HU3820 Interpersonal Communication  
Fall 2005

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Texts
• J. Stewart, Bridges Not Walls: A Book About Interpersonal Communication, 8th ed
• pdf files (to be posted)

Rationale
Interpersonal communication is more than “mere talk” or even “interpersonal skills.”  
The argument of this course is that interpersonal communication creates who we are and 
can be as both individuals and social beings. Interpersonal communication also 
reproduces who we have been and the conditions that both enable and constrain positive 
change. The trick is to develop awareness, skills, and vision so that you can engage in 
constructive and satisfying interpersonal interactions that make a difference in your own 
relationships and in the social life around you. During the course, you will be asked to do 
two things: (1) engage the material in the textbooks, readings, and in-class discussions in 
serious, careful, and academically honest ways in order to develop a conceptually rich 
understanding of the complexities and possibilities of interpersonal communication and 
(2) reflect on your own assumptions and experiences in order to enrich your 
understanding of yourself as an interpersonal communicator.

Objectives
1. Introduce basic skills and research findings about interpersonal communication.
2. Reflect on personal habits and assumptions in view of interpersonal concepts.
3. Engage philosophical and ethical issues about what interpersonal communication 
is and our responsibilities as communicators.

Policies
• Attendance is required. Five points will be deducted from the final class score for each 
  absence. Only absences approved through the Dean of Students absence will be exempted 
  from this policy.
• Late papers or presentations will be graded down one full grade for each day after the 
  due date.
• Group assignments require commitment and contributions from all members. Individual 
  students may lose points from a group’s final grade for slacking.
• All students are subscribed to the course email list (interpersonal-l@mtu.edu). Students 
  should check for additional email messages about course assignments and activities 
  regularly. This list is meant to facilitate class discussions and questions as well. All 
  postings should be respectful and maintain classroom civilities.
• All non-medical electronic devices (cell phones, pagers, PDAs, etc.,) must be turned off 
  or set on mute during class time.
• Breaks from class are discouraged. Please take care of personal needs before and after 
  class time.
• Plagiarism will be reported to the Dean of Students so carefully document any sources 
  you use for your presentations.
I encourage you to contact me about any questions or suggestions. In addition, please see me about any particular accommodations in accordance with MTU’s ADA policy. MTU complies with all federal and state laws and regulations regarding discrimination, including the Americans with Disability Act (ADA). If you have a disability and need a reasonable accommodation for equal access to education or services at MTU, please call Dr. Gloria Melton, Associate Dean of Students (72212). For other concerns about discrimination, you may contact your advisor, department head, or the Affirmative Action office (7-3310).

**Grading structure**

- Class involvement ........................................... 50 points
- Exam 1 (chaps. 1-4) ........................................... 100 points
- Exam 2 (chaps. 5-6) ........................................... 100 points
- Exam 3 (chaps. 9-12) ......................................... 100 points
- Partner paper ................................................... 50 points
- One-point presentation ..................................... 50 points
- Group project .................................................. 100 points
- Total: ................................................................ 550 points

**Schedule**

- **8/29** Introduction to course and classmates
- **8/31** Introduction to text. *Read chapter 1.*
- **9/2** Communication and Meaning. *Read chapter 2.*
- **9/5** Labor Day recess
- **9/7** Interpersonal communicating. *Read chapter 3.*
- **9/9** Interpersonal communicating. *K-Day recess begins at Noon right after class!*
- **9/12** Constructing selves. *Read chapter 4.*
- **9/14** Constructing selves. *Exam review.*
- **9/16** *Exam #1 (chapters 1-4)*
- **9/19** Perception processes. *Read chapter 5.*
- **9/21** Perception.
- **9/23** Listening. *Read chapter 6.* *Homecoming begins at 3pm.*
- **9/26** Listening.
- **9/28** Verbal dimensions of talk. *Read chapter 7.*
- **9/30** More about talk.
- **10/3** Nonverbal dimensions of interpersonal interaction. *Read chapter 8.*
- **10/5** Nonverbal. *Exam review.*
- **10/7** No class. *Attend a keynote presentation at the Feminisms and Rhetorics conference. Attendance must be verified by instructor.*
Exam #2 (chapters 5-8).
Partner paper: in-class case
Partner paper: in-class discussion

Relational systems. Read chapter 9.
Relational systems. Partner papers due.
Power and the dark side of interpersonal communication. Read chapter 10

Power asymmetries and assistance
One-point presentation assignments
Conflict processes. Read chapter 11.

Conflict management
Cyberspace relations. Read chapter 12.
Interpersonal relations on-line. Exam review.

Exam #3
One-point presentations
One-point presentations
In-class group project preparation
Group project research
Group project proposals due

Thanksgiving recess

Summary of text concepts
Summary of text concepts

Group project presentations
Group project presentations
Course conclusion

Exam week (no exam)
**Assignments**

**Involvement**

Involvement is a global assessment of the quality of your participation in the course over the semester. You will have an opportunity to give input and receive input on how your involvement is graded. The dimensions for grading are as follows:

- Civility and respect in all classroom interactions and with all class members.
- Academic integrity and ethical conduct in all course assignments.
- Regular attendance, arriving on-time, staying in the classroom throughout class, and leaving only after all class business is finished.
- Careful preparation including reading all assigned materials and turning in papers and projects on time.
- Relevant participation in class discussions and activities throughout the semester.
- Fair and useful contributions to partner and group assignments and in-class activities.
- Conversations and questions about class materials with classmates, the instructor, and over the email list that clarify concepts, contribute insights, or add substantively to the class.

**Exams**

These will cover both assigned readings and lecture or discussion materials. The exams will typically include multiple-choice, matching and short-answer questions.

**Partner paper**

You will be paired with another student from the class to discuss a question about interpersonal communication prompted by a case presented in-class. You and your partner will write a 2-page (typed, double-spaced) paper about both your interactions and about your answers to the question.

**One-point presentation**

Each student will give a 2-3 minute presentation that both applies the skills of chapters 4-8 and elaborates on one particular concept from those chapters.

**Final group project/paper assignment**

Groups of 3-4 will choose a particular concept from the textbook, research the concept, and adapt their findings to a particular target group that would benefit from this information.