

COM 4383 – Relational Communication
Course Materials Handbook
(Spring 2005)

Prepared by

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for

The University of Texas at San Antonio

Department of Communication

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SYLLABUS

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COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course facilitates understanding of the major theories and concepts in the study of communication phenomena in close, personal relationships. Emphasis is placed on critical analysis of communication research into personal relationships. An important goal of this class is to foster students' insight into their own experience of close personal relationships and to enable students to apply course-related concepts to their relationships.

Lectures, discussion, classroom exercises, written assignments, and in-class and out-of-class observations will be used to aid the development of knowledge and skills relating to the study of communication.

The aim is to merge theory and practice throughout the classroom experience. To this end, we will maintain a stimulating, interactive, open, and friendly classroom environment that fosters self and other insight, critical thinking, intellectual growth and communicative competence. The following objectives are core to the course:

- To achieve a clear understanding of theories of communication in close, personal relationships,
- To extend understanding and appreciation of the discipline of communication, and
- To develop critical thinking and analytical skills.

TEXT

Wood, J. T. (2000). *Relational communication: Continuity and change in personal relationships* (2nd ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

POLICIES

Cheating, plagiarism and collusion will not be tolerated. All work submitted must be the original work of the student, for this course only (no submitting the same assignment in more than one class). The penalty for plagiarism, cheating or collusion may include failing the assignment, failing the course, or expulsion from the University depending on the severity of the infraction. Please see the University's Student Code of Conduct for information regarding these policies.

Course requirements must be fulfilled in order to successfully pass the course. Late assignments will not be accepted. Incompletes will be given only in very limited cases and only when they meet the Policy for Incompletes on file in the Department of Communication office, as well as the University requirements for Incompletes as specified in the Handbook of Operating Procedures. Please see your Course Materials Handbook for further information on assignments, grading criteria and course schedule. All other University policies will be followed.

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

In order for this course to be a successful learning experience for you, active and committed participation on your part is crucial; therefore, as specified in the Information Bulletin, **students are expected to attend class**. All assignments are due according to the Schedule of Assignments in the Course Materials Handbook. Students are expected to take examinations and turn in assignments at the scheduled time. Students who may miss an examination or assignment deadline due to an authorized University activity should make arrangements to complete the assignment in advance, which includes approval from the student's Dean. **Late assignments or examinations will not be accepted**. Please also see the Handbook of Operating Procedures for policies regarding attendance.

The Americans With Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973: If you have a disability that may have some impact on your work in this class and for which you may require special accommodations, please see a coordinator at Disability Services (MS 2.03.18) so that such accommodations may be arranged. After you receive your accommodation letters, please meet with me to discuss the provisions of those accommodations as soon as possible.

ASSIGNMENTS

Examinations: Students will be assessed on knowledge of course material through examination. A midterm exam will cover concepts and terms from the first half of the semester. The final exam will cover primarily material from the second half of the semester but will be semi-comprehensive. The two exams will consist of multiple choice and true-false questions.

Weekly Journal: Students will write their reflections on issues related to their experiences of personal relationships for weekly submission via WebCT.

Relational Context and Comparison: Students will answer a series of questions about their experience of relationship in three contexts: best childhood friend, best adulthood friend, and closest family-of-origin member.

Relational Termination Analysis: Students will answer a series of questions about a significant relational termination event in their own lives.

A full description of each of these assignments can be found in the Course Materials Handbook, which is located in WebCT, or through the course website Student Section at hpleblanc.com

Students may participate in ongoing research of the course instructor.

Due to the content of this senior-level course, students should be aware that subject matter of a very personal and mature nature may be discussed in the class. However, the course is not intended nor is it designed to serve the purpose of relational, marital, or family counseling.

DIVISION OF ASSIGNMENTS

	<u>GRADING SCALE:</u>
MIDTERM EXAM (100 pts.)	
FINAL EXAM (100 pts.)	90.0 - 100: A
	80.0 - 89.9: B
WEEKLY JOURNAL (120 pts.)	70.0 - 79.9: C
	60.0 - 69.9: D
RELATIONAL CONTEXT AND COMPARISON ESSAY (60 pts.)	BELOW 60.0: F
RELATIONAL TERMINATION ANALYSIS (60 pts.)	

Grades are earned and will be calculated on a cumulative scale. Grades can be calculated by dividing the raw score of the assignment by the total points possible for the assignment. Grades are calculated using a 400 point scale. For example, if the total number of points that can be achieved on the Weekly Journal is 120, then the journal is worth 30% of the final grade. The Midterm Exam is worth 100 points. Therefore, a raw score of 78 on the first exam is 19.5% of the final grade. Extra credit will not be assigned for any student due to poor performance or missed assignment. **Grades are not rounded.** You may use the [Grade Monitoring Form](#) located in the [Course Materials Handbook](#) to calculate your grade average in the course at any time. Furthermore, you may obtain your current grade for assignments in WebCT for this course.

GRADING RATIONALE

- A** Exceptionally well-prepared completion of assignment indicating effort, individualized style, and impact expected of effective communication.
- B** Unusually well-prepared completion of assignment indicating original application of course materials and individual imagination distinctly superior to average effort.
- C** Satisfactory completion of assignment indicating effort normally expected of the majority of students (basic preparation, correct procedure, and disciplined technique.)
- D** Unsatisfactory completion of assignment indicating technical irregularity, misperceived objectives or methods, unorganized effort, or failure to follow directions.
- F** Failure to complete assignments during the scheduled time through lack of evident effort.

All students will be expected to follow the instructions as they are presented, meet the grading criteria, and turn in each assignment by the due date in order to earn a "B."

This course is a senior-level communication elective. Interpersonal Communication (COM 3383) is a prerequisite for this course. All course requirements are explicitly written in the [Course Materials Handbook](#).

GRADE MONITORING FORM

Name: _____

Banner ID: _____

GRADING SCALE:

90.0 - 100: A
80.0 - 89.9: B
70.0 - 79.9: C
60.0 - 69.9: D
BELOW 60.0: F

EXAMINATIONS:

Midterm Exam: Total: _____ Possible: 100

Final Exam: Total: _____ Possible: 100 Tests Total: _____

ASSIGNMENTS:

Assignment 1: Total: _____ Possible: 60

Assignment 2: Total: _____ Possible: 60

Weekly Journal: Total: _____ Possible: 120 Assignments Total: _____

FINAL GRADE: Total: _____ Possible: 400 Percent: _____ Grade: _____

LIST OF IMPORTANT DATES

January 17:	M. L. King Jr. Holiday: No class.
January 19:	Classes begin.
January 24:	Final date for adding the course.
January 25:	Final date for dropping the course without receiving a grade of “W”.
March 2:	Midterm Exam 1.
March 9:	Assignment 1 due at 10:00am.
March 14-18:	Spring Break.
March 28:	Final date for dropping course.
April 6:	Journal entry number 9 due for Weekly Journal.
April 8:	IABD Conference. No class.
April 13:	Assignment 2 due at 10:00am.
May 4:	Last Day of Class.
May 11:	Final Exam period (7:30am - 10:15am).
May 17:	Final grades due by 2:00pm.

Dates for class assignments and exams will not be altered. We will meet during the Final Examination period for this section. Unless otherwise indicated, assignments are due at the beginning of the class period as assigned. The Weekly Journal assignments will be due every Friday except as noted above.

SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Week One: Introduction and Outline of the Course. Introduction to personal relationships.

- Read Chapter 1.

Week Two: Communication and personal relationships.

- Read Chapter 2.

Week Three: Theoretical frameworks for studying personal relationships.

- Read Chapter 3.

Week Four: The central role of communication.

- Read Chapter 4.

Week Five: Intimacy and relational culture.

- Read Chapter 5.

Week Six: Social determinants of relationships.

- Study for Midterm Exam.

Week Seven: Unit I review and examination.

- Read Chapter 6.

Week Eight: Initiating personal relationships.

- Relational Context and Comparison Assignment due. Read Chapter 7.

Week Nine: Commitment.

- Read Chapter 8.

Week Ten: Maintaining personal relationships.

- Read Chapter 9.

Week Eleven: Repairing personal relationships.

Week Twelve: Redefining personal relationships.

- Relational Termination Analysis due.

Week Thirteen: Research in relational communication.

- Read Chapter 10.

Week Fourteen: Communication in personal relationships.

- Study for Final Exam.

Week Fifteen: Concluding relational communication.

- Study for Final Exam.

Final Exam Week: Final Exam (May 11 at 7:30 am).

MIDTERM TEST REVIEW

Chapter 1:

Behavioral interdependence
Emotional interdependence
Social comparison
Agency
Will
Commitment

Chapter 2:

Symbolic Interactionism Theory
Standpoint Theory
Attachment Theory
Social Cognition Theory
 Schema/ta
 Prototype
 Constructs
 Scripts
Rule Theory
Systems Theory
Social Exchange Theory
Social Penetration Theory
Dialectical Theory
Turning Points Theory

Chapter 3:

Symbol
Arbitrariness
Ambiguity
Abstractness
Rules
Levels of meaning
Punctuation
Context
Monitoring
Mindfulness
Listening
Metacommunication
Metaperception

Chapter 4:

Relational culture
Contradiction
Process
Selection
Separation
Neutralization
Reframing
Organizing structure
Power

Chapter 5:

Ritual
Role
Social expectation
Mobility
Transience
Relational self
Saturated self
Situated knowledge

FINAL TEST REVIEW

Chapter 6:

Imagined trajectories
Imagined interactions
Attraction
Proximity
Environmental spoiling
Similarity
Relationship quota
Comparison level
Comparison level of alternatives
Breadth of information
Depth of information
Self-disclosure
Information overload

Chapter 7:

Sternberg's Triangular Theory
Closeness
Companionship
Storge
Eros
Ludus
Mania
Agape
Pragma
Private intensifying
Personalized communication
Idealizing
Investment

Chapter 8:

Relationship maintenance
Relationship repair
Dialogue
Dynamic equilibrium
Individual change
Relational change
Systemic change
Social change

Chapter 9:

Dyadic breakdown
Intrapsychic phase
Dyadic phase
Neglect
Loyalty
Social phase
Grave dressing phase
Negative reciprocity
Attribution
Relational redefinition

Chapter 10:

Choice
Responsibility
Acceptance
Patience
Serenity

GENERAL ASSIGNMENT INSTRUCTIONS

The purpose of the following assignments is: 1) to assist you in thinking critically about the nature of personal relationships, and 2) to assist you in understanding the communicative processes involved with initiating, maintaining, repairing and terminating personal relationships.

For all assignments a written document will be created. You must submit these documents in electronic form as an attachment (but not as text embedded in an e-mail) in a standard format such as Microsoft Word, Wordpad, Corel WordPerfect, or RTF. (Assignments created and submitted in Microsoft Works format will not be accepted). When you save the assignment file, use the following file naming protocol: **LastnameFa1.doc** (as in LeBlancPa1.doc), where “F” represents the first letter of your first name and “a1” represents the assignment number. For the Weekly Journal Assignments, use **LastnameFj1.doc** where “j” represents the assignment, and “1” represents the Weekly Journal Question number. It is critical that you use this naming convention to avoid confusion and assure credit as each student will be sending multiple assignments in this fashion. **All assignments should be submitted through WebCT.** The timestamp on the assignment submission will serve as documentation for meeting the deadline for the assignment. The assignments feature in WebCT is designed not to accept submissions after the deadline. You will be notified via your UTSA Lonestar e-mail account automatically when your assignment has been submitted. Failure to attach the document will not serve as grounds for accepting late assignments.

For all assignments questions will be posted at 8:00am through the WebCT assignments link. The dates for posting of Weekly Journal questions, the Relational Context and Comparison questions and the Relational Termination Analysis questions are:

<u>Journal</u>	<u>Posting Date:</u>	<u>Due Date:</u>	<u>Relational Context and Comparison</u>	
1	January 24	January 28	<u>Posting Date:</u>	<u>Due Date:</u>
2	January 31	February 4	January 28	March 9
3	February 7	February 11		
4	February 14	February 18	<u>Relational Termination Analysis</u>	
5	February 21	February 25	<u>Posting Date:</u>	<u>Due Date:</u>
6	March 7	March 11	February 25	April 13
7	March 21	March 25		
8	March 28	April 1		
9	April 4	April 6		
10	April 11	April 15		
11	April 18	April 22		
12	April 25	April 29		

Furthermore, submit all written assignments with your name, the assignment number and the date in the document itself. For all assignments, **failure to properly follow these general instructions or the instructions for any assignment will result in a ten percent deduction on the grade for that assignment.**

WEEKLY JOURNAL

Objective: To demonstrate the ability to reflect on and analyze the issues of importance in personal relationships.

Directions: At the beginning of each week, your instructor will give the class a question for reflection. The question will be posted on WebCT before the beginning of class on the Monday for the week for which the response is due. Students will type their responses to the question and submit the file electronically through WebCT as per the instructions outlined in General Assignment Instructions located in this Course Materials Handbook. Students should submit their responses according to the schedule, generally by the beginning of class on the Friday of the week for which the question was posted. Each reflected response should be no less than one page, single-spaced, and no more than two pages. The assignment will be evaluated on thoughtfulness and completeness of response. Each week will be worth 10 points for twelve weeks of the semester or 120 points.

Students are requested to include the provocative question at the beginning of each entry.

Evaluation of the assignment for each week will be based on the following criteria:

- I. Thoughtfulness of response - 45% for each entry.
- II. Completeness of response (length) - 45% for each entry.
- III. Instructions followed - 10%

RELATIONAL CONTEXT AND COMPARISON

Objective: To demonstrate the ability to compare characteristics of relational initiation and maintenance in three types of close, personal relationships.

Directions: Students will reflect on and respond to three questions each for three different relationships: best childhood friend, best adult friend, closest family-of-origin member. The three questions will be posted on WebCT by the end of the second week of class. Students will list and describe in short essay form each relationship (2 pages single-spaced maximum for each relationship) according to the questions posed. Specifically, students should answer all three questions for best childhood friend, then answer all three questions for the best adult friend, and then for the closest family-of-origin member. Students will submit the document electronically through WebCT as per the instructions outlined in General Assignment Instructions located in this Course Materials Handbook.

Criteria for Evaluation:

For each relationship described, the following criteria will be applied

- I. Depth of self-reflective analysis (10 pts.)
- II. Use of ideas from Unit I (5 pts.)
- III. Answered all questions fully (5 pts.)

Additionally, the following criterion will be applied to the assignment:

- IV. Instructions followed? (-10%)

RELATIONAL TERMINATION ANALYSIS

Objective: To demonstrate the ability to critically analyze the nature of relational termination in a close personal relationship.

Directions: Students will reflect on and respond to six questions related to their own experiences of relational termination in a close, personal relationship. The six questions will be posted on WebCT by the end of the sixth week of class. Students will describe in essay form the nature of the relationship termination according to the questions posed. Students will submit the document electronically through WebCT as per the instructions outlined in General Assignment Instructions located in this Course Materials Handbook. The maximum length of the document should be four, single-spaced pages.

Criteria for Evaluation:

- I. Depth of self-reflective analysis (10 pts.)
- II. Use of ideas from Unit I (10 pts.)
- III. Use of ideas from Unit II (10 pts.)
- IV. Clear delineation of termination sub-categories (10 pts.)
- V. Demonstrated understanding and insight (10 pts.)
- VI. Answered all questions fully (10 pts.)
- VII. Instructions followed (-10%)

REFERENCES

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COURSE FEEDBACK FORM

I have enjoyed discussing areas of relational communication in the course. However, I would like to know what particular areas you liked or did not like. Please answer the following questions.

1. What do you remember most about relational communication as discussed in class?

2. Please go back and carefully examine the topics listed on the Schedule of Assignments.
 - a) What topics did you find most intriguing and why?

 - b) Do you wish more time were spent in a particular area or less time in another?

3. What do you think about the course structure: The form of tests, the assignments, the Weekly Journal, etc.

4. What do you think about the online course materials or the Course Materials Handbook?

5. What do you think about me as an instructor?

6. What suggestions do you have for improvements in the course?

7. Are there any other issues relevant to the course that you would like to discuss?

Thank you for your feedback.

H. Paul LeBlanc III, PhD