HU3820 Fall 2009

Instructors:
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Office hours: 11:05-Noon MWF

Texts:
Pdfs as assigned

Course Description:
Examines practices and issues of relational communication and encourages critical awareness of common assumptions. Topics include verbal and nonverbal cues, conflict models, friendship, intimacy, and the interpersonal significance of race, gender, class, and disability.

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. You will be asked to reflect on your own assumptions and experiences in order to more fully develop your understanding of yourself as an interpersonal communicator.

Objectives:
1. Gain familiarity with basic skills and research findings about interpersonal communication.
2. Practice skills of interviewing and presenting information about interpersonal communication practices.
3. Reflect on personal habits and assumptions in view of relational concepts.
4. Identify the ethical and social significance of familiar stories as relational narratives.
5. Engage philosophical and ethical issues about what interpersonal communication is and our responsibilities as communicators.
6. Develop awareness of cultural contexts.

Course Policies:

• Please turn off cell phones and laptops.

• After three absences, I will deduct 5 points from your final grade in the class for each additional absence. The MTU epidemic policies will apply if necessary. See http://www.mtu.edu/flu/
• There will be no make-up for in-class activities including presentations. If you cannot make a scheduled presentation date, you must notify me in advance to reschedule.

• Plagiarism will be reported to the Dean of Students so carefully document any sources you use for your presentations. Please refer to the MTU Academic Integrity Policies at http://www.studentaffairs.mtu.edu/dean/judicial/policies/academic_integrity.html

• 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) of 1990. If you have a disability and need a reasonable accommodation for equal access to education or services at Michigan Tech, please call the Dean of Students Office at 906-487-2212. For other concerns about discrimination, you may contact your advisor, department head, or the Affirmative Action Office at 906-487-3310. Affirmative Action Policies: www.mtu.edu/admin/force/peppolicy/div.html.

Disability Services Policies:
www.mtu.edu/admin/force/student_handbook/student_services.html/disability

Equal Opportunity Statement:
www.mtu.edu/admin/force/policy/eho/chain7.htm

Grading:

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Grading scale: 95-100 points A; 92-90 points A-; 89-87 points B+; 86-83 points B; 82-80 points B-; 79-77 points C+; 76-73 points C; 72-70 points C-; 69-67 points D+; 66-63 points D; 62-60 points D-; below 60 points F

Assignments:

Narrative Project

This is a three-part project designed to help students develop an awareness of the relational significance of narrative at work in interpersonal communication. Some of these 'steps' will be completed during class time.

• Consider a 'family' story, or a story that has become particularly meaningful to you. Write it down and answer the following questions...(1) Why is this story important? (2) Have you heard it often? (3) Is it an experience that actually happened to you or did it happen to someone else? (4) Who told it to you? (5) Does the story require an action or cause you to think about things differently?

• Popular culture is full of stories that seem to shape the way we think about things. Find a story, be it film, music, fairy tale, etc that you think serves to speak an important message to audiences. Examine the story and answer the following questions: Why is this story important? How does it shape my
understanding of the world? Have I considered the themes of this story in my
communication with others? Have I told another person about this story? Why
is it so effective?

- Re-tell the story changing themes to the opposite of the original telling. How
does this effect the outcome of the story? Does it change the values at work in
shaping popular culture? Why?

**Interview Report (3 pages)**

Do an interview on any topic relevant to interpersonal communication. You may wish
to tape-record the interview. The goal is to develop your own strategies of questioning
and listening and to learn about interpersonal communication strategies or assumptions
in use.

**Bridge Reading Responses (2 pages)**

In the Stewart text, read the assigned reading and respond to 2 of the review questions
at the end of that reading (do not choose fill-in the blank questions) and one of the Probe
questions (total: 2 Review and 1 Probe). The goal is to give careful attention to the
reading and to reflect on your own practices in light of the ideas you learn.

**Research project and presentation (minimum + pages + source reviews; due 12/3-12/12)**

As part of a small group, develop a project inspired by our readings about interpersonal
communication and aimed at improving the communication habits/skills/ideas of a
specified group. Prepare a +-page report and a 15-minute presentation on a topic we
have discussed – friendship or conflict, for example – or one that is not addressed in our
texts – for example, the interpersonal aspects of blogging. The project must involve
research updating our knowledge of the topic – a minimum of 7 scholarly sources and 3
popular sources that you must connect to the concepts from the Stewart text. The goal
is to learn more about a topic of interest and to think carefully about how to make the
ideas you learn useful to a particular audience.