

COMM 3309.001 – Family Communication
Spring 2026
Course Syllabus

Professor:	Joseph Velasco, Ph.D.	RESOURCES
Office Hours:	MW, 10-11am & TTh 2-4pm, or by appointment.	
Office Location:	LH 307	
Telephone:	432-837-8370	
Email Address:	jvelasco@sulross.edu	
Class Schedule:	TTh, 12:30-1:45pm	
Classroom Location:	LH 303	
Required Text:	Galvin, K. M., Braithwaite, D. O., Schrot, P., & Bylund, C. L. (2019). <i>Family communication: Cohesion and change</i> (10 th ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.	
Required Equipment & Software:	Internet connection; computer with webcam & microphone; Microsoft Word, Microsoft PowerPoint (available free to SRSU students via Office 365)	Bookstore Graduate Student Center Human Resources Library Lobo lookout Lobo Pass Office 365

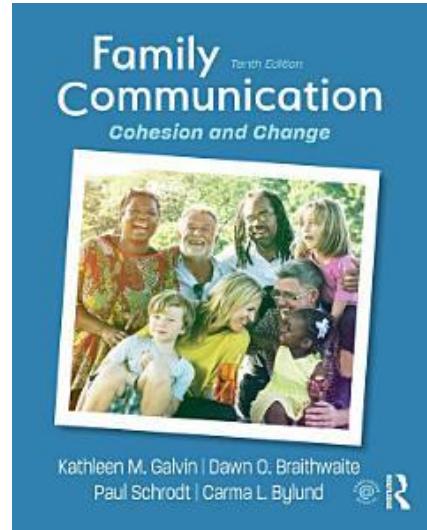
“We are born into a family, we are socialized and acculturated within a family, we mature from a family using information and behaviors learned from a family, and, when we die, we diminish a family. Families surround us, shape us, and contribute to our destiny.” (Judy Goldberg, family therapist)

My name is Dr. Joseph Velasco (most students call me Dr. V), and I am happy to be on this academic journey with you.

Communication is learned and much of what we learn is learned within family contexts. We communicate to meet and interact with other people and to improve all types of relationships. Across the varying dynamics of family, friends, romances, lifestyles, cultures, and interpersonal relationships, communication defines and shapes the interaction as we seek to strengthen bonds. This course is grounded in communication research centered on family interaction and multiple communicative/relational issues implicating family as the core communicative context.

This course is designed as an introduction to communication phenomena in the setting of the family. The overall goal is to help you understand how we develop, maintain, enhance, or disturb family relationships through communication. You will learn verbal and nonverbal skills which can help promote healthy family communication.

Finally, this course also provides an option for service-learning, which is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities.



Section I. Course Objectives

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

1. Describe family communication according to Whitchurch & Dickson (1999).
2. Explain various theories in family communication.
3. Write a literature review.
4. Identify peer-reviewed research in the discipline of Communication Studies.
5. Demonstrate proficiency with synthesizing concepts from multiple readings in conversation with other students.
6. Write academic journal article summaries.
7. Contribute to a shared collection of academic journal article summaries, thereby constructing a community of scholars amongst your course colleagues.

Section II. 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 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

Assignment	Points Possible
Attendance & Participation	200
Article Summaries (4)	400
Literature Review Draft	100
Final - Literature Review	300
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Total	1000

Grade Description (Points)
A = 895-1000
B = 795-899
C = 695-799
D = 595-699
F = < 595

Attendance & Participation. Each day I will take attendance and record the quality of your attendance as a function of your participation in our discussions, as well as your demonstration of your reading the relevant course materials for that day. Keep in mind that it is university policy that I may drop a student from a course after they have six unexcused absences. Attendance is important.

Article Summaries. Throughout the course, 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 family communication and come from a peer-reviewed Communication journal. For each journal article, you will write a one-page summary which adheres to a format which is posted on Blackboard. You will submit a Word document through our Bb Assignments link, and you will also post a copy in the designated discussion board so that your peers can view your work and respond to it. Basically, your summary will 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.

Literature Review (and draft). You will choose a topic that interests you and can be understood from a family communication perspective. You will then survey the relevant literature written about your topic (primarily in the academic 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. On **Thursday, March 26th**, you will submit a draft on Blackboard (saved as a Word document) of your literature review so that I can give you feedback a month in advance of the due date. The draft is worth 100 points. **Your literature review is due on May 1st by 5pm.** Additional guidelines will be provided in class.

Section V. Policies

Basic Class Expectations: It is expected that you spend at least a few hours each week to complete the course readings and assignments. If you are taking this class at a distance, it is also expected that you have reliable internet service and that you check your university email at least once a day. It is also recommended that you set up course notifications in Blackboard to receive a text alert when I post announcements, grades, or other course-related items. See instructions in Blackboard.

Online Classroom Demeanor: Communication issues tend to be emotionally charged. It is highly unlikely in a class this size that everyone will share your personal values, beliefs, and opinions. Believe it or not, this is a good thing! The presentation of varying perspectives will help all of us to learn. This can be accomplished if ideas, beliefs, and opinions are presented in a respectful way. I will be expecting all students to follow basic ground rules for online discussion. These are included at the end of the syllabus.

Academic Integrity. Students in this class are expected to demonstrate scholarly behavior and academic honesty in the use of intellectual property. Students should submit work that is their own and avoid the temptation to engage in behaviors that violate academic integrity, such as turning in work as original that was used in whole or part for another course and/or professor; turning in another person's work as one's own; copying from professional works or internet sites without citation; collaborating on a course assignment, examination, or quiz when collaboration is forbidden. Students should also avoid using open AI sources unless permission is expressly given for an assignment or course. Violations of academic integrity can result in failing assignments, failing a class, and/or more serious university consequences. These behaviors also erode the value of college degrees and higher education overall.

Late Work: All the assignments for the entire course will be posted and available as soon as the course is open. It is expected that all assignments are completed by the stated deadlines. Please plan your time

carefully. If something does come up, prompt and clear communication will facilitate an accommodating response.

Texas Senate Bill 17, the recent law that outlaws diversity, equity, and inclusion programs at public colleges and universities in Texas, does not in any way affect content, instruction or discussion in a course at public colleges and universities in Texas. Expectations and academic freedom for teaching and class discussion have not been altered post-SB 17, and students should not feel the need to censor their speech pertaining to topics including race and racism, structural inequality, LGBTQ+ issues, or diversity, and inclusion.

Section VI. Notes on University Programs and Policies

ADA. SRSU Accessibility Services. Sul Ross State University (SRSU) is committed to equal access in compliance with the 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 SRSU's Accessibility Services Director or Ronnie Harris, LPC, Counselor, at 432-837-8203 or email ronnie.harris@sulross.edu. Our office is located on the first floor of Ferguson Hall, room 112, and our mailing address is P.O. Box C122, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas, 79832. **Please note that instructors are not permitted to provide classroom accommodations to a student until the appropriate verification has been received.**

SRSU Student Responsibilities Statement: All full-time and part-time students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the [Student Handbook](#) and the [Undergraduate & Graduate Catalog](#) and for abiding by the [University rules and regulations](#). Additionally, students are responsible for checking their Sul Ross email as an official form of communication from the university. Every student is expected to obey all federal, state and local laws and is expected to familiarize themselves with the requirements of such laws.

SRSU 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.

Technical Support. SRSU 24/7 Blackboard Technical Support: Toll Free: 888.837.6055.
Email: blackboardsupport@sulross.edu

SRSU Library Services. The Bryan Wildenthal Memorial Library and Archives of the Big Bend in Alpine offer FREE resources and services to the entire SRSU community. Access and borrow books, articles, and more by visiting the library's website, library.sulross.edu/. Off-campus access requires logging in with your Lobold and password. Librarians are a tremendous resource for your coursework and can be reached in person, by email (srsulibrary@sulross.edu), or by phone (432-837-8123). No matter where you are based, public libraries and many academic and special libraries welcome the general public into their spaces for study. SRSU TexShare Cardholders can access additional services and resources at various libraries across Texas. Learn more about the TexShare program by

visiting library.sulross.edu/find-and-borrow/texshare/ or ask a librarian by emailing srsulibrary@sulross.edu.

Mike Fernandez, SRSU Librarian, is based in Eagle Pass (Building D-129) to offer specialized library services to students, faculty, and staff. Utilize free services such as InterLibrary Loan (ILL), ScanIt, and Direct Mail to get materials delivered to you at home or via email.

Counseling. Sul Ross has partnered with TimelyCare where all SR students will have access to nine free counseling sessions. You can learn more about this 24/7/365 support by visiting Timelycare/SRSU. The SR Counseling and Accessibility Services office will continue to offer in-person counseling in Ferguson Hall room 112 (Alpine campus), and telehealth Zoom sessions for remote students and RGC students.

[The Lobo Den Tutoring Center](#) offers FREE tutoring support to help you excel in your courses. Whether you need assistance in Writing, Math, Science, or other subjects, we're here to help!

Important Information:

- **Drop-in and Scheduled Appointments:** Flexible options to fit your needs.
- **Hours of Operation:** Monday–Friday, 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM.
- **Workshops:** Attend our regularly hosted academic workshops on STEM topics and professional development, often in collaboration with specialized faculty.
- **Location:** BWML (aka the library) Room 128.
- **Contact Us:** For more information or to book an appointment, email tutoring@sulross.edu or call (432) 837-8726.

Looking for additional support?

- Tutor.com offers FREE 24/7 online tutoring in over 200 subjects, including specialized support for ESL and ELL learners with native Spanish-speaking tutors.
- Access Tutor.com via Blackboard: Log in to your Blackboard account to get started anytime, anywhere.

Take advantage of these valuable resources to boost your confidence and performance in your classes. They look forward to helping you succeed!

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 shileman@sulross.edu or calling 432-837-8015.

Important University Dates:

• 1/14, First day of SRSU classes	• 4/2, Last day to register to vote in May elections
• 1/19, MLK, Jr. Holiday, no SRSU classes	• 4/3, Last day to withdraw with a “W” (16-week classes)
• 1/20, Last day for registration and schedule changes	• 4/29, Last SRSU class day before finals
• 1/30, Last day to drop a 16-week class without a record	• 4/30, Dead day
• 3/9-3/13, Spring Break (No Classes)	• May 1, 4-6, Final Exams
• 3/30, Registration for Summer & Fall 2026 opens	

Calendar
(This calendar is subject to change)

Week	Date	Topic	Reading	Due or To Do:
One	Jan 15	Course Introduction		Introductions
Two	Jan 20 Jan 22	What is a Family? What is Family Communication?	Chapter 1 Chapter 2	*
Three	Jan 27 Jan 29	Family Communication Theories Family Communication Theories	Chapter 3 Chapter 3	*
Four	Feb 3 Feb 5	FCPs and Family Identity Rel. Maintenance in Families	Chapter 4 Chapter 5	*
Five	Feb 10 Feb 12	Article Summary 1 Article Summary 1		Article Summary 1
Six	Feb 17 Feb 19	Intimacy within partnerships Family Roles & Family Types	Chapter 6 Chapter 7	*
Seven	Feb 24 Feb 26	Article Summary 2 Work on Lit Reviews – No Class		Article Summary 2
Eight	Mar 3 Mar 5	Power, Influence, & Decision-making Communication and Family Conflict	Chapter 8 Chapter 9	
Spring Break	Mar 10 Mar 12	<i>Spring Break – No Class</i> <i>Spring Break – No Class</i>		
Nine	Mar 17 Mar 19	Article Summary 3 Article Summary 3		Article Summary 3
Ten	Mar 24 Mar 26	Communication & Family Developmental Stress	Chapter10	Draft of Lit. Review
Eleven	Mar 31 Apr 2	Unpredictable Stress Unpredictable Stress	Chapter11	
Twelve	Apr 7 Apr 9	Family Communication & Well-being Family Communication & Well-being	Chapter12	
Thirteen	Apr 14 Apr 16	Article Summary 4 Article Summary 4		Article Summary 4
Fourteen	Apr 21 Apr 23	<i>Family Crisis Symposium</i> <i>Family Crisis Symposium</i>		
Fifteen	Apr 28 Apr 30	Course Wrap-up & Lit. Review Showcase		May 1 by 5pm: Final Draft of Lit. Review
Sixteen	TBA	Final Exam - TBA		Final Exam

* Additional readings for graduate students
See Blackboard for the reading list. I'll provide a link to a pdf copy for each reading.