

## SYLLABUS FOR COMM 220--INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

Spring 2008

Section 002: Tues/Thurs 12:15-1:30

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**Office Hours:** Tues 1:40-2:40 (College Way)  
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*Please feel free to make an appointment if my office hours conflict with your schedule!*

### REQUIRED MATERIALS

McCornack, S. (2007). *Reflect and relate: An introduction to interpersonal communication*. Bedford/St. Martins: Boston.

You may choose between the e-book and the hard-copy!

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

We engage in interpersonal communication every day. Whether the activity is getting to know a new roommate, raising money for your favorite cause, asking your boss for a raise, or ending an unproductive romantic relationship, you typically must communicate with others in order to achieve your goals. Most of the time our communication goes smoothly, so we just take it for granted without really thinking about what we're doing. The only time we really pay attention to communication is when it becomes problematic for us. We then tend to blame the problem on our communication partner (e.g., "He never listens to me!") or the message (e.g., "The topic is just too boring!"). This course encourages you to spend time consciously examining interpersonal communication in general, and your interpersonal communication in particular, in order to identify communication behaviors that are productive, and not so productive, to effective and appropriate (i.e., competent) communication.

Conscientious study and attendance during this semester should provide you with the following:

1. an understanding of interpersonal communication concepts and theories, including those related to perception, verbal channels, nonverbal channels, listening, and relationships;
2. an opportunity to examine your own relationships and communication habits in order to identify those that work and those that may be causing problems for you; and
3. a safe environment in which to develop and practice new interpersonal communication skills.

COM 220 helps develop, through study and practice, many habits of mind and heart. We will engage in a review of the research findings in interpersonal communication, a subject which crosses traditional disciplinary boundaries as it synthesizes findings in psychology, sociology, biology, and communication. Throughout the course we will incorporate diverse cultural perspectives into our discussion of interpersonal communication, for culture influences how we communicate and how we interpret the communication of others. The course project will allow you to gather and analyze information relevant to an area about which you wish to gain self-knowledge and direction. You will make a plan for self-improvement, and through self-reflection, work to put your plan into action. You will then assess your improvement.

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Three exams @ 150 points each	450 points
Individual Improvement Project	
Gathering info and making a plan	100 points
Self-reflection—The Journal	150 points
Reflection on Progress	150 points
Contributions to the Learning Community	150 points

**Exams.** The exams will be composed of a mixture of limited choice (e.g., multiple-choice, matching) and open-ended (e.g., short-answer, essay) questions. Each exam will be worth 150 points. If you are not present for a unit exam, for any reason, you will have to take a comprehensive make-up exam that will be administered during the last class session.

**The Project.** I really like this project because each person gets to work on something of importance to her/him. And it shows how you can USE the information in this course to help you make changes you want to make in your life. It also shows you how to identify a problem, implement a solution, and evaluate the results of your solution, which are skills that will be useful regardless of your career field. This is a three-part project that will aid you in learning how to identify a problem, plan a solution for improving the situation, implement the solution, and evaluate your progress. Here is an overview. Specific instructions are available on WebCT.

1. Identify an interpersonal communication behavior that you wish to improve. Gather information about the behavior (3 expert sources) and write a short paper that summarizes your research and outlines a specific plan for improving the behavior.
2. Keep a record of your progress in the form of a journal. Each entry should describe your active efforts to improve your chosen interpersonal skills. Be specific! Include an assessment of how well you accomplished your objectives. Be sure to include successes and non-successes in your journal entries. After the description, suggest reasons why you might have been more or less successful in the situation. These entries will provide the “data” for your final paper.
3. You will write a short evaluation of your progress and the project.

**Contributions to the Learning Community.**

This course is designed as an “active-learning” course. We will spend a great deal of class time applying course concepts, rather than simply reading and hearing about them. In order to be an active learner you must do the following:

- a. come to class,
- b. read the assigned readings and complete any assignments prior to coming to class, and
- c. take an active role in class discussion and completing individual and group activities.

Class attendance is a necessary condition for contributing to our learning community; however, it is not sufficient in and of itself. You must do your part to enrich the learning experience by sharing examples and participating in course activities. If you are present and follow the directions for an activity (including due dates) you will receive credit for the day’s activity. If you are not present or do not follow the directions for contributing, you will not receive credit. In order for the active-learning process to work, you must prepare for class by reading and thinking about the assigned material. For in-class and homework activities you complete, you will be assigned 10, 6, or 0 points, depending upon your contributions to the learning efforts of the class (hint: a bad attitude does NOT contribute positively to the learning environment). I will “drop” your two lowest grades (a missed activity will be scored as zero points).

**GRADING SCALE**

A = Complete Mastery (930-1000 points)	D+ = Below Average (670-699 points)
A- = Almost Mastered (900-929 points)	D = Below Average (630-669 points)
B+ = Excellent (870-899 points)	D- = Barely Passing (600-629 points)
B = Excellent (830-869 points)	F = Failing (fewer than 600 points)
B- = A few things missing (800-829 points)	
C+ = Fair (770-799 points)	
C = Average (730-769 points)	
C- = Acceptable (700-729 points)	

## OTHER COURSE POLICIES

1. Academic Integrity. All work in this course should be the individual work of the student who submits it, unless I have indicated otherwise. It is my assumption that you have read and understand the student honor code that you signed at orientation. Disciplinary action will be taken against any student found to have cheated, plagiarized, or otherwise violated the student honor code. Offenders will be reported to the Dean of Students office for disciplinary sanctions.

2. Special Accommodations. If, due to some disabling condition, you require special arrangements in order to meet some course requirements, please let me know by **January 16**, so that we can make any adjustments that may be necessary. You need to present appropriate verification so that proper accommodations can be made. The Center for Disability Services (943-1431) coordinates these accommodations.

3. Class Attendance. Our class comprises a learning system. As with any system, each component in the system (each of us) contributes to the optimal functioning of our learning system. If one component of the system fails to perform effectively (e.g., isn't there to share the experience s/he had when visiting another country), the whole system suffers. As such, we all have the responsibility to do our part to help optimize learning. Much of our class time will be devoted to activities that involve interpersonal communication within our learning system. If you are not present, you cannot contribute. You are expected to attend and to arrive in a timely fashion. Attendance will be taken daily. Each person will be allowed two free absences. For each absence beyond two, your final grade will be reduced 2% (20 points). Excused absences will be counted as "free absences." If you foresee missing more than two classes, you should see me immediately. Six absences will result my dropping you from the course.

4. Excused Absences. An excused absence is an absence that is the result of an occurrence that is beyond the student's control, such as an illness severe enough to require medical assistance (but not a routine office visit which could be scheduled outside of class time), a family death, or a bona fide religious holiday as set forth by law. Students absent for an excused reason must make up the work (see policy below) in the manner that I designate. Because they specify only that a student was seen in the clinic, student health clinic, "notes" will be accepted only if they include a medical recommendation that you miss class and a "return-to-class" date.

5. Absences for Athletics and Other CofC-Sponsored Activities. Absences for college-sponsored activities, such as athletics, require prior notification of the absence, at which time we will discuss missed assignment and expectations. Your first two absences will be counted as your "free" absences, so you should plan to attend all other classes. If you will miss more than two class periods for official activities, please consult with me prior to January 16. You will be required to submit work early if you know you will be absent on a due date.

6. Make-Up Work. Requests for make-up work must be made the day of your return, in writing, and be accompanied by verifiable documentation that your absence was uncontrollable on your part. If you are absent on a due date, you should submit work early or send it with a friend. If you miss notes, please arrange to get them from another student. Because it is difficult/impossible to re-create the learning environment for individuals, if you are absent on a day we have a learning activity you may not be allowed to make up the activity

7. Late Papers. I will accept late papers; however, the grade for the paper will be reduced by 5% for every 24 hours, or fraction thereof, that the paper is late. For instance, if a 100-point paper is due Tuesday at 10 a.m. and you submit it Wednesday at noon, your paper grade will incur a 10-point penalty.

8. Classroom Courtesy. Our aim this semester is to create a safe environment where each student feels welcome to explore issues important to him or her. Therefore, the golden rule applies--You should treat others as you would like to be treated. Focus on descriptions of behavior and ideas, not evaluations of people! Don't say, "You're so stupid to think that!" Rather, explain why you don't agree!

9. Electronic Devices. Electronic devices are potential distractions to the learning of your colleagues. Cell phones, PDAs, MP3 players, etc. should be turned off and stowed out of view before coming into the classroom and remain as such for the duration of class. Failure to do so will result in the loss of your day's points for contributions to the learning community. Exceptions to this policy are by individual instructor permission only. You may not answer or check your phones or other electronic devices during class or exams. Violation of this rule during an exam will result in your receiving a zero on the exam.

### TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

When a reading is listed for a given day, my assumption will be that you have read the material (including all boxes and inserts!) **before coming to class**, and I will plan class accordingly. The assigned reading and the lectures/activities will complement each other. There may be a limited amount of repetition, but I will not be reciting the text for you. The tests will cover material found only in the text, material found only in lecture, and material found both in the text and the lecture.

**When reading, include all boxed information, pop quizzes, and other inserts!!!**

Date	Topic	Reading/Assignment Due Today
Jan. 15	Intro to Course Intro to IPC	Bring printed Syllabus to class Read Chapter One
Jan. 17	Intro to Each Other	Complete "Skills Practice," p. 21 Complete "Self Reflection," p. 24
Jan. 22	The Project! Intro to IPC, contd	1. Bring printed Self-Improvement Project Assignment Sheet 2. Complete the "Jung Typology Test" at <a href="http://www.humanmetrics.com">www.humanmetrics.com</a> and print results and at least one description of your "type"
Jan. 24	The Self	Read Chapter Two, pp. 40-58 Complete Skills Practice, p. 46 Complete "Focus on Culture," p. 50
Jan. 29	Self Presentation Self in relationship	Read Chapter Two, pp. 58-77 Complete "Ethics and Self Disclosure" case, p. 72-73 "Prologue" (paper and two journal entries) due today
Jan. 31	Perception Processes	Read Chapter Three, pp. 78-98
Feb. 5	Perceptions of Others	Read Chapter Three, pp. 98-113 Project Part I Due at the beginning of class
Feb. 7	Emotions	Read Chapter Four, pp. 115-130
Feb. 12	Managing Emotions	Read Chapter Four, pp. 130-149 Complete "Managing Anger and Providing Support" case, p. 144-45
Feb. 14	Catch Up and Review	
Feb. 19		Exam I Journal Check! Bring at least two complete journal entries to class!
Feb. 21	Communication Competence	Read Chapter Five, pp. 150-164
Feb. 26	Improving Comm Competence	Read Chapter Five, pp. 164-183 Complete "Self Reflection," p. 176 Complete "When a Friend Fails You," p. 178-79 Bring Journal Entries 1-4 for journal check
Feb. 28	Listening	Read Chapter Six, pp. 184 Complete "Listening When You Don't Want To," pp. 210-11
Mar. 2-8	<b>Spring Break!!!</b>	Complete "Skills Practice," p. 192

Mar. 11	Conclude Listening Verbal Comm	Read Chapter Seven, pp. 216-237 Complete "Focus on Culture," p. 232 Bring Journal Entries 1-6 for journal check
Mar. 13		Read Chapter Seven, pp. 237-255 Complete WebCT Language Worksheet
Mar. 18	Nonverbal Comm	Read Chapter 8
Mar. 20	Nonverbal, contd. Review for Exam	
Mar. 25		Exam II Bring Journals 1-8 for Journal Check
Mar. 27	Conflict & Power	Read Chapter Nine, pp. 292-307 Complete "Self-Reflection," p. 307
Apr. 1	Managing Conflict	Read chapter Nine, pp. 308-327 Complete One Skills Practice: p. 313, 314, 317 Complete "Dealing with Family Conflict," pp. 322-23
Apr. 3	Romantic Relationships	Read Chapter Ten, pp. 329-354 Complete "Focus on Culture," p. 350
Apr. 8		Read Chapter Ten, pp. 354-375 Complete "Dealing with Infidelity," pp. 370-371 <b>Individual Project Due at the beginning of class!!!</b>
Apr. 10	Family Relations	Read Chapter Eleven, pp. 376-397 Complete "Self-Reflection," p. 383 or 384 or 397 Complete "Focus on Culture," p. 392
Apr. 15	Friendships	Read Chapter Eleven, pp. 397-415 Complete one "Self-Reflection" Complete "Choosing between Family and Friends," pp. 410-411
Apr. 17	Workplace Relationships	Read Chapter Twelve
Apr. 22	Catch up and Review	Comprehensive Make-Up Exam
Apr. 29	<b>noon-3:00</b>	Exam III

*Note: All exams in this course are the property of the Department of Communication, College of Charleston.*

The instructor reserves the right to make changes in this syllabus should the need arise.