

## COMMUNICATION STUDIES 4130 (FORMERLY 3900)

---

### COMMUNICATION SKILLS TRAINING & ASSESSMENT

---

**Graham D. Bodie, Ph.D.**

*Associate Professor*

[gbodie@lsu.edu](mailto:gbodie@lsu.edu)

126 Coates Hall

Office Phone: 578-6683

---

Class Days and Times: MWF, 12:30-1:20 (Coates 237)

Office Hours: Wednesday, 1:30-3:30 AND BY APPOINTMENT

#### REQUIRED TEXT

---

Beebe, S. A., Motet, T. P., & Roach, K. D. (2013). *Training and development: Enhancing communication and leadership skills* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: Pearson.

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 and 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 will come to class prepared. This 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 students 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.

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

This assignment requires students to critique a set of claims 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.

The project is **due on February 28<sup>th</sup>**. The assignment is to document evidence for claims made about human communication – how it works, what constitutes skilled communication, what one can do to be a better communicator, etc. Students should turn in a stapled set of pages that starts with a cover page that indicates which claim is being questioned. The first part of the paper should detail how the claim is presented in sources not considered academic. This includes textbooks, blogs, Fox News commentary, Facebook, LinkedIn, etc. Basically, you should summarize what “experts” think about this element of human communication. Your job here is to be a detective of all (or at least many) things non-academic but that still purport to be “truth”

about this element of human communication. The second part of the paper should offer a critique of the non-academic literature by (a) summarizing what the academic literature says about this claim and (b) comparing the two sets of knowledge (i.e., the academic with the non-academic). When reading the academic literature, you should ask:

- Is there any direct support for this claim?
- Is there any evidence that this claim is actually a myth?

Your job here is to be a detective of all (or at least many) things academic – what is the “truth” about human communication (i.e., what the real experts claim we know about human communication).

For any data you present, you will have to cite your sources. Consequently, you need to know how to read them (and know how to find them). I assume you have that knowledge. A good place to start for both types of sources (academic and non-academic) is Google – the normal Google search function for the former, and the Google Scholar function for the latter. But don't stop there! The LSU library also has extensive database access for both academic and non-academic source material. Please note, just because you find it using a database through LSU does not make it academic!

In addition to content, this project will also be marked for format and writing clarity, etc.

#### Timeline

1. No later than January 31– students meet with instructor to discuss non-academic findings; it is your responsibility to set an appointment with me. I will not remind you.
2. February 12 – groups meet with instructor to discuss sources they will use to evaluate claims; I will devote class on February 12 to this part of the project. Due this day is a typed list of the sources you plan to use for the project, organized by whether the source is academic or non-academic. All citations should follow APA 6<sup>th</sup> edition. Please note, APA is not MLA, Chicago, or Johnny-Student Style. Find the style book in the library or go here: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/10/>
3. February 28 – final projects are due no later than **12:31 PM 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.

#### Example claims that you can critique:

1. “Male” and “Female” communication is akin to “cross-cultural communication” – aka, Men are From Mars, Women are From Venus
2. Nonverbal behavior can be used to detect deception – aka, you can tell someone is lying by closely examining how they act nonverbally
3. 93% of communication is nonverbal
4. Conflict is a reliable sign that a relationship is in trouble
5. Leaders are born, not developed.
6. Public speaking anxiety is universally negative and should therefore be eliminated entirely through one or more techniques.

7. When you communicate, you should always attempt clarity, avoiding ambiguity and equivocal language
8. Uncertainty is a highly undesirable element of relationships and should be avoided at all cost; in fact a fundamental goal of communication is to reduce uncertainty and thereby enhance relational closeness, satisfaction, and commitment
9. When it comes to making decisions, “two heads is better than one”.
10. When you listen to others you should always first repeat back to them what they said to check understanding; only after paraphrasing can you assert your own opinion.

If you want to explore a claim not listed here, please have that approved no later than January 22.

### **Assignment 2: Assisting in 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. It is, thus, not surprising that other programs often have specific skills training courses. One such course offered on this campus is *Counseling Skills and Interventions*, taught out of the Counselor Education program. As part of your course grade in CMST 4130 you will serve as a “client” who will meet with a training counselor 2-3 times during the course of the semester.

Your name will be provided to the course director, and you will be contacted and expected to fully participate. At the end of the sessions you will turn in a 1-2 page reflection paper about the experience. The paper should assess communication skills for counselors and how these skills were manifest in the sessions. In other words, you should write about the skills that you think were taught and how well these skills will serve this set of counselors in their future careers.

Although you may turn in your paper at any point after you have completed your sessions, all papers are due no later than Friday, May 2, 12:31 PM, IN CLASS. No emailed assignments will be accepted unless prior arrangements have been made.

Your grade will be a function of the following:

- Attending and full participation in all sessions– 25%
  - Failure to attend one scheduled session will result in an F for the assignment
- 1-2 page reflection paper about the experience – 75%

### **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 I have placed the LSU Libraries copy of the book 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 Chapter 12) and is due Friday, May 2 at 12:31 PM IN CLASS. No emailed assignments will be accepted. Students will present their proposals toward the end of the semester, preferably during the last week of classes using the final exam session only if needed. Of course, this plan is contingent on how many groups there are. 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.

## 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 below. 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:**

|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| Primary I   | A |
| Primary II  | A |
| Primary III | 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.

## **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.

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

---

Students are expected to attend class. Absenteeism hinders the learning process and creates difficulties in completing the requirements for course credit. This is particularly true because class discussion may not necessarily follow the book's structure.

LSU's attendance policy can be summarized by the following:

**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.

An absence due to illness or other causes beyond a student's control will be excused when the instructor is convinced that the reason for absence is valid. The University's *Policy Statement 22* discusses approved trips, activities, and other instances of excused absences.

Instructors will excuse any student who is unable to attend or participate in class or an examination on a religious holiday supported by the student's religious beliefs. It is the student's responsibility to anticipate such conflicts and discuss this with the faculty member well in advance. *Policy Statement 31* discusses the University's policy on observance of religious holidays in further detail.

Although class notes will be posted online prior to each class period, they are no substitute for coming to class. Reading assignments will not be posted online and are not in print. **All reading assignments will be announced in class. If you don't come, you won't hear them.**



## PLAGIARISM

---

In terms of plagiarism, my policy is simple: **DO NOT DO IT UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES**. As is the case for any other course taught at LSU, no form of academic misconduct will be tolerated. Students are advised to become familiar with the student code of conduct.

So you know where LSU stands ...

### **8.5. Academic Misconduct by Undergraduate Students**

#### **A. Assigning a grade when there is academic misconduct**

1. Absent sufficiently mitigating circumstances, a student found responsible for academic misconduct will, at a minimum, be dropped from the course in which the academic misconduct occurred and a permanent grade of "F" must be assigned in the course. In no instance may the student receive credit for the assignment on which the violation occurred.
2. If a student is charged with academic misconduct and the case cannot be resolved prior to the final date for filing a semester grade, the student should continue to complete all work and the instructor referring the matter shall report an "I" grade in the course in which the alleged academic misconduct occurred. If the student is not found in violation, a permanent grade shall be assigned to remove the "I" grade on the basis of the quality of work done in the course. If the student is found in violation of academic misconduct, the instructor shall assign a grade that incorporates the sanction issued.

#### **B. Non-grade related sanctions for academic misconduct**

1. For the first offense, the minimum sanction, in addition to the grade related sanction, is disciplinary probation for a period of at least one year. Circumstances may warrant a lengthier period of probation or separation from the University. Particularly egregious violations may warrant expulsion (under certain circumstances, examples may include, but are not limited to, falsifying an academic record relating to grades, entering a building or office for the purpose of changing a grade or accessing an unadministered test, substituting for another person or permitting any other person to substitute for oneself to take a test, or taking or otherwise obtaining a test without authorization.)
2. For the second offense, the minimum sanction is separation for one full year. The maximum sanction is expulsion.
3. For the third offense, the sanction is expulsion.

## TOPICS TO COVER

---

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

### **January 15-17: Orientation, Introductions, Discussion of Class Expectations**

Readings: Syllabus, Relevant LSU Policy Statements

### **January 20-31: Defining “training” and related terms; Training careers**

Readings: Beebe et al., Chapter 1, 12

### **February 3-14: 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
- C. Understanding communication (and other social scientific) research  
Readings: Schroeder, Johnson, and Jensen; Bodie and Fitch-Hauser, pp. 46-61

### **Rest of the Semester: 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)
- E. Assessing Training Outcomes (Chapter 11; Spitzberg II)

\*\*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).\*\*

## **Guest Lectures**

### **January 24: Dr. Margaret Fitch-Hauser, The Leadership Communication Group**

Margaret Fitch-Hauser has 35 + years' experience as an educator, consultant, trainer and coach. She has worked with people from a variety of organizations ranging from large multinational firms to small businesses. Through her firm, The Leadership Communication Group, LLC, Margaret specializes in helping clients discover and develop their own communication and relationship styles and strengths. She does this by listening, diagnosing, and working with the client to problem solve and strategically map a path to improvement.

Margaret's education includes a BA and MA in Speech Communication from Stephen F. Austin State University in Texas. Her Ph.D. is in Interpersonal Communication from the University of Oklahoma. She is a published scholar in the fields of public relations education, listening and information processing and has served as an expert witness in several fraud litigations. Her current research efforts focus on how organizations listen to their publics. For eight years, Dr. Fitch-Hauser served on the faculty of the College of Business at the University of Oklahoma working with their consulting services and teaching Business Communication. She recently

retired after serving on the faculty of the Department of Communication and Journalism at Auburn University where she was most recently Associate Professor and Chair.

**January 29: Dr. Will Powers, CEO, Concept Keys, Inc.**

Will Powers (Ph.D.) has been an executive consultant in the area of workforce development for over 35 years. His candid and pragmatic focus upon organizational leadership and communication systems has helped thousands of business owners and executives reduce the headaches and heartaches of managing to succeed. As he achieved an international reputation, he was in the unique and fortunate position of being able to focus intensively upon a small number of organizations each year while frequently speaking to key organizations such as NASA, the Girl Scouts of America, and the American Society for Training and Development.

Will's education includes A.A., B.S., M.S., and Ph.D. degrees in management, organizational, and interpersonal communication. He has published over 150 books, articles and papers; received numerous awards and recognitions for outstanding teaching, research, and service; and served in administrative roles including Chair of the Department of Communication and Associate Dean & Acting Dean of the College of Communication at Texas Christian University.

**February 17: Ben Keller, Senior Director, Corporate Security Services, Capital One Bank**

Ben Keller began his career as a private investigator, working cases involving fraud investigations, dignitary protection, litigation support, missing persons and many others. After selling his firm, he began to work as a security and investigations consultant for large U.S. banks. Today, Ben is responsible for the physical security of Capital One's employees and facilities, consisting of nearly a thousand branches, six hundred back office buildings, and its nearly 50,000 employees across North America, Europe and Asia. Most importantly, Ben is a husband and father.

The skills Ben will be referencing include tactical skills like listening for inconsistencies in interviews, detecting deviations in communication, separating fact from conjecture in report writing, and giving calm, clear instructions and reports in emergencies as well as more complex skills such as being a people manager, translating tactical concerns to executives who speak at a strategic level, handling professional conflict, and delivering difficult messages.

**Week of 4/28-5/2: Dr. Laura Choate, Associate Professor, Counselor Education, LSU**

Dr. Choate has been at LSU since August 1999. She is the coordinator of the community counseling track within the counselor education program. Her research interests include counseling issues and interventions for working with girls and women, college student wellness, and counselor preparation. She is the author of the 2008 book, *Girls' and Women's Wellness: Contemporary Counseling Issues and Interventions*, published by the American Counseling Association press. She has published over 20 articles in peer refereed journals including the *Journal of Counseling and Development*, *Counselor Education and Supervision*, and the *Journal of Mental Health Counseling*. Dr. Choate was the 2004-2006 editor of the *Journal of College Counseling*, and an editorial board member of the *Journal of Counseling and Development*. She is the 2009-2010 chair of the American Counseling Association Publications Committee. She is a Licensed Professional Counselor and is a member of the Louisiana Licensed Professional Counselors Board of Examiners. Dr. Choate has volunteered as an outreach presenter to over 30

groups of girls and women in the Baton Rouge community on the topics of sexual assault prevention and eating disorders prevention. She teaches Introduction to Counseling Services, Counseling Skills and Interventions, Analysis of the Individual, Group Counseling, Girls' and Women's Issues in Counseling, and Community Practicum. Dr. Choate is licensed as Professional Counselor in Louisiana (LPC), a National Board Certified Counselor (NBCC) and a Board Approved Supervisor in Louisiana.