

COMS 5380: ADVANCED FAMILY COMMUNICATION  
SYLLABUS, FALL 2017

*Course Description*

Methodological and theoretical issues in family communication. Credit 3. (Online Instructional Method)

*Instructor*

Dr. Richard Bello  
Office: 290F College of Humanities and Social Sciences 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 family communication.
- To become acquainted with major research findings associated with family communication.
- To think in more sophisticated ways about family communication and improve ability to conduct research about it.
- To demonstrate knowledge of the development of and current state of the family communication field.
- To share effectively and appropriately one's thinking and research about family communication.

*Required Readings*

Students are required to read works by Arnold (2008) and Floyd and Morman (2014). 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!

Arnold, L. B. (2008). *Family communication: Theory and research*. Boston, MA: Pearson  
(ISBN 978-0-205-45364-1)

Floyd, K., & Morman, M. T. (2014). *Widening the family circle: New research on family communication*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. (ISBN 978-1-4522-5694-8)

*Class Meetings and Attendance*

Although the class is on-line, attendance is still important for you to do well and to get the most out of the learning process. Students will be required to check in at least once a week for several purposes (see below).

*Class Procedure*

Students will check in each week in order to respond to discussion board material prompted by at least one student "presentation" outline from the Floyd and Morman (FM) book (including the posting of a research article related to the chapter and a set of discussion questions). You will also have to respond to a set of discussion/review questions posted by the instructor regarding a chapter from the Arnold book.

There might occasionally be mini-lectures by the instructor (in video or written form) 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 and, to some degree, the instructor.

### *Project and Grading Policy*

In addition to the discussion board presentations and postings, there will be a research paper that is 12 to 20 pages long. It should be an exhaustive literature review on a topic related to family communication, a review that should lead logically to a set of hypotheses and/or research questions, and conclude with a brief discussion of how you might go about testing the hypotheses or answering the questions posed. Papers must also be engagingly written, well organized, grammatically and mechanically correct, and follow appropriate elements of style (APA, 6<sup>th</sup> edition). Papers should NOT have been written for any class other than this one. Students might be asked to present the key findings of their research papers to the class.

The outline presentations of chapters (mentioned above in "Class Procedure" section) will be done approximately three to six times by each student during the course of the semester, and they each deal with a chapter (from the FM book) that covers a body of new research on a particular context for family communication. The outlines need to be a minimum of two to three pages long, and should follow principles of good outlining, with clear organization, consistent use of levels of subdivision (main points, subpoints, sub-subpoints, etc.), clear language and explanations, and the like. Also, prepare a set of questions designed to promote class discussion about the chapter on the discussion board, and include these within or at the end of the outline. Finally, post a link to an empirical research article that is related to the chapter's topic.

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

Grading breakdown: Paper 40%, Test 20%, Presentations 20%, and Discussion Responses 20%

### *General Class Policies*

A. Students are expected to assist in maintaining a course environment that is conducive to learning. All students and faculty are to be treated with courtesy and respect. I expect that an attitude that encourages freedom of discussion and intellectual inquiry will prevail. Therefore, behavior in this course that interferes with the potential for students to learn or my ability to adequately conduct the class is simply not acceptable. Students should read and adhere to all policies contained in the SHSU Student Handbook. The Code of Student Conduct and Discipline can be found here, along with plenty of other useful information for students:

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

B. Be open and receptive to new ideas--you will be exposed to a lot of them this semester. Questioning your assumptions is the basis of learning.

C. Exam/presentation 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.

D. Plagiarism will result, at a minimum, in a zero for the assignment involved. Student work will be checked for plagiarism by any means available, including electronic plagiarism-detecting services, an example of which is Turnitin. If students have ANY questions about what constitutes plagiarism, they should direct those questions to me, not other students!

E. 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.

F. Your continued enrollment in this course indicates that you have accepted the conditions of this syllabus.

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

*Course Outline\**

8/29	Syllabus, orientation, student introductions
9/5	Chapter 1, Arnold; Intro chapter, FM; Assignment of presentations
9/12	Chapter 2, Arnold Pres/Disc: Chapter 3, FM
9/19	Chapter 3, Arnold Pres/Disc: Chapter 8, FM
9/26	Chapter 4, Arnold Pres/Disc: Chapter 11, FM
10/3	Chapter 5, Arnold Pres/Disc: Chapter 2, FM
10/10	Chapter 6, Arnold Pres/Disc: Chapter 1, FM
10/17	Chapter 7, Arnold Pres/Disc: Chapter 12, FM
10/24	Chapter 8, Arnold Pres/Disc: Chapter 9, FM
10/31	Chapter 9, Arnold Pres/Disc: Chapter 10, FM
11/7	Chapter 10, Arnold Pres/Disc: Chapter 4, FM
11/14	Pres/Disc: Chapter 5, FM
11/21	Pres/Disc: Chapter 6, FM
11/28	Pres/Disc: Chapter 7, FM Research Paper Due This Week
12/5	Final Examination Due This Week

\*Please NOTE that adjustments and changes to this schedule may be made as they are deemed appropriate by the instructor.