

**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 2017

Time: 9:00 - 10:20 pm, Location: 202 Coates

Dr. James Honeycutt
LSU Distinguished Professor
 Dept. of Communication Studies
 230 Coates Hall, 578-6676; e-mail: sphone@lsu.edu
 Office Hours: TTh 10:30 – noon or by appointment

Course Objectives:

This is an intriguing course in which we examine experimental research findings on family interaction. This is a certified Communication-Intensive (C-I) course which meets all of the requirements set forth by LSU's Communication across the Curriculum program, including. 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

Note: We will occasionally discuss ongoing physiological research on marital and family communication from the Matchbox Interaction Lab that my 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.

Communication-Intensive Certification. This is a certified Communication-Intensive (C-I) course which meets all of the requirements set forth by LSU's Communication across the Curriculum program, including:

- Instruction and assignments emphasizing informal and formal [mode 1] and [mode 2]; teaching of discipline-specific communication techniques;
- Use of draft-feedback-revision process for learning;
- Practice of ethical and professional work standards;
- 40% of the course grade rooted in communication-based work; and
- A student/faculty ratio no greater than 35:1.

Texts:

Honeycutt, J. M. (2018). *Communication Diversity in Families*; San Diego, CA: Cognella, Inc.

The required book for my **CMST 4118 | SOCL 4402** course, **Communication Diversity in Families (First Edition)**, is published and distributed by Cognella Academic Publishing. The book is now available for purchase in both print and digital formats

To purchase the textbook, please follow the instructions below. Video instructions for placing an order and downloading an eBook are available at: <https://vimeo.com/195821361>.

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The text includes course material we will reference and use in class regularly, so you should purchase your own copy. Please keep in mind our institution adheres to copyright law. Course materials should never be copied or duplicated in any manner.

If you experience any difficulties while ordering your text, please email orders@cognella.com or call 800.200.3908 ext. 503.

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.

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. Do not read newspapers, listen to iPods, or browse the internet during class activities. I may call on you in class to discuss what you are browsing and how it pertains to the topic at hand. If it is irrelevant, I may close the laptop. Do not read or 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	15%
Test 2	20%
Test 3	20%
Questions from Readings	5%
Initial Proposal	5%
Research project	25%
Attendance/Activities/Readings	5%
Presentation	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.

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. Indicate the correct answer with an asterisk to your questions and the page number where the correct reading is found.

Use two guidelines for generating these questions; 1) the answer is directly stated in the reading, or should be based on informed deduction, 2) 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 text:

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 viii — They must be related by birth, marriage, or adoption.

T F 2. Research reveals that families are associated with different economic, child, and health outcomes.

The answer is true and is on page x. Various forms including married with kids, married with no kids, and single-parents with young children have different outcomes.

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 become increasing 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 x in the third, 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 are covered
- e. None are covered

The answer is D. The overview of the volume is on pages xi-xiii.

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 2010 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 and Jefferson Highway. 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. An alternative site must be approved by Dr. Honeycutt. Go to the following website which is the Community Engagement, Learning, and Leadership (CCELL) page.

http://www.lsu.edu/academicaffairs/ccell/community_resources/partnership_contacts.php

You will write a paper that is due on the final day of class detailing your experiences at the agency (6-8 double-spaced pages, including the appendix of log hours). 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:

Contacts:

1. Bridgett Dembowski—Activity Director
Sunrise Assisted Living
9351 Siegen Lane
Baton Rouge, LA 70810
Main: 225-765-7538
e-mail: siegen.avc.@sunriseseniorliving.com
<http://www.sunriseseniorliving.com/communities/sunrise-at-siegen.aspx>
<http://sunrise.touchtown.us/home/>
2. Kimberly Ashmore, Activity Director
Sunrise Assisted Living
8502 Jefferson Highway
Baton Rouge, LA 70809
Main: 225-932-9400
<http://www.sunriseseniorliving.com/communities/sunrise-of-baton-rouge/overview.aspx>

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 2017

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 (e.g., adolescents watch a man drown in a pond and do nothing to help the man while laughing;

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/teenagers-who-laughed-while-filming-disabled-man-drown-had-no-legal-duty-to-help-a7854381.html>

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

Date	Topic/Activities	Reading
Family Communication Theories & Cultural Diversity		
T Aug. 22	Course introduction; Family myths	
Th Aug. 24	Family types; Turn in 4 questions from text	Introduction
T Aug. 29	Service-Learning Orientation	
Th Aug. 31	Family Systems theory	Chp. 1
T Sept. 5	Observation of couple discussing issues	(Fill out observation form)
Th Sept. 7	Symbolic interactionism & rules for resolving conflict	
T Sept. 12	Family narratives & oral histories	
Th Sept. 14	Family Diversity & Culture	Chp. 2-3
T Sept. 19	LGBT families Chp. 4	
Spirituality, Introspection, & Social Media Influences		
Th Sept. 21	Spirituality and Family Bonding	Chp. 5
T Sept. 26	Using Imagined Interactions to Create Families	Chp. 6
Th Sept. 28	Test 1	
T Oct. 3	Social Media Effects on Family Bonding;	Chp. 7
Emotions and Physiological Arousal in Families		
Th Oct. 5	Children communicating emotions;	Chp. 8

Journal article outline due

T Oct. 10	Diffuse physiological arousal in happy & unhappy couples/families	Chp. 9
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Family Reconfiguration and Divorce

Th Oct. 12	Bereavement over Family Loss	Chp. 10
T Oct. 17	The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse: What Predicts Divorce?	Chp. 11
Th Oct. 19	No class; fall holiday	
T Oct. 24	Test 2	
Th Oct. 26	Effects of divorce on children	Chp. 12
T Oct. 31	Stressors in family and life	
Th Nov. 2	Empty nest; blended families	Chp. 13
T Nov. 7	Attachment bonds in the family	
Th Nov. 9	Animals as Family Members	Chp. 14
T Nov. 14	Defining dominance in families & groups	
T Nov. 16	No class; NCA Convention	
T Nov. 21	Reflection seminar	
Th Nov. 23	No class; Thanksgiving	

Effects of Infidelity and Abuse

T Nov. 28	Infidelity & Family Destruction	Chp. 15
Th Nov. 30	Spousal & elder abuse	Chp. 16

Final exam: Th Dec. 7, 12:30 - 2:30 pm