

# DePaul University

## School for New Learning

### HC 146 How Families Communicate

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Monday 6:00-9:00 p.m.

#### INTRODUCTION:

A family communication course provides students with the opportunity to apply a wide range of theories about family communication to an experience common to all – family life. Through this course students will gain an understanding of how communication functions to develop, maintain, enrich or limit family relationships across a wide range of family structures and cultural backgrounds. Among the family relationship issues considered in this course are patterns of intimacy, power, decision-making, roles, rituals and conflicts. Factors involved in forming family patterns (e.g. gender, ethnicity, family diversity and family stories) will be covered.

This course will reflect a “systems approach” to family communication – emphasizing the way family members regulate relationships through their messages and how these messages promote a collective identity within a larger cultural context. The underlying assumptions are:

1. there are many ways to be a family
2. communication both constitutes and reflects family relationships,
3. through communication families create and share their meaning with each other,
4. families are part of multigenerational communication patterns,
5. families are also part of cultural communication patterns,
6. to function well families must work together at furthering their communication skills.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES: Along with the required text we will view at least one family drama (film or TV production) which will add to our discussion of family communication. Two short, self-assessment quizzes will be given during the quarter. And students will be encouraged to share experiences of their own. Competency papers will be due in the tenth week of class and will be returned to students in the eleventh week of class. Upon completion of this course students will:

1. understand what defines family communication,
2. be able to explain the various components of family communication,
3. be able to analyze family communication, identifying problem areas, and
4. be able to apply knowledge gained through this course to their lives.

COMPETENCIES: Students will be able to:

H-3-C: can use theories or models of adult growth and development to understand one's own experience (assignment to be distributed in class). A six to eight page, double spaced paper will meet this assignment.

H-3-X: write a six to eight page, double spaced paper on a topic designed by the student in conjunction with the instructor.

A-3-F: can compare two or more philosophical perspective on the relationship of the individual to the community. A six to eight page, double spaced paper (assignment to be distributed in class) will meet this requirement.

FX: write a complete paragraph defining the unique aspects of each of the components of family communication as well as explain and demonstrate how common family communication problems can be avoided and/or corrected. A six to eight page, double spaced paper (assignment to be distributed in class) will meet this requirement.

REQUIRED TEXT:

Lynn H. Turner & Richard West, Perspectives on Family Communication, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., McGraw/Hill.

INSTRUCTOR'S BIOGRAPHY: Robert Mills holds an M.A. degree in communication studies from Indiana University and a Ph.D. degree in communication studies from The University of Michigan. In addition to teaching courses at DePaul University he works as a consultant specializing in interpersonal, small group and corporate communication problem analysis.

ASSESSMENT: The percentage assigned to each of the course components is as follows: each quiz 15%, class participation 15% and papers 55%. At all times throughout the quarter, I will strive to ensure that my assessment of and feedback about student performance is as clear, honest and complete as I can make it. Since no two students are exactly alike, I will work to be as flexible and understanding as I can of the challenges individual students face.

CRITERIA FOR ASSESSMENT:

1. A grade of "A" designates work of high quality; reflects thorough and comprehensive understanding of issues at hand; reflects a clearly identifiable thesis and argument that demonstrates cogent and creative development and support of ideas.

2. A grade of “B” designates work of good quality; reflects clearly organized and comprehensive understanding of issues at hand; presents substantive thesis and argument with evident development and support of ideas.
3. A grade of “C” designates work that minimally meets requirements set forward in the assignment; reflects some organization and development of ideas but develops argument in superficial or simplistic manner; may only address part of the assignment or be otherwise incomplete.
4. A grade of “D” designates work of poor quality, which does not meet minimum requirements set forth in the assignment; demonstrates poor organization of ideas and/or inattention to development of ideas, grammar, spelling. Treatment of material is superficial and/or simplistic; it may indicate that student has not done reading assignment thoroughly.

PLEASE NOTE:

The DePaul Student Handbook defines plagiarism as follows: “Plagiarism includes but is not limited to the following: (a) The direct copying of any source, such as written and verbal material, computer files, audio disks, video programs or musical scores, whether published or unpublished, in whole or in part, without proper acknowledgement that it is someone else’s. (b) Copying of any source in whole or in part with only minor changes in wording or syntax even with acknowledgement. (c) Submitting as one’s own work a report, examination paper, computer file, lab report or other assignment, which has been prepared by someone else. This includes research papers purchased from any other person or agency. (d) The paraphrasing of another’s work or ideas with out proper acknowledgement.” Plagiarism will result in a failure of the assignment or possibly of the course. If you are unsure how to cite a source, ask.

COURSE SCHEDULE (assigned readings by week)

June 16:	Chapter 1
June 23:	Chapter 2
June 30:	Chapter 3
July 7:	Chapter 4
July 14:	Chapter 5
July 21:	Self-assessment quiz (chapter 1-5) Chapter 6
July 28:	Chapter 7
August 4:	Chapter 8
August 11:	Chapters 9 & 10
August 18:	ALL COMPETENCY PAPERS DUE & self-assessment quiz # 2 (chapters 6-10)

PLEASE NOTE:

\*Attendance at all II class sessions is suggested. If you foresee problems, please let me know in advance. Your ability to receive a passing grade in this course may be jeopardized by more than two absences.

\*All papers are due in the 10<sup>th</sup> week of class to be returned to you in the 11<sup>th</sup> week. This will allow for minor corrections to be made before grades are submitted..

\*A grade of incomplete is not automatically submitted for unfinished course work. To obtain in “incomplete” in this course a written contract between student and instructor must be negotiated prior to the 10<sup>th</sup> week of class. This contract must contain a clear deadline by which time outstanding coursework is to be completed and submitted for evaluation. Failure to submit outstanding work by this specified deadline will result in an automatic grade change from “I” to “F”. The contract is available on line under “forms”. Generally students are given two quarters to complete work outstanding.

\*Students wishing to take this course pass/fail should let me know at the beginning of the course. Once committed to taking a course P/F a student cannot switch back to a letter grade.