

Communication and Social Identity



COMM 365-Fall 2010

Instructor: Dr. Jordan Soliz
Office: 425 Oldfather Hall
Phone: 472-8326 [office/voicemail]
E-mail: jsoliz2@unl.edu
Office Hours: Mon & Wed 9:00-10:15 and by app't
Course website: my.unl.edu [Blackboard]

Required Text & Readings

Giles, H., Reid, S., & Harwood, J. (2010). *The dynamics of intergroup communication*. New York: Peter Lang.

Course Description

The role and mission of the faculty and students of the Department of Communication Studies are to examine human symbolic activity as it shapes and is shaped by relationships, institutions, and societies. This work concerns the creation, analysis, and critique of messages. The department's research, teaching, and service devote particular attention to understanding the ways in which **communication** sustains and erodes **collaboration** within and among local, national, and global **communities**.

The aim of this course is to provide you with a greater understanding of communication related to social categorization and our corresponding identities. The course is designed with both academic and personal goals. In the academic sense, you should exit the course with: (a) greater knowledge of the theoretical foundation of social identity and intergroup relations, (b) an enhanced understanding of the cognitive and communicative processes associated with social comparison and discrimination, and (c) familiarity with research on positive and negative outcomes of intergroup contact. Through course assignments and activities, you should also gain an enhanced ability to discuss and argue course concepts in written and oral formats. On a more personal level, you should exit the course with: (a) a deeper understanding of the manner in which you categorize the world into social ingroups and outgroups, (b) a capacity to recognize the prevalence and origin of your own discrimination and prejudice, (c) an ability to view various contexts of communication through an "intergroup lens," and (d) skills to critically evaluate historical, present, and future social issues. The academic and personal goals of this course will hopefully enrich your understanding and appreciation of diverse experiences in the local, national, and international community. To attain these goals, the structure of the course will demonstrate how course concepts and theories relate to your personal experience as well as current events.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & POLICIES

Expectations

As a student in a 300-level course, you are expected to: (a) attend class and be actively engaged, (b) complete assigned readings, (c) complete all work by the assigned due date, (d) be able to find and read scholarly sources, (e) construct a literature review, and (f) critically reflect on course concepts. Moreover, the design of this course requires your consistent and active involvement. In addition to traditional lecture/note-taking format, a notable portion of class time will focus on in-class activities. Thus, you are expected to attend each class and have assigned readings, preparations for activities, and any experiential exercises completed. Obviously, if you are absent, you cannot participate and this will be reflected in your discussion grade. Further, I reserve the right to reduce your final grade for the course due to course absences. If you will be absent for university-related events or religious observance, please let me know as soon as possible.

Classroom Etiquette

We will spend some class time participating in discussions. During these discussions, there may be times when you disagree. I encourage constructive debate so please be respectful of other beliefs, experiences, and perspectives. Throughout the semester, please talk to me if you have questions or concerns about this aspect of the course. Although there are undoubtedly times when circumstances may cause us to be late to class, please remember that tardiness is disruptive. Make it a point to be here on-time. Do NOT read newspapers, complete crossword puzzles or additional games (e.g., Sudoku), check text messages, check voicemail, see who just called, search Internet (if you bring a laptop), nap, and/or study for other classes during the class period. If you are taking part in these activities, you are obviously not taking part in class and this will be reflected in final grade. Unless you have a unique circumstance, please turn off cell phones (including “vibrating”) before entering class.

Course Website and E-mail

Copies of the syllabus, assignments, additional readings, lecture outlines, and grades will be available through this site. Additionally, any course announcements will be posted on the course website. On occasion, I may ask you to print a document from the course website for use in an in-class activity. If you are unfamiliar with using the Blackboard system, you may access the support center by clicking on the “help” icon on the main Blackboard website.

Academic Integrity

All course work should be original and unique for this class (i.e., do not use work from other courses even if it is your own). Plagiarism results in, at minimum, failure on the assignment, but can result in failure of the course and reporting to academic authorities at the university. If you have questions concerning what constitutes plagiarism, please review UNL’s Student Code of Conduct and/or discuss this with me. Not knowing the definition of plagiarism does not excuse you from the consequences.

Services for Students with Disabilities

The UNL office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) “provides special assistance to students with disabilities through individualized help and counseling.” If you have a disability for which you wish to request accommodations and have not contacted SSD, please do so as soon as possible. Their office is located in 132 Canfield Administration Building or you can contact SSD at (402) 472-3787. Information about their services can be found at <http://www.unl.edu/ssd/index.html>. Please also contact me privately in regard to your needs in this course.

Assignments and Exams

In addition to assessing your understanding of course concepts, the assignments and exams are designed to facilitate the development of oral and written communication skills as well as critical reflection. Detailed information concerning all assignments/exams will be provided later in the semester. The following are brief descriptions of the assignments or exams.

▪*Semester Project.* The purpose of this assignment is to give you an opportunity to critically evaluate a current event through an intergroup “lens” by applying course concepts to a real-world situation. The project will include a thorough explanation of the social issue, a scholarly analysis, and a creative application to educate, inform, or persuade others about the social issue or context.

▪*Exams.* Two exams will be included as part of your final evaluation. Each exam will cover material from the text, class lectures, video clips/films, and in-class discussion. One exam will be a take-home exam for which you will be required to answer 3 essay questions covering course material. A second exam will be a one-on-one oral exam.

Assignments and Exams (cont'd)

▪*Discussion*. Our understanding of communication and social identity is enhanced by multiple perspectives. Therefore, you should be actively engaged in discussions and complete any activities or exercises assigned prior to class. Further, I encourage you to send me any materials that you believe relate to the content of the course (e.g., articles, advertisements, videos, personal experiences) so we may discuss them in class. For each reading, you should email me a question that can be used for in-class discussion. These may be general questions related to the material in the readings or application of the material to a current or historical social issue/event. These questions will not only act as potential discussion prompts but will also serve as an indicator that you have read the chapter. Therefore, you should craft the question in a way which demonstrates that you have read the chapter. Questions should be emailed to me by 9:00 a.m. the day the reading is due. Your participation and quality of discussion questions will count toward part of your final evaluation.

▪*Reflection Journals/Book Report*. The purpose of these assignments is to give you the opportunity to further apply concepts and theories to “real-world” experiences, events, and social issues. You have the option of completing reflection journals (10 total) or a 4-5 page review of a book on a topic relevant to intergroup relations.

Office Hours & Evaluation

Please feel free to come into my office to discuss papers, concepts, grades, problems that may arise, or just to chat. If my office hours are not convenient, we can arrange another time to meet. I am typically on campus every day. I encourage all students to meet with me regularly throughout the semester

Students are encouraged to discuss their progress with me anytime throughout the semester. Please visit me during my office hours or make an appointment for discussing grades rather than before or after class. For each assignment, you will be provided specific details concerning grading criteria. However, as a general guideline, “A-quality work” is that which greatly exceeds expectations and requirements. Communication Studies majors must earn a grade of ‘C’ or better to receive credit for the course.

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Points Possible</u>
a) Semester Project	300
b) Discussion	50
c) Exam #1	150
d) Exam #2	150
e) Reflection Journals/Book Report	100
Total Points	750

A	93% & above	B	83%-86.9%	C	73%-76.9%	D	63%-66.9%
A-	90%-92.9%	B-	80%-82.9%	C-	70%-72.9%	D-	60%-62.9%
B+	87%-89.9%	C+	77%-79.9%	D+	67%-69.9%	F	59.9% & below

Tentative Semester Schedule

GRH: Giles, Reid, & Harwood: BB: Posted on BlackBoard

Week 1 (8/25)	Introduction to the Course
Week 2 (9/1)	Social Identity, Intergroup Theory, and Social Categorization GRH 1
Week 3 (9/8)	Communication, Stereotyping, and Outgroup Attitudes GRH 8 & 14
Week 4 (9/15)	Language and Identity GRH 9 & 10
Week 5 (9/22)	Intergroup Contact BB: Pettigrew
Week 6 (9/29)	Media, Social Identity and Intergroup Attitudes GRH 16 & 17
Week 7 (10/6)	Movie and Discussion Exam #1 (Due Friday 10/8)
Week 8 (10/13)	Ethnic and Religious Identity GRH 2 & 7
Week 9 (10/20)	International Conflict GRH 11 & 12
Week 10 (10/27)	Communication and Sexual Identity GRH 3 & BB: Conley et al.
Week 11 (11/3)	Sports and Music as Identity GRH 20 & BB: Bakagiannis & Tarrant
Week 12 (11/10)	Movie and Discussion
Week 13 (11/17)	No Class-National Communication Association Convention
Week 14 (11/24)	No Class-Thanksgiving Break
Week 15 (12/1)	Intergenerational Communication Intergroup Perspective on Families GRH 4, 5 & 15
Week 16 (12/8)	Semester Project Presentations & Course Review Semester Project and Journals/Book Review Due
Week 17	Exam #2 (<i>Individual Exams Scheduled</i>)
