

Family Communication - COMM 6381

Course: COMM 6381
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course explores theories and practices of family communication as well as various relationships and patterns in family settings such as power and control, parent-child communication, sibling communication, and communication roles in the family. Students will study scholarly and popular literature on family theories, structure, systems, development, and stories.

REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS

The SAGE Handbook of Family Communication, Lynn H. Turner & Richard West, SAGE Publications, 2015 (ISBN #9781483345956).

COURSE GOALS

1. To understand factors involved in defining families today and various aspects of family systems.
2. To understand the effects of family messages on family relationships and the roles of different family members.
3. To understand some of the developmental stages families experience.
4. To understand the complexity of various family cultures.
5. To understand the influence of conflict on families and how decision making can affect family relationships.
6. To understand various perspectives on maintaining and repairing family relationships.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

On completion of this course students will be able to:

1. Analyze a family as a communication system and a cultural subset using a functions framework.
2. Identify communication patterns and rules in real families or families portrayed in the media.
3. Recognize characteristics and communication differences of culturally diverse families.
4. Identify and recognize the importance of the role of communication rituals in families.
5. Describe key communication patterns and issues unique to different family forms.
6. Identify ways to improve communication within families.

EXPECTATIONS

In order to engage in meaningful conversations, it is imperative that you read thoroughly and come to every class prepared to contribute in a scholarly and significant manner. The learning that will take place is directly correlated with your ability to interact with others in discussion and to discuss the topics at hand. I ask that you be present (mind, body and spirit) each week as we grow our knowledge together.

Think about the following questions as you read and bring detailed notes to each class in order to have a more fluid conversation.

1. What are the key concepts or terms?
2. How does this material fit in with other materials in the course (put it into conversation with other

- articles we've read—how might the authors agree/disagree with one another), as well as with relevant outside materials (discipline related or other)?
3. To what extent does this information/theories allow me to understand family communication? How does it apply to my own experience?
 4. What doesn't make sense to me? What are the strengths and weaknesses of this approach/argument?

ASSIGNMENTS (more details will be shared as each assignment is given)

- **Journal Review [100 points]**
You will examine back issues of a journal covering the communication, personal relationships and family fields (a list of journals will be provided). Your goal is to identify trends, methods, researcher, etc., in the field as a result of surveying these issues.
- **Article Summary/Proposal [100 points]**
Using the Journal Review lists, select an article of your interest. You will summarize it and propose a follow up study to that article.
- **Lead Class Discussion [100 points]**
Each student will be leading ONE class discussions over that week's readings and putting them into context with earlier course readings. Students will be responsible for summarizing and raising questions about the assigned readings, providing leadership in discussion and offering relevant examples from primary documents.
- **Response Papers [100 points - 4 @ 25 each]**
You will select 4 different classes for which you will turn in a typed, single spaced, 1-2 page document that addresses the following: key concepts or terms; how this material fits with other materials in the course; how might the authors agree/disagree with one another; what are other relevant outside materials; what is happening culturally that relates to these concepts; how does the literature relate specifically to family settings; strengths, weaknesses, etc. Note that this is NOT intended to be a summary of the readings but rather a well thought out **response** to the readings.
- **Discussion Board [100 points]**
Students are expected to post questions and respond to peers' posts as a way to get the conversation started before we discuss.
- **Theory Presentation [100 points]**
You will select a family communication theory which you will research, apply to practical settings and then present to the class.
- **Peer Feedback [100 points]**
Students will watch each others' theory presentations and give feedback.

GRADING

Assignments	Points
Journal Review	100
Article Summary/Proposa	100
Lead Class Discussion	100
Response Papers (4 @ 25)	100
Discussion Board	100
Theory Presentation	100
Peer Feedback	100

Discussion of Graded Assignments: As stated in Angelo State University Operating Policy and Procedure (OP 10.03 Student Grade Grievances), a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the

matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see Operating Procedure 10.03 at http://www.angelo.edu/opmanual/docs/Section_10_Academic_Policies-Students/OP_10.03_Grade_Grievance.doc.

COURSE POLICIES

Reading and Participation. The course requires active participation by students therefore you should be prepared to summarize, discuss, and challenge each other on the readings. Readings must be completed on the day they are assigned on the course schedule.

Excused Absences: You will be given an excused absence when acting as an official representative of the University, provided you give me written verification from the faculty/staff supervisor of the event. For all other absences to be considered excused, official documentation must be submitted to me verifying the reason for your absence.

A student wishing to observe a religious holy day must notify me in writing at least 14 days prior to the classes scheduled on dates the student will be absent. For religious holy days that fall within the first two weeks of the semester, notice should be given on the first day of the semester.

Written Work must be typed.. Any assignments completed in class as part of class participation may be hand written. No other handwritten work will be accepted.

Changes to the schedule may be made at my discretion and if circumstances require. It is your responsibility to note these changes when announced.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation. Angelo State University complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act in making reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. If you suspect that you may have a disability (physical impairment, learning disability, psychiatric disability, etc.), please contact the Dean of Student Life and Student Services at 942-2191 If you need disability accommodations in this class, please see me as soon as possible.

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) is a Federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. The law applies to all schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education. FERPA gives parents certain rights with respect to their children's education records. These rights transfer to the student when he or she reaches the age of 18 or attends a school beyond the high school level. Students to whom the rights have transferred are "eligible students."

Academic Integrity: University standards regulating academic integrity (e.g., cheating, plagiarism, etc.) are strictly enforced. Infractions may result in a zero for the assignment or a failing grade in the course. Please see full Honor Code Policy at http://www.angelo.edu/cstudent/documents/pdf/Student_Handbook.pdf

Tentative Schedule

WEEK	DATE	TOPIC
1	July 6 - 10	Foundations Family & Narratives
2	July 13 - 17	Attraction Mate Selection Marriage Parenthood
3	July 20 - 24	Multi-Ethnic LGBT Cohabitation Child Free Couples
4	July 27 - 31	Infants & Children Adolescents & Young Adults Middle Adulthood & Old Age Extended Family & The Network Drugs, Alcohol & Violence
5	Aug 3 - 5	Final Presentations

* Thank you to Dr. Anita Vangelisti (University of Texas at Austin) and to Dr. Adria Battaglia (Angelo State University) for sharing knowledge and materials that helped to shape this syllabus.