



USC Annenberg

COMM 304 (4 units, 20475R)
Interpersonal Communication
Fall 2024 T/T 12:30 - 1:50 [ASC 231]

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Feel free to reach out to me by texting or calling my office phone number. Text for short messages only, please. Longer, content-related questions are best sent via email.

Office hours: Campus office
ASC G21 by appt

I encourage you to connect with me outside of our regularly scheduled class meetings!

I will have regular office hours TBA and by appointment on Zoom (you can find the link on Brightspace). I am usually in my campus office before and after class and would be glad to meet with you then. If none of these times work well, please email me with several suggested options to set up an alternate meeting time for in-person, Zoom, or phone.

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* (6th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Additional readings will be posted on Brightspace 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.

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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 Brightspace and additional links may be added so please check our site frequently.

Week	Date	Topic	Assignment due before class	Readings for after class
1	Aug 27 Aug 29	Course welcome & introduction Defining interpersonal comm	Student info form	GAA Ch 1
2	Sept 3 Sept 5	Identity & self-presentation in "real life" and online	Visual identity	GAA Ch 2 Verduyn et al. (2020)
3	Sept 10 Sept 12	Interpersonal comm theories (cont.)		GAA Ch 4 GAA Ch 6 Donovan et al. (2017) Nuru & Wang (2014)
4	Sept 17 Sept 19	Attraction & mate selection	Journal article selected	GAA Ch 3 Hall & Compton 2017 Neyt et al. (2020) Oltmanns et al. 2016
5	Sept 24 Sept 26	Relational development phases and stages	Journal report	GAA Ch 5 GAA Ch 15
6	Oct 1 Oct 3	Love and attachment styles and preferences	Quiz	GAA Ch 8 Horan et al (2015)
7	Oct 8 Oct 10	Affection & immediacy <i>Enjoy fall recess—no class meeting</i>	Paper artifact selected	GAA Ch 7
8	Oct 15 Oct 17	Relational maintenance Midterm	Midterm exam	GAA Ch 10
9	Oct 22 Oct 24	Communicating about sex & sexual health	topic ideas due	Goodboy et al. 2010 Kelly, Duran & Miller-Ott 2017 GAA Ch 9
10	Oct 29 Oct 31	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 5 Nov 7	Presentations Presentations	Presentations/ Peer feedback Peer feedback	
12	Nov 12 Nov 14	Presentations Presentations	Peer feedback Peer feedback	
13	Nov 19 Nov 21	Presentations Healing & apologizing	Peer feedback	GAA Ch 14
14	Nov 26	(cont.)		Carr et al. (2015)

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Week	Date	Topic	Assignment due before class	Readings for after class
	Nov 28	<i>Thanksgiving—no class meeting</i>		
15	Dec 3	Power & influence		GAA Ch 12
	Dec 5	Course conclusion		
	Dec 17	Final take home exam due 1 pm		

Please note the date of the final exam is set by USC. The university requires we hold the final during that time period.

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. 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 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 Brightspace 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. If you are using an iPad or other tablet instead of pen and paper, that is acceptable as long as you keep your device open to the note-taking app only.

The first exam will require use of a laptop, so it will be an exception to the "no laptop" rule.

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Communication

Please be sure to read your USC emails and Brightspace 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 Brightspace 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 Brightspace only. If you have trouble with Brightspace, reach out to Brightspace support directly for help—service is available 24/7 at 213-740-5555. Brightspace 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 Brightspace has a problem, you may email your assignment as proof that you completed it by the deadline. However, I can only grade in the Brightspace environment so you will still need to upload there as soon as the system is functioning.

Accommodations for students with registered disabilities

Please upload your letter from OSAS to the "assignment" I've created for it in Brightspace. If there's anything specific about your accommodations you'd like me to know, I would be very happy to talk with you and support you however I can.

Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use Policy

Generative AI (such as ChatGPT, Bard, Claude and many others) is a tool which offers opportunities and raises concerns. As the technology rapidly evolves, we students of communication need to be thoughtful and ethical consumers of the technology. For our class, there may be times when it is appropriate to use AI, such as for brainstorming topic ideas. But please keep in mind some important notes when using generative AI:

1. You must **give credit** to the specific AI used in your assignment. Check Blackboard and the specific assignment instructions for information about how to do that

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appropriately. Failing to cite AI use is an academic integrity violation and will be treated as such, with potentially serious consequences.

2. Generative AI often is incorrect and gives **misinformation** through its “hallucinations.” You cannot rely on AI output; you have to check for correctness.
3. The **quality of the prompts** shapes the quality of the output of generative AI. As these tools develop, our skills in “conversing” with them will need to change and grow too.
4. AI should never be a substitute for your own **thoughtful, critical contributions** to the subject matter. Expressing oneself through writing is an important part of learning, refining thought, and demonstrating understanding that cannot be ceded to AI tools.

These are just a few of many considerations that I wanted to highlight at present. I expect my own knowledge and policies in this arena to evolve, and I welcome your thoughts.

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%
Journal article report	10%
Comm analysis paper	20%
Investigation mini-lecture	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.

- A Excellent; demonstrates extraordinarily high achievement; comprehensive knowledge and understanding of subject matter; all expectations met and exceeded.
- B Good; moderately broad knowledge and understanding of subject matter; explicitly or implicitly demonstrates good, if not thorough understanding; only minor substantive shortcomings.

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- C Satisfactory; reasonable knowledge and understanding of subject matter; most expectations are met; despite any shortcomings, demonstrates basic level of understanding.
- D Marginal; minimal knowledge and understanding of subject matter; more than one significant shortcoming; deficiencies indicate only the most rudimentary level of understanding.
- F Failing; unacceptably low level of knowledge and understanding of subject matter; deficiencies indicate lack of understanding.
- P/ NP To earn a passing grade, you must have a C- or higher. You also may not omit any assignments or exams regardless of your average score in the class.

Assignments

Much more information will be forthcoming and posted on Brightspace. These brief descriptions are just to give you an idea of what to expect.

Homework & In-Class Work (10%)

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

Student Information Sheet: complete this so I have some info about you

Visual Representation of Identity

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).

Practice quiz

Topic selection for comm analysis paper

Topic selection for investigation presentation

Peer feedback/questions on presentations

Journal Article Report (10%)

You will select a recent research article published in a scholarly journal about interpersonal communication. You will write a brief report (2-3 pages) about the article, and present your report in class.

Comm Analysis Paper (20%)

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

Investigation Mini-Lecture (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 midterm. If you

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know yourself to be someone finds these kinds of tests particularly challenging, check my posts on Brightspace and seek help early in the semester. The second exam will be take-home, the format still to be determined.

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 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).

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.