COMM 370  

Gender and Communication

Professor: Merissa Ferrara  
Office: 7 College Way Room 302  
Email: use Oaks!  
Phone: 843-425-2781 (cell phone)  
Class times: COM 370 12:15 & 1:40; Honors course Tues 9:25-10:50  
Office hours: Tues & Thursdays 11:00-12:00 & Thursdays after 3 OR by appointment  

Contact response times: if you send a text or leave a voicemail I will return it within 24 hours. If you send an email I will return it within 48 hours, possibly longer if you send it over the weekend.  

Elizabeth Dorrance (TA): office hours Tu/R 9am-1pm & Friday 9am -2pm.  
eadorran@edisto.cofc.edu

Course description: This course is an Upper Division Course! It is designed to develop students' ability to critically think and analyze issues of gender and communication. This will be accomplished by examining theoretical perspectives used to explain gender phenomena, gender socialization, male and female interactions and stereotypes. It examines the influence of gender in our lives by utilizing various tools including films, guest speakers, lectures, in-class exercises and class discussion in both large and small groups. A high degree of class participation is both expected, and required to maximize student learning through integration and extrapolation of personal experience with in-class guided curriculum. To facilitate discussion, students are expected to have completed all assignments ON THE DATE SCHEDULED! It is your responsibility to check Oaks emails regularly for updates and correspondence.

Completion of all course requirements will provide the opportunity for students to  
1. become familiar with major issues regarding communication and gender through critical analysis and discussion of pertinent readings, writing assignments, guest lecturer presentations, on-campus activities, in-class activities, and service learning experiences.  
2. understand the critical and-dynamic roles of age and culture as these concepts interrelate to the development of gender attitudes and behavior this will be accomplished through service learning experiences, assigned readings, and by integrating personal and classroom experiences.  
3. develop and strengthen their ability to critically analyze the influence and role of gender in their lives through increased self-awareness, gender-awareness, and hopefully, age and cultural awareness by successfully completing course requirements.

Schedule  
Section I: Creating a foundation: Theoretical explanations  
Section II: Language and mixed messages\verbal and nonverbal  
Section III: Roles and relationships in context  
Section IV: Media and gender stereotyping effects

Participation  
This is a lecture/discussion course. This means you need to contribute appropriately to the class on a daily basis. By “appropriate” contributions, I mean that you help extend the discussion. Disruptive behaviors in class are NOT appropriate, since they hinder the ability of your fellow students to learn. I expect everyone in this class to treat each other with respect, and if you fail to demonstrate that respect you will be warned, followed by disciplinary actions if you continue to be disruptive. If you opt to do something else during class time you will be asked to write a 3 page paper on Brown
& Levinson’s Politeness theory and how it relates to your actions in class. The structure for this
course is different from that of most courses that are taught on the subject of gender and
communication. I am a feminist, and my personal perspective on gender is a feminist one. I
understand, however, that many people are not feminists. Because the core idea of feminism for me
is choice—the idea that individuals should be able to choose how they want to live and be—I do not
believe that I should prescribe my perspective as the only one or the best one. I want to give all of
us choices about how to view and enact gender. This means, then, that I want us all to explore, take
seriously, and respect a wide array of possible perspectives on gender—not just one. Although I
will offer a feminist perspective on the various topics we will explore, I do not intend that my
perspective be privileged, and I will not ask you to accept it. I will ask that- in each assignment- you
develop a strong thesis and a stronger rationale to support your thesis from personal stories
and/or research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class Requirements</th>
<th>Percentage of Total Grade</th>
<th>Due Date(s)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exam one</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>February 17th</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exam two</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>April 5th</td>
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| Exam three (cumulative final)               | 20                        | 12:15 section is 4/28 12-3 pm
                                         |                           | 1:40 section is 5/3 12-3 pm|
| Research participation                      | 2                         | Participation in two research projects offered by the Communication dept. |
| Semester Project: Gendered Evolution        | 18                        | Part one due February 22nd   |
                                         |                           | Part two due Reading Day (4/26) |
| Flex project: (Select One)                 | 20                        | a. March 29th                |
                                         |                           | b. March 29th                |
                                         |                           | c. March 29th                |
                                         |                           | d. Sign up sheet outside my office
door! (April 19th, 21st, or 26th)  |
                                         |                           | e. Proposal due date March 15th |

*Assignments are late if they are not turned in at the beginning of class. Your grade is reduced 3 pts per day late (including weekends!).

**Attendance**
It’s your choice as adults to attend or not. You are responsible for signing the sheet that is passed around. At
the end of the semester I will not accept, “I was there, but forgot to sign the attendance sheet.” You are
responsible for obtaining assignments, notes, and/or information disbursed on any missed days. Missing more
than 3 classes for any reason will begin to drop your grade by 3 total points. Missing 8 classes (4 weeks of
class) for any reason is an automatic F for the course. You may opt to make up absences in office hours. You
must do so prior to the relevant exam. Note: you are absent from class when you are not present, regardless
of the reason (sick, athletic event, out of town interview). This means you should plan ahead when possible!

**Before each class!!!**
On each Friday I will email readings, online videos to watch, lecture slides to have in class for the following
week, etc.. It is up to you to stay on top of these emails. I expect you to have completed the work mentioned in
the email prior to class. If I notice that students are not doing the necessary work I may ask you to leave the
classroom (at no risk to your attendance grade) and come to office hours once you have done the work.
Grading Scale

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<tr>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100-98</td>
<td>A+</td>
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<tr>
<td>97-95</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94-92</td>
<td>A-</td>
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<tr>
<td>91-89</td>
<td>B+</td>
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<tr>
<td>88-86</td>
<td>B</td>
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<td>85-83</td>
<td>B-</td>
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<td>82-80</td>
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<td>79-77</td>
<td>C</td>
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<td>76-74</td>
<td>C-</td>
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<tr>
<td>73-71</td>
<td>D+</td>
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<tr>
<td>70-68</td>
<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td>67-65</td>
<td>D-</td>
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Please note that a grade of “C” will be assigned to average college work. Grades in the “B” range signify work that stands above the average, and grades in the “A” range are reserved only for those students who do exceptional work. So, for example, if you only do the minimum that is required in an assignment and you do those things well, you will probably receive a “C” on that assignment. Only if you go beyond average expectations for assignments will you be awarded a grade in the “B” or “A” range. This is not to say, however, that adding additional work to your assignments will guarantee you a grade of “B” or “A.” You must present your work well (well-written, solid research, and clear organization) in order to earn an above average grade. You must wait 24 hours before discussing any grade with me and while I am always willing to discuss any grade with you, you will not consider any grade change after a time period of one week after receipt of the grade. You must identify specifically what you disagree with in the evaluation, why you disagree with the evaluation, and how you think you met the requirements of the assignment. To help both of us clearly understand the issues in question, you must present your concerns in writing.

Detailed List of semester assignments

RESEARCH PARTICIPATION:
Understanding research is integral to being a COMM major and a scholar. There will be several opportunities throughout the semester to participate in COMM research. To earn 2% of your total grade you will have to participate in two research projects. I will announce them in class. If you are opposed to research, please let me know and I will provide a small paper assignment. Any additional research projects will count as extra credit.

Exams
Exams are multiple choice, true/false, matching, and short answer. They are based 80% on lecture and 20% of readings and out of class assignments. The third and final exam will be cumulative. Review sheets and a review session will be offered prior to each exam.

Semester Project: Gendered Evolution
This project is about self-discovery and growth. Throughout the semester you will have mini assignments that challenge you to explore your gender identity, how you approach and manage gender through communication, and society’s influence on gender. You will have a detailed assignment sheet for this project.

Flex Project:
Time to put your best foot forward. Select ONE of the following projects to complete for 20% of your total grade. The deadlines vary depending on the project. There is a signup sheet outside my office door for each project. There is a limit to how many students may do the Media Presentation (though the presentations can be done in groups of 4).

a. Stepping out
Are you in a gendered majority? Time to get out of your box. Attend two events where you would be a gendered minority. Record thoughts prior to the event regarding what you think you will encounter regarding communication behavior- verbal and nonverbal. Then attend the event (take pictures or keep something to document proof of participation.) Compare your predictions with what actually occurred. Use actual communication examples to support your claims! What did you learn? I have read several papers in the past that 1) did a poor job of connecting the events to specific course concepts/ideas, 2) did not provide indepth
analysis, and/or 3) did not provide clear examples. Do not let me down! To do this project well you should carefully construct 4-5 pages of writing with at least 2 academic citations.

b. Outside looking in
If you consider yourself a gendered minority in some way this may be the project for you. A semester long journal in which you record communication and how you feel others (people, community, government, media) work (consciously or subconsciously) to include or exclude you as a gendered minority. You must include specific examples of content verbal or nonverbal. How did you react in thought, word, or action? Inclusion of course content is a must. A minimum of one reflection a week (you can handwrite in a journal, video record, or type). Instructor approval is due 1/28, which can be a verbal check in with me or a written statement.

c. Social Advocacy Interviews
There are people out in our community doing wonderful things to help the gendered disadvantaged. Track down someone who has in the past or is at present a social advocate for a group related to gender. Gain their approval to conduct an interview. Do some research on the topic, develop a set of questions that are geared toward this disadvantaged group, its history, and how this person is a voice for them. Gain a sense of how/why the person became an advocate, and what s/he hopes for the future (are they optimistic, pessimistic, realist). Explore the ideas from muted group and standpoint theory in the interview as well. It should be evident in the questions you ask that you have done your homework on the topic and on her/his basic bio and resume. You need to turn in a copy of the questions you asked (show how the course and your research influenced your questions), a transcript of the interview (in text form, voice recording, and/or video), and a 3 page reflection on what you discovered. Connect your reflection to class material or gender academic sources. Do not bore me. These interesting people deserve interesting papers!

d. Media Presentation
This project can be done on your own or with a group of up to 4 people. Select a book, celebrity couple, movie or television show from the list below. Conduct a content analysis of your media selection to discover and describe its construction of and perspective on gender. The analyses will be used as the basis for the group presentations. You goal is to analyze the artifact using 2 of the five topics—(1) the nature of genders; (2) gender theory (3) the treatment of genders in language; (4) gender differences in verbal and nonverbal communication; and (5) communication within same-gender cultures. To ensure a top quality analysis of your artifact, it is highly recommended that you treat this project as a content analysis. The following link can help you create a good content analysis, though I strongly advise that you have at least one person in your group that has had a research methods course and at least one person who recalls what they learned in Public Speaking (though there is a speaking lab on campus that can help you!)
http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/research/content/com2b2.cfm
http://academic.csuohio.edu/kneuendorf/content/resources/flowc.htm
http://academic.csuohio.edu/kneuendorf/content/hcoding/hcindex.htm
You must turn in your codebook and samples of your completed coding forms on the day of your presentation!

The following are preapproved media. If you would like to use something different you will need to see me! Plan on analyzing an entire movie or at least 4 episodes of a television show!

- Book: Kite Runner, A thousand splendid suns, On the Down low, Pledged, Push
- General television shows: Cougars, Desperate Housewives, Secret life of an American teenager, Entourage, Californication, The L Word, the Office, Mad Men, Modern Family, Buffy the Vampire Slayer, United States of Tara, Drop Dead Diva
- Reality shows: Real World – (I recommend the first season), America’s Next Top Model, Girls Next Door, Big Brother, Housewives of Orange County, Survivor, Next, Jersey Shore, The A-list, Transamerican love story, Cover Girl
- Movies: The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo, Sex and the City, Dodgeball, Transamerica, Pocahontas, The Princess and the Frog, Hangover, Mean Girls, The Kids are Alright, The Ugly Truth, Boys Don’t Cry, Saved
No more than 2 groups can cover the same media and only one group can cover a season of a show!

A note on all Presentations

I WILL BE EXPECTING WELL-PREPARED, PROFESSIONAL PRESENTATIONS.

Group presentations summarize the group analyses of media artifacts. Your task is to provide the best representation of the perspective on gender encoded in the artifact that you can—not to critique it or denigrate it. In other words, regardless of your own perspective on gender and your own preferred gender, you are asked to take seriously the perspective in the artifact and to try to understand how it makes sense to those who hold it.

Baseline criteria for presentations include: a captivating introduction, brief overview of media selected, thesis, preview statement, project rationale (based on class content and 2 additional academic sources), project research questions/hypotheses, content analysis method, results presented in a objective manner, discussion including subjective interpretation of results, any surprise findings, commentary on possible media effects with special consideration to gender, conclusion. Make sure you are considering your audience – fellow students- in this! It includes an introduction to the presentation that provides an overview helpful to the audience

- If you choose to show a clip from the artifact as part of your presentation, it should be used to support a clear claim, it should not preclude complete coverage of the analysis, and it should be set up prior to the presentation and work properly. Be careful to explain any clips you show. Do not let the clip speak for itself!
- The presentation should be no longer than 15 minutes (you will be stopped when you reach 15 minutes)
- Presenters should demonstrate competence in oral communication that shows evidence of preparation and practice. I am more interested, though, in a presentation that provides an in-depth analysis of the genders in the artifact than a showy, snazzy presentation.
- A handout should accompany the presentation that:
  o Includes names of all group members, the title of the artifact being analyzed, and the name of the topic on gender that is the focus of the analysis
  o Provides answers to the most relevant questions from the guidelines for that topic
  o Has few spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors
  o Is well organized and visually appealing
  o 10 copies for your audience (this is your responsibility—please do not ask me to make these copies for your group)

Group Dynamics:
Groups are encouraged to divide up responsibilities evenly among group members to complete the readings, plan the presentation, deliver the presentation, and contribute your knowledge in some way to the internet community. Although I expect all group members to participate in the reading, a group may choose to divide up other responsibilities according to group members’ strengths and interests. For example, a person who is a good writer may prepare the handout, and students who enjoy oral presentations may deliver the presentation, a person internet savvy may take responsibility for the internet portion.
A low-performing student may be voted out of a group by a majority vote of the other group members. Members may choose to vote a student out of a group if she or he does not contribute appropriately to the reading or the preparation of the group’s project or has excessive absences. If this happens, that individual must find another group to which to belong. If another group refuses to take the student in, she or he will not be able to complete any more of the group assignments, and the highest grade she or he will be able to receive is a D. A group that wants to vote out a member should contact me, and I will work with the group to make arrangements for the student to exit the group.
e. Choose your own adventure
This is your class. You decide what project you want to do. Whether it is a large project involving working at a domestic abuse shelter, assessing work relationships, interviewing a therapist, creating a family reunion, planning a wedding, making a video, etc. We can determine point value based on what you want to do. You must write up a formal assignment and propose how I would grade the assignment before March 15th.

Basic policies and Standard Answers

Academic Dishonesty – Dishonesty of any kind is unacceptable in this course. Academic dishonesty includes and is not limited to:
“…cheating, plagiarizing, fabricating of information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other students.” In this course, cases of academic dishonesty may result in academic sanctions and may result in automatic failure of the course. See the campus policy for further detail.

Class notes: If class is missed, students are responsible for acquiring class notes from other students in class. Commercialization of lecture notes and university-provided course materials is NOT permitted in this course.

Access – CofC encourages qualified persons with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities. If a student enrolled in this course anticipates needing any type of accommodations or has a question about physical access, please notify the instructor as soon as possible.

My computer ate my paper:
Give yourself enough time to account for something going wrong. In any and all cases, technological failures (i.e., computer hardware/software malfunctions, alarms) are not accepted as excuses for missed attendance or any missing/incomplete/late coursework assigned/collected in class. ALWAYS back your work (email it, multiple saves) I do not give an extension. Consider a different project or incur the late penalty.

I know this was already due but can I do the assignment now? No
But I really like the project!
No. You received a list of all the assignments and due dates on day one. You are responsible for planning accordingly. You are being unfair to the other students in the class who were on their game and got it in on time.

But I was sick... (or had a death in the family)
Waivered absences must be handled through the university. If you are absent due to a campus sanctioned absence on a day that a paper is due, then you have until the next class time after your return to turn it in without penalty. It is a good idea to contact me asap just to let me know what is going on. I can be of more help if I am in the know than in the dark. If attendance is an issue you still have to make up the day with me in my office hours.

But I had an interview, a family reunion, a friend who needed me...
I am happy that you made a decision. There are some events and people that take priority over going to class. I get that and respect your decision. I missed classes as an undergrad for a trip to Mardi Gras, a NCAA tournament, my grandmother's 80th birthday bash, etc. Looking back, they were well worth the missed class days, and my grade penalty. You still are marked absent, because you were not here.

I know I should have come talk to you earlier, but...
Yes you should have. This is a communication course.

I did not realize that I missed so many days or did not have all my assignments
You are responsible for keeping track of your work/attendance in this class.

But I did not understand the assignment or test question
Then you should have asked me about it prior to turning it in to be graded. No question is a bad question if you have it… so ask!