

COMM 355:
Interpersonal Communication Theory¹²

Fall 2011 - 192:355:01
M/Th 9:50 - 11:10 am
CI Building - Room 212

Contact information:

Instructor: Stephen DiDomenico
sdido@rutgers.edu
Office location: 102 Annex
(the yellow house at 192 College Ave.)
Office hours: Th 3 - 5 pm

Teaching Assistant: Lori Pesnell
Office Hours: M 11:10 - 11:45 am
in SCI student lounge
(*Please do *not* email Lori with
questions)

Catalog Description:

Critical examination of the theory and research concerning the dimensions, dynamics, and functions of interpersonal interaction.

Course Overview:

This is an advanced theory course that addresses a most important and pervasive aspect of human experience: interpersonal communication, including both verbal and nonverbal aspects of social interaction. In fact, some scholars have argued that our unique brand of interaction is at the root of *what makes us human*³. This course provides an opportunity to learn about how a set of core theoretical and methodological tools – primarily those drawn from three foundational thinkers: Goffman, Bateson, and Bakhtin – can be productively applied to communication in real-world contexts. We will explore how social interactions link speakers to a range of social and cultural realities. From this, we will see how talk not only reflects such realities, but also *constitutes* them. Embracing the interdisciplinary nature of communication inquiry, our explorations of these issues will draw on research from the disciplines of sociology, pragmatics, sociolinguistics, communication, social psychology, and anthropology. Please note that although the world of everyday experience is our starting point, this is *not* a class about "how to communicate." Rather, by placing communication processes at the center of social life, we put ourselves in the position to see how core aspects of our everyday encounters are recurrently being (re)constructed and (re)negotiated.

Prerequisites: Comm 101 (Intro) & 200 (Theory), [Intro to Interpersonal Com is *strongly* recommended]

Format: I will utilize a combination lecture/discussion format.

Learning Objectives: By the end of this course, students will be able to demonstrate their newly developed knowledge and understanding through their ability to:

1. Identify how everyday human interactions construct and manage identities, relationships, and cultures.
2. Compare advanced perspectives on key movements, themes, and thinkers in the study of interpersonal communication.

¹ Special thanks to Galina Bolden, Jenny Mandelbaum, Cynthia Gordon, and most of all, Hartmut Mokros, for their thorough comments and suggestions on earlier versions of this particular design/interpretation of COM 355.

² Technically, this course was recently renamed to "Interpersonal Communication"; however, in order to make it clear to LSI members that this course is distinct from the "basic" or intro-level interpersonal course, I have chosen to list the original title of the course here.

³ I am indebted to Danielle Pillelt-Shore for the first two lines of this description.

3. Analyze “Big Ideas” (abstract theoretical concepts) and how such conceptualizations have been extended and applied in contemporary interpersonal communication research.
4. Evaluate various approaches to studying interpersonal communication, including their methodologies and implications.
5. Demonstrate improved skills with engaging in academic dialogue, both written (via paper assignments) and spoken (via class discussions).

Level of Challenge:

Expect to be challenged. This course is a “Big Idea” course where we will develop more sophisticated and complex insights about communication than you have previously encountered. Wear your thinking caps to class; failure to wear your thinking caps could have dire consequences. While I will offer numerous concepts and definitions, I will not offer simple formulas for rote memorization and easy reiteration. Rather, we will continually challenge each other to think critically and creatively about the Big Ideas explored in this course.

The benefits that can be had from taking this course fall into the categories of the enrichment of life as well as the enhancement of day-to-day communication practice. If you take this course and its Big Ideas seriously, it is very likely that your perspective on the world will change (I’d like to think for the better). However, I can see how there might also be more “practical” payoff for you as well: through this course you can become a better thinker and communicator, simply because in it you’ll have to think (and, when possible, communicate) on a regular basis about new perspectives on things we ordinarily take for granted. And growth as a thinker and communicator has great practical value.

Course Website:

Sakai will be a central resource for information and you will be expected to check it regularly. Announcements, student grades, available videos, select readings, and a message board for questions/discussion will all be posted on the Sakai site. For the message board, feel free to post any questions that may benefit the entire class; however, please be aware that I will *not* be checking it daily and it is a supplement to regular office hours.

Readings & Other Materials:

To do well in the course, you also need to keep up with the demanding reading load. Readings will often be challenging, requiring significant concentration and discipline. The amount of reading averages around 43 pages a week. We will read classic and contemporary materials, some of which are purely theoretical, some of which are more ethnographic or discourse analytic in nature. Readings are to be completed before coming to class. Class lectures will be designed to supplement, *not replace*, the readings. Please bring the day’s assigned reading(s) with you to our sessions together.

1. Tracy, Karen (2002). Everyday talk: Building and reflecting identities. New York: Guilford Press.
2. Coursepack of bound articles/book chapters available at the University Bookstore.
3. Additional readings available on Sakai under the “Resources” tab
4. A three-ring binder for handouts, notes, etc. (I hole punch *everything* in an effort to help you stay organized, so please take advantage of it!)

Assessment

1) General Involvement - N/A

- *Attendance/Participation - N/A*
 - To do well in the course, you need to attend the lectures. No credit will be given for attendance and participation. However, you should attend class sessions since the exams will cover material presented in the lectures but not in the texts (and conversely), and you should participate because (a) that gives you a chance to test out your understanding of the concepts and (b) it's a bit more satisfying to talk than to be lectured to. If you miss a class, you are responsible for getting lecture notes from a classmate. If, during the course of a lecture, anything is unclear, ask a question! If something doesn't make sense to you, it probably doesn't make sense to other people either.

2) Written Assignments - 35%

- *Idea-Reflection Papers (IRPs): 8.75% each (max. of 1 per unit) x top 4 scores = 35%*
 - IRPs are two-page essays that require you to demonstrate your ability to grasp key ideas encountered in the primary readings. You must write an IRP for *four* of the five units in the course, *two* of which must be completed by October 24. However, students who write *more* than four IRPs will have their *highest* four scores from each of the five units included in their final course grade. Please note that students who complete these assignments early in the semester (and in each section) have a clear advantage: they are well-prepared for other components of the course (i.e. quizzes, exams) and they have ample opportunity to complete *extra* IRPs to raise their overall score for this portion of the course. IRPs are due at the beginning of class on the Monday immediately following the week when the relevant reading was assigned. More information will be provided in a separate handout.

3) Examinations - 65%

- *Regular Quizzes = 20%*
 - Up to 15 quizzes may be given during the term. They are designed to (a) assess your comprehension of the assigned reading(s) and (b) encourage you to come to sessions prepared. Quiz formats may consist of multiple choice, matching, true/false, and/or short answer questions. They will be graded on a 3 point scale where 3 points are earned for excellent work, 2 points for satisfactory work, and 1 point for work that needs improvement. At the end of the semester, your lowest 3 quiz grades will be dropped. You must be present in class to complete them. Absolutely no makeups will be given, so plan ahead.
- *Midterm Exam = 20%, Final Exam = 25%*
 - Two examinations will test your knowledge of concepts from the required readings, lectures, and discussions. Each exam will consist of a combination of objective-type questions (multiple choice, true/false, or matching) and written response questions (short answer, exssay). You must arrive to take the exam before the first person completes his/her exam and exits the classroom. Should you arrive after the first person completes the exam, you may *not* take the exam. Review sessions will be held outside of class approximately one week before the exam at a time which is most ideal time for the entire class. To prepare for each exam, I suggest that you keep thorough notes on the various "big ideas" that extend across the class readings

and sessions. In an effort to help with this task, I typically review key concepts at the beginning and end of every class session.

Course Policies

I. Attendance

While I don't officially record attendance (besides the weekly quizzes described earlier), you must be in class to take full advantage of the learning opportunities provided in 355. If you expect to miss one or two classes, please use the University absence reporting website <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> to indicate the date and reason for your absence (an email is automatically sent to me). Please note that reporting your absence via this system does NOT automatically excuse you from any due dates, quizzes, or exams (see the policy on late work below).

If you know you will be absent for several classes because of student athletics or ROTC, you must bring me a list of those dates with proper documentation in advance. Students missing more than an occasional class due to serious illness or serious personal circumstances should provide documentation to the Dean of Students (<http://deanofstudents.rutgers.edu>) to authenticate the absences. Absences due to religious observance, participation in university-sponsored events or activities such as intercollegiate athletics, are treated as authenticated absences and do not require written verification from the dean.

II. Academic Integrity

I encourage you to discuss the material with your classmates; however, all work you turn in must be your own. I take academic integrity very seriously. You are encouraged to inform yourself of the University's policy on academic integrity which describes and gives examples of violations on academic integrity. This can be found at the following web address:

<http://cat.rutgers.edu/integrity/policy.html>

If you violate this code, you risk a failing grade in the course and even possible suspension from the university. Violations include (but are not limited to) such things as cheating, use of a paper that has been turned in by you or someone else in another class, plagiarism, and unauthorized possession of exam materials.

III. Grading Scale

Grades in this course will be determined on a straight percentage scale. Final grades will be assigned according to the following scale:

100-91% = **A**, 90-86% = **B+**, 85-81% = **B**, 80-76% = **C+**, 75-71% = **C**, 70-60% = **D**, 59-0% = **F**

With regards to grading, there are three important points I'd like to make:

- (1) It is my genuine desire to help you excel in this course.
- (2) It is your responsibility to demonstrate that your work is more than just 'satisfactory'.
- (3) Remember that I do not *give* you a grade - you must *earn* one.

IV. Grade Inquiries

Grades will be made available as soon as possible following the submission deadline for any assignment. If you have any questions after you receive a grade, I ask that you wait 24 hours from the time you received the document back. In accordance with FERPA (the Family Educational Rights Privacy Act), I will not discuss any grades over email. If you want to appeal your assignment grade, you must turn in to me a well-written, typed critique of your work on the assignment within one

week of the assignment being handed back (after one week, the grade stands as posted). The critique must make the argument for why your work is better than the assigned grades reflects. Although this critique is a requirement, the content of it may not be sufficient to warrant a grade change.

V. Late Work

Technical problems (including, but not limited to, power outages, erased/lost disks or jump drives, viruses, inaccessible networks, inability to print, etc.) do not in themselves constitute legitimate excuses for late or missing work. I expect all work to be turned in at the beginning of class on the due date. For every calendar day that your assignment is late, your score will receive a one letter grade deduction (e.g., B to C, C to D). Only officially-documented and university-approved excuses are accepted for missed exams and assignments. Note that late course registration does *not* constitute a university-approved excuse.

VI. Technology Use⁴

Use of computers in class is permitted but strongly discouraged. From past experience, I know that students with computers are tempted to spend class time reading e-mail or looking at facebook, etc. This degrades the quality of your education. Instead of checking e-mail/facebook before class, try re-reading your notes, reminding yourself of what puzzled you about that session's reading, or discussing ideas for your film analysis paper or next IRP with fellow classmates. This will make you more receptive to the material in the lecture and more able to participate during discussion opportunities. For those who typically carry cell phones: **JUST TURN THEM OFF**. Our time together for each session is short and you owe it to yourself to maximize the educational experience you are entitled to (and, furthermore, may be paying for).

VII. Proper Email Communication

The way you compose (and proofread) your emails is an important aspect of your self-presentation in any class. Here are three principles I will expect you to follow when using this medium of communication to contact me:

- 1. Include the course number (COM 355) in the subject line.
- 2. Sign the email with your FULL NAME.
- 3. Clearly indicate what your question is. The more relevant information you provide, the more helpful and timely my response can be.

VIII. Session Notes/Outlines

There are no lecture notes or handouts guaranteed for this course (though I may pass some out from time to time). Psychologists know that people learn best when using as many of their senses as possible including sight, sound, and touch. It is also through repetition that we are able to memorize things better. So, by reading and making notes while you progress through the assigned readings, listening and remaining actively engaged during our sessions, keeping your own class notes, and playing an active part in discussions, you will enhance your grasp of the level of knowledge and understanding necessary for success in the course. To reward those who take notes while they make their way through the readings, one handwritten notecard with notes may be used during quizzes. If you are reading this, please send me an email with "I read the syllabus" in the subject line by 9/8/11 and you will receive 1 bonus point towards your first quiz grade⁵.

⁴ I am indebted to Ian Proops for the text appearing in this section

⁵ I am indebted to Crispin Thurlow for the text appearing in this section.

IX. Disability Statement

Rutgers University encourages qualified persons with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities. If you anticipate needing any type of disability-related accommodation in this course, please contact the Office of Disability Services, 151 College Avenue, Suite 122, New Brunswick, NJ 08901, (732)-932-2848. If you seek assistance due to a disability, it is your responsibility to inform me and made arrangements prior to any relevant assignments.

Tentative Topic Schedule

(Tracy = *Everyday Talk*, CP = Coursepack, SK = Sakai Site,
#X refers to the reading's listing on the bibliography at the end of the syllabus)

Session #	Date	Topic	Reading(s) Due	# Pgs (minus Refs)	Assign. Due
<i>Section I: Constructing Social Worlds Through Communication</i>					
WEEK 1:					
1	Th 1 Sept	Course overview	N/A	N/A	
2	Th 8 Sept	Taking a communication perspective	Pearce (CP, #1)	25	
WEEK 2:					
3	M 12 Sept	Frames, meta-communication & the mundane	Bateson (CP, #2), Goffman (CP, #3)	24	
4	Th 15 Sept	Theorizing the connection between talk & identity	Tracy - Ch 1, Goffman (CP, #10)	31	
WEEK 3:					
5	M 19 Sept	Context is key...but what kind of context?	Tracy - Ch 2	21	Week 1/2 IRPs due
<i>Unit II: The Performance of Everyday Life</i>					
6	Th 22 Sept	The dramaturgy of self-presentation	Goffman (CP, #4)	35	
WEEK 4:					
7	M 26 Sept	Improvisation in everyday life	Sawyer (CP, #5)	34	Week 3 IRPs due
8	Th 29 Sept	A dramaturgical take on the daily work of doormen	Bearman (CP, #6)	37	
WEEK 5:					
9	M 3 Oct	Constructing emotions and the management of feelings	Hochschild (SK, #7)	31	Week 4 IRPs due
10	Th 6 Oct	Emotional labor	Hochschild (SK, #8)	47	

<i>Unit III: Language as Social Action</i>					
WEEK 6:					
11	M 10 Oct	Speech act theory & the power of language	Tracy - Ch 4	27	Week 5 IRPs due
12	Th 13 Oct	The sound of talk	Tracy - Ch 5, Hall (SK, #9)	24	
WEEK 7:					
13	M 17 Oct	The structure and process of social interaction	Tracy - Ch 7	16	Week 6 IRPs due
14	Th 20 Oct	Directness vs. indirectness: Ways of saying the same thing?	Tracy - Ch 8, Lee (SK, #11)	33	
WEEK 8:					
15	M 24 Oct	All about storytelling (+ Mini-review)	Tracy - Ch 9	24	Week 7 IRPs due (**At least <i>two</i> IRPs must be completed up to this point**)
	Th 27 Oct	<u>MIDTERM EXAM</u>			Study!
WEEK 9:					
16	M 31 Oct	Finding the "footing" of reported speech	Goffman (CP, #12), Tannen (CP, #13)	19	Week 8 IRPs due
17	Th 3 Nov	Storytelling & identity in two contexts	Goodwin (CP, #14), Cain (CP, #15)	23	
<i>Unit IV: Relationships as Communicative Accomplishments</i>					
WEEK 10:					
18	M 7 Nov	Composing and managing relationships in everyday life	Goffman (CP, #16), Tannen (CP, #17), Mokros (CP, #18)	29	Week 9 IRPs due
19	Th 10 Nov	Dialectical tensions and "turning points" in relationship development	Baxter (SK, #19), Baxter & Pittman (SK, #20)	34	
WEEK 11:					
20	M 14 Nov	Coping with relational uncertainty during periods of turbulence <i>Guest lecture:</i> <i>Mary Nagy, Doctoral Candidate</i>	(CP #19) Knobloch (SK, #21), Theiss & Nagy (SK, #22)	35	Week 10 IRPs due

21	Th 17 Nov	Managing illness and uncertainty in the context of close relationships	Beach (CP, #23)	11	
WEEK 12:					
22	*T 22 Nov*	Storytelling and the interactional construction of family	Mandelbaum (CP, #24), Gordon (CP, #25)	20	Week 11 IRPs due
WEEK 13:					
23	M 28 Nov	Framing & intertextuality in family talk	Gordon (CP, #26)	38	Week 12 IRPs due
<i>Unit V: The Affordances of New Communication Technologies</i>					
24	Th 1 Dec	Mediated ritual interaction	Ling (CP, #27)	16	
WEEK 14:					
25	M 5 Dec	Using technology within and across social encounters	Humphreys (SK, #28)	10	Week 13 IRPs due
26	Th 8 Dec	The social organisation of social actions in text messaging	Hutchby (SK, #29)	19	
WEEK 15:					
27	M 12 Dec	Looking back: Rethinking what “interpersonal communication” is all about	Tracy - Ch 11	5	Week 14 IRPs due
<p>Final Exam Review Session: _____ (TBA) (Will be held on a reading day: <u>Either Wed 12/14 or Thurs 12/15</u>, determined by class vote early in the semester)</p>					
<p><u>FINAL EXAM:</u> December 20, 12 - 3 pm</p>					

Bibliography (in order of assigned readings)

1. Pearce

Pearce, W. B. (2008). “Chapter 1” (excerpt) & “Chapter 2” in *Making social worlds: A communication perspective*, pp. 1- 7, 29 – 56. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.

2. Bateson

Bateson, Gregory. (1972 [1955]). A theory of play and fantasy (excerpt). In *Steps to an ecology of mind*, pp. 177 – 188. New York: Ballantine Books.

3. Goffman

Goffman Erving. (1959). "Preface" in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. (pp. 1 - 16). Garden City, NY: Anchor Books

4. Goffman

Goffman Erving. (1959). Various excerpts from *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. (pp. 18 – 27, 76 – 87, 106 – 123). Garden City, NY: Anchor Books

5. Sawyer

Sawyer, R. K. (2001). "Ch 1: Scripts and improvisations" in *Creating conversations: Improvisation in everyday discourse*. (pp. 7 – 41). Creskill, NJ: Hampton Press.

6. Bearman

Bearman, Peter. (2005). "Chapter 3: Serving time" in *Doormen*. (p. 66 – 101). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

7. Hochschild (*Not in printed CP, Available on Sakai only*)

Hochschild, A. R. (1983). "Chapter 2: Feeling as clue" and "Chapter 3: Managing feeling" in *The managed heart: Commercialization of human feeling*. (p. 25 – 55). Berkeley: University of California Press.

8. Hochschild (*Not in printed CP, Available on Sakai only*)

Hochschild, A. R. (1983). "Chapters 6: Feeling management – From private to commercial uses" in *The managed heart: Commercialization of human feeling*. (p. 89 – 136). Berkeley: University of California Press.

9. Hall (*Not in printed CP, Available on Sakai only*)

Hall, Kira (1995). Lip service on the fantasy lines. In Kira Hall and Mary Bucholtz, eds. *Gender Articulated: Language and the Socially Constructed Self*. New York: Routledge. 188 – 196.

10. Goffman

Goffman, Erving. (1967) On face-work (excerpt). An analysis of ritual elements in social interaction. In *Interaction Ritual*. (pp. 4 - 14). Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books.

11. Lee (*Not in printed CP, Available on Sakai only*)

Lee, Jooyoung. 2009. "Escaping Embarrassment: Face-work in the Rap Cipher." *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 4: 306 - 324.

12. Goffman

Goffman, Erving (2007). Footing (excerpt). In L. Monaghan & J. E. Goodman (eds.), *A cultural approach to interpersonal communication: Essential readings* (pp. 396 - 399). Malden, MA: Blackwell.

13. Tannen

Tannen, Deborah (1995). Waiting for the mouse: Constructed dialogue in conversation. In: B. Mannheim and D. Tedlock, eds., *The dialogic emergence of culture*, (p. 198-219). Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press.

14. Goodwin

Goodwin, C. (1992). "Orchestrating Participation in Events: Powerful Talk among African American Girls." In *Locating Power: Proceedings of the 1992 Berkeley Women and Language Conference*, Kira Hall, ed. Pp. 182-96. Berkeley: Berkeley Women and Language Group, Linguistics Department, UC-Berkeley.

15. Cain

Cain (1991). Personal Stories: Identity Acquisition and Self- Understanding in Alcoholics Anonymous (excerpt). *Ethos* 19:210-233.

16. Goffman

Goffman, E. (1971) Tie-signs (excerpt) in *Relations in Public* (pp. 194 - 198). N.Y.: Harper & Row.

17. Tannen

Tannen, Deborah. (1986). "Chapter 5: Framing and reframing". In D. Tannen, *That's not what I meant! How Conversational Style Makes or Breaks Relationships* (pp. 74 – 92). New York: Ballantine Books.

18. Mokros

Mokros, Hartmut. (2006). Composing relationships at work. In J. T. Wood & S. W. Duck (eds.), *Composing relationships: Communication in everyday life* (pp. 175–185). Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.

19. Baxter (*Not in printed CP, Available on Sakai only*)

Baxter, L. A. (1990). Dialectical contradictions in relationship development. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 7, 69-88.

20. Baxter & Pittman (*Not in printed CP, Available on Sakai only*)

Baxter, L. A., & Pittman, G. (2001). Communicatively remembered turning points of relationship development in heterosexual romantic relationships. *Communication Reports*, 14, 1-17.

21. Knobloch (*Not in printed CP, Available on Sakai only*)

Knobloch, Leanne K. (2007). Perceptions of turmoil within courtship: Associations with intimacy, relational uncertainty, and interference from partners. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 24, 363-384.

22. Theiss & Nagy (*Not in printed CP, Available on Sakai only*)

Theiss, Jennifer & Nagy, Mary E. (2010). Actor-partner effects in the associations between relationship characteristics and reactions to marital sexual intimacy. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 27, 1089-1109.

23. Beach

Beach, Wayne A. (2006). Understanding how family members talk through cancer. In B. Whaley & W. Samter (ed.), *Explaining communication: Contemporary theories and exemplars*. London: Routledge.

24. Mandelbaum

Mandelbaum, J. (2010). The management and import of concurrent and intervening actions during storytelling in family ceremonial dinners. In A. De Fina and D. Schiffrin (Eds.), *Telling stories: Building bridges among language, narrative, identity, interaction, society and culture* (pp. 161-172). Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.

25. Gordon

Gordon, Cynthia (2009). "Chapter 1: Introduction - Intertextuality and framing in family discourse" in *Making meanings, creating family: Intertextuality and framing in family interaction*. (p. 3 – 13). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

26. Gordon

Gordon, Cynthia (2009). "Chapter 3: 'Tell Uncle Noodles what you did today' – Intertextuality, child-centered frames, and 'extending family' " in *Making meanings, creating family: Intertextuality and framing in family interaction*. (p. 76 – 114). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

27. Ling

Ling, R. (2008). The Mediation of ritual interaction via the mobile phone. In J.E. Katz (Ed.), *Handbook of Mobile Communication Studies*, pp. 165 – 176. MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass.

28. Humphreys (*Not in printed CP, Available on Sakai only*)

Humphreys, L. (2005). Cell phones in public: Social interaction in a wireless era. *New Media & Society*, 7 (6), 813 - 836.

29. Hutchby (*Not in printed CP, Available on Sakai only*)

Hutchby, I. & Tanna, V. (2008). Aspects of Sequential Organisation in Text Message Exchange, *Discourse and Communication*, 2(2), pp. 143-164.

"One of the basic things I want to be able to give you is an aesthetic for social life. By that I mean in part we should have some sense of where it is deep, and to be able to see, and to pose problems" – Harvey Sacks, *Lectures on Conversation*

"The operation of the teacher's own mental habit tends, unless carefully watched and guided, to make the child a student of the teacher's peculiarities rather than of the subjects that he is supposed to study. His chief concern is to accommodate himself to what the teacher expects of him, rather than to devote himself energetically to the problems of the subject matter. "Is this right?" comes to mean "Will this answer or this process satisfy the teacher?"—instead of meaning, "Does it satisfy the inherent conditions of the problem?"

– John Dewey, *How We Think*, p. 50