

SPE/WGS 203 – Summer 2015
Interpersonal Communication

Professor: Keith Hardeman

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“Office Hours”: email or Skype me (keith.hardeman in Columbia, MO), and I will normally respond quickly.

Text: *Looking Out/Looking In*. Ron Adler and Russell Proctor (14th edition, 2014). I know books are expensive, but their content is part of the education process. It is assumed that all students purchase (or have access 100% of the time to) this book and edition. Choosing not to have the book or having an older edition could significantly hinder your success in this class.

General Course Objectives: The student should learn definitions and applications of various interpersonal communication theories including (but not limited to) areas of general communication theory, perception, semantics, nonverbal communication, listening, defensiveness, conflict resolution, and relationships. Since interpersonal communication is normally a live, face-to-face transaction, we obviously encounter some obstacles in doing this online. Nonetheless, we will make every attempt to apply our ideas in cyber communication and demonstrate a number of communication competencies.

All class materials, this course syllabus, course announcements, course assignments, and PowerPoint slides for the course can be found on the class Moodle site. ***It is extremely important that you keep up with material and class assignments.*** This is an online course, so it is completely self-directed. Keep an eye on all assignments and tests and their respective deadlines.

Online: This is an **online** class. Perpetual and reliable access to a working computer and to the internet is required at all times during the six weeks of the course. This is non-negotiable. If you're somewhere without reliable internet service, then you are responsible for finding a place that has it before any impending deadline occurs. Given the perpetual availability of computers and wireless internet service, computer problems on your end will not be considered an acceptable excuse for missing a deadline.

Class: This is an online **class**. Though there are obvious flexibility advantages in taking this course online versus onsite, it is still a Westminster College class with Westminster College-level expectations. Deadlines matter, and you are expected to meet them.

Netiquette: Your course instructor and fellow students wish to foster a safe online learning environment. All opinions and experiences, no matter how different or controversial they may be perceived, ***must be respected in the tolerant spirit of academic discourse.*** You are encouraged to comment, question, or even critique an idea in your discussion posts (should you post anything). We can respectfully agree to disagree, and we can even respectfully comment on why we disagree. But ***you are not to attack an individual.*** Doing so will have an adverse effect on your semester grade. Our differences will add richness to this learning experience. Please consider that sarcasm and humor can be misconstrued in online interactions and generate unintended reactions. Working as a community of learners will allow us to build a polite and respectful course ambience.

Written Work: Late submission of your paper will be accepted for reduced credit depending, of course, on how late.

Academic Honesty: Westminster College's Honor Code, as well as College policies regarding honesty, ethics and professionalism will be respected.

Assignments and grading: The course work consists of three exams, one quiz, class participation (through our Discussion Forum), and one 3-5 page essay. The following is a tentative grading scale, which is subject to change in the event of added or deleted material:

Assignments and grading (continued):

- ***Exams and Quiz:*** (Exams are 50 points each; Quiz is 25 points; 175 possible): The exams will cover textbook readings and lecture (PowerPoint) material, and any handout given during a particular unit. Exams will be taken onsite and not online. You will need to communicate your class schedule to me asap so that I can find times for you to come in to take the exam.
- ***Posting on discussion boards:*** (30 points possible) ***Posting to discussion boards:*** (Each post and one response [five points each, **if substantive**, less if not] worth 10 for a total of 30 points possible): Reading assignments will be followed by a discussion board for that topic on three of the four units. Students will post to the professor's question, as related to the readings (text and/or handouts), a *minimum* of two substantive, well-written paragraphs. You must incorporate information from the readings and/or the posted unit PowerPoints. In addition to my evaluating your content, proper grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization do count in my assessment. Students will then be required to respond to at least one other student's original post, again, a minimum of two paragraphs each. Missing a discussion-post or response deadline will result in a zero for that section of the discussion.
- ***Essay/Short paper*** (30 points possible): You will write an essay (about 3-5 pages) about a communication theory or concept and its application to your communication style. You will be assessed on your correct usage, explanations, and applications of terminology from that particular unit (and past units, if needed).

*Notes on grading: I grade on a straight percent scale:

- A (90-100%)
- B+ (87-89.99)
- B (82-86.99)
- B- (80-81.99)
- C+ (77-79.99)
- C (72-76.99)
- C- (70-79.99)
- D+ (67-69.99)
- D (62-66.99)
- D- (60-61.99)
- F (0-59.99)

- 1) The minimum point value you see per grade must be attained in order to receive that grade.
- 2) All assignment grades in this class reflect my professional assessment of your work and ability to follow directions. Standards and grades are non-negotiable. It is my responsibility to make my standards clear, and students are responsible for meeting/exceeding those standards.
- 3) Students often ask me why I deducted points in a certain portion of the paper. An assignment is not an A until proven otherwise. It is a zero until proven otherwise.

General Class policies:

- 1) ***Exam Schedule:*** An exam date is sacrosanct. Exams are timed at about 35 minutes. You will have a 14-hour window during which to take and complete an exam. Should you not complete your exam during that window, you will receive a zero.
- 2) ***Academic Dishonesty:*** This is the intentional *or* unintentional act of copying, paraphrasing, or somehow using another's work without giving credit to the work's originator on a written or oral assignment, or copying someone else's past or present exam. It is unequivocally the most personally and professionally disrespectful thing you can do with your professor. At the very minimum, the assignment or exam in question will be graded as a zero. If you are caught, your professor loses all trust in you. It might be in your best interest to withdraw from class at that point.

Course Schedule

Unit 1: The self and communication

- Intro to communication theory
- Self-concept and self-disclosure
- Perception

PowerPoints and Chapters 1, 2, 3

Discussion posts and responses to posts

Exam 1

Unit 2: Verbal and Nonverbal messages

- Semantics – Meaning is in people, not in words
- Nonverbal communication – What you do “speaks” so loudly I often don’t hear what you say

PowerPoints and Chapters 5, 6

Discussion posts and responses to posts

Exam 2

Unit 3: Communication and problem-solving

- Listening – I know you believe you understand what you think I said, but I’m not sure you realize what you heard is not what I meant!
- Lessening toxic defensive communication – Build bridges, not walls
- Conflict: productive and destructive problem-solving strategies
 - 1) Interpersonal conflict - Control your *self*
 - 2) The art of confrontation with grace – Aggressiveness vs. assertiveness
 - 3) Power in conflict

PowerPoints and Chapters 7, 10, and 11

Essay/Short paper

[No discussion this unit. Just focus on your paper and exam preparation.]

Exam 3

Unit 4 Relationships and Termination

- Universals of relationships – So far, so good. We’ve been moving right along just like we should
- Deterioration and termination – All good things must come to an end

PowerPoints and Chapter 8

Discussion posts and responses to posts

Final Quiz

Federal Credit hour policies require that students complete a total of 45 hours of work for each academic credit they receive (time in class plus time outside of class). For a 3-credit course, that means a minimum total of 135 hours. Translated into six weeks, that means 22.5 hours per week.