

COM 597 The Dark Side of
Relational Communication
Fall, 2013

Instructor: Dr. Marcia D. Dixson

Office hours: TR 2:00 - 4:00 and happily by appt.

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Textbooks:

Olson, Loreen N., Baiocchi-Wagner, Elizabeth A., Kratzer, Jessica M.W., & Symonds, S. E. (2012). *The dark side of family communication*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Cupach, W.R. & Spitzberg, B.H. (Eds). (2011). *The dark side of close relationships II*. New York: Routledge.

Course Objectives

1. To understand the "dark side" of relational communication including

- what behaviors are considered dark;
- why they are considered dark;
- whether they "must" be dark;
- why people choose to perform them or not; and
- how society encourages/discourages such behaviors.

2. To answer the question: "Is the dark side good? bad? necessary? functional? unavoidable? something else entirely?"

Major Assignments

Research project/presentation: (30%)

Students are required to write a 12-15 page paper including: 1) a literature review (at least 7-10 recent journal sources) addressing a particular question relevant to the darkside of relational communication; 2) hypotheses or research questions further exploring this question; 3) methods for testing the hypotheses; 4) data generated piloting those methods; 5) results of the pilot test; 6) discussion of the results including limitations and implications sections. If data can be gathered in conjunction with another student's research project, then such collaborative effort is encouraged. See webpage for specifics regarding how to write a research paper. Due December 10 or 12 (depending on your presentation date) along with webpage and oral presentation. Part of the grade for this project is based on your meeting deadlines for Research Workshops 1, 2 and 3.

If you intend or want to be able to submit your paper for a conference or publication, you **MUST** complete and receive human subjects permission. You can find information on human subjects as well as the forms to complete under human subjects on the [Purdue Human Subjects](#) website.

All students are expected to complete an oral presentation (10-12 minutes) of their individual paper.

The main points from your research paper should appear on your webpage/blog (depending on what the class decides).

Reaction papers: (10%)

Each person is required to write two reaction papers. Papers should be three to five pages long and react to the assigned readings. You may react by talking about how the reading relates (similar, contradicts etc.) to your own experiences, beliefs etc.; how the ideas are played out in the media, how you feel they are useful/not useful, valid/not valid or by doing an in-depth evaluation of the logic/assumptions involved in the concepts.

Reaction papers need to go beyond labeling experiences using terms from the text to talking about meanings, consequences and/or new insights. In short, these papers should be characterized by depth not breadth (do some analysis, synthesis, and evaluation). We will briefly discuss these papers at the beginning of the class for that topic, so you must plan ahead a bit. They should be posted to your webpage/blog before class.

Group mini-projects: (20%): Groups

You will be required to do two mini-projects which ask you to evaluate what you are learning in light of the world around you, i.e., how acceptable are some of the "dark" behaviors we talk about, what messages does the media send about such practices, do people enact/experience these behaviors? For each of these you will make a short presentation (10 minutes) and add what you have learned to your group webpage. Methods may include interviews, surveys, web or popular media based empirical research, they are not academic journal research projects. Like reaction papers, the projects are meant to enhance our discussion, so they are due the day of the topic. Grading criteria.

Discussions/Participation/Homework (15%)

You are expected to prepare for discussions by doing the reading and preparing to answer the questions associated with each chapter. You are expected to be an active, informed participant. Some group work will likely occur! :)

Media Analysis Paper (10%)

I will show a movie on or about October 8 and 10. You will analyze the dark side of communication within the relationships in the movie and write a 2-4 page paper (Please do so in 2 - 4 pages; double spaced, 12 point font, 1 inch margins) about that analysis which is due on October 22nd. More information will be forthcoming - no, I won't tell you what movie. Add summary to your webpage/blog.

Final Test (10%)

Now, it's time to see what you have learned. Ok, you probably cannot share all that you have learned in this course. So, illustrate the depth (not the breadth) of your knowledge by answering the primary question of the course (also listed above): "Is the dark side good? bad? necessary? functional? unavoidable? something else entirely?" Please do so in 2 - 4 pages; double spaced, 12 point font, 1 inch margins. In doing so, choose one or two areas we have covered. Include information from at least three chapters and four students' sources (reaction papers, mini-projects, research presentations). Due by 4:00 pm December 19th (you may email it or bring in a hard copy).

Webpage/Blog (5%)

Given that the internet is a primary form of communication today, you should have a working knowledge of how to create and post to a webpage or blog. You are expected to post a webpage or blog by September 5. Introduce yourself to the class (no need to do an extensive autobiography, a paragraph or so will suffice). Include at least one image that is relevant to who you are. As we progress through the class, please add bullet point summaries of your reaction papers, your media analysis paper (after it's turned in) and your mini-projects (each group can use one person's webpage/blog or create a group page).

Need help creating a webpage?

Course requirements and grade percentages:

Research project/ presentation	30%
Reaction Papers	10%
Group mini-projects	20%
In-class discussions/ participation/homework	15%
Media Analysis Paper	10%
Final test	10%
Webpages/Blogs	5%

Grading Breakdown:

90 - 93% A-		94 - 100% A
80 - 82% B-	83 - 86% B	87 - 89% B+
70 - 72% C-	73 - 76% C	77 - 79% C+
60 - 62% D-	63 - 66%; D	67 - 69% D+
	0 - 59% F	

Teaching Philosophy

My job here is to facilitate your learning; to provide you with a variety of opportunities to learn the content of this course. To that end, I am generally willing to work with any student who is willing to work as well. But, I expect you to work. If you do your part; i.e., come to class prepared having read and considered the material, complete assignments thoroughly and on time, I absolutely enjoy doing my part. If you have questions or concerns about the class, assignments or content, you should consult with me about those either in person or via email. My services as a facilitator and guide come with the tuition you paid for the course, do not be shy about using them!

General Class Structure

- Any mini-projects for that day
- Reaction papers with topic for that day
- Discussion of that day's chapter
- Sometimes, time to work in groups (until all mini-projects are accomplished)

Class policies:

Assignments: Papers are expected to be typed, double-spaced, 12 point font, 1 inch margins. Please always use a cover page - your name should ONLY appear on the cover page. Turn them in on time. Late assignments (papers, presentations etc.) (up to one class period) are subject to up to a 20% reduction of points (two letter grades). If you have a bona fide excuse (hospitalization, car accident etc.), talk to me.

Missed classes: If you cannot or do not attend class, get the notes from someone. Group presentation points can only be obtained by being here and active. If you know you must miss class, talk to me and your group ahead of time. In case of emergency, call ASAP. Treat this like you would a job! Good work habits are an asset in many situations.

Grade complaint/question policy: Except in the case of error (I added wrong), all grades are final. I will be happy to discuss your grade, i.e., why you received it, how you can improve it the next time, etc. I won't change it.

Late work: While I do accept late work, each day (including weekends) late is subject to up to 20% reduction in points (which means after five days, you have pretty much earned a 0). If you are having a technical problem, have questions about the assignment, or are having other issues which make it difficult for you to complete the assignment on time, always let me know before the assignment is due. Plan for technological obstacles, i.e, if your computer or internet at home goes down, what can you do (get to campus, go to a library etc.). Waiting until the last minute, almost assures you will have technical problems!

My availability: I check my email multiple times a day during the week. I check it once or twice on Saturday. I do not do email on Sunday as that is reserved for family, puppies, football and, having some down time. So, you can expect me to get back to you fairly quickly, but not necessarily within a half hour or so. Remember, you can also call me in the office during office hours.

Civility expectations: While you are not required to agree with everyone's opinions, you are required to respect them in class. However, because you have an opinion, does not mean it is a valid opinion! Back up your statements with facts, direct experiences, concepts from the text, etc.

Academic Misconduct : Academic Misconduct, including plagiarism (using other people's ideas/ words and not giving them credit thus implying the work is your own original work), is taken very seriously at any learning institution. It is taken very seriously in this class. Please be aware of what academic misconduct is and the potential consequences (including dismissal from the university) of such behavior.

Helpful places on campus:

Services for Students with a Disability: If you have a disability or acquire one and want to find out about what special services and accommodations are available, you may contact Services for Students with Disabilities in WALB 113.

Writing Center: Can help you with general writing problems or specific assignments (including APA research papers) at Learning Commons (Helmke Library, second floor).

CASA (Center for Academic Support and Advancement): Offers many kinds of services to students including tutoring in KT G23.

Helmke Library offers research librarians who can help you find what you need. Make an appointment with one early in your research process and your life will be much easier in November :).

Tentative Agenda

Note: Links to the Agenda will be added with questions to guide your reading and other information.

August

27 Orientation: Welcome to the Dark Side!!: Groups

29 Dark Side of Family Communication (DSFC) Chapter 1: Homework assignment due today based on Duck quotes

September

3 DSFC Chapter 2

5 DSFC Chapter 3: Webpage/blog introduction should be posted

10 DSFC Chapter 4

12 DSFC Chapter 5

17 DSFC Chapter 6

19 Research Paper Workshop I

24 Dark Side of Close Relationships (DSCR) Chapter 1

26 DSCR Chapter 6

October

1 DSCR Chapter 7

3 DSCR Chapter 14

8 Movie

10 Movie

15 Fall Break - no class

17 Research Paper Workshop II

22 Movie Analysis Due - debrief

24 DSCR Chapter 2

29 DSCR Chapter 9

31 DSCR Chapter 10

November

5 DSCR Chapter 11

7 DSCR Chapter 3

12 DSCR Chapter 4

14 DSCR Chapter 5

19 DSCR Chapter 8
21 DSCR Chapter 12
26 Research Paper Workshop III
28 Thanksgiving Break - no class

December

3 DSCR Chapter 13
5 DSCR Chapter 15

10 Research Presentations
12 Research Presentations

19 Final Due 4:00 pm