Family Communication Theory and Research
TAMUCC Spring 2012

Contact Information
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Office hours: TBA

Course Information
Course number: 5315.001 CRN: 52969
Meeting times: R 4:20-6:50 PM
Course location: 222 Bachelor Hall
Credits: 3

Course Overview

Course Description. This course is designed to introduce graduate students to theory and research on communication in the family. During the semester, we will investigate various definitions of “family” and the implications of those definitions for conducting research and creating policy, study communication at various family life course stages, examine various family systems and subsystems, and analyze key communication processes within the family. Special consideration will be given to theoretical and methodological issues relating specifically to family communication research. Students are expected to critically examine what it means to study communication in the family, to critique current theory and research, and to identify areas for future research growth.

Student Learning Outcomes:
At the conclusion of the course, students will be able to:

- appraise the various ways to define family and articulate how each shapes research directions and outcomes.
- evaluate research in terms of its approach, rigor, and contribution to our understanding of family communication patterns and processes.
- describe key methodological challenges for conducting research on family communication.
- analyze the family development perspective and the family systems perspective and how each shape family communication research.
- illustrate how theories can be used to advance family communication research.
- critique current family communication research directions and findings
- identify directions for future family communication research.
- synthesize family communication research and develop a proposal for future research.

Course Text:
- Supplemental readings (listed at the end of the syllabus) will be available through blackboard.
I. Discussion Participation. (20 points) Critical discussion is an essential component of a graduate seminar. Students are expected to arrive to class having read all of the assigned class material with at least one question and/or topic to discuss relating to the readings for that day. Students will be called on to lead discussion at various points.

Good discussion at the graduate level includes several important components: listening to and respecting others’ opinions, sharing ideas and thoughts, posing questions to classmates, responding to and building off of others’ comments, making connections between disparate thoughts and concepts, and encouraging others to share their ideas. Questions, comments, and answers should not be directed to the instructor. Instead, good critical graduate-level discussion involves actively listening to and engaging other students in the classroom. Monopolizing conversations, disrespecting or criticizing others, and creating a discordant atmosphere are unacceptable participation techniques. As a courtesy to others, please turn off cell phones and put away computers during discussion.

Consider the following questions when reading the course materials:
- What are the main point(s) of the reading? What does this reading say about family communication?
- Where is the communication? How does one study this topic from a communication perspective?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the article/reading?
- What have the authors missed or overlooked?
- What are some directions for future research?

II. Article Presentation. (60 points) Each student will present two research articles to the class. Presentation dates will be determined. The presentation will be 8 to 10 minutes in length and follow a standard conference style format. The article must address a topic that relates to the discussion topics for a specific day. Students may not present two articles on the same day. Students may not present articles two weeks in a row. More information will be provided.

III. Research Proposal & Presentation. (100 points) Each student will plan a research study in family communication. This involves identifying a research topic, conducting a review of literature on the topic, formulating a research question or hypothesis, and describing a plan for data collection and analysis. In addition, each student will present his or her paper orally to the class in format similar to a conference presentation. More information about the assignment will be provided.

IV. Reading Responses. (50 points) Over the course of the semester, students need to complete ten reading responses over twelve weeks (you can select two weeks in which you don’t write a response). Each response should be a one–page, single-spaced analysis of the readings for that day. In it, you should reflect on the readings, raise questions, draw conclusions, compare and contrast, evaluate, and/or make connections. The reading response is meant to be a place for you to process the material. It should not be a summary of the content of the articles.
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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Participation</td>
<td>Each Class</td>
<td>20 points</td>
<td>8%</td>
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<td>Research Proposal Paper</td>
<td>Week 15</td>
<td>100 points</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<td>Research Proposal</td>
<td>Week 16 &amp; 17</td>
<td>30 points</td>
<td>12%</td>
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<td>Article Presentations</td>
<td>To be Assigned</td>
<td>60 points</td>
<td>24%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading Responses</td>
<td>Each Class</td>
<td>40 points</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td>250 points</td>
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**COURSE EVALUATION**

**Method of Evaluation:**
Students’ grades are based on written papers, oral presentations, and in-class participation.

Grades are based on demonstration of mastery of course material. Work that meets the minimum requirements of an assignment, is done on time, and displays average involvement with the course content is deserving of a ‘C.’ Higher grades are awarded to work that goes above and beyond the minimum standards to produce products that reflect superior intellectual effort, excellence in critical analysis, and overall creativity in the approach to any given assignment.

- 224-250 points—A 90-100% A
- 199-223 points—B 80-89% B
- 165-198 points—C 70-79% C
- 149-164 points—D 60-69% D
- fewer than 149 points—F 59% and below F

**COURSE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

**Academic Honesty:** Students unaware of the university’s statement on academic honesty should review it in the *Undergraduate Catalog or Student Handbook*. Examples of academic dishonesty and plagiarism are using someone else’s ideas and not giving them credit; presenting a paper or speech that is not originally yours; handing in assignments that are not originally yours; presenting “facts” or lifting ideas from sources without crediting the source; presenting falsified opinions and figures; cheating on an exam; and/or not participating in group activities, but taking credit for the product. If you are uncertain as to what actions constitute plagiarism or dishonesty, please ask your professor. Students who violate the code of honesty in this class will receive a “0” on that assignment. Any student receiving more than one “0” for academic dishonesty or plagiarism will fail the course and could be dismissed from the program. Note: All violations of the academic honesty are reported to the college dean and Office of Students Affairs who maintains documentation of such offenses for at least 5 years.

**Equity Statement:** All persons, regardless of gender, age, class, race, ethnicity, religion, physical disability, sexual orientation, veteran status, nationality, etc., shall have equal opportunity without harassment in this class. Any problems with or questions about harassment can be discussed confidentially with your professor or department chair.
Notice to Students with Disabilities: Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi complies with the American with Disabilities Act in making reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. If you suspect you may have a disability (physical impairment, learning disability, psychiatric disability, etc.), please contact the Services for Students with Disabilities Office, located in Driftwood 101, at 361-825-5816. If you need disability accommodations in this class, please see me as soon as possible.

Academic Advising: The College of Liberal Arts requires that graduate students meet regularly with their Academic Advisor. For students with less than 18 hours, your advisor is the Graduate Coordinator for the Communication program.

Grade Appeal Process: As stated in University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, and University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures. These documents are accessible through the University Rules Web site at http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Office of Student Affairs.

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<tr>
<td><strong>Jan 12</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Course Overview</td>
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<tr>
<td>Introductions</td>
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<td>Perceptions of Family Communication</td>
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<th>WEEK 2</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Jan 19</strong></td>
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<td>The Shape of America's Families</td>
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<td><em>Readings:</em> Taylor (2010)</td>
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<td>Floyd, Mikkelson, &amp; Judd (2006).</td>
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<td>Edwards &amp; Graham (2009)</td>
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<td>Braithwaite et al (2010)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Jan 26</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Transition to Parenthood</td>
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<td>Early Family Communication</td>
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<td><em>Readings:</em> Chapter 5 (Huston &amp; Holmes)</td>
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<td>Chapter 14 (Van Egeren &amp; Barratt)</td>
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<td>Chapter 15 (Stafford)</td>
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WEEK 5

Feb. 2  Family at Midlife
      Family in Later Adulthood
      Readings:  Chapter 6 (Fingerman, Nussbaum, & Burditt)
                 Chapter 16 (Larsen & Collins)
                 Ingersoll-Dayton (2001)
                 Chapter 7 (Dickson, Christian, Remmo)

      Research Proposal Topic Due

WEEK 6

Feb. 9  Intact Family Systems
        Divorced & Single-Parent Systems
        Readings:  Chapter 8 (Koerner & Fitzpatrick)
                    Chapter 9 (Lewis, Wallerstein, & Johnson-Reitz)
                    Rollie (2006)
                    Barber & Demo (2006)

WEEK 7

Feb. 16  Stepfamily Systems
         Readings:  Chapter 10 (Coleman, Ganong, & Fine)
                    Ganong & Coleman (2006)
                    Braithwaite, Olson, Golish, Soukup, & Turman (2001)

WEEK 8

Feb. 23  Family Subsystems
         Readings:  Chapter 13 (Doherty & Beaton)
                    Sillars, Smith, & Koerner (2010)
                    Penington (2004)
                    Beatty & Dobos (1992)

WEEK 9

Mar. 1  Expanded Systems
        Readings:  Chapter 17 (Schmeeckle & Sprecher)
                    Morr Serewicz (2006)
                    Milardo & Allann (2000)

WEEK 10
Mar. 8  Alternative Family Systems  
*Readings:*  
Chapter 11 (Peplau & Beals)  
Berger, Suter, & Daas (2006)  
Durham & Braithwaite (2009)  
Docan-Morgan (2011)

**WEEK 11**

Mar. 15  Spring Break—No Class

**WEEK 12**

Mar. 22  Violence & Abuse in Families  
*Readings:*  
Chapter 27 (Le Poire)  
Chapter 28 (Anderson, Umberson, & Elliott)  
Additional Readings TBA

**WEEK 13**

Mar. 29  Media & the Family  
Support & Emotion in Families  
*Readings:*  
Chapter 26 (Jennings & Wartella)  
Mesch (2006)  
Chapter 21 (Fitness & Duffield)  
Chapter 22 (Gardner & Cutrona)

**WEEK 14**

Apr. 5  Family Culture  
Privacy in Families  
*Readings:*  
Chapter 23 (Jorgenson & Bochner)  
Chapter 24 (Perry-Jenkins, Pierce, & Goldberg)  
Chapter 18 (Caughlin & Petronio)  
Afifi & McManus (2006)

**WEEK 15**

Apr. 12  Conflict in Families  
Future Family Research  
*Readings:*  
Chapter 19 (Sillars, Canary, & Tafoya)  
Caughlin & Malis (2004)  
Chapter 30 (Galvin)  
Turner & West (2006)

*Research Proposal Due*

**WEEK 16**
REFERENCES

(Ordered by reading sequence)


