

Instructor: Jillian Pierson, Ph.D.

Office Hours: Tu, Wed, Th  
11 - 12

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I encourage you to connect with me outside of our regularly scheduled class meetings! I'm available many times other than what is listed here as my official hours. If my office hours aren't convenient for you, I'd be glad to meet you at other times, either in-person or by Zoom or on the phone. Email me with several suggested options that work in your schedule if you'd like to set up an alternate meeting time. You might text me to see if I'm in my office before heading over—even the official hours sometimes are disrupted by meetings or talks I'm attending, so it's a good idea to check first.

I give you my cell phone number in case you want to send a quick text or would like to meet by phone. But for content or assignment-related issues, email is the best way to connect with me.

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### **Course Description**

This class is an introduction to the field of interpersonal communication, an area of scholarship that looks at how communication builds, maintains, and changes relationships. The term “relationships” covers more than romance and friendship; we'll include a number of contexts including families, health care, and online environments.

This is an academic course, so we will work toward increasing your conceptual understanding and critical thinking; we are not focusing on your own personal communication skills. However, many students will find that the understanding we build throughout the semester will enhance their own communication in relationships.

### **Learning Outcomes**

By the end of the semester, you should be able to define the terminology used by interpersonal communication scholars; explain the major concepts, issues and theories of this field; and recognize and apply the course concepts to mediated depictions and to real-world situations where these ideas are at play.

### **Required Course Materials**

Guerrero, L. K., Andersen, P. A., & Afifi, W. A. (2021). *Close encounters: Communication in relationships* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Additional readings will be posted on Blackboard and are noted on the course calendar with the authors' last names and dates. These readings are subject to change as I may update to titles that are tailored to our class.

### **Course Policies**

**Respectful conversation:** We may touch on topics that some students feel sensitive about during class. If you find yourself having an emotional response, please reach out to me. Know that I want everyone to feel comfortable engaging in productive, open conversation, including at the times we don't agree with one another. If I get something wrong, I'd like to hear from you in a respectful way; I have an open mind and like most people, I am still learning and evolving.

I also hope you'll be mindful that we all come to the classroom from a variety of backgrounds and life experiences. We can't truly understand another person's perspective, but we can listen with acceptance and empathy.

### **Attendance and Participation**

1. To get the most out of this class, you must show up for our meetings. While it is normal to miss a few times during the course of a semester, you cannot "take" this class without attending regularly.

2. Of course you may occasionally have to miss class for illness or other reasons. When you are absent, I do not need to hear an excuse nor will there be an alternative credit opportunity. I do not take attendance after the first few weeks of class. However, if you have to miss several classes, I would appreciate your letting me know what is going on, so that I don't worry about you.

### **No laptops or electronics.**

In order to create the best possible learning environment, I ask you to not use your laptops, tablets or phones. I completely understand the temptation, but I think we all benefit from focusing without technology. Current research shows that taking notes by hand is more effective than typing them. Read the articles posted on Blackboard for a lengthier discussion of this policy. (Sometimes students have documented reasons for using laptops for note-taking; exceptions are made only for students with such documentation.)

Please bring pen and paper to lectures for note-taking and activities.

The two exams will require use of a laptop, so they will be an exception to the "no laptop" rule.

### **Communication**

Please be sure to read your USC emails and Blackboard announcements daily on weekdays.

I reply to my emails within 24 hours (although on the weekends I may take longer). If you don't hear back from me promptly, feel free to send me a follow-up after a day has gone by.

**Timely submission of work:** If your assignment is late, it will be marked down by one third of a letter grade for every day it is late. Also, please be aware that if you end up handing a paper in late, it falls to the bottom of our stack of things to do and will most likely not be returned to you in a very timely manner.

Sometimes a student has a true emergency. Please contact me as soon as possible if something prevents you from submitting your work on time.

Accidentally uploading the wrong assignment or using a format not accepted by Blackboard is not an excuse for a late submission.

**Back up your work:** Computer failures are sadly not uncommon. Please cover yourself by regularly saving your work to cloud storage and to an external storage device.

### **Electronic submission of assignments**

Please upload your assignments to Blackboard only. If you have trouble with Blackboard, reach out to Blackboard support directly for help—service is available 24/7 at 213-740-5555. Blackboard submissions that have uploaded successfully automatically generate an email to the student who submitted them. If you don't get the email, you haven't submitted your assignment.

If Blackboard has a problem, you may email your assignment as proof that you completed it by the deadline. However, we can only grade in the Blackboard environment so you will still need to upload there as soon as the system is functioning.

### **Grading:**

I believe a "B" represents really good work. An "A" represents excellent work. A "C" grade should satisfactorily meet all the requirements of an assignment. To achieve a "C" or better on written assignments, you must write at a level appropriate for a university student, i.e., with clarity and with correct grammar, punctuation and spelling. Consider connecting with USC's Writing Center early in the semester for help with your writing. If you are disappointed by a grade, I would be happy to discuss your work with you and help you improve for the next assignment.

Grades will be calculated as follows:

Homework & in-class work	10%
Visual identity	5%
Quiz	5%
Comm analysis paper	20%
Investigation presentation	20%
Exam 1	20%
Exam 2	20%

The grading scale for this class will be that an A is equivalent to 94 or above; A- is 90-93; B+ is 87-89; B is 84-86; B- is 80-83; C+ is 77-79; C is 74-76; C- is 70-73; D+ is 67-69; D is 64-66; D- is 60-63; and F is 59 and below.

## **Assignments**

Much more information will be forthcoming—these brief descriptions are just to give you an idea of what to expect.

### **Homework & In-Class Work (10%)**

You will get credit for some in-class participation activities and short, independent assignments. These will include:

- Student Information Sheet: complete this so I have some info about you
- Topic selection for comm analysis paper
- Topic selection for investigation presentation
- Peer feedback/questions on presentations

### **Visual Representation of Identity (5%)**

Create a collage, digital or on paper, that represents a number of elements of your identity. Be prepared to share these in class (and edit your work with your own privacy needs in mind).

### **Quiz (5%)**

This is mostly meant as practice to help prepare you for the exams.

### **Comm Analysis Paper (20%)**

You will write a 5-7 page paper that demonstrates your understanding and application of course concepts.

### **Investigation Presentation (20%)**

This will be an opportunity to investigate an interpersonal comm topic that interests you and share it with the class.

### **Exams (40%)**

The exams assess if you are able to apply what you have learned through class meetings and readings. Prepare for a series of rigorous multiple choice questions on the exams. If you know yourself to be someone finds these kinds of tests particularly challenging, check my posts on Blackboard and seek help early in the semester.

Please note that you are responsible for both the material presented in the readings and in class. The two do not always overlap. If you miss a class, be sure to connect with a couple of your peers to get notes. If you need clarification after getting notes, please come to me with your questions.

The final will not be “cumulative” in that you won’t have to go back to the earlier chapters and study them in depth. But your knowledge will build, and the final exam questions should reflect that knowledge base.

## Campus Resources

Please take advantage of some of the resources your tuition supports. Early in the semester, visit The Writing Center for one-on-one assistance or small-group workshops. (Email [writing@usc.edu](mailto:writing@usc.edu) or call 213-740-3691). If you have difficulty with tests, reach out to the Center for Academic Support (call 213-740-0776 or email them at [study@usc.edu](mailto:study@usc.edu)).

## Honoring Native Lands

Our USC campus is located on the traditional land of the Tongva People. It is a complicated reality that we exist in a space which for many years belonged to the Tongva as well as the Chumash, Tataviam, Serrano, Cahuilla, Juaneno, and Luiseno People. I would like to acknowledge the unjust, violent history that unfolded over many years before the establishment of this university, and to show appreciation and humility toward indigenous communities and the sacrifices they were—and continue to be—forced to make.

## Looking Ahead

Studying communication is an ongoing experience of discovery. I look forward to learning more with all of you this semester.

## Tentative Course Schedule, *Subject to Change:*

Assignments are due on the days they are listed; readings can be done after the class meeting on the dates they're listed on. The textbook chapters are listed on this calendar as GAA and they represent the bulk of your readings. The articles are posted on Blackboard and additional links may be added so please check our site frequently.

	Date	Topic	Assignments due <i>before</i> class	Read <i>after</i> class
1	Aug 24	Course introduction		
	Aug 26	Defining Interpersonal Comm	Student info sheet	GAA Ch 1
2	Aug 31	Identity & Self-Presentation	Visual identity	GAA Ch 2
	Sept 2	in “real life” and online		Verduyn et al. (2020)
3	Sept 7	Interpersonal Comm Theories		GAA Ch 4
	Sept 9	(cont.)		GAA Ch 6 Donovan et al. (2017) Nuru & Wang (2014)
4	Sept 14	Attraction		GAA Ch 3
	Sept 16	& mate selection		Hall & Compton 2017 Neyt et al. (2020) Oltmanns et al. 2016

5	Sept 21 Sept 23	Relational development phases and stages	Quiz	GAA Ch 5 GAA Ch 15
6	Sept 28 Sept 30	Love and Attachment styles and preferences	(assignment topic)	GAA Ch 8 Horan et al (2015)
7	Oct 5 Oct 7	Affection & Immediacy Relational Maintenance	Paper	GAA Ch 7 GAA Ch 10
8	Oct 12 Oct 14	Midterm Exam * * * Enjoy fall recess: no class meeting * * *	Midterm Exam	
9	Oct 19  Oct 21	Communicating about Sex  & Sexual Health	  topic due	Goodboy et al. 2010 Kelly, Duran & Miller-Ott 2017 GAA Ch 9
10	Oct 26  Oct 28	Conflict &  Deception	prelim sources due	GAA Ch 11 Aloia & Solomon (2015) Merrill & Afifi (2017) GAA Ch 13 Elphinston et al. (2013) Markovitz & Hancock (2018)
11	Nov 2 Nov 4	Presentations Presentations	Presentations	
12	Nov 9 Nov 11	Presentations Presentations		
13	Nov 16 Nov 18	Presentations Healing & Apologizing	Peer feedback	GAA Ch 14
14	Nov 23 Nov 25	(cont.) <b>Enjoy Thanksgiving break</b>		Carr et al. (2015)
15	Nov 30 Dec 2	Power & Influence Course conclusion		GAA Ch 12
	Dec 14	<b>Exam 11 -1</b>	Exam	

## Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

### Academic Integrity Policy:

The School of Communication maintains a commitment to the highest standards of ethical conduct and academic excellence. Any student found responsible for plagiarism, fabrication, cheating on examinations, or purchasing papers or other assignments will be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards and may be dismissed from the School of Communication. There are no exceptions to the school's policy.

### Academic Conduct:

Plagiarism – presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Part B, Section 11, "Behavior Violating University Standards" [policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b](http://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b). Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, [policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct](http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct).

In addition, it is assumed that the work you submit for this course is work you have produced entirely by yourself, and has not been previously produced by you for submission in another course, without approval of the instructor.

### Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity in a Crisis

In case of a declared emergency if travel to campus is not feasible, USC executive leadership will announce an electronic way for instructors to teach students in their residence halls or homes using a combination of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technologies. See the university's site on **Campus Safety and Emergency Preparedness**.

### Support Systems:

*Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call*  
[studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling](http://studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling)

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

*National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call*  
[suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

*Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press "0" after hours – 24/7 on call*  
[studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault](http://studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault)

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.  
*Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) - (213) 740-5086 | Title IX – (213) 821-8298*  
[equity.usc.edu](http://equity.usc.edu), [titleix.usc.edu](http://titleix.usc.edu)

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

*Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298*  
[usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care\\_report](http://usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report)

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity | Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

*The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776*  
[dsp.usc.edu](http://dsp.usc.edu)

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

*USC Campus Support and Intervention - (213) 821-4710*

[campussupport.usc.edu](http://campussupport.usc.edu)

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

*Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101*

[diversity.usc.edu](http://diversity.usc.edu)

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

*USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call*

[dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu), [emergency.usc.edu](http://emergency.usc.edu)

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

*USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call*

[dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu)

Non-emergency assistance or information.

*Annenberg Student Success Fund*

<https://annenbergsuccessfund.usc.edu/current-students/resources/additional-funding-resources>

The Annenberg Student Success Fund is a donor-funded financial aid account available to USC Annenberg undergraduate and graduate students for non-tuition expenses related to extra- and co-curricular programs and opportunities.

## Course Bibliography (subject to change)

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- Oltmanns, J. R., Markey, P. M., & French, J. E. (2017). Dissimilarity in physical attractiveness within romantic dyads and mate retention behaviors. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 34*, 565-577.
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