Topics in Communication:
The Dark Side of Interpersonal Communication
COM 401

Professor Name: Dr. Carrie Kennedy-Lightsey (pronounced “Light-SEE”)
Contact Information:
Email: kennedylcd@sfasu.edu
Office Phone: 936-468-1262

Class Meeting Times:
COM 170.001, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:30a-10:45a, Human Services Rm 317
COM 170.003, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11a-12:15p, Ferguson 375
COM 401.001, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:30-1:45pm, Ferguson 175

Office: Liberal Arts North (LAN)-Vera Dugas, Rm 413
Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2p-3p
Wednesdays, 8:30a-11:30a
If these times don’t work with your schedule and you need to meet with me, we can arrange a
time that works for both of our schedules.

General Course Description: In this course, we’ll discuss the Dark Side of Interpersonal
Communication. Many of us in communication courses recognize the positive behaviors that we
engage in to make our relationships successful. However, relationships with romantic
partners, friends, family, and coworkers/supervisors can also include a number of behaviors that
damage our relationships and our abilities to communicate effectively and appropriately. We
encounter jealousy and envy, aggression, hurt, abuse, lying, teasing and bullying, infidelity,
uncertainty and secrecy, and criticisms and complaints in a variety of relationship contexts.
We’ll examine these topics as well as theories of the dark side for what we know about the ways
they damage relationships, what we can do to avoid (or overcome) them, and what studying dark
side of communication means for employers.

Required Textbook:
Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Additional readings and materials will be available in D2L or through the library databases.

Student Learning Outcomes: By the end of this course you will be able to:
- Explain the “dark side” metaphor and its importance to interpersonal communication
  research, theory, and practice.
- Critique current interpersonal communication theories and research.
- Explain and apply the complexities associated with dark side topics including message
  complexity, annoyances, dark emotions, relational struggles, relational disruption, as well as
  coercion, abuse, and the dark side of family interaction.
Articulate the benefits and drawbacks of dark side concepts in developing, maintaining, and dissolving interpersonal relationships

Apply theories of the dark side of interpersonal communication to practical interpersonal situations

This course also meets several objectives for those of you majoring in Communication Studies. Below, you’ll find several outcomes accomplished in this course.

Program Learning Outcomes:
Students majoring in Communication Studies…
- Should display comprehension of major communication theories.
- Will apply the major theories in the field to communicate effectively in a variety of settings.
- Will be able to use and demonstrate understanding of appropriate methodology in critical, humanistic, or social scientific paradigms in examining research questions in communication.
- Will be able to recognize the central role of diversity and freedom of expression in a global community.
- Will be able to demonstrate knowledge of the constitutive nature of communication, which includes forces that enable and constrain communication such as technology, ethics, and organizational life.
- Will be able to demonstrate oral and written competence in logical and critical thinking.

Course Requirements

Student Evaluation: Your grade in this course will be calculated using a cumulative score out of 500 total possible points. The following scale can be used to determine your final letter grade.

A = 450-500, B = 400-449, C = 350-399, D = 300-349, F < 299

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Requirements</th>
<th>Points Possible</th>
<th>Your Score</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading Responses and Discussion Questions (12 @ 10 points each; drop lowest 2)</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Mid-term Exam (@ 100 pts.)</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Final Exam (@ 100 pts.)</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Project (Presentation, Paper, Eval)</td>
<td>200</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Points</strong></td>
<td><strong>500</strong></td>
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Reading Responses and Discussion Questions. For each assigned reading, you will submit the following typed responses: (1) Summarize in one sentence the major premise/thesis/argument of the article/chapter, (2) offer a one to two sentence reaction to the article’s premise wherein you contradict, critique, support, or extend the premise, and (3) pose 2 thoughtful and reflective questions that were inspired by the reading that you would like to discuss in class. These will be
collected each day a reading is required and graded based on your inclusion of each of these three elements. Your response to the reading and your discussion questions will often serve as the basis for our discussions. Therefore, you should be thoroughly prepared to lead and engage one another in a discussion about the topic and readings. If it becomes clear that students are not doing the assigned reading, I reserve the right to give pop-up quizzes with little to no warning.

**Exams.** There will be two exams given over the course of the semester. Exam one will occur mid-semester and will include the topics covered in the first part of the course, whereas exam two will occur during our final exam time. The final exam will be primarily focused on material covered since exam 1, but I expect that students will also incorporate their knowledge of the other material into their answers. With the exams, I will assess not only your ability to recall, understand, and apply material, but also higher levels of learning. You’ll be expected to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate material. Thus, the exams will be multiple-choice, true/false, and short-answer/essay questions. Each exam is worth 100 points each.

You will be allotted the entire class period to complete exams. However, late students will not receive any additional time. If you arrive after the first exam has been turned in, you will not be allowed to take the exam. **On exam days, you will be asked to turn off ALL technology.** If any technology comes out during the exam, I will pick up your exam and you will automatically receive a zero. Make-up exams are **not** permitted unless otherwise arranged with the professor for extreme, unavoidable circumstances. I reserve the right to adjust the exam when giving a make-up instead of giving the original exam. If you will be away on official university business on an exam day, you will need to arrange to take the exam **BEFORE** the exam date. It is your responsibility to arrange this meeting and you must provide documentation.

**Group Project.** The final project in this class will include two central components. First, your group will be charged with investigating a local crime story that has received media attention. Such investigations will include primarily secondary research (examining news stories found in the library and on the internet) but may include some primary research (via contact with reporters and investigators—not criminals!). The purpose of this research is to offer a general overview of the situation to the audience but also more importantly to investigate the presence of dark side topics and issues that are relevant to the case. Second, your group will consult scholarly research and write a report that documents the intersection between what research has found and how this compares and contrasts with the application discovered in your research of the situation. The results of this research, in addition to conclusions your group draws about the intersection of communication research with these real crime scenes will be reported in a group paper. Finally, your group will present what you found in your research as well as share your conclusions with the class at the end of the semester in a 10+ minute presentation. Additional instructions will be provided along with a rubric for how the paper and presentation will be graded. All of you will complete an anonymous evaluation of your group members (and you will be evaluated by your group members).
All papers submitted in this course, must be typed in 12-point Times New Roman font with 1-inch margins and double spacing between sentences and paragraphs. I expect to read a cohesive essay with a clear introduction and conclusion. Your paper should be free of spelling and grammatical errors and should include well-organized paragraphs with topic sentences and transitions. Papers with errors that do not satisfy the requirements of the assignment, including being off topic or rambling, will lose points. Your group paper needs to be submitted to the D2L Dropbox designated by the due date specified on the Course Timeline. If your group fails to submit your paper by this date, your group will not be allowed to submit the paper and will automatically receive a 0.

**Attendance/Participation.** Attendance and active participation in class discussions and activities are very important for your success in this class. Formal attendance will be taken randomly over the course of the semester at the instructor’s discretion. It is the student’s responsibility to sign in on the days attendance is collected and/or to complete the attendance activity. Students will be allowed three (3) absences over the course of the semester without fear of grade penalty. However, students with four (4) or more absences are at risk of point deduction (minus 10 points per absence). Arriving late and leaving early could negatively affect your grade. **Perfect attendance, which means being physically present for EVERY single class meeting, is worth 10 additional points toward your final grade (out of 500 points).** Signing someone else’s name or requesting someone else to sign your name is academic dishonesty and will be handled in the same manner as academic plagiarism/cheating (see Academic Integrity statement). If you miss **seven or more classes,** you will automatically receive an F in the course, regardless of the reason.

### COURSE POLICIES

**Late Assignments.** Assignments are due by the designated date and time on the Course Timeline. **No late work** is accepted regardless of the reason. Any exceptions will be determined on a case-by-case basis and will require extremely compelling, well-documented reasons. You must provide documentation for dire circumstances (e.g., accident, hospitalization, family death etc.). If you will be away on official university business when an assignment is due, you must provide appropriate documentation and arrange to complete assignments/tests **BEFORE** departing.

**Grading Policy.** I cannot explicitly measure effort. The final product is all that can be evaluated. Although effort is typically associated with improved results, you should not confuse the two. If you are dissatisfied with a grade on an assignment, you **must wait at least 24 hours and no more than 7 days** before discussing the issue with me. At that time, you should focus on what can be done to improve your performance on the next assignment, rather than disputing the grade itself. I spend a great deal of time ensuring that I grade assignments in a fair and consistent manner and any error that does occur will be in your favor. Please feel free to speak with me at any time.

Kennedy-Lightsey
about ways to improve your performance in the course. I strongly suggest however that this is
done early in the semester rather than waiting until the end of the semester.

**Technology.** It is important that you be familiar with D2L. You can anticipate that any
unexpected changes or prompt announcements will be distributed via D2L. Moreover, all of your
grades will be posted in D2L. You are encouraged to check D2L on a daily basis for updates and
other information. Students who do not check their D2L regularly will still be held accountable
for missed information regarding the course.

Technology use during class time however should be kept to a minimum. Texting in class,
especially while someone else is talking, is rude and will not be tolerated. If you would like to
use a laptop or electronic device (other than a phone) for note taking, you will be allowed to do
so. If you’re using such technology for other, non-educational reasons however, your technology
use will be suspended for the rest of the semester.

**Classroom Civility.** Civility in the classroom is not only expected, but also required. We may
discuss some sensitive issues in this class. Please be mindful that although you have not
experienced certain things first hand, it is very possible and highly likely that some of your
classmates have. A vast array of opinions, points of view, and experiences will be expressed
during class, and we will work together to create an environment where everyone feels safe to
express their ideas. While different opinions, experiences, and ideas will be welcomed, incivility
and disrespect will not be tolerated.

“Classroom behavior should not interfere with the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or the
ability of other students to learn from the instructional program (see the Student Conduct Code,
policy D-34.1). Unacceptable or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Students who disrupt
the learning environment may be asked to leave class and may be subject to judicial, academic or
other penalties. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including electronic,
classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The instructor shall have full discretion over
what behavior is appropriate/inappropriate in the classroom. Students who do not attend class
regularly or who perform poorly on class projects/exams may be referred to the Early Alert
Program. This program provides students with recommendations for resources or other
assistance that is available to help SFA students succeed.”

**Academic Integrity (A-9.1)**

“Academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members
promote academic integrity in multiple ways including instruction on the components of
academic honesty, as well as abiding by university policy on penalties for cheating and
plagiarism.

**Definition of Academic Dishonesty**
Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes but is not limited to (1) using or attempting to use unauthorized materials to aid in achieving a better grade on a component of a class; (2) the falsification or invention of any information, including citations, on an assigned exercise; and/or (3) helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were your own. Examples of plagiarism are (1) submitting an assignment as if it were one's own work when, in fact, it is at least partly the work of another; (2) submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from an Internet source or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one's paper without giving the author due credit.

Please read the complete policy at http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp

**Withheld Grades Semester Grades Policy (A-54)**

“Ordinarily, at the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the course work because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F. If students register for the same course in future terms the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course for the purpose of computing the grade point average.”

**Students with Disabilities**

“To obtain disability related accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, and Room 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/.”
### Tentative Daily Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Course Reading/Due Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week One</td>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>☐ Syllabus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/26, 8/28</td>
<td>Key Terms</td>
<td>☐ Introductions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week Two</td>
<td>Relational Uncertainty</td>
<td>☐ Chapter 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/2, 9/4</td>
<td>Jealousy and Envy</td>
<td>☐ Response/Questions 1 Due 9/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week Three</td>
<td>What is Dark Side?</td>
<td>☐ Chapter 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/9, 9/11</td>
<td></td>
<td>☐ Response/Questions 2 Due 9/9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week Four</td>
<td>Relational Transgressions</td>
<td>☐ Chapter 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/16, 9/18</td>
<td>Hurt</td>
<td>☐ Response/Questions 3 Due 9/18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week Five</td>
<td>Infidelity</td>
<td>☐ Chapter 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/23, 9/25</td>
<td></td>
<td>☐ Response/Questions 4 Due 9/23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week Six</td>
<td>Avoidance &amp; Secrecy</td>
<td>☐ Chapter 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/30, 10/2</td>
<td>Manipulation of Self in Cyberspace</td>
<td>☐ Response/Questions 5 Due 9/30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week Seven</td>
<td>Revenge</td>
<td>☐ Chapter 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/7-10/9</td>
<td></td>
<td>☐ Response/Questions 6 Due 10/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week Eight</strong></td>
<td>Catch up day,</td>
<td>☐ Chapters 2, 1, 5, 8, 3, 4, and 10, plus notes and supplemental readings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>10/14-10/16</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mid-Term Exam (10/16)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week Nine</td>
<td>Complaints and Criticism</td>
<td>☐ Chapter 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/21, 10/23</td>
<td></td>
<td>☐ Response/Questions 8 Due 10/21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week Ten</td>
<td>Comm Aggression</td>
<td>☐ Chapter 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/28, 10/30</td>
<td>Intimate Partner Violence</td>
<td>☐ Response/Questions 9 Due 10/28</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week Eleven</td>
<td>Child Abuse</td>
<td>☐ Chapter 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/4, 11/6</td>
<td></td>
<td>☐ Response/Questions 10 Due 11/4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week Twelve</td>
<td>Adolescent-to-Parent Abuse</td>
<td>☐ Chapter 13</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/11, 11/13</td>
<td></td>
<td>☐ Response/Questions 11 Due 11/11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week Thirteen</td>
<td>Forgiveness</td>
<td>☐ Supplemental Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/18, 11/20</td>
<td></td>
<td>☐ Response/Questions 12 Due 11/18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week Fourteen</td>
<td>Group Presentations</td>
<td>☐ Group Presentations and Reflections Due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/25, 11/27</td>
<td>Thanksgiving holiday</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week Fifteen</td>
<td>Group Presentations</td>
<td>☐ Group Presentations and Reflections Due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/2, 12/4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FINALS Week</strong></td>
<td><strong>Final Exam</strong></td>
<td>☐ Chapters 6, 11, 12, 13, notes, and supplemental readings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>12/8-12/12</strong></td>
<td><strong>December 9 at 10:30am</strong></td>
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***This schedule is subject to change. It is your responsibility to stay abreast any changes made to the schedule throughout the semester.***