

TEXAS A & M UNIVERSITY-COMMERCE  
COMMERCE CAMPUS  
Department of Mass Media, Communication, & Theatre

Course Instructor: Stephen A. Furlich, Ph.D.

Course Title: Gender Communication

SPC 316

Class Time: PAC 112; W 3:00-5:50

E-Mail: Stephen.furlich@tamuc.edu

Office Hours: (Tues/Thurs. 8:00-9:30; 10:45-12:00; W. 2:00-3:00)

Office: PAC 120

Prerequisites: None

**Disability statement:** It is university policy that no otherwise qualified disabled person be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under any educational program or activity in the university. Students should inform the instructor of existing disabilities the first class meeting.

**Course Description:** Sex differences and similarities in communication will be explored. Different theoretical perspectives will be covered from which to study social behavior of the two sexes. Both verbal communication and nonverbal communication will be addressed across contexts. The first part of the semester will be focused on themes that emerge from meta-analyses comprised of decades of research. Statistical conclusions will be discussed. The latter part of the semester will examine physiological brain structures of male and female brains. Social communication behaviors will be discussed as related to these brain structures.

Dindia, K., Canary, D., (2012). *Sex Differences and Similarities in Communication* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Psychology Press

Leaf, C. (2011). *Who Switched off your brain?: Solving the Mystery of He Said/She Said*. Thomas Nelson. ISBN-10: 0981956742 ISBN-13: 978-0981956749

**Required: 3 GREEN Scan Trans**

### **COURSE OUTCOME COMPETENCIES**

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

1. To understand current theories, principles, and research findings examining the role of gender communication in the total communication process.
2. Understand themes emerging from decades of gender communication research.
3. Understand physiological brain structures of male and females brains and relations with social communication behaviors.

4. Understand the similarities in communication between the sexes.
5. Understand the differences in communication between the sexes.
6. Understand communication of both sexes in relationships.
7. Understand verbal communication of both sexes.
8. Understand nonverbal communication of both sexes.
9. Raise self-awareness concerning communication behaviors within a gendered context.
10. To examine the ways in which communication creates and perpetuates gender roles and gender identities in various contexts such as the family, school, organizations, the media, and society in general.

**Attendance** - Punctual attendance is expected at all class sessions, especially on presentation and test days. If you participate in University sponsored activities (e.g., intercollegiate sports) you must check with the instructor with appropriate documentation before you are absent. Students are responsible for all missed work.

**\* Activities** - (+2%)

A number of activities will be assigned to demonstrate or apply content from the text and class discussions. You cannot get credit for activities that are done on days you are absent, you leave early, or come in 10 minutes late. Late activities will not be accepted. You are expected to keep up with your own grades. You should know your standing in the course at any time during the semester. Students will receive **2%** additional points to their final grade if they miss no more than **1 day**. Students may lose **10% of their final grade or will be dropped from the class for any class that they are disrespectful the first time**. This includes but is not limited to any **cell phone activity, doing work for other classes, talking out of turn in a disruptive manner, sleeping, etc.**

**Course Assignments/Assessments:** The department of Mass Media, Communication, & Theatre supports university policies of academic excellence as noted in the student handbook.

Interpretation of grades should be considered within the university framework: A=excellent, B=good; C=average; D=inferior; and F=failure. Final grades in this course will be based on:

**\* Tests - (70%)**

20% Test 1

25% Test 2

25% Test 3

**\* Presentations - (20%)** Note: Encyclopedias and dictionaries do not count as sources.

10% Presentation 1: Gender Observation - Emphasis on Content and Structure with Library Sources.

10% Presentation 2: Media Critique - With Library Sources

**Paper Assignment (10%)- Application**

Assignment Descriptions:

**Presentation 1:**

Observation of a particular context of gender communication: Each student will choose a different context to observe gender communication taking place. The student can be part of the communication that takes place, such as in a group. It is essential to have several members of both genders in the particular context actively participating to get adequate observation information. Students should consider paying attention to what topics are discussed by which gender. More specifically, what topics are discussed within same gender groups of males and females, and also mixed gender groups. How much detail is given, who controls the conversation, etc.? Another consideration is to observe nonverbal behaviors of each gender. For example, what distance is used standing or sitting in same gender versus mixed gender groups, what are facial expressions of each gender, how is touch used and by whom (hand shake, hug, pat on shoulder, etc.), what are the seating arrangements or standing positions. Each student should address at least **3 different research areas that they observed**, such as from class material or outside research. Only talking about your observations is not adequate, the observations need to be tied into research. Application is a key concept for the assignment. **Three outside sources** need to be cited during the presentation. Each student should address the following areas

1. What does research indicate occurs with gender communication within this context?
2. What are some of the nonverbal behaviors that previous researchers have identified studying this context?
3. What unique communication behaviors by both sexes are occurring within this context that differs from other contexts?
4. What is consistent and inconsistent about your observations from that of previous research regarding this context?
5. What can researchers do in the future to better understand gender communication within this context?
6. Some examples of contexts are a park, airport, social gathering, sporting event, school cafeteria, mall, salon or barber place, hardware store, massage business office, dentist office, care sales lot etc.

\*Speeches will be 4:30-5:30 minutes, include 3 different reference sources (books or journal articles), and follow the outline format. The book for this class and Wikipedia do not count for your 3 sources for this assignment. **Only one source can be an Internet source.** The **reference page and outline** will be submitted in **ECollege in the DocSharing** envelop labeled for the presentation. Do not bring in hard copies or submit it in DropBox.

### **Presentation 2:**

Each student will be assigned a particular genre from which to study gender communication. The purpose of the presentation is to identify how this genre portrays gender communication. It is important to tie in your genre to research that is covered in class and **3 outside sources**.

Particular aspects to pay attention to are:

Are there any gender agendas to influence the audience? (For example, portraying women as more masculine and men more feminine or vice versa compared with average people).

What is consistent/inconsistent with research on gender communication and this genre?

What possible influence does it have on society or society has on this genre?

What are some of the positives and negatives from this example?

How are same sex and cross sex friendships portrayed?

How are romantic relationships portrayed?

\*Speeches will be **4:30-5:30 minutes, include 3 different reference sources** (books or journal articles), and follow the outline format. The book for this class and Wikipedia do not count for this assignment. **Only one** source can be an **Internet source**. The **reference page and outline** will be submitted in **ECollege in the DocSharing** envelop labeled for the presentation. Do not bring in hard copies or submit it in DropBox.

### Topics for Presentation

- Representations of gender in print media (newspapers, magazines, art, etc.)
- Representations of gender in film
- Representations of gender in television
- Representation of gender in the music industry (or other industry)
- Gender and the internet
  - Gender represented in advertisements
- Gender in educational settings
- Gender in workplace settings
  - Gender in family settings
- Gender in sports
- Gender in popular culture
  - Gender in video games
  - Gender in politics
  - Gender in religious roles
  - Gender in dating roles
  - Gender in historical documents
- Come see me if there is something you'd like to do that is not on this list; you must speak to me in advance before choosing your topic.

### Paper:

Each student will write a paper that incorporates research with their personal lives. The purpose of this paper is to use the research learned throughout the semester to better their lives. Each student needs to **address at least 3 research areas** that they can apply to their personal life. The research areas can come from class material and/ or outside research sources. How can you improve your life from what you learned such as in personal relationships (family, friends social groups etc.), romantics relationships, and workplace relationships? Can you use some of the information from this class to better understand how and why the other gender communicates in the ways that they do?

Each student must have at least **3 journal articles cited in their paper**. The student will turn in their **paper and a reference page**. Only the body of the paper is counted toward the **2-3 page** requirement, hence the title page and reference pages are not counted. The book for this class and Wikipedia do not count for this assignment. **Only one source can be an Internet source**. The

paper will be submitted in ECollege in the DocSharing envelop labeled for the Paper. Do not bring in hard copies or submit it in DropBox.

### **Course Procedures**

**Assignments** - Assignments must be completed on time. Late work will result in loss of points. Academic integrity is expected on all course assignments and activities. Violations of academic integrity (e.g., plagiarism, cheating, etc.) are serious offenses and will be dealt with according to university policy.

**Make-Up Assignments and Examinations** - If you miss an exam or presentation it must be for one of the following types of documentable reasons: death in the family, severe personal illness, university sponsored activities, etc. If you have an unexcused absence on a day you are scheduled to make a presentation or take a test, you cannot make up that presentation or test. Additionally, because of time constraints, the instructor may elect not to grant make-up speeches for any reason. In order to take a make-up examination you must submit verifiable and official documentation to your instructor (e.g., a doctor's note for the specific day missed). If your request is approved, you may take a make-up test on the appointed day. All make-up exams must be given for qualified persons within 2 weeks of the missed test.

**Extra Credit** - Extra credit can be earned for participation in departmental research conducted in or outside of class, if the opportunity arises. Extra credit points awarded will be determined by the nature of the project.

**Cell Phones** – All cell phones must be turned off before class starts.

**Observance of a Religious Holy Day** – Texas House Bill 256 requires institutions of higher education to excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day. The student shall also be excused for time necessary to travel. An institution may not penalize the student for the absence and allows for the student to take an exam or complete an assignment from which the student is excused. No prior notification of the instructor is required.

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| Aug. 27: Intro., Dindia Ch. 1, 2                                  |
| Sept. 3: Dindia Ch. 3-6   |
| Sept. 10: Dindia Ch. 7-10   |
| Sept. 17: <b>Test 1</b> ; Presentation 1 Context Topic Selection. |

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| Sept. 24: Dindia Ch. 11-14 |   |
| Oct. 1                     | <b>Presentation 1</b>                             |
| Oct. 8                     | Dindia Ch. 15-18, Presentation 2 Genre selection. |
| OCT. 15                    | Dindia Ch. 19-21                                  |
| Oct. 22                    | <b>Test 2</b>                                     |
| Oct. 29                    | <b>Presentation 2</b>                             |
| Nov. 5                     | Leaf Ch. 1-8                                      |
| Nov. 12                    | Leaf Ch. 9-17                                     |
| Nov. 19                    | <b>Papers Due</b> Leaf Ch. 18-25                  |
| Nov. 26                    | <b>No Class Thanksgiving</b>                      |
| Dec. 3                     | <b>Test 3</b><br><b>Post-Test</b>                 |