

**COM 325:001 – Theory and Research in Interpersonal Communication**  
**Tuesday/Thursday, 12:35-1:50**  
**Fell Hall 180**

- **Professor:** Lindsey J. Thomas, PhD (she/her)
- **Department:** School of Communication, FEL 434
- **Email:** ljthom3@ilstu.edu (best way to reach me)
- **Student Hours:** T 2-3:00; W 12-2:00; by appt.
- **Office:** FEL 464 (come on in during your hours!)

**WELCOME to theory and research in interpersonal communication!** I hope this new beginning finds you well. As a scholar of communication, I, of course, LOVE studying the ways in which people communicate. Interpersonal communication and relationships are my primary scholarly interests, plus I'm a total theory AND methods nerd, so I am very excited to be teaching the material in this course! Please do not hesitate to stop by my office hours or e-mail me to further discuss course topics and assignments (or, you know, life). Below, please find some guidelines for how we can make the most of our time together.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Provides an overview of theory and research on interpersonal communication with emphasis on the knowledge and skills necessary to develop, maintain, and terminate social and personal relationships. Prerequisite: COM 111.

This course is designed as an in-depth examination of extant theory and research on face-to-face communication in our social and personal relationships with acquaintances, friendships, romantic partnerships, and relations with other loved (or whatever) ones. The basic premise of the course is to position one to maximize communicative effectiveness in these relationships with knowledge about how communication functions combined with analysis about one's own and others' communication practices and experiences. As a course couched in the social sciences, this class will emphasize an understanding and application of various theories of interpersonal communication and a familiarity with both seminal and current interpersonal communication research.

**Goals**

1. Think "outside the box" (i.e., engage in critical thinking) about interpersonal communication/relationships.
2. Understand the scope of interpersonal communication in research and everyday life.
3. Gain familiarity with foundational interpersonal theories and studies.
4. Practice written analysis, application, and argument in relation to interpersonal theory and praxis.
5. Actively assist your own and others' learning through ongoing discussion of course content.

If you would like assistance with achieving the above or more personal goals, I welcome you to attend my office hours or make an appointment to meet with me. Please not prior to personal disclosures that I am a mandated reporter.

**REQUIRED TEXTS:**

Knapp, M. L., Vangelisti, A. L., & Caughlin, J. P. (2020). *Interpersonal communication and human relationships* (8<sup>th</sup> ed.). Kendall Hunt.

Check Canvas regularly (before each class period) for course readings/activities to complete before each class throughout the semester.

**OPTIONAL TEXT:**

American Psychological Association. (2020). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (7<sup>th</sup> ed.). APA.

**COURSE WEB PAGE:** <https://canvas.illinoisstate.edu/>

Remember to check for readings and announcements.

**COURSE PERFORMANCE & REQUIREMENTS:**

Please keep in mind that you are not “given” a grade. Rather, you earn a grade that is based on performance in three general areas: participation in class and group work, exams, and written assignments, all of which highlight your advancement toward achieving course goals. All assignments will be graded using a points-based system (detailed below). Please keep track of your own grade and standing in this course.

**Academic Load and Homework Expectation**

This is a three (3) credit hour course. As such, in addition to scheduled class time, students should expect to spend approximately six to nine hours per week outside of class preparing for class sessions and working on assignments.

**Taking Course for Graduate Credit**

Students taking this course for graduate credit must arrange to complete an additional research project.

**COURSE EVALUATION:**

Participation	100 points
Translational Assignment	50 points
Exam 1	75 points
Analysis & Answer Application Paper 1	
Letter	10 points
Paper	90 points
Exam 2	75 points
Analysis & Answer Application Paper 2	100 points
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<b>500 TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS</b>	

**Grading Scale**

Generally in the course, *excellent* work earns “A” grades, *good* earns “B” grades, *average* earns “C” grades, *below average* earns “D” grades, and *unacceptable* work earns an “F” or “O” grade. There may be extra credit opportunities, but do not rely on it. Grading scale: > 90-100% = A; 80%-89.99% = B; 70-79.99% = C; 60-69.99% = D; below 60% = F

\* I reserve the right to adjust this scale, but I will only change it to the students’ advantage.

**Attendance, Participation, & Smaller Assignments (100 points; 20% of total grade)**

This class meets two times most weeks and will largely be conducted as a seminar. The success of a seminar depends upon everyone’s input and active engagement. Help me to help you by coming to class prepared to talk about/engage the assigned readings for the week and related activities and discussions. Simply attending class without actively contributing is not “participation.” Regardless of whether an absence is excused, you missed a class; thus, *you cannot make up participation*. Please read assigned texts before attending class so that we are able to discuss them (that makes sense, right?). It is also beneficial to bring the readings with you for ongoing reference. Up to 2 participation points may be earned during each of approximately 25 classes throughout the semester. I will note participation, and you may be responsible for conducting/submitting activities. If you are bashful, you may also read ahead and submit clips/activities/etc. relevant to the class period at least 24 hours

before we meet to discuss the material. These points will also reflect my assessment of overall preparation, effort, and performance for/in class.

If you are seeking an approved/excused absence, please e-mail or call me *before* the absence or, in the event of an emergency, as soon as possible. I accept the following approved and/or “excused” absences only with proper documentation: 1. Certain religious holidays and observances; 2. Service in the military or jury duty; 3. Major illness (requiring a physician’s note with physician’s signature to be excused) 4. Authorized university activities, including athletics, marching band, and other university groups (requiring note from coach, leader, etc.). You are responsible for all material discussed and distributed in class. It is your responsibility to answer roll call or sign the attendance sheet each class period. I will not give points retroactively for failure to sign in. Also, any/all materials are handed out only once. If you are not in class to receive them, you should obtain the information from a fellow student (unless excused and you obtain from me).

### **Translational Assignment (50 points; 10% of total grade)**

*tl;dr: Pretend we’re kinda ignorant and tell us what’s useful for the day from some fancy-schmancy RELATIONAL COMMUNICATION scholarship*

Students, in sets of two (*maybe* three, depending on enrollment), are responsible for signing up for one topic during the semester, about which they will complete a translational assignment based on a relevant and recent peer-reviewed, scholarly journal article. To complete this assignment: (1) complete the assigned reading(s) associated with your topic; (2) peruse scholarly journal articles published recently (since 2018) related to the topic (this means using Google Scholar, the Milner Library search, or similar); (3) select one article that interests you and become a content expert; (4) translate the research for laypersons (i.e., not communication scholars), as you might if you wrote for an outlet such as Psychology Today (submit this, along with a copy of the article, prior to your presentation); (5) prepare and present a brief (5-7ish minutes – PRACTICE, as this goes faster than you might think) overview of the main points of the article/your translation, as it relates to everyday life and the topic of the day, in class (feel free to use imagery, *short* clips, etc. to illustrate the content, but do NOT directly use/“borrow from” the class conversation notes/PowerPoints). This should SUPPLEMENT the reading and class conversation, not reiterate/rehash them.

### **Exams (150 points; 30% of total grade)**

This course will have two exams, each worth 75 points. An elective review session will be held prior to each exam; it is your responsibility to prepare any review questions that you have about the exam prior to the review session. The second exam is not cumulative. Both exams are closed-book and closed-notes. These exams are often described as “tough but fair,” so please prepare accordingly throughout the semester (i.e., don’t “cram” the night before). Any student who is caught cheating will receive an automatic 0 for the exam and will be reported to the appropriate person in the Dean’s Office. Please consult the Tentative Course Schedule for review session and exam dates.

### **Analysis and Answer Application Papers (200 points; 40% of total grade)**

There will be two analysis and application papers worth 100 points each. Each paper may be no more than five pages of text (style guidelines below). To promote coherence, I recommend that you limit each analysis and answer set by selecting a theme and applying relevant concepts from one class conversation and its accompanying required readings for each paper. Each paper should draw on at least two (2) properly cited (APA style) scholarly sources (i.e., peer-reviewed articles from [preferably communication/relationships-focused] journals) in addition to textbook and class conversation materials/citations. See Tentative Course Schedule and Paper Grading Criteria on Canvas.

- **Paper 1:** Each student is tasked with writing a “Dear Prudence”-style advice-seeking letter related to content from the first half of the course (pre-midterm) (approximately 250 words; you must submit a quality letter by the due date to earn credit on the next part of the assignment). You will then analyze

and answer one of your classmate's letters, referencing what you have learned in the course thus far (pre-midterm; submit the original letter with your response) (100 points).

- **Paper 2:** You will locate and analyze a cultural artifact (e.g., PostSecret card, advice letter, case study, podcast, etc.; submit artifact with paper), drawing on material from the second half of the course (post-midterm, starting with commitment). You will make an argument for the course-related topic that is at the heart of the artifact and provide advice for the author based on what you have learned the second half of the class, citing course texts (100 points).

**I DO NOT ACCEPT LATE WORK\*.** All assignments are APA style (12 pt. TNR, black font; double spaced; 1" margins), stapled, and error-free (PROOFREAD). If you cannot turn something in when it is due, you must arrange to submit it *before* the due date, or you will earn no points on the assignment. You are always welcome to turn papers in before the deadline. If you are unable to attend a class, it is your responsibility to a) attain notes and information you missed from a fellow student and b) contact me about questions (not content of whole classes) that you have regarding the material.

\*Automatically, anyway. That said, I do love to revel in you all's successes, so, you know... TALK TO ME.

### **ADDITIONAL COURSE POLICIES:**

Each of the following are intended to enhance students' educational experiences, both inside and outside of the classroom.

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### **Equity**

We will strive to ensure that individuals from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that we all bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength, and benefit. It is my intent to present materials and activities that consider and respect: race, gender, class/socioeconomic status, sexuality, ability, age, health, ethnicity, and culture (examples are not exhaustive). Education is ongoing, and your suggestions are both encouraged and appreciated. If you have the energy, ability, and willingness, you are always welcome to share ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students or student groups.

All people have the right to be addressed and referred to in accordance with their personal identity. In this class, we will indicate the name that we prefer to be called and, if we choose, identify pronouns with which we would like to be addressed. I will do my best to address everyone accordingly and support class members in doing so as well.

If any of our class meetings conflict with your religious events, please let me know so that we can make arrangements for you.

DEIA resource starting points:

Illinois State University - <https://illinoisstate.edu/diversity/>

School of Communication - <https://communication.illinoisstate.edu/about/anti-racism/>

### **Access and Accommodations**

Any student needing to arrange a reasonable accommodation for a documented disability and/or medical/mental health condition should contact Student Access and Accommodation Services at 350 Fell Hall, [\(309\) 438-5853](tel:3094385853), or visit the website at [StudentAccess.IllinoisState.edu](http://StudentAccess.IllinoisState.edu).

### **Land Acknowledgement**

Illinois State University was built on the land of multiple native nations. These lands were the traditional birthright of Indigenous people who were forcibly removed and have faced centuries of struggle for survival and identity in the

wake of dispossession and displacement. We acknowledge that our campus sits on the lands that were once home to the Illini, Peoria, Myaamia and later, due to colonial encroachment and displacement, the Fox, Potawatomi, Sauk, Shawnee, Winnebago, Ioway, Mascouten, Piankashaw, Wea, and Kickapoo Nations. We also express honor to those Indigenous people who we may have excluded in this acknowledgement due to erasure and historical inaccuracy.

Statement credit and further information - <https://illinoisstate.edu/president/diversity-inclusion-advisory-council/land-acknowledgement/>

### **Classroom Decorum**

Debates and disagreements during class discussions foster the free exchange of ideas. It is expected that students treat each other with respect when engaging in discussions and all other classroom interactions.

### **Technology**

If you are accessing your newfangled technological devices while in class, use them for ventures related to the course. Do not distract your classmates or your instructor.

### **Academic Dishonesty (Cheating/Plagiarism)**

Plagiarism (using the words or ideas of others and failing to acknowledge their contribution) will not be tolerated and may result in a failing grade. Examples of plagiarism include: using the work of other students, arranging for someone else to write your assignments, rephrasing a published review or essay and presenting it as your own work/ideas, copying a review word-for-word and presenting it as your own work, using unacknowledged online sources, failing to use quotation marks where needed, failing to cite sources where needed, and “recycling” essays written by other students. If you have any doubts about how to acknowledge the work of others, please pose questions in class or during an office visit with us. Refer to the University Handbook for the plagiarism policy followed in this class. That said, I credit Dr. Leslie Baxter and Dr. Bianca Wolf and thank them for their assistance in developing this syllabus.

Never turn in a paper that you did not write yourself (yes, this includes AI creations). Never turn in a paper for this class that you wrote for another class. Never collaborate on an exam or facilitate someone else’s efforts to do so. If I detect cheating or plagiarism, I will reduce the student's grade on the assignment or the course or assign an F for the course. Plagiarism or cheating will be reported to Community Rights and Responsibilities, and the instructor will meet with the student in person.

### **Grades**

All evaluations will be graded using points; please keep track of these points so that you are aware of your standing in this course. In accordance with FERPA (Family Education Rights and Privacy Act) regulations, I will not post grades outside of the ISU System. Come to my office hours or make an appointment to discuss your grade(s).

I have a “24-7” policy for disputing assignment grades. This means that you must wait 24 hours before contacting me (aside from basic mathematical errors) to discuss/dispute an assignment, and you must contact me *in writing* within 7 days of the assignment being returned to dispute a grade. This policy ensures that you have time to process my feedback and that disputes take place in a timely manner. To dispute a grade, you must submit no more than a one-page argument that details your specific dispute(s) about the (in)appropriateness of the grade. I will review your request and re-grade the assignment, and we will have a face-to-face meeting to discuss our stances. Note: your grade can increase, stay the same, or decrease upon re-grading.

### **(Optional) Up to 2 Points Extra Credit for Research Participation**

You have two options for earning extra credit. First, you may receive extra credit for participating in any of the studies posted to the School of Communication’s Research Announcement Board. The Research Announcement

Board is updated as research studies are opened/closed, and it is your responsibility to access the Board and be aware of available opportunities. Research Announcement Board: <https://sites.google.com/site/ilstusocstudies>

In general, each 30 minutes of participation in an extra credit study will earn you .5 Research Credits, but please see the call for participants for the Research Credits associated with each study. Each project listed on the Research Announcement Board will indicate the specific number of Research Credits associated with the project. For this class, you can complete up to the equivalent of 1.0. Research Credit for participating in studies on the School of Communication Research Announcement Board website. For studies worth .5 credits, you can earn 1 point (1 percent) extra credit. For studies worth 1.0 credit, you can earn 2 points extra credit.

The extra credit points will be added to your final grade and might not necessarily appear in the gradebook immediately upon your completion of the opportunity. There are no guarantees for extra credit, and it is each student's responsibility to be aware and take advantage of such opportunities.

The researcher(s) who administer the research studies will provide evidence of your participation at the conclusion of the semester; however, it is your responsibility to make sure that the researchers have the necessary evidence of your participation at the time of the study. Before participating in a study, please be sure to have your name, ULID (i.e., the part of your email before @ilstu.edu), instructor name, and course and section number ready, as you will need to provide these to receive credit. Research Credit can only be applied to one course for each study, unless specified otherwise on the Research Announcement Board. Second, there may be some studies for which you are not eligible (e.g., recruiting based on gender or family structure) or in which you do not wish to take part. Therefore, options for alternative extra credit during the semester, each worth .5 research credits (1 point extra credit), will also be available (contact your instructor for more information). As with the research participation, you can earn up to 1 research credit (2 points extra credit). These assignments are alternatives to research participation, not in addition to participating in research. Thus, YOU CANNOT EARN MORE THAN 2 EXTRA CREDIT POINTS IN THIS COURSE.

### **Permission to Record**

Students must obtain written permission from the instructor if they wish either to photograph classroom lectures or discussions or to record them using audio or video devices. This restriction includes visual materials that accompany the lecture/discussion, such as lecture slides, whiteboard notes/equations, etc. Such recordings are to be used solely for the purposes of individual or group study with other students enrolled in the class. They may not be reproduced, shared in any way (including electronically or posting in any web environment) with those not in the class. Students with disabilities who need to record classroom lectures or discussions must contact Student Access and Accommodation Services to register, request and be approved for an accommodation. Students who violate this policy may be subject to both legal sanctions for violations of copyright law and disciplinary action under the University's Code of Student Conduct.

### **Student Access and Accommodations**

Any student needing to arrange a reasonable accommodation for a documented disability and/or medical/mental health condition should contact Student Access and Accommodation Services at 308 Fell Hall, Office Phone (309) 438-5853, Video Phone (309) 319-7682 or visit the website at [StudentAccess.IllinoisState.edu](http://StudentAccess.IllinoisState.edu)

### **Classroom Emergency Response**

Please review university emergency preparedness and response procedures posted in classrooms.

### **Instructor Responsibilities**

My job is to expand on ideas presented throughout the course and offer opportunities for discussions to take place about the material covered in readings and field experiences. Above all else, I am here to help you!

Please feel free to e-mail me at any time if you have questions about course materials, assignments, or other concerns related to the course. However, I will respond only during “regular business hours” (i.e., not 4:00 AM the Sunday before an assignment is due), so plan accordingly. Do not wait until the day before an assignment is due to seek assistance. You do not need to make appointments with me to attend my office hours, so stop on by! I get lonely in there, and again, my job is literally to help you learn. If you are unable to attend office hours due to a conflict in your schedule, please set up a time to meet with me. I want you to succeed as much as you want you to succeed.

### **Final Thoughts**

We are all adults. That’s awesome (although, I must admit, the novelty is wearing off for me at this point). However, with great power comes great responsibility. I have faith that you know what is expected of you as a college student: come to class; don’t cheat; meet deadlines; be a team player; and so on. All of this is important, and I assume that you already know it (if you didn’t before, you do now; you’re welcome). Equally importantly, though: Just don’t be a jerk. Be good to yourself, to your peers, to your instructors... to everyone. It will serve you well in the long run. We all have stuff going on (believe me, I know that life gets really rough sometimes), and the only way to get through it is to be kind to one another. When you need help, talk with someone. Talk with me. When someone talks with you, be kind. We’re all in this together.

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I don’t have a girlfriend, but I do know a woman who’d be really mad if she heard me say that.  
Mitch Hedberg

### TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

(Tentative schedule subject to change without notice as instructor deems necessary)

Week	Date	Topic	Reading (BEFORE class)	Assignment (DUE DATE)
1	8/19	<b>Welcome!</b> Course Introduction What's at stake?	Syllabus Textbook Preface; Ch. 1	Assign Papers 1 & 2
	8/21	Stages of Change	pp. 30-55	
2	8/26	Relational (RDT) & Rational (SET) Theories of Relating	pp. 55-57; 57-64	
	8/28	^^ Discussion & Application		
3	9/02	Interpersonal Needs	Ch. 3	
	9/4	<b>workday – no class</b>		<b>Letter for Paper 1</b>
4	9/9	Culture; Gender	Ch. 4	Letters Distributed
	9/11	^^ Discussion & Application		
5	9/16	Attraction; Managing Uncertainty	Ch. 5; Ch. 6	
	9/18	^^ Discussion & Application		
6	9/23	Sexual Communication	pp. 336-348	
	9/25	Liking & Love	Ch. 7	<b>Paper 1</b>
7	9/30	^^ Discussion & Application		
	10/2	Review for Midterm (optional)		bring questions if attending
8	10/7	<b>Midterm</b>		<b>Exam 1</b>
	10/9	Commitment & Quality	pp. 314-325	
9	10/14	Rituals; Managing Openness	pp. 260-262 & 325-332; pp. 272-285	
	10/16	^^ Discussion & Application		
10	10/21	Lying & Deception; Power Politics	pp. 285-291; pp. 333-336	
	10/23	^^ Discussion & Application		
11	10/28	Transgressions & Forgiveness	Ch. 11	
	10/30	^^ Discussion & Application		
12	11/4	Destructive & Constructive Conflict	Ch. 8; pp. 292-306	
	11/6	^^ Discussion & Application		
13	11/11	Violence in Relating: Verbal & Physical		
	11/13	Breakups & Aftermaths	Ch. 10	
14	11/18	<b>workday – DrT at NCA in Denver</b>		
	11/20	<b>workday – DrT at NCA in Denver</b>		<b>Paper 2</b>
XXXX		<b>Fall Break! (no classes 11/25-11/29)</b>		
15	12/2	Class Closure	Ch. 12	
	12/4	Exam 2 Review Day (optional)		bring questions if attending
16	12/8	<b>FINALS WEEK: Exam 2 date/time TBD</b>		



### Translational Assignment Topics/Dates

Week	Date	Topic (remember: situated <i>interpersonally/within relationships</i> )	Translator/Presenter Names
2	8/28	Relational Dialectics (Theory)	Lindsey Thomas (example)      Nobody Else
3	9/02	Attachment (Theory)	
4	9/9	Gendered Communication	
5	9/16	Speech Codes/Genres	
6	9/23	Sexual/Intimate Communication	
7	10/09	Commitment	
8	10/14	Rituals	
9	10/21	Deception	
10	10/28	Transgressions	
11	11/04	Conflict	
12	11/11	Intimate Partner Violence	
13	11/13	Breakups	