

COMS 5360.02: ADVANCED INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION  
SYLLABUS, FALL 2012

*Course Description*

Methodological and theoretical issues in relational communication. Prerequisite: COMS 2386 or the equivalent. Credit 3.

*Instructor*

Dr. Richard Bello  
Office: 322B Dan Rather Communications Building  
Office Hours: 11:00 – 12:00 MWF; also by appointment  
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*Course Objectives*

- To enhance understanding of the most commonly employed empirical theories of interpersonal communication across a variety of relational contexts (friendship, family, romance, etc.)
- To become acquainted with major research findings associated with each empirical theory of interpersonal communication.
- To think in more sophisticated ways about interpersonal communication and improve ability to conduct research about it.
- To share effectively and appropriately, in writing and orally, one's thinking and research about interpersonal communication.

*Required Readings*

Students are required to read works by Baxter and Braithwaite (2008) and Guerrero, Andersen, and Afifi (2011). One of the single most important things you can do as a graduate student of communication studies is to actually read these materials in a timely manner!

*Class Meetings and Attendance*

Attendance is absolutely essential because the course process depends largely on discussions of topics that are prepared and led by students themselves. There will, therefore, be a participation grade that is influenced by two criteria: attendance itself and the ability to meaningfully participate in discussions of course material. These participation grades will be automatically lowered by one letter for every absence beyond two. Credit for attendance depends on students arriving to class on time and staying for the entire time the class meets.

### *Class Procedure*

There will occasionally be mini-lectures by the instructor that deal with especially important or complex topics. However, the majority of class time will be taken up by presentations and discussions that are prepared and led by individual students.

### *Projects and Grading Policy*

Most significant to this course will be a research paper that is 15 to 20 pages long. The assignment is to review literature that deals with how at least one, but no more than three, of the theories covered (Baxter & Braithwaite, 2008) are related to one of the course relevant topics (Guerrero, Andersen, & Afifi, 2011). The key focus of the paper, in other words, is to apply interpersonal communication theories to some aspect of interpersonal communication behavior, so that the result is a unique, original set of hypotheses and/or research questions. How well the paper does this will primarily determine its grade. Papers must also be engagingly written, well organized, grammatically and mechanically correct, and follow appropriate elements of style (APA). Students will also present the key findings of their research papers in class.

Another integral part of the course will be planned presentations and discussions led by individual students. Each student will prepare three to six of these, each dealing with a separate theory (and chapter) covered in the Baxter and Braithwaite book. Prepare a two to three page outline of the chapter and bring enough copies for everyone in the class. Also, prepare a set of questions designed to promote class discussion about the theory, and be prepared to lead that discussion after (or during) your presentation.

There will also be a comprehensive final exam during the week set aside for finals.

Class participation determines the remainder of the final grade (see “Class Meetings and Attendance” section above). ALL students are expected both to read the appropriate chapters BEFORE those chapters are presented in class and to come prepared to discuss them.

Breakdown: Paper 40%, Test 25%, Pres/Disc’s 25%, Participation 10%

### *General Class Policies*

- A. Be on time.
- B. Don't leave early.
- C. **In class, turn off all cell phones, beepers, or other electronic communication devices.**
- D. Arrive to class rested and ready to participate. Be open and receptive to new ideas--you will hear a lot of them this semester. Questioning your assumptions is the basis of learning.

E. Project makeups or late papers will be allowed with no penalty only if the student can present written evidence of a legitimate reason for having missed the due date. Minus a legitimate, documented reason, late papers will either not be accepted or, at the discretion of the instructor, will be accepted with a penalty of at least one letter grade.

F. Plagiarism will result, at a minimum, in a zero for the assignment involved.

H. If you have a documented disability that requires assistance, please contact the Chair of the Committee for Continuing Assistance for Disabled Students at 294-1720.

Notice: You will find online a more detailed description of these policies at <http://www.shsu.edu/syllabus/>

### *Course Outline*

9-4	Syllabus and orientation to course
9-11	Chapters 1, GAA; Chapter 1, BB; Assignment of presentations
9-18	Chapter 2, GAA Pres./Disc: Face Theory (15, BB); Politeness Theory (19, BB)
9-25	Chapter 3, GAA Pres./Disc: Constructivism Theory (4, BB)
10-2	Chapter 4, GAA Pres./Disc: Uncertainty Management Theories (9, BB); Uncertainty Reduction Theory (10, BB)
10-9	Chapter 5, GAA Pres./Disc: Stage Theories of Relationship Development (27, BB)
10-16	Chapter 6, GAA Pres./Disc: Affection Exchange Theory (21, BB)
10-23	Chapter 7, GAA Pres./Disc: Attachment Theory (22, BB)

10-30	Chapters 8 & 9, GAA Pres./Disc: Communication Accommodation Theory (12, BB); Relational Dialectics Theory (9, BB)
11-6	Chapter 10, GAA Pres./Disc: Social Exchange Theories (10, BB)
11-13	Chapter 11, GAA Pres./Disc: Relational Communication Theory (25, BB)
11-20	Chapter 12, GAA Pres./Disc: Communication Privacy Management Theory (23, BB)
11-27	Chapter 13, GAA Pres./Disc: Information Manipulation Theory (16, BB); Interpersonal Deception Theory (17, BB)
12-4	Chapters 14 & 15, GAA Pres./Disc: Attribution Theory (3, BB) Research Paper Due
12-11	Final Examination

#### References

- Baxter, L. A., & Braithwaite, D. O. (2008). *Engaging theories in interpersonal communication: Multiple perspectives*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Guerrero, L. K., Andersen, P. A., & Afifi, W. A. (2011). *Close encounters: Communication in relationships*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.