online assignments through Blackboard, which requires secure login. Students enrolled in distance education courses at Sul Ross are expected to adhere to all policies pertaining to academic honesty and appropriate student conduct, as described in the student handbook. Students in web-based courses must maintain appropriate equipment and software, according to the needs and requirements of the course, as outlined on the SRSU website. Directions for filing a student complaint are located in the student handbook.

**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. Sul Ross State University (SRSU) is committed to equal access in compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act of 1973. It is SRSU policy to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. It is the student’s responsibility to initiate a request each semester for each class. Students seeking accessibility/accommodations services must contact Rebecca Greathouse Wren, LPC-S, SRSU’s Accessibility Services Coordinator at 432-837-8203 (please leave a message and we’ll get back to you as soon as we can during working hours), or email rebecca.wren@sulross.edu. Our office is located on the first floor of Ferguson Hall (Suite 112), and our mailing address is P.O. Box C-122, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas, 79832.

The Graduate Student Center, located in BAB 104, provides resources and services for all SRSU graduate students. There is a computer lab with desktop computers and a networked printer/copier/scanner; laptop computers which can be checked out; a projector and screen for rehearsing student presentations; and a conference room for group study. Both Alpine and distance education students can receive writing and thesis assistance by contacting gradcenter@sulross.edu or calling 432-837-8524.

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…
1.) This past week’s class connects with my previous beliefs on how we hurt the ones we love. It also connects with some personal experiences. I didn’t know the three types of infidelity, but I have undergone one of them and I have done one of them to a past lover. The three types of infidelity are sexual, emotional, and communicative. I knew about the first two, but I had no idea what communicative infidelity was. The books states it as “when people engage in sexual activity with a third party to communicate a message to their partner” (p. 307). It sounds more like revengeful infidelity to me.

2.) My most contribution to this week’s class was when you asked us what would hurt more sexual or emotional infidelity. I chose emotional because I have been cheated on in that way with my ex. The person did not sexually cheat on me with another person, but they did confide in another behind my back while being exclusive with me. That hurts more to me because the person you love could be falling out of love with you and in love with someone else. I don’t think you have to actually care about someone to have sexual relations with. Girls are capable of having just casual sex and have no feelings at all. Another thing I found interesting was when we started talking about the Vegas bachelor/bachelorette parties and the differences between if the man would cheat or the girl. With the guys the first thing that his ‘buddies’ use to justify it would be “he had too much to drink”, but I believe that if a girl uses that excuse it’s not true and wouldn’t be a good enough excuse. Then I also think everyone thinks differently and every couple overcomes obstacles on their own to fix their problems.

3.) Now that I think about it, I wish I had spoken more about the personal issue that I have witnessed but would rather just speak about it on here. I have seen a marriage fall apart right in front of my eyes that had both sexual and emotional infidelity. It was horrible. And the kicker was that it wasn’t the husband who was cheating, it was the wife. When everything came out and hit the fan it was like she had no care for doing what she did and justified why she did the things she did. Yes I know every marriage has their problems, but I lived in the same house and saw it all. This woman was capable of feeling nothing. No remorse. And what made it worse was that they have a child, and she was too young to have her parents split up. The things you said about how it would kill you if it happened in your marriage was crazy because I saw all of that happen. I saw the pretending of everything would be okay and we will work it out for the child, but nothing worked. It got worse and another cheating incident happened.

4.) The topic I was interested in was when Daniel brought up the evolutionary hypothesis. The book states this as the prediction “that men should get more upset over sexual
infidelity than emotional infidelity, whereas women should get more upset over emotional infidelity than sexual” (p.309). In some cases of cheating that I know of that is usually how it goes. Men get angry when their girlfriends have sex with someone else rather than her just talking to another guy, but there are a few where it’s the other way around. And with girls it is what the hypothesis states how emotionally hurts more. I liked what Alexis said how men who encounter sexual infidelity may feel as if their manhood is being tested or taken away because their girl went and sought it from somewhere else.

5.) I still wonder or want to know more about the types of jealousy and why we get jealous. I mean I don’t think it just stems from infidelity. Sometimes it comes from past relationships I believe, and I also believe that it is super unhealthy to bring that. I get jealous of other girls at times, but I trust my partner completely. I guess it would be more of a personal matter of viewing another girl and seeing her being prettier than me.

6.) Now that I know more about this chapter it has helped me have new ways to think and act in regards to my relationship. It makes me cherish what I have because we have disagreements but no actual life threatening arguments. It helps me look at new ways to speak and be open with my partner and not assume things. It really taught me on how to not send hurtful messages to my significant other so that it doesn’t lead to any type of infidelity in the future. This chapter has been helpful to benefiting my relationship for the future family I am about to have.
1. This week’s class, I think it was great start to the semester. I really look forward to the class discussions.

2. I feel like I did not contribute because I have not read the chapters. I did feel lost but now that have more time, I will catch up. I had to move to a new place and I have been really busy.

3. Now that I think about it, I wish that I had read the chapters.

4. The topic I was most interested in is...this entire class. Is it possible that I can get a copy of the reading that the graduates got? I’m just curious.

5. I still want to learn more about gender communication. I know that this class will help me in my family life.
6. Now that I know a little more about.

   Note: This is the first LSE and I know what to do to make them stronger and better. I need read the readings and take better notes.
LSE #11

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

   I spent half of Cat’s presentation scribbling furious notes to myself about Debi Pearl – a maven of patriarchy teaching for women, whose husband Michael’s best-selling child rearing manual, *To Train Up a Child*, has been linked to the deaths of at least three children when parents crossed the line from spanking to abuse after reading it. The spanking debate is a subject for another LSE (and makes me wish like anything I could have been in class for Tuesday’s discussion of parenting and aggression!). In the Pearls’ world, spanking is not just a tool for enforcing structural traditionalism, but a means of expiating a child’s sin so he can move on from guilt, accept his parents’ forgiveness, and feel happy again. Essentially, the parent must “break the child’s will” through discipline so he may become a fit candidate for heaven. (If you think this sounds like the rigorous emotional self-mortification of the Puritans, only to the power of about a thousand, you are right. Michael Pearl, however, is not a Puritan. A petition is circulating in the U.K. to ask amazon.uk to stop selling his book.) His methods are the extreme of behaviorism. The child learns not to have an individual will, but to conform to whatever is the parent’s whim at that moment. Pearl justifies this by writing that if his children are in danger, he needs to know that they will respond instantly to his command to move or stand still, for their own protection.

   Similarly, Debi Pearl teaches wives they are not to have a will of their own. In her book *Created to Be His Help Meet: Discover How God Can Make Your Marriage Glorious*, she writes that a woman should submit to whatever is her husband’s whim at the moment, including submit to painful intercourse. This is an actual quote: “Do you think your body has special needs?” God’s purpose in creating woman was for her to complete a man (so far, so good); therefore, a woman has an unbelievable amount of power to make or break her man’s self-esteem and success in life (red flag); therefore, if “her man” (quoting a Loretta Lynn song) is struggling, it is the wife’s fault (big problem here). If he has anger issues, it is because his wife is not supportive enough. If he is abusive, it is because she does not make him feel “reverenced.” If he is unfaithful, it is because his wife is not sexy enough. She should dress and act seductively in order to win him back from that “cheap office hussy.” Not even kidding!
The reason I connected Cat’s presentation to Debi Pearl is the emphasis Pearl places on indirect strategies, specifically positive affect. She pushes the 1950s housewife archetype: a wife who is not merely submissive, but saccharine-sweet. I’ve read that 1950s magazines encouraged middle-class wives to act like little girls (childish and giddy, with a “girlish” giggle), because husbands were supposed to find this attractive. (Maybe a man feels less compunction about making adult decisions on behalf of a woman if she’s a child who doesn’t know her own mind?) Pearl advocates the same thing, telling the wife to be a “playmate” to her husband and win his affection with giggles and spontaneity.

Better yet, here’s another quote, taken from Pearl’s letter of advice to a wife devastated by her husband’s affair (courtesy of a multi-part review posted at Love, Joy, Feminism on patheos.com):

“IT is in your best interest to learn to use feminine wiles. A woman holds her man with the fragile threads of adoration, thankfulness, delight, and just plain fun. He needs to hear gladness and appreciation in your voice when you speak to him, even when you are talking of everyday things.

“Don’t ride him with suspicion. Don’t play detective and follow him around. But do call his work with a giggle in your voice, and give him fair warning that you expect ‘some loving’ when he gets home, then giggle and ask him if he is blushing.

“Be creative and aggressive in your private, intimate times. Keep him drained at home so he won’t have any sexual need at work. If you feed him well, emotionally and sexually, her cooking won’t tempt him.”

Or this – a concise summary of Debi Pearl’s notion of positive affect and its critical role in marriage:

“Every day, I remember to view myself as the woman God gave this man. This mind set helps me to be just that: a gift, a playmate, his helper.”

2. My most important contribution to today’s class was…

Melissa and I had the same thought at the same moment (I love it when that happens!): The age, socioeconomic status, and education level of the couples in Weigel, Bennett, & Ballard-Reisch’s survey were likely to affect spouses’ use of influence strategies. Dr. V. picked this up and took it in the direction of household stress levels, which typically correlate with poverty and/or unemployment or with the transition into parenthood. Even with children present in 97% of households, most homes were comfortably middle-class, reducing economic stresses substantially. In over 50% of households, both partners worked full-time outside the home, meaning that if one partner lost his/her job, the family could probably survive financially.

Melissa noted that with a college education, most of the spouses could be financially secure if unmarried, and this might make them more likely to use direct influence
strategies since neither felt dependent on the other. I think we can take this further and note that people with more education tend to be more open to gender equity in terms of shared household chores, parenting responsibilities, and decision-making. (In addition, the mean (average) age was in the late thirties, and if the median age was similar, most participants would have been attending college around 1990, when equity feminism was becoming more popular.) If both spouses entered the marriage with this mindset, it is not surprising at all that both men and women reported using direct and bilateral strategies.

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

There were several points where I wanted to enter the conversation about influence strategies, but there wasn’t a long enough pause. It is probably better I didn’t say anything, however, because what I was thinking might not have come out right. I wanted to interrogate the role of negative affect as a defensive strategy in the face of stonewalling, based on my own experiences in arguments with my boyfriend, but it is a personal enough topic (and raw enough, after a huge argument on Wednesday) that it’s probably best I didn’t try to explore it in class discussion before I had fully thought through what I wanted to share and knew I could do it objectively, without negative emotions from the experience clouding my description of it. Out of respect for him, I want to make sure that what I share in public is fair and accurate and not too personal.

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

I was most interested in John Gottman’s “four horsemen of the apocalypse,” one being stonewalling or withdrawal. After class I found an article by Fowler & Dillow (2011) that links childhood attachment schemata to these four conflict behaviors. Gottman wrote that criticism, defensiveness, contemptuousness, and stonewalling are potential harbingers of the death of a relationship, because they are so destructive. Fowler & Dillow surveyed 170 individuals in established romantic relationships on their attachment orientations (anxiety and avoidance), correlating their answers to measures of the four conflict behaviors. They write, “The findings suggest that individuals whose attachment orientations reflect fears of abandonment and rejection may tend to enact conflict behaviors that increase the chances of their concerns becoming reality.” In other words, the patterns we learn in childhood from our primary caregivers affect our ability to relate confidently as adults. Particularly with men, who (based on other research I’ve seen) are more likely to use stonewalling, this is likely to be true. Researchers have noted that male infants tend to make eye contact with their caregiver less than females and to seek independence earlier in a variety of ways, and this is often pinpointed as a biological difference. At the same time, though, doesn’t our culture socialize boys to be less emotionally connected to others? Does this mean caregivers are less attentive to male babies from an early age, creating a negative attachment orientation? This could be an evolutionary response, in that (I have read that) female babies may be born weaker and smaller and need more care in order to survive. (Another possibility that comes to mind is early childhood trauma, which can shortcut verbal communication of emotions. I am not arguing for or against religious circumcision, but I will say this: the way medical circumcision is practiced in the modern United States is certainly traumatic. The infant is
removed from his primary caregiver – his mother – typically within a few hours after birth, strapped into place, fitted with a surgical clamp, and put through a major surgery often without the proper anesthetic [that is, it happens so quickly the anesthetic has no chance to take effect]. Some mothers have noted that after the surgery, their sons won’t suckle and – most significant – won’t make eye contact. If these researchers in the early twentieth century were observing boys who’d been circumcised with this method, is it any surprise that they showed more aggression with peers and less desire to attach to their caregiver than girls did?

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

Branden’s article summary brought up more questions relative to last week’s discussion of violence in media and its influence on children. He indicated that children who hear news reports about mass shootings can react with fear and a traumatized response. If this is true, how much more may children who witness media violence (that is, violence in movies) be traumatized? When we first watched the Walt Disney *Snow White* in about 1994, my then three-year-old sister was so distressed by the scene of the huntsman with the knife that she left the room in tears and wouldn’t return until we assured her the “scary part” was over. I don’t think she watched that movie (or *Beauty and the Beast…remember the wolves?*) until she was at least ten or eleven. On the other hand, as Dr. V. suggested, is there a difference between fantasy violence and reality? Do inner-city children who grow up with gun violence in their neighborhood develop a fear response, while affluent children whose only exposure to violence is in video games become desensitized? Where is the line between reality and fantasy for an individual child? Why did my sister have an extreme response to fear-inducing media, even though we’d never seen real violence or even heard much about it on the news? How much of the difference lies in personality, and how much in other aspects of the home environment, or even in genetics?

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

The discussion of influence strategies in marriage made me aware of the behaviors and behavior cycles in my relationship with my boyfriend. Without going into too much detail, I’ll say I recognized Gottman’s cycle of the “four horsemen” right away. The cycle starts when I say something that comes across as criticism, and he responds with defensiveness. I also recognized the influence strategy of negative affect. I wouldn’t dream of “sulking” or “acting cold” toward my parents or sister; why in the world do I think it’s OK to do in an argument with my boyfriend? This week’s class discussion brought my attention to some personal housecleaning I need to take care of.
# Calendar
(This calendar is subject to change)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Due or To Do:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>Aug 24</td>
<td>Introduction to Course</td>
<td>No reading</td>
<td>Discuss Syllabus &amp; Assignments</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Aug 26</td>
<td>Opening the Conversation</td>
<td><em>Introduction</em></td>
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<td>How to write Article Summaries</td>
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<td>Two</td>
<td>Aug 31</td>
<td>Gender Jargon &amp; Gender Research</td>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
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<td>Sept 2</td>
<td>Theoretical Approaches</td>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
<td>LSE 1</td>
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<td><strong>Rhetorical Shaping of Gender</strong>: Feminist</td>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
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<td>Sept 9</td>
<td>&amp; Men’s Movements</td>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
<td>LSE 2</td>
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<td>Chapter 7</td>
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<td>Chapter 8</td>
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<td><em>Work on your own</em></td>
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<td>Nov 9</td>
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<td>DEAD DAY – NO CLASS</td>
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