COMM 200:

Interpersonal Communication

Spring 2013 • Section #73090 • Madeleva Hall 209 • T/Th 12:30-1:45p

**Instructor:** Jenny A. Armentrout, PhD **Phone:** (989) 954-5031

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**Hours:** Tu/Th 3:30p-5:30p or by appt **E-mail:** jarmentr@saintmarys.edu

*“The quality of your life is the quality of your relationships*.” -Tony Robbins

**Welcome!** This syllabus has been designed to give you a preview of the course and will answer many questions about policies. Please refer to these materials throughout the semester. The focus of the course is a relational view of communication--one that explores how relationships are created, negotiated, maintained, and terminated. Class sessions will include lectures and guided discussions. I believe you will find your experience in this classroom to be worthwhile, enjoyable, and valuable to your future coursework and employment opportunities. I look forward to working with each of you over the next 16 weeks.

Required Texts:

Devito, J. (2013). *The Interpersonal Communication Book*. 13th Ed. Boston: Pearson.

**Course Description & Objectives:** The purpose of this course is to teach you theories and skills related to successful communication in interpersonal relationships and to discuss vital concepts that might be quite simple in theory, but complex in practice. Specifically this course is designed to accomplish the following objectives:

-To provide you with a knowledge of interpersonal communication theories and processes.

-To develop your communication competence in interpersonal relationships and settings.

-To establish your potential for improved communication.

-To experience working with and learning from others.

Studying interpersonal communication has a distinct advantage: you are already very experienced at it. Your life is filled with various types of relationships. You spend each day interacting with people at home, at work, in various social settings, and other places. Your past and current relationships as well as your daily interactions with others provide a rich context for analyzing and applying the concepts you will learn in this course. So, reflect on your own experiences and relationships as you engage this course.

**Participation &Ethical Communication Responsibility:** As human beings and active collegiate-level participants, it is important to recognize and respect each others' rights guaranteeing freedom of speech and empathetic attention. Members of this class will be held responsible for conducting themselves as respectful members of a learning community. The initiatives of this course may challenge your views, attitudes, and beliefs while also encouraging you to express yourself. However, racist, sexist, or other oppressive/violent language will not be tolerated. I strongly encourage you to express your opinions and question the opinions of others as you listen, discuss, and debate all topics in a respectful manner. Also, do not speak or whisper during instructor/peers’ presentations. Questions may be answered by a peer or the instructor by raising one’s hand. With this policy we will find that our classroom setting will be quite enjoyable and beneficial to everyone participating in the course. To insure participation points: attend every class, be considerate of others, be prepared, participate actively and complete all assignments on time. In short, be respectful.

**Response & Availability Policy:** Please utilize email to contact me as a primary method. Please refrain from calling/texting my cell phone unless it is an emergency. I may not respond. When emailing, please realize that I teach several classes (just like you attend more than just this class) and receive many emails. I will respond to you as quickly as I can but this could take longer than you anticipate. Incessant emailing will not be answered. I will do my best to respond within 24 hours of your email; however, the weekends are my free time as well, so I will not guarantee as speedy of a response rate then. My customary office hours are listed above, but other meeting times are available by appointment.

**Disability Policy:** If you have a specific learning and/or physical disability that require accommodation, please let me know by the second week of the semester so that your learning needs may be appropriately met. Also contact the Disabilities Resource Office on campus in 103C Madeleva Hall (574-284-4262) or at: www3.saintmarys.edu/students-with-disabilities

In compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act and applicable rules of the Department of Education, the mission of the DRO is to provide equal access and opportunity to qualified students with disabilities. Our goal is to increase awareness of disability issues and provide opportunities for students with documented disabilities to fully integrate into our community.

**Writing Policy:** It is expected that all assignments in this course be word-processed in 12 point Times New Roman or Arial font, 1 inch margins, double-spaced, spell-checked, grammatically correct, with page numbers, and stapled. Please use paragraphs, introductions, conclusions, and transitions accordingly. Your name, the course number, my name, and the date should also appear on a title page separate from the rest of the document. Accurate APA or MLA formatted documentation and citations will be standard in this course; please refer to the appropriate style manual for stylistic guidelines. In terms of content, all papers should be focused, well-organized, and free of punctuation errors. I expect all writing to be nothing less than a model of brevity, clarity, and style. If you have questions about a writing assignment, please feel free to contact me to set up a time to meet and work through your questions. Writing assistance is also available and highly recommended in the Writing Center located in 103A Madeleva Hall (574-284-4710) or at: www3.saintmarys.edu/writing-center

**Academic Dishonesty/Plagiarism:** All work must be original, and each student is expected to uphold the standards of academic honesty. Presenting the work of another as your own, whether through direct copying, plagiarism, forgery, cheating, unintended paraphrasing, or inadequate citation practices constitute plagiarism. If you don’t know how to give credit where it is due regarding citations, please see me. An assignment that is plagiarized in whole or in part will receive a failing grade, the student producing it will receive a failing grade, and the assignment will be turned over to the administrative supervisors to determine further action. Please remember that plagiarism is grounds for dismissal from Saint Mary’s. Any violation of this code will be vigorously pursued. Saint Mary’s policy about plagiarism can be found in the Student Handbook: www3.saintmarys.edu/student-handbook

**Assignment Submission Policy:** Assignments are due at the beginning of class (and in hard copy format) by the assigned due date as indicated on the course calendar unless otherwise specified, negotiated, and/or agreed. In terms of late work: Except under the most extreme circumstances (and documentation of those circumstances is required), **no late work will be accepted**. If you encounter an emergency situation of some kind, it is best to communicate with me about it earlier rather than later. If I accept your late assignment due to an extreme circumstance, you will be eligible to receive partial credit only. In addition, late assignments may receive little or no written feedback. Please note that grades/feedback of your submitted assignments will be handed back to you as promptly as possible. Also, as a rule, upon receiving the assignment grade it is suggested that you **wait over 24 hours to object if you do not agree with the assessment**.

**Cell Phone/Technology/Device Policy:** Cell phones should be turned off (not on vibrate) before class begins. In addition, iPods are not to be used in the classroom. Personal computers may be utilized for note-taking, but if you are found to be send/receiving text messages, listening to music/viewing videos, browsing nonacademic websites, instant messaging, or your cell phone goes off, **you will receive a 10 point deduction from your overall grade** for the course. Also, if you have any of these items out during a major presentation or exam, I reserve the right to give you a zero for that particular assignment. Merely turn unnecessary technology off as a means of respect.

**Attendance/Tardiness Policy:** Attendance and active participation are required (**MANDATORY**) at every single session in order to help you achieve the goals of this course and accomplish your personal academic goals. Thus, your regular attendance and informed active participation are expected. The only absences that will be considered excused are death in the family, severe verified/documented personal illness, religious holidays, and participation in University sponsored activities (e.g., intercollegiate sports, etc.)All doctors’ notes must be signed by the doctor on official letter-head/prescription pad. Notes that are not dated, signed, or verifiable will not be accepted. Please note: **Arriving more than 10 minutes late to class constitutes as an absence.** If you are absent for an exam or presentation, you can request to make up the exam/presentation; only extenuating circumstances will be considered.

**Major Assignments:**

**Examinations:** (300 points) All exams will consist of material from class lectures, discussions, and readings. All exams are short answer/essay, multiple choice, and true/false. See class schedule for exam dates. When time is available, we may review for upcoming exams. All students will take exams at the scheduled days/times unless extenuating circumstances (that can be documented) prevent you from doing so.

**Activity Assignments:** (50 points) Five Activity Assignments are designed to assess your preparation for class and mastery of the readings and are illustrative of your thinking on a topic. Periodically throughout the semester you will be asked to complete a small project (i.e., construct a greeting card), engage in an activity (i.e., break a nonverbal rule), or complete a worksheet. Each assignment is worth 10 points and credit will be awarded on a credit/no credit basis. Specific guidelines for each activity assignment are attached and due dates are noted on the syllabus. All assignments must be typed and responses to all question posed answered for full credit. To facilitate class discussion, the contents of the activity assignments will periodically be shared with the class. All assignments are due in class and will not be accepted at any other time. Separate handouts describing the requirements of each component will be posted on Blackboard and reviewed in class throughout the semester.

**Interpersonal Development Project:** (100 points) This project will require the identification of an interpersonal communication skill that you wish to develop (or eliminate) to become a more effective interpersonal communicator. Throughout the semester you will be expected to focus on the improvement of this skill by taking specific steps that will bring about the desired change in your communication behavior. Write a **6-8 page** paper detailing your experiences and be prepared to share your results with the class as a final project. More details to come.

**Grading:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Activity Assignments  Interpersonal Development Project  First Exam  Second Exam  Final Exam | 50  100  150  150  150 |
| Total Points | 600 |

**Grading Scale, Rounding & Evaluation Criteria:** You can determine your grade at any point during the semester by adding points earned, dividing by points possible and applying the % to Saint Mary’s grading scale. Grades in this course will **not** be rounded up to the nearest whole %. This is non-negotiable. Student grades will be determined through the professor’s evaluation of the major assignments. **No** “Incomplete” grades will be assigned.

A 94-100% B- 80-83 D+ 67-69

A- 90-93% C+ 77-79 D 63-66

B+ 87-89% C 74-76 D- 60-62

B 84-86% C- 70-73 F 59-below

**Activity Assignments (Brief Descriptions)**

***Activity #1:*** Representing ME. This assignment requires two products (the pictures and answers to the questions posed on a separate sheet of paper). This activity is designed to help you understand yourself and others. Please bring in a picture of a celebrity that you (1) truly admire, (2) want to be like, (3) dislike, and (4) feel like you are similar to. In your 1-2pp written response (1) Explain why you picked each person for each category. Be sure to put your name on all work and staple all your work together as pictures can be lost easily.

***Activity #2:*** Nonverbal Rule-Breaking. Choose a specific nonverbal behavior (proxemics, kinesics, paralanguage, haptics, chronemics, etc…) and violate a rule (an expectation of the appropriate behavior). In your 1-2pp written response please include: (1) The definition of the nonverbal behavior you are focusing on. (2) Explain the expected behavior that would normally be operative in this situation and detail how you deviated from that expectation. (3) Describe the reaction you receive from others. Please realize that nonverbal rules are dominated by North American culture. (4) Be sure to address how cultural differences/similarities are in evidence. Please practice good sense as NO rules should be broken that hurt or infringe on the rights of others, break the law, or present a danger to yourself or others.

***Activity #3:*** Family Communication Patterns. Read the short passage on Family Communication Patterns. Reflect on the four family communication patterns and identify which pattern your family practices. In your 1-2pp written response please include: (1) What specific communication behaviors support your claim? (2) Is this the same pattern you hope to recreate in your future family? (3) Explain yourself.

***Activity #4:*** Termination Card. This assignment requires two products (a card and answers to the questions posed on a separate sheet of paper). First, your task is to design a “Termination Greeting Card” for a real-life relationship that has been previously terminated (by you or the other). The relationship might be romantic, familial, or friendship based. The card may be serious or humorous but must have a definite theme. Second, in your written response please include: (1) What were the reasons for the relationship dissolution? (2) Was it a “sudden death” or a passing away” of the relationship? (3) How did the break-up reflect the “coming apart” stages (differentiating, circumscribing, stagnating, avoiding, terminating.)

***Activity #5:*** Conflict Style. Describe a recent conflict that you have had with a significant person in your life. In your 1-2pp written response please include: (1) Which conflict style did you use (competing, avoiding, accommodating, collaborating, or compromising)? (2) Which conflict style did the other person use? (3) What was the outcome of the conflict? (4) In retrospect, if you had it to do over again, what would you do differently?

*\*\*Type and double-space all Activity Assignments. Be prepared to share Activity Assignments with the class. All assignments are due in class and will not be accepted at any other time or place. This means you must attend class for the Activity Assignment to qualify as complete.*

**Course Calendar**

The course calendar is **tentative**, meaning I reserve the right to modify the agenda. In addition, you are responsible for checking your Saint Mary’s email account and/or Blackboard on a regular basis for course updates, reminders, etc. Assignments and readings are expected to be completed on the allotted day. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

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| **Week 1**  **(Jan 13-19)** | **DISCUSSION TOPIC/ASSIGNED READINGS** | **ASSIGNMENTS DUE** |
| Tuesday | Course Introduction/Syllabus |  |
| Thursday | Introduction | Ch. 1 reading |
| **Week 2**  **(Jan 20-26)** |  |  |
| Tuesday | Foundations/History of Interpersonal Communication |  |
| Thursday | Culture and Interpersonal Communication | Ch. 2 reading |
| **Week 3**  **(Jan 27- Feb 2)** |  |  |
| Tuesday | Interpersonal Competence |  |
| Thursday | Interpersonal Competence (cont.) | **Activity Assignment #1** |
| **Week 4**  **(Feb 3- Feb 9)** |  |  |
| Tuesday | Perception and the Development of Self | Ch. 3 reading |
| Thursday | Listening |  |
| **Week 5**  **(Feb 10- 16)** |  |  |
| Tuesday | Listening (cont.)/Review Test #1 | Ch. 4 reading |
| Thursday | **TEST #1** | Chapters 1-4 |
| **Week 6**  **(Feb 17- 23)** |  |  |
| Tuesday | **Assign Interpersonal Development Project** |  |
| Thursday | Verbal Communication | Ch. 5 reading |
| **Week 7**  **(Feb 24- March 2)** |  |  |
| Tuesday | Noverbal Communication |  |
| Thursday | Nonverbal Communication (cont.) | Ch. 6 reading |
| **Week 8**  **(March 3- March 9)** |  |  |
| Tuesday | Nonverbal Communication (cont.) | **Activity Assignment #2** |
| Thursday | Emotional Messages | Ch. 7 reading |
| **Week 9**  **(March 10- 16)** |  |  |
| Tuesday | **SPRING BREAK** | **NO CLASS** |
| Thursday | **SPRING BREAK** | **NO CLASS** |
| **Week 10**  **(March 17- 23)** |  |  |
| Tuesday | Conversational Messages/ Review Test #2 | Ch. 8 reading |
| Thursday | **TEST #2** | Chapters 5-8 |
| **Week 11**  **(March 24- 30)** |  |  |
| Tuesday | Interpersonal Relationship Theories | Ch. 9 reading |
| Thursday | Interpersonal Relationship Theories (cont.) |  |
| **Week 12**  **(March 31- April 6)** |  |  |
| Tuesday | Friendship and Love | Ch. 11 reading |
| Thursday | Family/Workplace Communication | **Activity Assignment #3** |
| **Week 13**  **(April 7- 13)** |  |  |
| Tuesday | Relationship Maintenance/Deterioration/Repair | Ch. 10 reading |
| Thursday | Relationship Maintenance/ Deterioration/ Repair (cont.) | **Activity Assignment #4** |
| **Week 14**  **(April 14 - 20)** |  |  |
| Tuesday | Interpersonal Conflict | Ch. 12 reading |
| Thursday | Interpersonal Conflict | **Activity Assignment #5** |
| **Week 15**  **(April 21- 27)** |  |  |
| Tuesday | Power & Influence | Ch. 13 reading |
| Thursday | **Final Exam Review/Student Evals** | Chapters 9-13 |
| **Week 16**  **(April 28- May 4)** |  |  |
| Tuesday | **PRESENTATIONS** | **Projects Due** |
| Thursday | **PRESENTATIONS** | **Projects Due** |
| **Week 17**  **(May 5- May 11)** |  |  |
|  | **FINAL EXAM** | **Tues May 7, 4:15p** |
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