
COMMUNICATION STUDIES 4130

COMMUNICATION SKILLS TRAINING & ASSESSMENT**Graham D. Bodie, Ph.D.***Professor of Communication Studies*gbodie@lsu.edu

126 Coates Hall

Office Phone: 578-6683

Class Days and Times: TTh, 15:00-16:20 (Coates 204)

Office Hours: Tuesday, 14:00-14:50, otherwise when my office door is open, AND BY APPOINTMENT

REQUIRED TEXT

Beebe, S. A., Motet, T. P., & Roach, K. D. (2013). *Training and development: Enhancing communication and leadership skills* (2nd ed.). New York: Pearson.Powers, W. G., & Bodie, G. D. *Listening Effectively Today!* (online program, details forthcoming)

Readings posted on Moodle

GENERAL COURSE INFORMATION

CMST 4130, *Communication Skills Training & Assessment*, explores how one might go about training specific communication related skills and assessing whether that training was effective. This course will focus on interpersonal communication skills, but other skills will be entertained based on student interest.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Welcome to *CMST 4130: Communication Skills Training & Assessment!* This class is designed to provide students with a theoretically-based understanding of training communication skills. The objectives of this course include (1) acquainting you with how communication skills are conceptualized and measured, (2) increasing your awareness of the importance of communication skills in everyday life, (3) helping you improve several of your communication skills, and (4) developing your appreciation for scholarly research in the field of communication.

CLASS THEME AND OTHER CURIOS

The theme for this class is to **treat it like a job**. While many of you will land your dream job upon graduation, many of you will simply land a J-O-B. In either case, you will need to take your employment seriously and work hard. Similar to success in the workplace, coming to class and participating in all class activities and discussion will help you succeed in CMST 4130. If, however, you arrive late, unprepared, unmotivated, or simply in a bad mood to work there are consequences.

You could be written up. You could be demoted. You could be fired. **Please don't get fired from CMST 4130!** Come to class prepared and ready to learn. In return, I will come to class prepared and ready to facilitate your learning.

Overall, students should be self-motivated and enjoy learning. Self-motivated students come to class prepared. Preparation includes reading and thinking critically about the material assigned for each class period. Class time will not be story time whereby the reading material is regurgitated; this is a waste of my time and yours. Instead, class time will be used to highlight and clarify certain concepts from the texts and introduce new material not presented there.

Students are expected, in addition to time spent in class, to spend a minimum of an additional 6 hours per week reading and thinking about material and putting forth effort toward the completion of course assignments. Thus, students are expected to devote at least 9 hours per week toward the successful completion of CMST 4130.

ASSESSMENT

The grade you earn in this class will be largely based on an extensive, semester-long project that involves creating a skills training program and a way to assess its potential for success. That project will be divided into several components, due throughout the semester. In addition, students will turn in a critique of several claims made about human communication and enroll as participants in a program. So, there are three primary assignments with the most weight placed on the semester-long project.

Course assignments reflect the following learning outcomes:

During CMST 4130, students will be able to:

1. Differentiate between scholarly and non-scholarly source material relevant for understanding human communication;
2. Summarize, in written form, what is known about one or more aspects of human communication;
3. Critique a training product against established criteria; and
4. Create a program suitable for the training of one or more communication skills.

Assignment 1: Critique of Claims about Human Communication (15%)

This assignment requires students to critique a claim made about human communication. One of the most rewarding and frustrating things about being a scholar of human communication is that anyone is an expert. Any John Gray with a keyboard and internet access is now a “communication expert” or “body language expert” and can travel the world spouting myths that have little or no empirical backing.¹

¹ John Grey is the author of “Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus” and several other fictional tales of how males and females inhabit different planets.

Timeline

1. September 6 – Students sign up for a claim (see assignment sheet)
2. September 8– students bring to class their non-academic findings. We will do this in class.
3. September 20 – students bring to class their academic sources
4. September 29– final projects are due no later than **15:01 IN CLASS**. No emailed assignments will be accepted unless prior arrangements have been made.

For this project, you may choose to work alone or in groups consisting of up to 5 members.

I will devote two class periods to project logistics:

1. on 9/8 we will talk about non-academic findings, and
2. on 9/20 we will use class to talk about academic sources.

Due both days is a typed list of the sources you plan to use for the project (non-academic then academic); for the 9/20 class, the list should include both non-academic and academic, organized into those two sections. The list does not bind you to using the sources; it simply gives us something to talk about and assess for appropriateness and ability to meet assignment goals.

Assignment 2: Critique of a Skills Training Program (25%)

Communication skills are important to all professions. People who are obtaining degrees in Business, Agriculture, Counseling, Education, and beyond all must be proficient communicators. Likewise, many professions stress the importance of communication skills. Indeed, communication skills are consistently rated as vitally important to career success. It is no surprise, then, that you can find many “training programs” that seek to boost various communication skills.

Communication skills training programs come in many forms – from self-help books to online training to weekend seminars. For this assignment, you will be enrolled in an online program that delivers a single key to effective listening over email each day (September 12-October 11).

1. September 6 - Students must be enrolled in Listening Effectively Today!
(*payment remitted and confirmed by 15:01*)
2. Sept. 12 – Students begin receiving daily emails from conceptkeys.com
3. October 11 – Final tasks delivered (*practice certification exam in class*)
4. October 18 – Students to take certification exam by 15:01.
5. October 20 – In class workshop for final paper
6. October 27 – Paper due in class (no later than 15:01)

Grades will be earned on the following basis:

1. Engagement in the online program – 30% (Average of on-time percentage for keys, food-for-thought questions, and most-important-key activities; weekly retention quiz scores; and score on first certification exam attempt)
2. Critique of the program – 70% (3-5 double spaced pages of text)

Assignment 3: Building a Training Program (60%)

The final primary assignment is a semester-long project; in other words, this is something you should **start thinking about now and begin to work on soon**. For this project you will choose a specific communication skill and design a training program to teach this skill to a specific population. A good resource for what counts as a communication skill is the *Handbook of Communication and Social Interaction Skills* edited by John Greene and Brant Burleson and published by Erlbaum in 2003. I have a copy of this book, and it is available as an eBook through LSU Libraries. I also have placed the LSU Libraries hard copy on reserve. Consult it!

In addition to developing a training program, you will design an assessment protocol appropriate for evaluating its effectiveness. We will discuss various models of assessment in class.

Both the program and its assessment should be grounded in scholarly research and theory. The final product is a proposal (see Beebe et al., Chapter 12) and is due Thursday, December 2 at 15:01 PM IN CLASS. No emailed assignments will be accepted. Students will present their proposals during the final exam session (Friday, December 9, 5:30-7:30PM). Of course, this plan is contingent on how many groups there are. We may have to schedule some presentations during the last week of classes.

For this assignment you can work in groups of up to five, though this group does not necessarily have to be the same as the group with whom you worked on the critique.

Your grade will be a function of the following:

- Training program and assessment portfolio – 70%
- Presentation (i.e., final examination) – 30%

The *Training Program Assignment Explanation* document is posted on Moodle and goes into more detail concerning specific deadlines for this assignment.

In addition to your primary assignments, I reserve the right to adjust grades based on class attendance and participation per PS-44. According to that document:

Grading must be based on work that is assigned and evaluated equitably and fairly, with no special consideration given to individual students unless justified by disability (see PS-26) or excused absence (see PS-22). **Individual students should not, for example, be allowed to take on "extra credit" projects, spend extra hours in laboratories, or present themselves for re-examination or special examination unless the same options are available to the entire class on the same terms.** While it is appropriate (and indeed inevitable) that the instructor should exercise subjective judgment in determining grades, particularly in "borderline" cases, the judgment should be based solely on academic considerations. **Because class absences are likely to affect a student's mastery of course content, they may be considered among these "academic considerations" in determining the final course grade.** Therefore, instructors, at their discretion, may also include "unexcused" absences as component of the course grade, as long as attendance policies are spelled out clearly in the course syllabus at the beginning of the semester. Grades

must not be utilized as coercive or punitive measures reflective of a student's behavior, attitude, personal philosophy, or other personal characteristics except as those qualities relate directly to the student's level of mastery of the course material.

POLICIES

Academic Integrity: Louisiana State University A&M adopted the Commitment to Community in 1995 to set forth a guiding mantra for student behavior inside and outside of the classroom. The Commitment to Community charges students to maintain high standards of academic and personal integrity. All students are required to read and be familiar with the LSU Code of Student Conduct and Commitment to Community, found at www.lsu.edu/saa. It is a student's individual responsibility to understand the standards of behavior for the LSU community.

Access: Please drop by my office when the door is open or make an appointment to speak with me at any point. Part of my job is to assist students in learning course material as well as providing advice for all things academic and professional. If you are having issues in your personal life that are impeding your ability to perform in this class as you normally would it is vital that you speak to me about them before you begin to fall behind. If it can be prevented, I do not want you to slip through the cracks.

Scheduled Appointments: My availability on campus is quite good – when my office door is open, you are free to come in and talk about the course or anything else that is on your mind. If you prefer to schedule appointments, I will do that as well (both on and off campus). Failure to attend a scheduled appointment will result in a suffix reduction in your final course grade (e.g., A- to B+).

Accommodations: Louisiana State University A&M is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for all persons with disabilities. The syllabus is available in alternate formats upon request. Students with disabilities: If you are seeking classroom accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act, you are required to register with Disability Services (DS). DS is located in 115 Johnston Hall. Phone is (225)578-5919. **To receive academic accommodations for this class, please obtain the proper DS forms and meet with me by September 1, 14:25.**

Attendance: Class attendance is the responsibility of the student. The student is expected to attend all classes. A student who finds it necessary to miss class assumes responsibility for making up examinations, obtaining lecture notes, and otherwise compensating for what may have been missed. The course instructor will determine the validity of a student's reason(s) for absences and will assist those students who have valid reasons (see PS-22). It is not possible to “make up” a daily participation grade, though students who have valid reasons for missing class on particular days will be officially excused from class assuming appropriate documentation is provided. A student who does not have a valid reason for missing class should submit to the instructor a formal letter outlining the reason for missing that class at least 24 hours prior to that class's start time. Only hard copies of letters will be accepted. Letters should follow standard business letter format.

Guest Lectures: Throughout the semester, I will arrange several guest lectures. Attendance for these classes is even more important than on normal class days. As a result, failure to

attend a guest lecture day will result in a suffix reduction in your final course grade (e.g., A- to B+).

In Class Meetings: I have blocked off several class days for class meetings. These are mandatory. Failure to attend these days will result in a letter-grade reduction from the final grade earned on the assignment being discussed (e.g., A to B).

Note: As a rational person, I allow for emergencies and otherwise valid excuses, assuming you communicate with me in advance or as close to the event as possible.

Correspondence: I frequently use email as a means for getting in touch with the entire class or with individual students. It is important that you regularly check your LSU email account. You should use email to correspond with me regarding areas of confusion, to make appointments, and to indicate whether you will miss class on a particular day (though see above policy about excusing “invalid” absences). Do not use email to turn in assignments or ask me to pre-read those assignments.

Late Work: All written work is to be handed in on or before the due date stated in the syllabus or on assignment descriptions. No emailed assignments will be accepted without prior arrangement and a documented and valid reason. Papers submitted past the deadline will be placed at the bottom of the stack. If I have not yet finished grading the assignments, then there is no penalty for late work. If I have finished grading the assignments, then your work will be read and marked but a grade of “F” will be assigned.

Personal Emergencies: If you experience an unavoidable personal situation that prevents you from completing work on time, you must take responsibility for informing your instructor prior to the date the work is due. A failure to contact your instructor prior to the due date will result in the application of the late work policy above. Extensions will only be granted for substantiated and documented emergencies. Make-up exams are scheduled only in cases of documented and unavoidable conflicts. You must notify your instructor prior to the exam date to re-schedule.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT AND THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973

If you have a disability that may have some impact on your work in this class and for which you may require accommodations, please see a Coordinator in the Office for Disability Services (112 Johnston Hall) so that such accommodations may be arranged. After you receive your accommodation letter, please meet with me to discuss the provisions of those accommodations.

FINAL GRADE CALCULATION

The grade you EARN for this class will be based on a formula that weights the items listed above by their respective percentages. **For all assignments, you will earn a letter grade** that corresponds to the “meaning of grades” found on page 7. These letter grades will correspond to a traditional 4.0 scale, where a 4.0 equals and grade of “A” as follows:

A+ = 4.33	C = 2.0
A = 4.0	C- = 1.67
A- = 3.67	D+ = 1.33
B+ = 3.33	D = 1.0
B = 3.0	D - = .67
B- = 2.67	F+ = .33
C+ = 2.33	F = 0.0

As an example suppose you earned the following grades:

Critique of Claim	A
Critique of Program	A
Skills Program	B

Your final grade would be calculated in the following manner:

$$(4.0)(.15) + (4.0)(.25) + (3.0)(.60) = 0.6 + 1.0 + 1.80 = 3.40 = B+$$

As always, if you have questions about where you stand in the class see me before it is too late.

As a rule, grades will not be discussed until at least 24 hours has passed since the grade was returned. During this time you are to review the material in an effort to figure out why you did better or worse than you anticipated. **The purpose of this rule is to encourage an intellectual rather than a strictly emotional discussion of your grade.**

THE MEANING OF GRADES

- A - Excellent work.** The student went above and beyond assignment expectations. Furthermore, the student has represented mastery of course material, both conceptually and pragmatically.
- B - Above average work.** The student completed the assignment with more effort than average. B work is good work, but still has room for improvement.
- C - Average work.** The student completed the assignment as specified by the assignment description. No more than “effort as expected” was achieved. Minimum requirements were met, minimum effort was put forth.
- D - Below average work.** The student seemed unsure of assignment specifics and did not complete said assignment in a satisfactory manner. There were both conceptual and pragmatic holes in the presentation.
- F - Poor/Failing work.** Student was not prepared for and/or did not execute the assignment properly. There are large holes or missing information.
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TOPICS TO COVER

All readings referenced can be found in your textbook or on the class Moodle page.

August 23-25: Orientation, Introductions, Discussion of Class Expectations

Readings: Syllabus, Relevant LSU Policy Statements

September 1: Defining “training” and related terms; Training careers

Readings: Beebe et al., Chapter 1, 12

September 6-8: Making Claims about Human Communication

A. Why do we believe what we believe?

Readings: Linfeld et al, Ch 1

B. Understanding communication (and other social scientific) research

Readings: How to Read Academic Articles; Bodie and Fitch-Hauser, pp. 46-61

September 13-15: Good training is based on good theory and research

A. Understanding Theory to Understand Practice

Readings: Reading Packet 1; Building Communication Theory

B. What is Communication Competence?

Readings: Trait Approaches; Spitzberg I

September 20 - Rest of the Semester**I. Developing a Training Program (Beebe et al.)**

A. Conducting a Needs Assessment (Chapter 3)

B. Developing Training Objectives (Chapter 4)

C. Designing Materials (Chapter 4)

D. Developing Training Plans (Chapter 9)

II. Assessing Training Outcomes (Chapter 11; Spitzberg II; portions of *Evaluation Basics*)

Notes: This is a tentative outline. Announcements about required readings will be made in class and will not be posted. Students who do not come to class will have to gather this information from those who do (or be uninformed)

No class will be held on the following days:

- August 30
- October 4, 6
- November 8, 10, 22, 24

Other non-class days will be announced at least 24 hours in advance either in class or over email.

Assignment	Letter Grade	GPA Equivalent ²	Weight	GPA Points ³	GPA To Date ⁴
Assignment I (Critique of Claim)	---		---	---	---
Sign up			.015		
Non-Academic Sources			.03		
Academic Sources			.03		
Paper			.075		
Assignment II (Critique of Program)	---		---	---	---
CK Engagement ⁵			.075		
Paper			.175		
Assignment III (Your Own Program)	---		---	---	---
Need Assessment			.06		
Task Analysis			.06		
Objectives			.03		
Training Plan			.12		
Assessment Plan			.12		
Final Proposal			.21		

² To compute GPA Equivalent, convert your letter grade into a number from 0 to 4.33 according to page 5.

³ To compute GPA Points, multiple GPA Equivalent by Weight.

⁴ To compute GPA to Date, add all GPA Points together. Please note, the only reason this number will be different from your final number is if you have an unexcused absence during an in-class meeting or guest lecture or if you failed to attend a scheduled appointment without sufficient notification or a valid excuse.

⁵ Computed as the average of on-time percent for 4 program tasks, total retention score, and certification exam.