

Community Applied Communication (Fall 2017)

COMS 2385.01 3 credit hours
Dan Rather Room 320 T/H 12:30 – 1:50 PM
Professor: Terri Jagers
Office Location: Dan Rather Bldg. 322-D
Telephone: 936-294-4318 E-mail: tej003@shsu.edu

Required Course Text

Allen, B.J. (2004). *Difference matters: Communicating social identity*. IL: Waveland.

Elmore, T. (2010). *Habitudes: The Art of Connection with Others*. Atlanta, GA: Poet Gardener.

Course Objectives and Outcomes

This course will focus on theoretical and practical issues regarding relationships between communication processes in contemporary U.S. organizations and socially constructed aspects of identity. Students will apply these skills within three specific community projects with various on and off campus project engagements. These community engagement projects will be ongoing through the course both on and off campus requiring more than 9 hours of outside coursework participation per student. Among the communication processes this course will concentrate on include communication among gender, race, sexual identity, social class, ability, hierarchy and age. The primary theoretical foundation of this course is social constructionism, which basically contends that humans create reality through interaction.

Based upon the idea that individual/group differences make a difference (they “matter”), course materials and activities will address a variety of related concerns (“matters”). These include theoretical perspectives, socio-historical developments, research issues, and practical issues. To explore these issues, the course focuses on how systems of power and privilege help shape perceptions of salient social identity groups within the United States, and how individuals and groups resist and transform those systems. In application, students will be participating in small groups in developing and implementing objectives specific to the organization the students are assigned.

The course also delves into communication issues relevant to ways that we learn about social identities from such sources as our families, the media, and organizations. To explore these matters, we will take a critical approach, which means looking for power dynamics, including domination, compliance, and resistance. We also will self-consciously delve into our personal perceptions, perspectives, and experiences as related to course materials. In addition, we will discuss implications of our studies for social change.

This course further aims to equip students with the wisdom to create healthy relationships, listen respectfully, encourage those around them, and effectively handle criticism. Students application

of these habits and attitudes will improve their ability to internalize important principles enabling them to successfully connect interpersonally with others. That ability will help guide them as they step beyond college into their careers.

We will analyze and discuss work from several disciplines, including communication, sociology, organizational behavior, ethnic studies, psychology, education, disability studies, and philosophy. We will consider diverse types of organizations, such as corporations, educational institutions, non-profits, and media conglomerates. And, we will address many modes of communication. The assigned organizations and their basic objectives in coordination with the course material are:

Orphan Care Solutions of Texas: A Texas non-profit organization whose membership includes over 70 faith based organizations in Texas who have a focus on improving the plight of Texas' foster care system. Participants will work with the OCS Board of Directors and engage in their choice of one of three different projects that will forward the State of Texas' efforts to improve our foster care system.

We will explore how communication helps to create and sustain understandings of ourselves in relationship to different and similar others in society and in organizational contexts. We will engage the term 'organization' as a noun and a verb by investigating how communication occurs *in* organizations as well as how it *functions to organize* social and organizational relationships. As a result of the students' participation in the community engagement projects, students will gain understanding and life application of soft communication skills as well as opportunities to navigate through barriers of "differences" (gender, race, sexual identity, social class, ability/disability, hierarchy and age) that matter in the communication process prevalent within today's job market. In addition, each student will be assigned to an executive/professional from outside the university that will serve as their mentor during the course. Each participating community professional will assist in the course by assess the student's communication skills/needs as relates to current industry standards and requirements.

Course Policies

1. **Attendance.** Instruction in this course is lecture and participation based, therefore regular attendance is required. All students start with an attendance grade of 100 points. You are allowed to miss **3 class hours (TTH 2 absences)** without penalty and all absences after that will result in a ten point deduction from the attendance grade. Students missing **six or more class hours** will receive an "F" in the course. Students will not be dropped from the course due to absences; therefore you are responsible for attending or dropping. **I do not accept excuses!** You are allowed to miss 3 class hours without penalty, use them wisely. (Meaning, on your fourth class hour absence points will be deducted because you have already used your 3 "free" class hour absences.) If you are absent, it is your responsibility to find out what work you missed (either from another student or myself) and complete all assignments by the due date. You are responsible for signing the class attendance sheet for each class session. Your signature becomes official documentation that you were in class; if you do not sign-in you will be considered absent!

You will be considered absent if you do not attend the entire class period. That is, staying for only half of the class, or coming in 15 minutes before the end of class, or consistently coming 5-10 minutes late does not mean that you attended class. Two tardies will count as one absence. (This pattern continues in increments of two.) Students sleeping during class will be considered absent.

Note: An undetermined number of unannounced quizzes may be used to encourage attendance. These quizzes will be given at the beginning of the class period and there will be no make-up quizzes for late students.

2. **Final Examination.** You must be on time. Students more than 15 minutes late will not be allowed to take the exam.

3. **NO late assignments will be accepted. No late presentations will be allowed. However, if you are incapacitated (aka in the hospital) and provide an excuse you will be allowed to make up your oral presentation with a 25 point penalty.**

You are responsible for turning in assignments on time. Keep up with the course activities and due dates to ensure you do not miss a deadline.

ALL assignments must be typed. Failure to type assignments will result in a significant point deduction.

4. **Plagiarism.** Plagiarism is defined as "the unauthorized use or close imitation of the language and thoughts of another author and the representation of them as one's own original work" (Dictionary.com). All work must be the original composition of each student. Although you must use outside sources, you must cite them appropriately. Plagiarism will result in a zero for the assignment. Assignments will be checked for plagiarism by **any and all means available**, including electronic checking services (i.e. Turnitin.com). The University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including, but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other

academic work which is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource materials.

5. **Americans with Disabilities Act.** If you are a qualified student with a disability seeking accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act, you are required to self-identify with the Committee for Continuing Assistance for Disabled Students at 294-1720.

It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance are expected to visit with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Counseling Center. They should then make arrangements with their individual instructors so that appropriate strategies can be considered and helpful procedures can be developed to ensure that participation and achievement opportunities are not impaired.

SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If a student has a disability that may affect adversely his/her work in this class, then the student is encouraged to register with the SHSU Counseling Center and to talk with the instructor about how best to deal with the situation. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. NOTE: no accommodation can be made until the student registers with the Counseling Center.

6. **Religious Holidays.** Section 51.911(b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence.

"Religious holy day" means a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20, Tax Code.

7. **Classroom Visitors.** Unannounced visitors to class must present a current, official SHSU identification card to be permitted into the classroom. They must not present a disruption to the class by their attendance. It is at the instructor's discretion whether or not the visitor will be allowed to remain in the classroom.

8. **IDEA System.** Students are asked to complete an IDEA evaluation of the course and the instructor at the end of the semester. Participation is voluntary.

9. Presentations may be video taped for future review.

10. **Classroom conduct.** Free discussion, inquiry, and expression are encouraged in this class. Classroom behavior that interferes with either the instructor's ability to conduct the class or the ability of students to benefit from the instruction is not acceptable. Examples may include routinely entering class late or departing early; use of mobile phones, or other electronic devices; texting; repeatedly talking in class without being recognized; talking while others are

Page | 4

speaking or arguing in a way that is perceived as crossing the civility line. In the event of a situation where a student legitimately needs to carry a beeper/phone to class, prior approval of the instructor is required.

Students are expected to read and abide by all rules and policies in the SHSU Student Handbook. The Code of Student Conduct and Discipline is found at the following link:

<http://www.shsu.edu/dept/dean-of-students/documents/2016-2018%20Student%20Guidelines.pdf>

www.shsu.edu/syllabus

Assignments and Requirements

You must complete and be prepared to discuss all assigned readings by the date indicated on the syllabus. Also, you must submit assignments by the beginning of the class session on designated due dates.

Your course grade will be based upon the following:

Attendance 10% (100 points)

Reflection Papers 20% (200 points)

In Class Community Applied Project Participation 10% (100 points)

Out of Class Community Applied Project (CAP) 20% (200 points)

Oral/Written Presentations 15% (150 points)

In Class Textbook Discussion Participation 15% (150 points)

Quizzes 5% (50 points)

Final Exam 5% (50 points)

Point Scale Letter Grade
900 – 1000 = A
800 – 899 = B
700 – 799 = C
600 – 699 = D
Below 600 = F

Attendance (10%, 100 points): Active student participation is imperative to maximize the learning potential of this course. Therefore, you should attend each class. Please inform me if you are not able to come to class, and we can negotiate whether or not and how you might receive partial credit.

Reflection Papers: Details forthcoming (20%, 2@100 points each) Each paper should demonstrate how you are constructing knowledge based on your experiences from both; your community engagement project and personal experiences through the course. Questions to consider addressing in your reflection include: What has been striking thus far in the course? What have you learned? How are you thinking/behaving/feeling differently as a result of the course? The papers must meet the following criteria:

- State an analytical thesis
- Support the thesis
- Refer to personal responses and experiences
- Connect personal responses and experiences to course readings and community engagement project.
- Demonstrate knowledge of concepts covered in the paper
- Indicate practical implications of your self-analysis
- Adhere to APA style
- Text content should be 3-4 pages long (not including references)

Community Applied Project – 30% (10% In class participation, 20% out of class, total of 300 points): You should always be prepared to participate fully in class. Grading criteria for participation include the following behaviors: seems prepared; listens actively; offers thoughtful comments and responses; asks thoughtful questions; allows and invites others to speak; solicits feedback; responds well to feedback; demonstrates cumulative learning; and, shows initiative. Your work product outside of class will be evaluated by your professor, your team peers as well as a representative of the organization of your community applied project. This evaluation will include the setting and achievement of goals and final work product.

Oral/Written Presentations (15% 150 points): Throughout the course, each group will be required to brief the class on the status of their project. This grade is a comprehensive grade of those oral presentations and the group's notes reflecting their progress.

Instructor's Notes

My office is in the Communication building room 322-D. If there is something you do not understand or need help with please come see me. I encourage you to make an appointment even if it is during office hours because I may step out of my office for a few minutes. I am in my office more than the posted office hours, if you need to see me at another time please make an appointment.

My office hours are tentatively scheduled as:

Tues/Thurs: 11:00 AM – 12:20 PM and 3:30 – 5:00 PM
(By appointment if at all possible.)

My Fall 2017 teaching schedule is:

COMS 1361.04	Tues/Thurs	9:30 – 10:50 AM	Room 320
COMS 2385.01	Tues/Thurs	12:30 – 1:50 PM	Room 320
COMS 1361.14	Tues/Thurs	2:00 – 3:20 PM	Room 312
COMS 4378.01	INTERNSHIPS OFF AND ONSITE		

Continuation of enrollment in this course indicates acceptance of the terms and requirements of this syllabus.