**Course Overview.** 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.
- analyze the family development perspective and the family systems perspective and how each shapes 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:**

*Required*


*Recommended*

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

I. Discussion Participation. 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 two questions and/or topics to discuss** relating to the readings for that day. Students will be called on to lead discussion at various points. Student will turn in discussion questions and discussion assignments throughout the semester.

II. Article Presentations. Each student will formally present three research articles to the class.

III. Mini Literature Review. Each student will select a family communication topic and conduct a mini literature review that synthesizes a snapshot of the research on the topic.

IV. Research Project. Over the course of the semester, students will work on research teams that will be assigned a research project.

V. Take Home Exam. Students will answer questions about content from readings, research, discussion, and presentations. The exam is designed to help students process information from the course and prepare them for taking comprehensive exams.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Total Points</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Participation</td>
<td>50 points</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article Presentations</td>
<td>75 points</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mini Literature Review</td>
<td>75 points</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Project</td>
<td>100 points</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take-home Exam</td>
<td>100 points</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>400 points</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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</table>

**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.

- 358-400 points 90-100% A
- 318-357 points 80-89% B
- 278-317 points 70-79% C
- 238-277 points 60-69% D
- fewer than 238 points 59% and below F
**COURSE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

**Attendance.** Attendance is required for participation in this course. At the graduate level, students are expected to attend every class. Only work missed due to extreme illness, a family emergency, a religious holiday, or an excused university activity can be made up. Provide documentation of excused absences prior to planned absences and within a week of unplanned absences to make arrangements for missed work. Work missed due to unexcused absences may not be able to be made up. Additionally, students are responsible for obtaining the information covered in class.

**Late Work.** All assignments are due at the beginning of class time on the assigned day. If I do not have the assignment by the beginning of class that day, the assignment is late. Each calendar day that the assignment is late will generally result in a one-letter-grade reduction.

**Media.** When class is in session, laptops may be used only to take notes and reference class readings and materials. Students may not access unrelated web pages, instant messaging programs, email, facebook or any similar programs during class unless otherwise instructed to do so. Similarly, mobile phones should be put away. Students who are using laptops or mobile phones inappropriately will no longer be allowed to bring them to class.

**Communication.** This course will rely on blackboard and islander email accounts to communicate electronically with students outside of class. Students need to be sure to check both regularly.

**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.** The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Corpus Christi Hall, Room #116.

If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance at (361) 825-5816.
**Academic Advising.** Students pursuing the Master of Arts in Communication will be paired with a graduate faculty member advisor in their first semester. Students should contact their advisors within the first two weeks of a semester to arrange a meeting during which degree plans, tracks, and opportunities for professional development should be discussed. If there is any question regarding whom a student’s academic advisor is, the student should contact Dr. Stephanie Rollie Rodriguez, Graduate Coordinator, for assistance (Stephanie.rodriguez@tamucc.edu; 361-825-5753). To finalize your degree plan and register for graduation, you must also meet with the Graduate Student Academic Advisor in the Academic Advising Center for the College of Liberal Arts. This office is located in Driftwood 203E and can be reached at (361) 825-3466.

**Grade Appeal Process.** As stated in University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures, 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 Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures (available at http://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/rules_procedures/assets/13.02.99.C2.01_student_grade_appeal_procedure.pdf). For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, http://cla.tamucc.edu/about/student-resources.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean’s Office.

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**Tentative Course Schedule** *(This is a tentative reading schedule; a final reading schedule will be provided)*

**Week 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jan 24</th>
<th>Course Overview</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Introductions</td>
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<td>Perceptions of Family Communication</td>
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*Readings:* Taylor (2010)

**Week 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jan. 31</th>
<th>The Shape of America’s Families</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overarching Perspectives</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Readings:* Floyd, Mikkelsen, & Judd (2006)
            Braithwaite et al (2010)
            Klein & White (1996)
            Galvin, Dickson, & Marrow (2006)

**Week 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feb. 7</th>
<th>Transition to Parenthood</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Early Family Communication</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Readings:* Chapter 5: On Becoming Parents
Galvin (2006)
Chapter 15: Infant Communication

**Article Presentation(s):** Frizzo, Vivian, Piccini, Lopes (2013)
Kane (2009)

### WEEK 4

**Feb. 14**

**Family at Midlife**

**Readings:**
- Chapter 16: Interactions During Middle Childhood
- Chapter 17: Parent-Child Communication During Adolescence
  Perry-Jenkins, Pierce, & Goldberg (2004)

**Article Presentation(s):**
- Stone, Ingham, & Gibbins (2013)
- Waldron, Kloeb, Carmen, Piemonte, & Danaher (2014)

### WEEK 5

**Feb. 21**

**Family in Later Adulthood**

**Readings:**
- Chapter 18: Communication During Emerging Adulthood
- Chapter 7: Family Communication in Later Life
  Conididis (2001)

**Article Presentation(s):**
- Mikkelson, Floyd, & Pauley (2011)
- Rauer, Sabey, & Jensen (2014)

### WEEK 6

**Feb. 28**

**Intact & Diverse Family Systems**

**Readings:**
- Chapter 8: Communication in Intact Families
- Chapter 12: Single, No Children: Who is your Family?
- Chapter 11: The Family Relationships of Sexual Minorities

**Article Presentation(s):**
- Docan-Morgan (2011)
- Lee & Zvonkovic (2014)
- Bergen, Suter, & Daas (2006)

### WEEK 7

**Mar. 7**

**Divorced & Single-Parent Systems**

**Readings:**
- Chapter 9: Divorced and Single-Parent Families: Risk, Resiliency, and the Role of Communication
  Rollie (2010)
  Rollie (2006)
  Barber & Demo (2006)

**Article Presentation(s):**
- Afifi, McManus, Hutchinson, & Baker (2007)
- Stavrova & Fetchenhauer (2015)

### WEEK 8

**Mar. 14**

**Stepfamily Systems**
### Readings:
- Chapter 10: Stepfamily Communication
  - Ganong, Coleman, & Hans (2006)
  - Braithwaite, Olson, Golish, Soukup, & Turman (2001)
- Article Presentation(s):
  - Schrot, Braithwaite, Soliz, Tye-Williams, Miller, Normand, & Harrigan (2007)

### Week 9
- Mar. 21: Spring Break—No Class

### Week 10
- Mar. 28: Family Subsystems
  - Readings: Chapter 14: Mothers and Fathers Coparenting Together
    - Myers & Bryant (2008)
    - Penington (2004)
  - Article Presentation(s):
    - Padilla-Walker, Nelson, & Knapp (2014)
    - Jacobs & Sillars (2012)

### Week 11
- Apr. 4: Expanded Systems
  - Readings: Chapter 19: Widening Circles
  - Article Presentation(s):
    - Soliz (2008)
    - Bergen (2010)
  - Assignment: Mini Literature Review Due

### Week 12
- Apr. 11: Conflict, Violence, & Abuse in Families
  - Readings: Chapter 21: Conflict and Relational Quality in Families
    - Chapter 29: Charting Dangerous Territory
    - Chapter 28: The Reciprocal Influence of Drug and Alcohol Abuse and Family Members’ Communication
  - Article Presentation(s):
    - King & DeLongis (2013)
    - Ebersole, Miller-Day, & Raup-Kreger (2014)

### Week 13
- Apr. 18: Research Project

### Week 14
- Apr. 25: Media, Technology, & the Family
  - Readings: Chapter 26: The Media and Family Communication
Chapter 27: Digital Technology and Families
Horst (2010)

**Article Presentation(s):**  Child & Westermann (2013)  
Devitt & Roker (2009)

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**WEEK 15**

**May 2**  
**Family Culture**  
**Future of Family Communication**

**Readings:**  
Chapter 24: Family Stories and Storytelling  
Chapter 25: After the Workday Ends  
Chapter 32: The Family of the Future

**Article Presentation(s):**  Prentice (2008)  
Johannasson (2011)

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**FINALS WEEK**

**May 9**  
**Assignment:**  Take Home Exam Due

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**REQUIRED SUPPLEMENTAL READINGS**

(Ordered by reading sequence)


**Presentation Readings**

(Ordered by reading sequence)


