Introduction to Human Communication and Culture

Class # and Section: E59.0005, section 3
Class time and room: Mon: 194M 209
                    Wed: EAST 540
                    11:00-12:15
Instructor: Dr. Gabriella Coleman
Office: 713
Office hours: By appointment
Phone: 212-992-7696
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COURSE DESCRIPTION & OVERVIEW

This course examines major concepts, theories, and research perspectives within the field of culture and human communication. It will introduce and review key approaches to the study of human interaction, rhetoric, language, persuasion, and cultural processes across diverse contexts. As a student of this class, you will explore its interdisciplinary character, examining the role of language and meaning; how language structures reality; the nonverbal aspects of social interaction; and the processes and meanings of interaction in varied contexts, such as interpersonal, small groups, and organizations. Specifically, the course provides a framework from which you can think seriously about how culture and society are constructed in our communicative practices. We will examine the social, cultural, and political impacts of communication as it unfolds in everyday life. By semester’s end, you will develop the critical tools to consider the process and role of communication in contemporary society and begin to establish your own perspectives on the study of human communication.

COURSE FORMAT, GENERAL REQUIREMENTS, & ATTENDANCE

I will begin each class with a brief introductory lecture that examines the themes and readings for the week. The rest of the class should function to promote class discussion and student-led conversation about the various readings. Because active participation in discussion is the cornerstone of the class, you should come prepared for discussion and with copies of the reading.

To aid our discussion and to improve your writing skills, you will be required to turn in eight Blackboard posts where you will (1) provide a brief, one paragraph summary of the argument of each reading (2) pose at least
one conceptual question about the readings and/or topics under discussion. Four of them must be posted before class on October 22.

In addition, there will be an in-class mid-term consisting of multiple choice and true/false questions as well as a take-home final exam. You will also have one short writing assignment during the course of the class. More information on these assignments will be provided in class. Because this is a seminar course, regular class attendance is required.

Three or more missed classes without prior notices and excuse will result in your grade being dropped by one half letter.

Please be advised that no late work will be accepted and no exam will be rescheduled without a preceding agreement with your instructor. Delayed due dates will be rare, authorized only under truly justified circumstances (which will be defined as such only by your instructor).

GRADING

• **Class Participation and Questions:** 25%
• Mid-Term Exam: 25%
• Essay Assignment: 20%
• Final Exam: 30%

EVALUATION

A= Excellent
This work is comprehensive and detailed, integrating themes and concepts from discussions, lectures and readings. Writing is clear, analytical and organized. Arguments offer specific examples and concisely evaluate evidence. Students who earn this grade are prepared for class, synthesize course materials and contribute insightfully.

B= Good
This work is complete and accurate, offering insights at general level of understanding. Writing is clear, uses examples properly and tends toward broad analysis. Classroom participation is consistent and thoughtful.

C= Average
This work is correct but is largely descriptive, lacking analysis. Writing is vague and at times tangential. Arguments are unorganized, without specific examples or analysis. Classroom participation is inarticulate.

D= Unsatisfactory
This work is incomplete, and evidences little understanding of the readings or discussions. Arguments demonstrate inattention to detail, misunderstand course material and overlook significant themes. Classroom participation is spotty, unprepared and off topic.

F= Failed
This grade indicates a failure to participate.

Plus and minus grade indicate the standing within the above grades.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Any student attending NYU who needs an accommodation due to a chronic, psychological, visual, mobility and/or learning disability, or is Deaf or Hard of Hearing should register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212 998-4980, 240 Greene Street, www.nyu.edu/csd.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY & PLAGARISM

Plagiarism or cheating on any assignment will not be tolerated under any circumstances and will result in a failure of the assignment and possibly failure of this class.

“Academic integrity is the guiding principle for all that you do...you violate the principle when you: cheat on
an exam; submit the same work for two different courses without prior permission from your professors; receive help on a take-home course without prior permission from your professors; receive help on a take-home that calls for independent work; or plagiarize. You plagiarize when, without proper attribution, you do any of the following: copy verbatim from a book, article, or other media; download documents from the Internet; purchase documents; paraphrase or restate someone else’s facts, analysis, and/or conclusions...” (see School of Education Bulletin, 2004-6, p. 174)

**FORMAT**

All written work must be typed, double-spaced, and paginated. Please staple multiple pages.

Students are strongly encouraged to purchase at least one style manual, which will help to improve the organization and composition of your written work, and help ensure proper citation of sources. I recommend Doing Honest Work in College: How to prepare citations, avoid plagiarism, and achieve real academic success and The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers. Whatever citation style you choose, please use it consistently throughout your writing.


**STUDENT RESOURCES**

Henry and Lucy Moses Center for students with disabilities: 240 Greene St, 2nd Floor
Writing Center: 269 Mercer Street, Room 233. Schedule an appointment online at [www.rich15.com/nyu/](http://www.rich15.com/nyu/) or just walk-in.

**READINGS & OTHER MATERIALS:**

Most readings are available on Blackboard. The following two texts are required and are available for purchase at the NYU Bookstore:


Selected articles are available on Blackboard.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

The following is a “working schedule.” Class materials are subject to change based on the interests, understanding, and general pace of the class, although we will generally stick to the following format and assignments. It is your responsibility to keep on top of any schedule changes, whether you are in class or not. If you have a concern about any of the materials, please speak to me.

**Section 1: What is Communication Theory?**

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1. **September 3: Introduction**

- During the first meeting we will discuss the syllabus, goals and requirements of the course.

| Week 2. |
1. September 8: Two Opposing Views of Language, Communication, and Culture

- Colapinto, “The Interpreter”
- Pinker, “Mentalese”

2. September 10: What is Communication Theory, What is Culture?

- Trenholm, Chapter 1, pp. 18-25, Chapter 12, 343-348 (“Defining Communication… “)
- Carey, “A Cultural Approach to Communication”

Week 3.

1. September 15: Two models: Psychological Model and Social Constructionist Model

- Trenholm, Chapter 1, pp. 25-32 (“Communication as Message Transmission” & “Communication as World Building”)
- Berger & Luckmann, “The Foundations of Knowledge in Everyday Life”

2. September 17: Three More Models: Pragmatic Model, Cultural Studies, and Ethnography

- Trenholm, Chapter 1, pp. 32-40 (“Communication as Patterned Interaction,” “Cultural Studies,” & “What to Look For…”)
- Geertz, “Common Sense as a Cultural System”

Section 2: Language, Metaphor, & Rhetoric

Week 4.

1. September 22: The Power of Language

- Trenholm, Chapter 4, pp. 71-85 (“What is Language,” “The Subsystems of Language,” & “Pragmatic Styles & Structures”)


- Basso, “Speaking with Names: Language and Landscape among Western Apache”

Week 5.

1. September 29: Metaphor

- Lakoff & Johnson, Metaphors We Live By (selections)
- Sontag, Illness as Metaphor (selections)

2. October 1: Review Session 1

- We have covered a lot of very dense material and now we are ready to slow down, look it over, and make some connections between all of them. Take this chance to look over notes before class. For the review session, be ready to answer general questions about what we have covered so far but also bring in questions you may have about the readings.
Week 6.

1. October 6: Rhetoric
   - Trenholm, Chapter 1 and “The Rhetoric of Aristotle,” sections 1.1-1.4 (NB—I have included Book 1 of Aristotle’s Rhetoric in its entirety for your reference, but you are only responsible for the first 4 sections.

2. October 8: No class
   (You will be given an essay assignment on Monday’s class and you are expected to work on it during the week)

Week 7.

1. October 13: No class, school holiday
   Essay Due October 12 at 5 PM via email.

2. October 15: Non-Verbal Communication
   - Trenholm Chapter 5, pp. 107-118 (“What is Nonverbal Communication” & first sections of “The Nonverbal Codes”)
   - Hebdige, “The Meaning of Style”

Section 3: Communication in Contexts and Genres of Communication

1. October 20: Proxemics—Space as Communication
   - Trenholm, Chapter 5, pp. 124-130 (“Territory and the Use of Space,” “Spatial Arrangement,” “Personal Space” & “Touch”)
   - E.T. Hall, “Culture as Communication,” “Anthropology of Space” & “Distances in Man”
   - Rosenbloom, “In Certain Circles, Two is a Crowd”

2. October 22: Chronemics—Time as Communication
   - Trenholm Chapter 5, pp. 122-126 (“Time Orientations”)
   - Gleick, “FSTR”
   - Frankel “Man's Search for Meaning.”

Week 8.

1. October 27th: Interpersonal Communication and Self Presentation
   - Trenholm, Chapter 6, pp. 141-164 (“What is Interpersonal Communication,” “Managing Interpersonal Communication, “Relational Development” & “Increasing Relational Skills” sections on disclosure, conflict and feedback)
   - Goffman, “Introduction” in The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life
2. October 29th: Self Presentation, continued

- Goffman, Chapter 3 from The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life
- Elliot, “The Face Behind the Mask” (selections)

**Week 9.**

1. **November 3:** Mid-term
   - In class midterm

2. **November 5: Technological Mediated Communication**
   - In class movie: The Parlor and the Instant Messenger Song (30 minutes)
   - Jones and Schiefflen “Enquoting voices, accomplishing talk: Uses of be + like in Instant Messaging


**Week 10.**

1. **November 10: Stereotype, Bias, and Ethnicity**
   - Moore, “Racist Stereotyping in the English Language”
   - Gladwell, “The Warren Harding Error: Why We Fall for Tall, Dark, and Handsome Men”

2. **November 12: Rumor**
   - Turner, “I Heard It Through the Grapevine: Rumor in African-American Culture” (Selections)
   - Ellis, “Tuning In to Pavement Radio”
   - Goodnough, “Oh, Everyone Knows That” (Except You).

**Week 11.**

1. **November 17: Cross-Cultural Perspectives in Communication**
   - Trenholm, Chapter 4, pp. 91-93 (“Language & Culture Difference”) & Chapter 11, pgs. 320-342 (“What is Culture?” “Barriers to Intercultural Communication” & “Adapting to New Cultures”)
   - Bohannon, “Shakespeare in the Bush”
   - Geertz, “Life without Husbands”

2. **November 19: Organizations and Organizational Communication.**
   - Trenholm, Chapter 7, pgs. 177-199 (“What is a Group?” “Managing Group Communication, Group Development,” “How Not to be Chosen Leader,” & first 3 parts of “Strengthening Group Discussion Skills”)

**Week 12.**

1. **November 24: Social Structure, Class, and Humor**
   - Bernstein, “Social Class, Language and Socialization”
   - Mulkay, “Humour and Social Structure”
2. November 26: Gender
- Hall, “Lip Service on the Fantasy Lines”

### Week 13.

1. Public Communication: News
- Trenholm, Chapter 10, pp. 311-321 (“Media Formats & Logics”)
- Postman, “Now…This” from Amusing Ourselves to Death

2. December 3: Disability, Communication and Normalcy
- Groce, “Everyone Here Spoke Sign Language: Hereditary Deafness on Martha’s Vineyard”

### Week 14.

1. December 8: Stigma, Sexuality, and Normalcy
- Warner, “The Trouble with Normal”

2. December 10
- Take Home Exams Handed Out.
- Read/review Trenholm “Becoming a More Responsible Communicator” at the end of Chapters 6-10 & Chapter 11, “Becoming a More Open Communicator”
- Review for Final

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The Steinhardt School of Education Statement on Academic Integrity*

“Your degree should represent genuine learning”

The relationship between students and faculty is the keystone of the educational experience in The Steinhardt School of Education at New York University. This relationship takes an honor code for granted. Mutual trust, respect and responsibility are foundational requirements. Thus, how you learn is as important as what you learn. A University education aims not only to produce high quality scholars, but to also cultivate honorable citizens.

**Academic integrity** is the guiding principle for all that you do, from taking exams, making oral presentations to writing term papers. It requires that you recognize and acknowledge information derived from others, and take credit only for ideas and work that are yours.

You violate the principle of academic integrity when you:
• Cheat on an exam;
• Submit the same work for two different courses without prior permission from your professors;
• Receive help on a take-home examination that calls for independent work;
• Plagiarize.

Plagiarism, one of the gravest forms of academic dishonesty in university life, whether intended or not, is academic fraud. In a community of scholars, whose members are teaching, learning and discovering knowledge, plagiarism cannot be tolerated.

Plagiarism is failure to properly assign authorship to a paper, a document, an oral presentation, a musical score and/or other materials which are not your original work. You plagiarize when, without proper attribution, you do any of the following:

• Copy verbatim from a book, an article or other media;
• Download documents from the Internet;
• Purchase documents;
• Report from other’s oral work;
• Paraphrase or restate someone else’s facts, analysis and/or conclusions;
• Copy directly from a classmate or allow a classmate to copy from you.

Your professors are responsible for helping you to understand other people’s ideas, to use resources and conscientiously acknowledge them, and to develop and clarify your own thinking. You should know what constitutes good and honest scholarship, style guide preferences, and formats for assignments for each of your courses. Consult your professors for help with problems related to fulfilling course assignments, including questions related to attribution of sources.

Through reading, writing, and discussion, you will undoubtedly acquire ideas from others, and exchange ideas and opinions with others, including your classmates and professors. You will be expected, and often required, to build your own work on that of other people. In so doing, you are expected to credit those sources that have contributed to the development of your ideas.

**Avoiding Academic Dishonesty**

• Organize your time appropriately to avoid undue pressure, and acquire good study habits, including note taking.
• Learn proper forms of citation. Always check with your professors of record for their preferred style guides. Directly copied material must always be in quotes; paraphrased material must be acknowledged; even ideas and organization derived from your own previous work or another’s work need to be acknowledged.
• Always proofread your finished work to be sure that quotation marks or footnotes or other references were not inadvertently omitted. Know the source of each citation.
• Do not submit the same work for more than one class without first obtaining the permission of both professors even if you believe that work you have already completed satisfies the requirements of another assignment.
• Save your notes and drafts of your papers as evidence of your original work.

**Disciplinary Sanctions**
When a professor suspects cheating, plagiarism, and/or other forms of academic dishonesty, appropriate disciplinary action is as follows:

- The Professor will meet with the student to discuss, and present evidence for the particular violation, giving the student opportunity to refute or deny the charge(s).
- If the Professor confirms the violation(s), he/she, in consultation with the Program Director and Department Chair may take any of the following actions:
  0 Allow the student to redo the assignment
  0 Lower the grade for the work in question
  0 Assign a grade of F for the work in question
  0 Assign a grade of F for the course
  0 Recommend dismissal

Once an action (s) is taken, the Professor will inform the Program Director and Department Chair, and inform the student in writing, instructing the student to schedule an appointment with the Associate Dean for Student Services and Public Affairs, as a final step. Copies of the letter will be sent to the Department Chair for his/her confidential student file and the Associate Dean for Student Services and Public Affairs. The student has the right to appeal the action taken in accordance with the School’s Student Complaint Procedure as outlined in The Steinhardt School of Education Student Handbook.

When dismissal is recommended, that recommendation will be forwarded to the Associate Dean for Student Services and Public Affairs, who will convene all parties involved. An appeal of the decision at this step is submitted in writing to the Vice Dean, including full documentation to support the appeal.

* The Steinhardt School of Education Statement on Academic Integrity is consistent with New York University Policy on Student Conduct, published in the NYU Student Guide.