



DEPARTMENT OF APPLIED COMMUNICATION
UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS AT LITTLE ROCK

ACOM 4323: Family Communication

ACOM 4323-9H1 65735

Spring 2019

Thursdays 12:15 – 1:30 PM
Speech Bldg., Room 210

3 Credit Hours

Syllabus subject to change

Instructor: Dr. Bailey M. Oliver

Email: bmoliver1@ualr.edu

Office: Speech Bldg., Room 230

Business Hours Contact: (501) 683-7264

Weekends Contact: via email

Office Hours:

T - from 11:30 AM – 1:30 PM

Th – from 9:30 AM – 11:30 AM

And by appointment, contact me via email to set up

Course Objectives

This course was carefully designed to help you:

- Recognize and identify the various forms that families currently are manifested
- Understand how roles, rules, and rituals contribute to familial relationships
- Develop a greater awareness of the influence of media and law in defining ‘family’
- Demonstrate an understanding of theories and methodologies used in family communication research
- Expand your understanding and use of a range of constructive family communication practices

Catalog Course Description

Study of communication phenomena in the family setting. Examination of how communication relates and influences the development, maintenance, and enhancement of family relationships. Case analysis and course activities focus on co-constructing family relationships with effective communication skills.

Course Rationale

This course examines the long-term and often involuntary relationships found within a family context, primarily examining behaviors that occur in a functional family system. Topics include family rules and roles, societal influences on family communication, attraction and intimacy, and familial conflict. The course also takes a topical focus to various relationships within the family, including a discussion of parent-child, sibling, in-law, grandparent, and other relationships. This course was carefully designed alongside and in conjunction with the goal of the Department of Applied Communication to “foster the co-creation of better social worlds through positive communication”. Course content is

focused on using family communication theories and concepts to help students analyze the communication system of a family and identify communication patterns, problems, and dilemmas in families with the goal of providing constructive communication suggestions for each to help promote understanding and civil communication in our family relationships. This is an applied communication class: it combines lecture, discussion, and activities to focus on how you can translate communication research into knowledge and skills that will influence the quality of your familial relationships now and in the future. In order for this course to be of value to you and your classmates, you need to read the assigned readings, regularly attend lectures, and participate actively in the course.

Required Texts

- Turner, L. H., & West, R. (2018). *Perspectives of family communication* (5th Edition). New York: McGraw Hill Education.
 - ISBN: 9781259870330
- Floyd, K., & Morman, M. T. (2014). *Widening the family circle: New research on family communication* (2nd Edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
 - ISBN: 9781452256948
- Required Supplemental Readings (will be available on Blackboard)

Blackboard/UALR Email

A required part of this course is accessing announcements, updates, and grades through Blackboard. The Blackboard website provides vital announcements, online lectures, readings, and the course calendar—information that may not be discussed in lecture. Because it is more up-to-date, website information supersedes lecture information, so check it before each class. You should access the ACOM 4323 Blackboard website within the first week of class. In order to get key course announcements, you MUST regularly access your UALR-sponsored email address. If you want to use an alternate email, you must redirect your UALR email address. Furthermore, students must regularly clean out their email accounts so that they are able to receive course announcements.

Do not send emails to me through Blackboard. The only way to contact me is by emailing bmoliver1@ualr.edu

Assignments*

Grades will be calculated based on the following assignments. There are 400 total possible points for this course with the following grade breakdown:

Participation during Activity Days:	(12 at 10 points each)	120 points
Exams:	(3 at 50 points each)	150 points
Journals*:	(2 at 25 points each)	50 points
Final Paper*:		80 points
Total:		/400 points

**Grad students will have additional criteria connected with the journal assignments and final paper.*

Activity Days Participation:**12 at 10 points each: 120 points total.**

Class activities will be a central component of this class, as they are useful for understanding and applying concepts in family communication. This is a mashup course, meaning we meet once a week face to face (Thursdays) and the remainder of class content is available and completed online via our Blackboard page. Each Thursday that we meet in person will serve as an “Activity Day” to augment online lectures posted earlier that week. For example, I will post a lecture online on a Tuesday, and we will meet in person on Thursday to complete class activities that explain, extend, and illustrate concepts from that chapter. It is imperative that you watch lectures prior to activity days in order to be successful in the said activity. There are 13 activity days throughout the semester. 12 of these 13 days will count toward this grade, meaning you can miss one activity day and still receive full points. Each activity day differs and will include in-class assignments worth 10 points.

Exams:**3 exams at 50 points each: 150 points total.**

Exams are based on assigned reading content, lectures, class activities, and other class materials. Generally, exams are constructed with multiple choice questions and short essays or brief applications. Study guides will be provided, but be warned they are more of an outline of topics instead of answered questions. Exams will be administered online and questions will have time restrictions. Safe Assign (anti-plagiarism software embedded within our Blackboard page) notes patterns in similar answers across multiple student answers and if content used on an exam is used from course presentations or outside websites. Be warned that this constitutes academic dishonesty and will result in a failure of the assignment. Exams should be completed individually and not with other students. *No exams will be accumulative.*

Journals:**2 at 25 points: 50 points total.**

Throughout this course you will be asked to write two short (2 page double-spaced) journals in which you reflect on the concepts, vocabulary, and lessons in this class and relate them to your own personal experiences and family relationships. This is your chance to put theories and academic concepts in your own words using anecdotes, examples, or your own ideas. These journals should be fun and enjoyable to write, but also should incorporate academic definitions and explanations. You will submit two of these, one in Week 7 and another in Week 12. Further information and unique instructions for each journal will be provided within handouts and posted online at least two weeks prior to each journal’s due date.

Final Paper:**80 points.**

The goal of this paper is to interview a member of your family and gain insight into their experiences and life. You will interview this person for at least 45 minutes and transcribe the interview. This interview will serve as your case study, and your paper will: propose a research question regarding family communication, apply at least two family theories to understand and analyze your interviewee’s experiences, derive at least two themes from your interview/case, and discuss implications and conclusions. An appropriate introduction and conclusion are also expected. Papers should be a minimum of 5 pages* in length, NOT including references, figures, charts, etc. Your paper should not exceed 8 pages*. You will need to do outside research for this paper. A minimum of 7 references will be required (academic journal articles) utilizing both course material and articles you find on your own. APA style is

expected: 1 inch margins all around, 12 point Times New Roman font, double-spaced, in-text citations, and a full reference page. This paper will be submitted via Blackboard and checked with anti-plagiarism software known as “Safe Assign”. You will also be asked to provide the transcript of the interview earlier prior to submitting this paper. More information on this option will be distributed in class.

Grading Policy

Generally, in the course, ‘excellent’ work earns “A” grades, ‘good’ work earns “B” grades, ‘average’ work earns “C” grades, ‘below average’ work earns “D” grades, and ‘unacceptable’ work earns an “F” or “0” grade. [More specific guidelines as to what counts as ‘excellent’ and ‘good’ will be explicated in class or presented to you on a handout before each assignment.]

Due to course policy, I cannot offer extra credit.

A – 90-100	Percent	360-400 Points
B – 80-89	Percent	320-359 Points
C – 70-79	Percent	280-319 Points
D – 60-69	Percent	240-279 Points
F – 0-59	Percent	0-239 Points

Course Policies

Participation:

As noted above, we will be engaging in a number of in-class activities for which participation is REQUIRED. Your participation in this class includes every assignment from in-class discussions, to assigned online lectures, and in-class activities. Your Activity Day Participation grade will reflect each of these areas. Students who are not present or who are tardy for those activities will not receive credit for the activities.

Attendance:

You are expected to attend class regularly and to be part of our learning community. Therefore, attendance will be taken each day we meet (Thursdays). Every student is allowed a total of 1 absence. Missing more than one Activity Day (2+) will negatively affect your overall Activity Days Participation grade. An excused absence (note from physician, attorney, police, judge, religious holidays, official schedules for university sponsored events, an obituary/funeral program, etc.) will only negate the absence if the note covers that class time period. If you have an excused absence for a missed Activity Day, you will be required to complete an alternate individual activity to make up those points.

For an absence to be excused you will need to provide the instructor with appropriate documentation. If you are going to miss class for religious holidays or university-sponsored events, please notify me at least two weeks in advance so that appropriate accommodations can be made. Students who have some prior conflict with a due date have the responsibility of discussing the conflict and making alternative arrangements **in advance** with their instructor. **Tardies of 15 minutes or more will detract from that day’s activity participation grade.**

Makeup Policies:

Papers will **not** be accepted late for full credit. Assignments may be turned in the following class day for half credit (50% less credit) at most. Papers will not be accepted after two class days from the original due date. **I do not accept papers via email**, so please do not ask. Blackboard is the only acceptable place to turn in online assignments. All papers must be typed, submitted correctly, and include your name for grading.

Regular and Substantive Contact:

I am dedicated to interacting with my students to ensure their academic success. As such, I will remain in regular and substantive contact with you all throughout the semester by: conducting in-class and/or online lectures, sending weekly emails, commenting on discussion board posts when applicable, and providing feedback and grades within two weeks of an assignment submission. I will also be available for virtual or in-person office hours and via email throughout the semester.

Academic Integrity:

Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated. Plagiarism is the deliberate use of another's work as your own. This means lifting passages from books, journal articles, or other scholarly material without proper citations. I read these types of articles regularly and recognize the type of writing. Please also be advised that all work for this class must be **original** to this class. You may not recycle papers or work from other courses you've taken, including if you are taking this course over again. This behavior is considered to be academically dishonest and/or plagiarism as well. You should also not be taking online exams with others – all work, including exam answers, should be original. If you have any questions about these policies, please contact me. All material in this course- exam answers, any discussion board comments and posts, and paper submissions will be reviewed for plagiarism. Recognized plagiarism will result in at least an immediate deduction of 20% of the assignment's points, and possibly a failure for the assignment.

Student Conduct:

I want to build a classroom climate that is comfortable for all. In a communication class, it is *especially* important that we (1) display respect for all members of the classroom – including the instructor and students, (2) pay attention to and participate in all class sessions and activities; (3) avoid unnecessary disruption during class time (e.g., having private conversations, reading the newspaper, surfing the internet, doing work for other classes, making/receiving cell phone calls, text messaging, etc.); and (4) avoid racist, sexist, homophobic or other negative language that may unnecessarily exclude members of our campus and classroom. This is *not* an exhaustive list of behaviors; rather, it represents examples of the types of things that can have a dramatic impact on the class environment. Your final grade may be reduced by 1% *each time* you engage in these sorts of behaviors (via discussion boards, submitted assignments, or in-class discussions). Further, students who are verbally or physically aggressive towards the instructor, the TAs, or another student before, during, or after class will have their grade lowered by 25% *each time* they engage in this sort of behavior (and, students engaging in such behaviors will be permanently removed from the class and the proper authorities notified). A breach of any of these student conduct expectations may also result in being sent to an academic disciplinary dean.

Please note our physical classroom, my office, and our online spaces are all Safe Zones. Safe Zone spaces are locations where there is support and understanding, where bigotry and discrimination are not tolerated. I am a trained Safe Zone supporter and will not tolerate discrimination.



Students with Disabilities:

Students with Disabilities: Your success in this class is important to me, and it is the policy and practice of the University of Arkansas at Little Rock to create inclusive learning environments consistent with federal and state law. If you have a documented disability (or need to have a disability documented), and need an accommodation, please contact me privately as soon as possible, so that we can discuss with the Disability Resource Center (DRC) how to meet your specific needs and the requirements of the course. The DRC offers resources and coordinates reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. Reasonable accommodations are established through an interactive process among you, your instructor(s), and the DRC. Thus, if you have a disability, please contact me and/or the DRC, at 501.569.3143 (V/TTY) or 501.683.7629 (VP). For more information, please visit the [DRC website](#).

Inclement Weather:

During inclement weather, UA Little Rock will make a decision whether or not to close based on all available information. The chancellor will decide whether or not conditions warrant canceling classes and activities and closing the campus or whether classes and activities will be canceled but with specified campus offices open. Online or web-enhanced classes will continue as scheduled at the discretion of the faculty member. The [UA Little Rock website](#), UA Little Rock email, the university's main telephone number (501.569.3000), and the Rave campus alert notification system are the official means of communicating information concerning weather-related closings. When necessary, the university will announce a separate decision about canceling night classes (those classes starting at 4:20 p.m. or later) by 2 p.m., if possible. The Policy Advisory Council of the University Assembly will recommend to the chancellor if and when missed undergraduate and graduate class days should be made up. In the event that the university is closed during a final examination day, the provost, in consultation with the Faculty Senate president, will reschedule any missed graduate or undergraduate final examinations with the exception of online exams which will continue as scheduled. Weather and road conditions vary from place to place. Employees and students are expected to exercise good judgment regarding the safety of travel when road conditions are affected by the weather.

Class Rules

- All students will be professional and considerate of others and act in an appropriate and mature manner within classroom *and* throughout online class interactions.
- Emails will be composed using proper language and grammar, and will include a proper greeting. Failure to do so will result in the deletion of the email without a response.
- Emails sent after 5 PM may not be responded to until after 8 AM the following morning.
- No tobacco use will be tolerated during class times and cigarette breaks will not be permitted.
- Questions about grading will be asked during office hours only, not through email or during class time. If you cannot make my office hours (listed above), send me an email to schedule a different meeting time.

- Cellphone use and/or taking pictures of slides or the board are prohibited in this course. You may use your laptop, but should only do so to access lecture slides and/or type out notes. *Each time* you are caught (by the instructor or by another student) using a cellphone or using a laptop for purposes outside lecture slides or note-taking, 1 point will be deducted from your overall participation/attendance grade.

Tentative Course Calendar

Please note – the assigned chapters/readings and online lectures must be read BEFORE the corresponding class meeting.

Week	Dates	Topic(s)	Readings	Assignments
Week 1	Thursday, Jan 24	Syllabus & Course Overview		OL “Welcome”
	Sunday, Jan 27			Optional Syllabus Quiz Due by 11:59 PM
Week 2	Tuesday, Jan 29	Defining Family Roles & Rules in the Family	T&W Chp 1 T&W Chp 3	OL “What is a Family?” OL “Family Roles, Rules, & Rituals”
	Thursday, Jan 31			Activity Day 1
Week 3	Tuesday, Feb 5	Family Comm Theories	T&W Chp 2 F&M Chp 11 Article OBB	OL “Family Theories”
	Thursday, Feb 7			Activity Day 2
Week 4	Tuesday, Feb 12	Societal Influences on Families	T&W Chp 4 Article OBB	OL “Society & the Family”
	Thursday, Feb 14			Activity Day 3 Study Guide & Review
	Friday, Feb 15 – Sunday, Feb 17	Exam 1 Available Online		Exam 1 Due by 11:59 PM on Sunday, Feb 17
Week 5	Tuesday, Feb 19	Attraction & Intimacy	T&W Chp 5	OL “Attraction & Intimacy”
	Thursday, Feb 21			Activity Day 4
Week 6	Tuesday, Feb 26	Family Stories	T&W Chp 6	OL “Family Stories”
	Thursday, Feb 28			Activity Day 5
Week 7	Tuesday, March 5	Family Conflict & Stress	T&W Chp 7 T&W Chp 8	OL “Family Conflict & Stress”
	Thursday, March 7			Activity Day 6
	Sunday, March 10			Journal 1 Due by 11:59 PM on Sunday, March 10
Week 8	Tuesday, March 12	Parent-Child Relationships	F&M Chp 1 F&M Chp 3	OL “Parent-Child Communication”
	Thursday, March 14			Activity Day 7
Week 9	Sunday March 17 – Saturday March 23	NO CLASS – Spring Break		
Week 10	Tuesday, March 26	Sibling Relationships	F&M Chp 2 Article OBB	OL “Sibling Communication”
	Thursday, March 28			Activity Day 8 Study Guide & Review
	Friday, March 29 – Sunday, March 31	Exam 2 Available Online		Exam 2 Due by 11:59 PM on Sunday, March 31

Week 11	Tuesday, April 2	Extended Family Member Relationships	F&M Chp 4 F&M Chp 5	OL “The Extended Family”
	Thursday, April 4			Activity Day 9
Week 12	Tuesday, April 9	In-Law Relationships	F&M Chp 6 F&M Chp 7	OL “The In-Laws”
	Thursday, April 11			Activity Day 10
	Sunday, April 14			Journal 2 Due by 11:59 PM on Sunday, April 14
Week 13	Tuesday, April 16	Divorce	F&M Chp 10	OL “Post-Divorced Families”
	Thursday, April 18			Activity Day 11
Week 14	Tuesday, April 23	Stepfamilies	F&M Chp 9 Article OBB	OL “Stepfamily Communication”
	Thursday, April 25			Activity Day 12
	Sunday, April 28			Paper due by 11:59 PM on Sunday, April 28
Week 15	Tuesday, April 30	Unique Family Structures Aging and End of Life	T&W Chp 10 F&M Chp 8 Article OBB	OL “Unique Family Structures” OL “Families Across the Lifespan”
	Thursday, May 2			Activity Day 13
	Tuesday, May 7 – Thursday, May 9	Exam Available Online		Exam 3 Due by 11:59 PM on Thursday, May 9

OL = Online Lecture

T&W = Turner & West Textbook

F&M = Floyd & Morman Textbook

Article OBB = Online Article posted to our course Blackboard