

**CMST 4118/SOCL 4402: MODELING COMMUNICATION WITHIN MARITAL AND  
FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS**

*Other things may change us, but we start and end with the family. ~Anthony Brandt*  
*Integrity is doing the right thing even when no one is watching. ~C.S. Lewis*  
*Try not to become a person of success, but rather try to become a person of value. ~Albert Einstein*

Fall 2015

Time: 12:00 -1:20 pm, Location: 214 Coates

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Office Hours: TTh 10:30 – noon or by appointment

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 Office hours: to be announced  
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***Course Objectives:***

This is an intriguing, team-taught course this semester in which we examine experimental research findings on family interaction. We have a tape library of engaged, unhappily-married, happily-married, separated, and divorced couples who are discussing issues in their relationships and their philosophy about marriage. A body of scholarly literature and research in the field of communication has centered on the general question of the correspondence between communication and marital happiness. For example, what types of communication behaviors distinguish happily-married, moderately happily-married and unhappy couples? This question can be answered from the perspective of the marital partners as well as from the perspective of outside behaviors. The perceptual study of family communication involves giving questionnaires to family members and having them report how they interact in the family. The behavioral study of couples and families was popular in the 90's. Now, the major breakthrough is the physiological study of couples in which physiological measures are taken while they communicate about anything on their minds.

When individuals are asked to report on what causes problems in their marriage or family relationships, ineffective communication is a buzzword that is so loosely used as to be meaningless. What defines an effective communicator within the marriage? For example, a partner could be very disclosure with his/her partner even though the self no longer loves the partner. What at one level appears to be simple, may be intriguing or complex at a different level. For example, we usually don't think about what is in water until we get sick and then we all want quick answers from chemists. Yet, quick answers are not easily forthcoming.

### Overview of Learning Objectives:

1. Understand contemporary theories of family communication (e.g., systems theory, symbolic interactionism, physiology, conflict theory)
2. Understand family cultural diversity in terms of multiracial blended families and families of origin
3. Understand emotion, spirituality, and sexual diversity in families
4. Effects of Separation and Divorce on Families and Offspring
5. Conflict in blended families
6. Effects of Infidelity and abuse on family coping
7. Understand the resiliency of new social families at Retirement Homes and Pet Adoption Homes

Note: We will occasionally discuss ongoing physiological research on marital and family communication from the Matchbox Interaction Lab that our research associates are doing here. We will show videotapes of arguments and oral histories with family members. You will be asked to rate the verbal and nonverbal behaviors using ratings sheets that are on Moodle. Make multiple copies of these rating sheets.

### ***Texts:***

There are two books for the course. Both are required:

1. Honeycutt, J. & Hatcher, L. (2015). *Diversity in Family Communication*. San Diego, CA: Cognella, Inc.
2. Turner, L. H., & West, R (2012). *Perspectives on Family Communication*. (4th ed.) Boston: McGraw-Hill. Available at Barnes and Noble.

The first book for **CMST 4118 | SOCL 4402** course, **Diversity in Family Communication (First Edition)**, is published and distributed by Cognella, Inc. The book is available for purchase in both print and digital formats through their student e-commerce store (<https://students.universityreaders.com/store/>).

I have carefully chosen this book to provide you with the best learning experience. Please purchase it ASAP to stay on top of your readings. Doing so will help you be successful in this class.

Print Price: \$87.95

Digital Price: \$79.95

The book includes readings that we will use in class daily, so you should purchase your own copy. Also, please keep in mind that our institution adheres to copyright law, so any copyrighted material should not be copied or duplicated in any manner.

I strongly encourage you to buy this textbook directly from the publisher. This will ensure you receive the following benefits:

- Best price available. The publisher offers a 20% discount off of the book's list price and there are no third-party price markups applied.
- Most updated edition. Only the current, most recent edition is available, unlike other vendors who may carry older editions.
- Immediate access to your own full or partial (FREE 30% PDF) e-book from within your student account. Full e-books work with various mobile devices.

To purchase the textbook, please follow the instructions below:

Step 1: Log on to <https://students.universityreaders.com/store/>.

Step 2: Create an account or log in if you have an existing account to purchase.

Step 3: Easy-to-follow instructions guide you through the rest of the ordering process. Payment can be made by all major credit cards.

Step 4: After purchasing, you can access your full or partial e-book by logging into your account and clicking My Digital Materials to get started on your readings right away.

Orders are typically processed within 24 hours and the shipping time will depend on the selected shipping method and day it is shipped (orders are not shipped on Sundays or holidays). If you experience any difficulties, please email [orders@cognella.com](mailto:orders@cognella.com) or call 800.200.3908 ext. 503.

**ADA Statement:** The American with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973: If you have a disability that 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 letters, please meet with me to discuss the provisions of those accommodations during the first two weeks of class.

***Music:*** I am a former musician who plays Ludwig, vialite/djembe drums and harmonica. I have researched how music affects moods and how background music affects communication and arguing. I love music (classic R& R, some jazz & symphony) and will play music at the beginning of class to affect moods. There are many songs about communication, arguing, family relationships, love, jealousy, and emotions.

### ***Classroom Etiquette:***

Always be prepared to be called on in class and respond to questions. Students are expected to conduct themselves as professional adults. Students are expected to be in class on time. Coffee/soda/water is permissible as long as it's not a distraction. There is debate on the value of

using laptops to take notes. Some research indicates that laptop use is not correlated with student performance on exams (<http://portal.acm.org/citation.cfm?id=1342673>). Students overestimate their ability to effectively multitask. **If you want to use a laptop for taking notes without distracting others, then you can. However, if we see that you are busy facebooking, then we may close the laptop.**

Do not read listen with earphones during class activities unless you are hearing impaired. Do not leave class unless prior permission has been granted. The central premise regarding classroom etiquette is to respect others by practicing simple manners. This is required in business organizations and so, it is here.

### ***COURSE REQUIREMENTS:***

#### **Undergraduate:**

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Weighting</u>
Test 1	20%
Test 2	21%
Test 3	24%
Family service project or Research project	25%
Attendance/Activities/ Questions from Readings	6%
Article outline	4%

#### **Grade Distribution:**

A+ = 97% - 100  
 A = 93 - 96  
 A- = 90 - 92  
 B+ = 87 - 89  
 B = 83 - 86  
 B- = 80 - 82  
 C+ = 77 - 79  
 C = 73 - 76  
 C- = 70 - 72  
 D+ = 67 - 69  
 D = 63 - 66  
 D- = 60 - 62  
 F < 60

**Graduate:**

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Weighting</u>
Test 1	21%
Test 2	21%
Test 3	23%
Research project	25%
Attendance/Activities/Readings	5%
Article outlines	5%

Since this is a 4000 level course that may contain graduate students, the graduates will be required to prepare an individual research paper. During the final week of class, the graduate students will have the opportunity to present to the class an oral report of their research. The research paper requires a review of literature in a narrowly defined area of marital or family communication. A detailed description of this assignment will be distributed during the second week of class. They also have to compile 4 outlines about research articles from communication and social science journals pertaining to marriage or the family.

***Questions about Readings from the book:*** In order to be sure that you stay on track with the assigned readings in the book, **we want you to write four questions (True-False, Multiple choice)) for each of the assigned chapters along with the answer and/or page that the answer is found on.** These questions must be typed in a Word document. These are graded as 2, 1, or 0. They are due on the date of the assigned reading and only will be accepted in class; not online. Late questions will result in 0; no excuses. We will drop the lowest zero. We have found that the repeated “0” quickly diminish your grade for this activity; so it very important for you to turn them in. They also act as study guides for the portion of the tests coming from the book. In fact, we may take some the “best” questions from your submissions and include them on the tests. Hence, you may have already asked and answered a question appearing on the exam.

Use three guidelines for generating these questions; 1) the answer is directly stated in the reading, 2) there are no right or wrong answers to the question directly from the reading but an opinion should be based on informed deduction, 3) Some of the questions can provoke controversy, raise important theoretical issues or generate research ideas as much as possible.

**Sample Questions from the Introductory Chapter of the HH volume:**

T F 1. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, a family is group of two or more people who live together.

The answer is false and is on page 2—They must be related by birth, marriage, or adoption.

T F 2. According to the diversity of family definitions discussed in the introductory chapter, a family can be defined as all of the members of a household under one roof.

3. As discussed in the introductory chapter, which of the following is NOT a reason that families matter insofar as children of divorce are concerned

- a. Children of divorce are more likely to be high-school dropouts
- b. Children of divorce are more likely to suffer from little parental involvement and supervision.
- c. Children of divorce are more likely to get impregnated or impregnate someone earlier compared to children where there was no divorce.
- d. We see increasing diversity in American families.
- e. It is becoming increasingly clear that not all types of family lead to equal outcomes.

The answer is C and can be deduced by ruling out the other choices as explained on page 5 in the first, full paragraph. Choice C also may reflect a common stereotype that is without basis in empirical study.

4. Which of the following themes are covered in the book?

- a. Divorce
- b. Sexual Orientation
- c. Cultural Diversity
- d. All of these are covered
- e. None of these is covered

The answer is D. The overview of the volume is on pages 6-8.

**Examinations:** There will be three scantron exams using the large 8.5 by 11 scantron forms that you must provide (Get these from the LSU Barnes & Noble bookstore on Highland Road across the street from the Union) consisting of true-false and multiple choice items. Students are expected to take the tests at the schedule time on the daily listing of class topics and activities. Students who will miss an examination due to an authorized university activity should make arrangements to take the test in advance. The exams contain 60-65 objective items. The exams will cover the material presented in the lectures and in the book. Exams 2 and 3 are not comprehensive. "Make-up" exams will be given only in the cases of documented university events (e.g., NCAA events) that conflict with the date of the exam, accident, illness, or emergency.

**Article Outlines for Students**—We want each of you to read a journal article from one of the social science or communication journals from 2008 to the present calendar year. Prepare a full sentence outline of the article. You will have to segment your outline into a brief literature

review, hypotheses or research questions, method, and results/discussion section following the segmentation of the article (2 typed, single-spaced pages). Post a copy of the article to Moodle to an activity link that will be set up. Make a hardcopy for yourself and turn in an additional hardcopy to us on the due date. **Once the due date is passed, be prepared to be called on to deliver a two-three minute summary of the article. Sometimes, we may call on you when you are absent and you will receive a zero for this. Articles will be accepted** from the following sources:

- Journal of Family Communication
- Journal of Marriage and the Family
- Family Relations
- Journal of Interpersonal Violence
- Any reputable social science journal (e.g., HUMAN COMMUNICATION RESEARCH, SEX ROLES, JOURNAL OF PERSONALITY AND SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY, PSYCH. BULLETIN, PSYCH. REVIEW, AMERICAN SOCIOLOGICAL REVIEW)

***Family Service or Individual Research Project:***

I am offering students the option of gaining practical, internship experience working as a volunteer in a family agency. The internship links a student's academic program of study with community service by helping persons in need. This is done through the context of a family based agency. Many businesses and corporations indicate that they examine service involvement as factors in the decision to hire someone. For example, an Exxon personnel manager informed me that employment interviewers are interested in experience with community involvement and consider this involvement a positive asset in the decision to hire someone.

This class has partnerships with **Sunrise Living on Siegen Lane as well as the Dog Adoption House at 8476 Highland Road** since many people consider pets as family members. You may split time between each of these agencies.

**FACEBOOK:** Friends of the Animals Baton Rouge – 3,000+ followers

**WEBSITE:** [www.friendsoftheanimalsbr.org](http://www.friendsoftheanimalsbr.org)

**CONTACT PERSON:** Paula Schoen, President (225-205-9330) or 225-384-0299

**e-mail:** [pbschoen18@gmail.com](mailto:pbschoen18@gmail.com)

If you decide to do the student internship at an agency, you will have to devote **16** hours of service time over a 10-11 week period (September 3 - December 3), less Thanksgiving Break. The time commitment will include 3-4 hours service weekly over the 10-11 week period and a 2-hour action reflection seminar in class. Service hours are negotiated between the agencies' activity directors and you.

However, because of time scheduling problems, you may choose an alternative site. Go to the following website on the LSU homepage search LSU from A-Z. Click on the Center for Community Engagement, Learning, and Leadership (CCELL). The webpage is

<http://appl003.lsu.edu/slas/ccell/ccell.nsf/index>. There is a list of various agencies under “Community Partner Information.” There is a sub-icon called “Community Partners” with a vast list of agencies and contact persons. However, some of this information has not been updated and some of the contact persons have changed.

You will write a paper due on the final day of class detailing your experiences at the agency. The purpose of the report is to demonstrate application of some course concepts to real-life observations. The report must define a minimum of three course concepts discussed in class lecture or from the book) along with examples showing the concept in action. For example, general systems theory or social-exchange theory concepts (e.g., Define symbolic, material, and affectionate rewards and costs, comparison level of alternatives) might be related to some residents. Memory, dementia and cognitive decline concepts can easily be applied. I will provide more information later about writing the journal at the reflection seminar in class.

Following is a sample list of other family agencies that you can consider: Big Buddy Program, YWCA of Greater Baton Rouge.

Contacts:

1. LaTrish Joseph, Terrace Club Coordinator (cell # 225-394-9811)  
 Sunrise Assisted Living  
 9351 Siegen Lane  
 Baton Rouge, LA 70810  
 Main: 225-765-7538  
 e-mail: [siegen.avc.sunriseseniorliving.com](mailto:siegen.avc.sunriseseniorliving.com)  
<http://www.sunriseseniorliving.com/communities/sunrise-at-siegen.aspx>  
<http://sunrise.touchtown.us/home/>

1. Friends of the Animals-- Friends of the Animals exists to rescue, rehome, or otherwise save as many dogs and puppies from euthanasia at the East Baton Rouge municipal shelter.  
**Dog Adoption House: 8476 Highland Road, Baton Rouge M-F: 1-6 pm, Saturday: 9-12 pm**  
**FACEBOOK:** Friends of the Animals Baton Rouge – 3,000+ followers  
**WEBSITE:** [www.friendsoftheanimalsbr.org](http://www.friendsoftheanimalsbr.org)  
**CONTACT PERSON: Paula Schoen, President (225-205-9330) or 225-384-0299**  
**e-mail: [pbschoen18@gmail.com](mailto:pbschoen18@gmail.com)**

**CMST 4118/SOCL 4402 Research Paper Option**

Aside from the service project, you have the option of choosing a research paper (25 typed, double-spaced pages including references using APA style of documentation) in a specific area of marital and family communication. You will conduct library research and write a review of literature in the area describing the results of empirical studies, noting the strengths and



weaknesses of these studies. You will also conduct a pilot survey in the area of study. I have old copies of papers you may consult as a model.

I advise you to consider using the Matchbox Lab to videotape family members for your research. Conduct an oral history interview on the topic of research and analyze the videos. For example, a prior student conducted an oral history interview in which three couples were interviewed separately and together. These interviews lasted about 30 minutes and were videotaped in the Matchbox Interaction Lab in which blood pressure and heart-rate were measured. The couples were asked a series of questions. The couples answered questions on a written survey form that was given to them. The surveys asked the spouses their beliefs about marriage and identification of problematic issues in marriage. The student surveyed a happily-married couple, an unhappily-married couple and a separated/divorced couple where they had access to both partners who could be interviewed. If you do not know someone, you may have success finding couples that are known to your friends or relatives.

Following is a sample list of topics. This list is by no means exhaustive. Hence, if you have a topic that is different, you must discuss this with Dr. Honeycutt. Regardless, the topic must be pre-approved by Dr. Honeycutt:

#### Individual Research Topics for CMST 4118/SOCL 4402--Fall 2013

Oral History Interview of Couples Based on a Classification Variable (e.g., long-distance versus proximal marriages, interethnic versus homogamous ethnic couple or families, conflict avoider vs. conflict engaging, similar age range vs. differences in term of more than 10 years, etcetera).

Blood pressure of couples while arguing  
 Meta-emotion interviews of siblings or partners how they handle emotions in their families  
 Problems and Benefits in single parenting  
 Effects of pets on family bonding  
 Family Anger and Interference in Childhood Sports  
 Decline of family values and morality in America  
 Kin keeping and social networking in the family  
 Uncertainty increase and cyber infidelity  
 Effects of social media or internet addiction on family values  
 Imagined interactions in happy and less happy couples  
 Expectancies for marriage as a function of gender, family history, and relationship experiences  
 The problem of contradictory needs (dialectical theory)  
 Amount of listening and talk in families versus text messaging  
 Verbal & physical aggression in families

Note: I can direct you to various studies in a number of these areas. You will have to find some critical studies as a starting point. Note who is cited in the initial studies and read some of the articles that are cited. The idea is to build a body of literature in the particular area. For

example, a journal called FAMILY RELATIONS has devoted entire issues to single-parenting, step-parenting, etcetera. There are a number of journals you can examine (e.g., JOURNAL OF FAMILY COMMUNICATION, JOURNAL OF MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY, FAMILY RELATIONS, JOURNAL OF DIVORCE, JOURNAL OF SOCIAL AND PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS, PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS, COMMUNICATION MONOGRAPHS, HUMAN COMMUNICATION RESEARCH, JOURNAL OF FAMILY ISSUES, JOURNAL OF MARITAL THERAPY, CHILD DEVELOPMENT).

## TENTATIVE COURSE OUTLINE

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic/Activities</b>	<b>Reading</b>
		Note: HH = Honeycutt, Hatcher book
<b>Family Communication Theories</b>		
T Aug. 25	Course introduction; Family myths	
Th Aug. 27	Family types; Turn in 4 questions from HH & 4 questions from Turner/West	Introduction from HH Turner/West Chp. 1
T Sept. 1	Service-Learning Orientation	
Th Sept. 3	Family Systems theory	HH Chp. 1; T/W Chp. 2
T Sept. 8	Symbolic Interactionism and Family Roles	Turner/West Chp. 3
Th Sept. 10	Rules for resolving conflict	Turner/West Chp. 5
T Sept. 15	Family narratives	Turner/West Chp. 6
Th Sept. 17	Oral histories of marriage	
T Sept. 22	Family Diversity	HH Chp. 2, 3
Th Sept. 24	Test 1	
<b>Emotion, Spirituality, Introspection, and Sexual Orientation</b>		
T Sept. 29	Communicating emotions in the family	HH Chp. 4
Th Oct. 1	Spirituality and Family Bonding	HH Chp. 5; Turner/West Chp. 9
T Oct. 6	Imagined Interactions with family members <b>Journal article outline due</b>	HH Chp. 6

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Reading</b>
Th Oct. 8	Sexual Orientation in the Family	HH Chp. 7
<b>Stress &amp; Physiological Arousal in Families</b>		
T Oct. 13	Stressors in family and life	Turner/West Chp. 8
Th Oct. 15	John Gottman's intent-impact model	
T Oct. 20	Physiological arousal in families	HH Chp. 9
<b>Divorce and Family Reconfiguration</b>		
Th Oct. 22	The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse: What Predicts Divorce?	HH Chp. 10
T Oct. 27	Test 2	
Th Oct. 29	No class—fall holiday	
T Nov. 3	Consequences of Divorce for Kids	HH Chp. 11
Th Nov. 5	Media & desensitization of violence	Turner/West Chp. 4
T Nov. 10	Empty nest, blended Families; Homeless Families	
Th Nov. 12	Communication Accommodation between Family Elders & younger generation	Honeycutt Chp. 12
T Nov. 17	Reflection seminar	
Th Nov. 19	Social media influences on the family	
T Nov. 24	Attachment bonds in the family	
Th Nov. 26	No class--Thanksgiving	
<b>Effects of Infidelity and Abuse</b>		
T Dec. 1	Infidelity & Family Destruction	HH Chp. 13

Th Dec. 3                      Spousal & elder abuse

HH Chp. 14

**Final exam: Wednesday, Dec. 9, 3-5 pm**