

Communication and Aging



COMM 498 – Fall 2009

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Course website: my.unl.edu [Blackboard]

****Outside of office visits, e-mail is the quickest method of communicating with me.****

Required Text

Harwood, J. (2007). *Understanding communication and aging*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

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.

This course is designed to give you insight into the nature of communication and aging. Specifically, you should exit the course with:

- (a) a familiarity with the central theories of communication and aging as well as approaches to studying intergenerational communication,
- (b) knowledge of societal attitudes about age groups and intergenerational communication,
- (c) an enhanced understanding of cultural variations in aging and attitudes toward intergenerational communication,
- (d) recognition of the role of media and technology in intergenerational relations,
- (e) an increased appreciation of health and health care issues, and
- (f) awareness of local issues and organizations relevant to the context of communication and aging.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & POLICIES

Prerequisites & Expectations

As a prerequisite for this course, you are expected to have completed COMM 200 and COMM 201 if you are a Communication Studies major. If you are a Communication Studies minor, you should have completed either one of these courses. If you are not a Communication Studies major/minor or would like more information, please talk to me about the expectations concerning students' familiarity with concepts, theories, and methods of inquiry in our discipline. As a student in a 400-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, read, and analyze scholarly sources, (e) construct a literature review, and (f) critically reflect on course concepts.

Attendance Policy

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 (see **Participation**). 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 final grade. Further, I reserve the right to reduce your final grade 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

Although there are undoubtedly times when circumstances cause us to be late to class, please remember that tardiness is disruptive. So, make it a point to be here on-time. Also, please refrain from reading newspapers, studying for other classes, text-messaging, etc. during the class period. Finally, there will be circumstances when you need to have a cell phone on (e.g., family emergencies). But, for the most part, this will not be the case. So, please remember to turn off cell phones before entering class (note: the “vibrating” function does not mean the cell phone is turned off).

Lectures and Assigned Readings

Lectures will **not** be a systematic review of assigned readings. Rather, the purpose of the lecture is to highlight and/or complement concepts and topics in the reading assigned for that particular class period. Many times, we will have an in-class activity instead of a lecture for certain topics. Regardless, you will be expected to complete assigned readings and visit with me to clarify any concepts presented in the readings. If there will be a “traditional” lecture format for a class period, outlines of lecture will be available on the course website prior to each class period. However, these are **not** complete lectures. Rather, they are outlines to assist you with note-taking and, therefore, should not be used as a substitute for missing or not paying attention to lectures. If we cover a topic through in-class discussion and activities rather than a lecture, you should identify key points and concepts for that class period and follow-up with me if you have any questions.

Course Website and E-mail

If you are enrolled in the course, you should have access to the course website at **my.unl.edu**. Copies of the syllabus, assignments, additional readings, reading guides, exam reviews, and grades will be available through this site. Additionally, any important announcements will be posted on the site. 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. All email will be sent to the address on file with the university.

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 discuss this with me. Not knowing the definition of plagiarism does not excuse you from the consequences.

Participation & Discussion Questions

Because our understanding of communication and aging is enhanced by multiple perspectives, you should be actively engaged in discussions. Further, you should complete any activities or exercises assigned. Given that all of us have “expertise” and experiences in intergenerational interaction, I encourage you to bring in 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. Finally, for each reading, you should email me a question related to the topic that can be used for in-class discussion. These should be emailed to me by 10:00 a.m. the day the reading is due. Your participation will be evaluated as part of your final evaluation.

Assignments & Exams

In addition to your participation, your course evaluation will be based on two exams, a semester project, a series of application assignments, and a final reflection. More detailed information concerning each of these will be provided later in the semester.

1) *Exams*. Two exams will be included as part of your final evaluation. The exams will cover material from the text, class lectures, and supplemental readings (i.e., research discussions). Prior to the exam, a detailed review sheet covering material from lecture, discussion, and corresponding readings will be posted on the course website.

2) *Semester Project*. You have two choices for your semester project. One option is to complete a literature review and research proposal on a topic related to communication and aging. A second option is to complete service hours with a community agency serving older adults in the community. This second option will also include reflection journals and a final paper linking experiences to course concepts. Each option will consist of an in-class discussion of your project at the end of the semester.

3) *Application Assignments*. You will be assigned a series of “application” assignments throughout the semester. These will vary in content and scope. But, each will require that you apply course concepts to specific aspect of communication and aging. Each of the application assignments will include an in-class discussion,

4) *Final Reflection*. At the end of the semester, you will turn in a 2-3 page reflection paper in which you discuss your thoughts and perceptions on societal views on older adults and aging, intergenerational communication, and attitudes toward your own aging.

Written Assignments

Remember that the appearance of your assignments signals the time and care in which they were prepared. All papers (reaction papers, service-learning papers) are expected to reflect university-level writing quality. In other words, spelling, organizational, and grammatical errors will greatly reduce your final grade. The university offers assistance with written assignments through the UNL Writing Assistance Center. Information on these services can be found at <http://www.unl.edu/writing>. Unless approved prior to the due date, late papers will not be accepted.

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.” Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the instructor for a confidential discussion of their individual needs for academic accommodation. It is the policy of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to provide flexible and individualized accommodation to students with documented disabilities that may affect their ability to fully participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. To receive accommodation services, students must be registered with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office, 132 Canfield Administration, 472-3787 voice or TTY.

Office Hours

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.

Evaluation

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.

Assignment	Points Possible
a) Application Assignments (6 x 20 pts each)	120
b) Participation	50
c) Exam #1	125
d) Exam #2	125
e) Reflection Paper	30
f) Semester Project	300
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
CH: Harwood Text, BB=Reading on Blackboard

Week 1	8/25 8/27	Introduction to the Course What is Aging? (Ch.1)
Week 2	9/1 9/3	Communication and Aging (Ch. 2) <i>Application Discussion I</i>
Week 3	9/8 9/10	Stereotypes and Attitudes toward Aging I (Ch.3) Stereotypes and Attitudes toward Aging II
Week 4	9/15 9/17	Intergenerational Communication (Ch. 4) Relationships in Later-Life I (Ch. 5)
Week 5	9/22 9/24	<i>Application Discussion II</i> Relationships in Later-Life II (Ch. 6)
Week 6	9/29 10/1	Relationships in Later-Life III <i>Application Discussion III</i>
Week 7	10/6 10/8	<i>Exam #1</i> Enhancing Intergenerational Attitudes (Ch. 7)
Week 8	10/13 10/15	Mass Media and Aging (Ch. 8) Health and Health Care I (Ch. 11)
Week 9	10/20 10/22	No Class-Fall Break Health and Health Care II (BB)
Week 10	10/27 10/29	<i>Application Discussion IV</i> Work and Retirement in Later-Life
Week 11	11/3 11/5	Caregiving and Caregiving Burden (BB) Older Adults and Media Use (Ch. 9)
Week 12	11/10 11/12	<i>Application Discussion V</i> No Class-National Communication Association Annual Meeting
Week 13	11/17 11/19	Cultural Variations in Communication and Aging I (Ch. 10) Cultural Variations in Communication and Aging II (BB)
Week 14	11/24 11/26	<i>Application Discussion VI</i> No Class-Thanksgiving Break
Week 15	12/1 12/3	Technology Use and Older Adults (Ch. 12) Semester Project Discussion I
Week 16	12/8 12/10	Semester Project Discussion II Course Review (Ch. 13)
Final Exam (Exam #2)		December 15th 1-3pm