

COM 491.01: UNDERGRADUATE SEMINAR IN COMMUNICATION STUDIES  
SYLLABUS, FALL 2009  
TT 9:30 – 10:50 Room EV105

*Course Description*

This course allows students to pursue particular problems or issues beyond the limits of current course offerings. The special topic for this semester is **deception**. 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 better understand the key communication concepts, theory, and research findings related to lying and deception.
- To gain insight into various ethical perspectives on lying and deception.
- To better recognize and understand key verbal and nonverbal indicators of deception.
- To gain a more realistic conception of our abilities to detect deception in our interactions with others as well as in mass-mediated (public) situations.
- To better understand the various motivations underlying lying and deception.
- To become better consumers of potentially deceptive and misleading information.

*Required Textbook*

Knapp, M. L. (2008). *Lying and deception in human interaction*. Boston: Penguin Academics.

This required reading will serve both as a basis of classroom lectures and discussions as well as a supplement to them. Do not always expect an exact relationship between what goes on in class and what you read in the book, but do note carefully the reading assignments on the course outline that follows.

*Class Meetings and Attendance*

If poor attendance prevents you from being exposed to theory and research about deceptive communication through classroom lectures and discussions, then it is difficult to develop the understanding necessary to truly improve your ability to analyze and apply the theories and research. In addition, your participation in class discussions is an aid to improving your fellow classmates' understanding.

Therefore, attendance is so important that students who accumulate four unexcused absences will have their class participation grades lowered by one letter grade. In addition, for every unexcused

absence beyond four, class participation will be lowered another letter grade.

### *Class Procedure*

The class roll will be taken promptly at the start of every class period, so students are expected to be on time. A variety of methods will be used to conduct class, including lecture, informal student discussions, and more formal classroom exercises including videos. These exercises are designed to test or demonstrate concepts raised in discussions and lectures and to stimulate thinking about deceptive communication. Plenty of opportunity will be given for students to ask questions about material encountered in class or read in the textbook.

### *Exams, Projects, and Grading Policy*

The final grade will be based primarily on three major exams, with the possibility of a few announced and unannounced quizzes. These exams and quizzes will count for 60% of the final grade.

Also significant to your grade will be several brief writing projects involving the course video material and a set of interviews. You will conduct two interviews with two different individuals about deceptive practices and complete a required form for each one. Also, you will respond in writing to two videos of your choice using a similar form. (For this reason, and for test purposes, take good notes about each video shown in class.) These four writing assignments and the oral presentation of your findings will count for 30% of the final grade.

Class participation and attendance will count for 10% of the final grade. Part of that grade will be based on adherence to the general class policies outlined below.

### *General Class Policies*

A. Be on time. If you arrive **after the roll is called** or **leave early**, you are considered absent. If you happen to arrive late, see me after class so that the absence can be changed to a tardy (three such tardies count as one absence). Student Absences on Religious Holy Days: Students are allowed to miss class and other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. Students remain responsible for all work.

B. Don't "leave" early, that is, pack up books, stand up, etc. near the end of class. The class period is over when the allotted time is completely up or when the instructor dismisses class.

C. In class, turn off all cell phones, iPods, Blackberries, or other electronic communication devices. Use of laptop computers in the classroom is allowed only for the purpose of taking lecture notes.

D. Listen carefully as well as courteously and take thorough notes. Students are expected to assist in maintaining a classroom environment that is conducive to learning. Students are to treat other students and faculty with respect. Under no circumstances are cell phones or any electronic devices to be used or seen during times of examination. Students may tape record lectures provided they do not disturb other students in the process.

E. 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.

F. Written assignments will be accepted up to one class period after they are originally due. However, such late assignments will be given less than full credit. No assignments will be accepted more than one class period after the due date, except in the most extenuating of circumstances and at the discretion of the instructor. Exam makeups and late papers will be allowed with no penalty only if the student can present evidence of a legitimate reason for having missed the due date. These reasons are: illness requiring a doctor's visit, required presence in court or other legal proceedings, and death in the immediate family. Students who miss exams or papers without a legitimate, documented reason will receive a zero on these assignments unless, at the discretion of the instructor, extenuating circumstances warrant a makeup penalized by at least one letter grade.

G. Plagiarism or cheating on exams will result, at a minimum, in a zero for those assignments. In addition, depending on the circumstances, the instructor will consider reporting the case to the student's academic dean for further disciplinary action or assigning a failing grade for the course. Any and all available means for detecting plagiarism of papers will be used, including electronic services.

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*

1st Week: Perspectives on Lying, Deception, and the Truth (Chapters 1 & 2)

- A. The Communicative Nature of Lying and Deception
- B. Lying and Deception: The Same Thing?
- C. Determining What is True

2nd Week: Ethics and the Use of Deception (Chapter 3)

- A. The Presumption of Honesty and its Importance
- B. An Ethical Perspective on Lying and Lie Detection

Monday, September 1st: Labor Day Holiday

3rd Week: The Biology of Deception (Chapter 4)

4th Week: Lying and Deception in Children (Chapter 5)

- A. Evolution of Childhood Lying
- B. The Parental Role

## **Exam # 1**

5th Week: Can We Deceive Ourselves? (Chapter 6)

- A. Motives
- B. How is it Possible?
- C. Are There Advantages to Self-Deception?

6th and 7th Weeks: Communicative Lying Behavior (Chapter 7)

- A. Types of Deception (IMT and Other Models)
- B. How We “Perform” Deception (IDT)
- C. The Close Relatives of Lying

8th Week: Special Types of Deceivers (Chapter 8)

9th, 10th, and 11th Weeks: The Detection of Lies

- A. Unassisted (Chapter 9)
- B. Assisted (Chapter 10)

## **Exam #2**

12th and 13th Weeks: The Politics of Lies (or the Lies of Politics?) (Chapter 11)

- A. The Special Nature of Public Deception
- B. Is Honesty Really the Best Policy?
- C. Famous Lies and Liars
- D. Protecting Ourselves

14th and 15th Weeks: Deception in Writing and Visual Imagery (Chapters 12 & 13)

November 25th, 26th, and 27th: Thanksgiving Holiday

16th Week: Summary and Presentations

17th Week: **Exam #3**