INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Carol Bruess  
OFFICE: LOR 306a  
OFFICE PHONE: 962-5829  
E-MAIL: cjbruess@stthomas.edu

Please use e-mail liberally. It’s a great way to ask questions, make comments, or chat without having to make it to my office hours. I also want you to be aware that I will be out of the office most Fridays during spring semester for personal reasons. Generally, e-mail that is sent late Thursday afternoons, Fridays, or on weekends will not be responded to until Monday morning. I am almost always in my office by 8 a.m., so you can expect e-mail from me early in the day.

OFFICE HOURS: Wednesdays 8:30 – 10 a.m. and by appointment

Required Texts and Readings:


Reading Packet: We will be reading a few additional articles that have been gathered into a small packet available for purchase for a small copying fee. I will bring the packets to class on one designated day. After that day, you can go to our department’s main office to purchase the packet (Loras 303).

Required expenses for this class:

At one point during the semester we will be attending a movie as a class. Purchasing the ticket for this is the responsibility of each individual student (approximately $7). If nothing relevant to families or family communication is currently playing, we will watch a movie in class. Popcorn and other treats will be the joint-responsibility of the instructor and the class members.

Course Objectives and Goals

Family communication is designed to help you understand the way communication phenomena work in the context of “family” (and one of our first tasks will be to discuss exactly what we mean by this term, family). The overall goal of this course is to help you understand how, through communication, we develop, maintain, or disturb family relationships. You will learn verbal and nonverbal skills that can help promote healthy and competent family communication toward the goals of family stability and satisfaction.

Researchers have noted that while families have changed throughout time, it is the unprecedented speed of change today that has resulted in inordinate discontinuity in our families. In this class we will discuss the effects of such changes on our families and their communication. We will discuss and read about how media portray families and about how family diversity functions in our culture.

PERSONAL STATEMENT:
I believe that my most challenging task as your instructor is to select and design those activities, assignments, and opportunities that will really help you learn something. I have designed this class to do just that. This class isn’t going to be your usual class; for instance, we don’t have tests or quizzes, because I think you learn more by “doing” than by “memorizing.” As you will see, this class will be an exciting blend of hard work and interesting discussions. I promise you that I will put as much of my energy and creativity into this class as I can toward making this a worthwhile learning experience for you. I love what I do and you will witness this every day in class. You should know, too, that I have high expectations for all students in my classes. I will expect you to work hard in this class, maybe harder than you do in many of your others. You will feel overwhelmed with reading sometimes, with writing other times, and with the oral history project at times. But I promise you that if you work hard, keep up, come to class, and follow the guidelines, you can do well in this class. I do need your help, however, if we are going to make this class an honest, energizing, comfortable, and active learning environment. If you help, I guarantee you we will all learn a lot from the class and from one another, all while having a pretty good time.
The following are guidelines and helpful tips for doing well in this class. I strongly encourage you to familiarize yourself with them.

1. **SEE ME:** Although you see me everyday we meet as a class, it’s hard to interact with all of you on an interpersonal level or offer much individual attention every day of class. Hence, as a general rule of thumb, PLEASE come and see me outside of class and let me know how things are going. I tend to be highly understanding and flexible if you talk with me about problems, concerns, issues, etc BEFORE they reach crisis stage. I tend to be less **so after** the fact. So please, come and see me. I can’t help if I don’t know.

2. **SYLLABUS:** Please read this syllabus cover-to-cover the first day and then use it regularly over the semester. I will assume that you have and are. I designed this syllabus with much care and detail to provide you with helpful, useful information for succeeding in this class. I have purposefully provided hints, tips, and generally helpful guidelines for succeeding on each individual assignment, and in the course generally.

3. **EXTRA-CREDIT:** My policy is simple on extra credit: There is none unless it is offered to everyone in the class. On rare occasion, an all-class extra-credit opportunity will be offered if something wildly appropriate or unusual comes up. Never will individual extra-credit assignments be given.

4. **SCHEDULE/CHANGES:** I will try my best to maintain the course schedule, although sometimes it will be necessary to make changes. You will be responsible for all changes announced in class.

5. **RESPECT:** While I believe in freedom of speech, I do not believe in language that demeans or otherwise is harmful to individuals or groups. In this class we will respect diverse ideas, experiences, values, and communication styles. All comments deserve and will receive respectful hearings. You are not pressured to **agree** with everything others say. You need to **respect** their right to say it.

6. **CIVILITY:** Though engaging and challenging the ideas of the text, instructor, and each other is encouraged, it is assumed that such interactions will be characterized by mutual respect and civility. Please practice unconditional courtesy in this class.

7. **READINGS:** You will find the readings in this class stimulating and diverse. The primary text for this class was chosen with much care. It’s a great book with current thinking about a diversity of families and their communication. The readings I’ve added are some I have recently come across and think are an exciting addition to the material in this class. They bring the textbook to life with rich, stimulating examples. I am confident you will take a great deal from all our readings.

Please note: We will not always “cover” or address everything in class that was in the reading. I will respect your initiatives in discussion; please let me know if you’d like to discuss a particular concept/issue in a reading and I will do my best to see that we do. Readings should be done **prior** to the class meeting because in-class work is designed to supplement and support the readings, not substitute for them.

8. **BRING YOUR BOOK TO EVERY CLASS.** We will often refer to the book, read from it, work out of it, or have activities that require that you prepare, in class, something from the book. On days we will be discussing only a copied reading, you need only bring that one to class.

9. **ATTENDANCE:**
   It is crucial you plan to be in class **every** day. In a communication course such as this your attendance is essential and expected at every class meeting. Your absences jeopardize not only your learning, but the opportunity of others’ learning as well. Here is how attendance works in this class:
   - **You will receive two (2) free days of absence without penalty. Use them carefully, because after your two “free missed days” . . .**
   - **Missing class (unexcused) will result in a 1% reduction of your final grade for each absence.**
   - **Consistently being tardy will also result in reduction of your final grade. Tardy means coming to class after class has begun. We will begin at the scheduled time. Please arrange your schedule so you can make it to class on time.**
   - **Attendance will be assessed by a daily circulating attendance sheet, which you should initial each class period. NOTE: It is YOUR responsibility to sign the attendance sheet each class. Find it and initial it before you leave the room.**
for whatever reason), you cannot receive credit for attendance once we have left the classroom -- please do not ask.

- If you decide (unannounced) not to return after a break, or just leave 1/2 way through class without prior discussion with me, you lose all attendance points for that class.
- Missing more than 7 class periods beyond your free days (excused or unexcused) will result in automatic failure of this course. No exceptions.
- **PERFECT ATTENDANCE BONUS**: If you have absolute perfect attendance, you will receive a 1% bonus on your final grade total. PERFECT attendance means no excused or unexcused absences. I know this doesn’t seem fair if you’re sick or have a car accident, but . . . perfect means perfect.
- **Excused Absences**: The only excused absences are ones that are the result of the following: Funeral/Death (yours or others), significant illness (yours or family member), conflicting UST responsibility (travel for sport’s team, choral performance, etc). That’s about it. Please schedule meetings, appointments, and your work other than during our scheduled class time.
- **Being Excused**: Talk to me.
- **Unexcused Absence**: Absences for the following reasons will (generally) NOT be excused, so please don’t ask: Conflicting work schedule, just couldn’t make it, family vacation, forgot to come, don’t like to come, don’t like you, wanted to watch The Price is Right, etc.

10. All assignments must be completed for a passing grade in this course.

11. **LATE ASSIGNMENTS**: Any assignment which is received late without prior approval of the instructor will automatically be graded down by 10% for each day that it is late. All assignments are required and failure to complete all assignments results in an automatic incomplete. If an assignment is more than three days late, please see me to make appropriate arrangements.

12. **CHEATING**: Plagiarism, cheating, and other acts of academic misconduct, will result in, at minimum, a failing grade for the assignment, and at my discretion, a failing grade for this course.

13. **GRADING**: Only outstanding performance on the assignments in this course will earn you an "A"; grading in this course is based on the following definition of grades:
   - **A** = represents work which is outstanding, far above the minimum requirements necessary for completing this course/assignment
   - **B** = represents work which is significantly above the minimum requirements necessary for completing this course/assignment
   - **C** = represents work which meets the basic course/assignment requirements
   - **D** = represents work which is worthy of credit even though it does not fully meet all the basic course/assignment requirements.

   Final grades will be calculated on the basis of points scored in each evaluation activity. The following percentages of total will be used to determine grades in this course:

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14. **CREATIVITY**: Creativity is encouraged and rewarded (which includes the creative application and observation of the concepts discussed). If you have an idea for an activity, assignment, or experience, discuss it with me. We'll try to work it into the scheduled material.

15. **COPIES**: You must keep a copy of all writing assignments on a disk, CD, or hard drive for the entire term. If, at any time, I ask for a copy of a writing assignment, you will be able to print a new copy. Failure to do so will result in a penalty for your final grade.

16. **COMPLAINTS**: If you are dissatisfied with any evaluation of an assignment or your performance in this class, you may petition your grade. To do so, you need to submit to me a typed explanation of why the grade is not warranted, what evaluation you believe you deserve with rationale to support your request, a refutation of my comments on your work, and a copy of the original paper/exam/evaluation activity.

17. **PAPERS**: All papers submitted should adhere to the highest professional standards. I reserve the right to return papers, ungraded and with a late penalty, that do not reflect a commitment to college writing and professional submission. See attached guidelines for ALL WRITTEN WORK.
18. **DISABILITY:** To request accommodations due to a disability, please contact the Enhancement Program - Disability Services (651-962-6315), located in Aquinas Hall, room 110 on the St. Paul campus. If you already have a form from this office indicating that you have a disability that requires accommodations, please present it to me as soon as possible so that I can facilitate this process.

19. **FUN:** Have fun. I pledge to make learning in this course a worthwhile and even enjoyable experience; I welcome your suggestions for achieving this goal.

**REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL WRITTEN WORK:**

Any work submitted in this course (except informal written assignments, like chapter eye-openers and application journals, or discussion-leader abstracts) should be prepared according to the following guidelines:

1. Papers must be typed, double-spaced (unless otherwise noted for assignment) in 10-12 point font, with 1-inch margins.
2. Pages must be numbered in the top, right-hand corner of each page (except the title page).
3. Papers must be STAPLED TOGETHER (NOT PAPER-CLIPPED)! NO LOOSE PAGES PLEASE.
4. Formal Papers should have a cover page with a title, your name, my name, date, and course identifier.
5. Do not use folders, binders, or plastic covers for your papers; attach only a cover sheet as indicated above and use one staple to secure all pages together.
6. Papers must include accurate and complete citations of sources and a complete reference list.
7. You should follow the guidelines of the APA style manual for preparation of any work that uses citations or bibliographic information.

**Overview of Course Assignments**

Oral History Project (Ascension Parish Project)
- Participation at project events **required**
- Completed interviews/Oral History 10%
- Oral History Analysis paper 20%

Family Narrative 5%
Discussion Leader Assignment 15%
Daily Eye-Openers and Application Journal 10%
At the Movies: Family Analysis Paper 15%
Book Review and Oral Report 15%
Participation and Class Leadership 10%
1. **Documenting Family Stories: Oral History Project**

   Completed interviews/Oral History worth 10% of your final grade
   Oral History Analysis paper worth 20% of final grade
   Participation at all project-related events is required of all class members

   An important topic for students of family communication to explore is that of family stories. Family stories are those stories told by and about family members which reveal the rich history, values, dynamics, and culture(s) of a particular family. The very telling of family stories is an important communication activity in families; also important is the information revealed in family stories about the many aspects of a family and family system.

   We have a unique opportunity to explore the topic of family stories this semester. Our class if very fortunate to be part of a first-ever interdisciplinary effort at the University of St. Thomas. Our class, along with 7 other classes (from sociology, art history, theology, Spanish, and others) will each separately be completing projects related to our disciplines and course objectives, but each with a common focus: Providing a valuable and educational service to a local organization in need of our help. The organization that our 8 classes will be serving is Ascension Parish, a catholic parish, community, and grade school, located in North Minneapolis.

   The focus of our family communication class will be on conducting a series of oral histories about some of the families that have lived and belonged to the parish for many years. Here’s how it will work:

   Each of you in the class with find a partner. You and your partner will be assigned an elderly family, individual, or couple from Ascension parish. Your team will meet with that individual, couple, or family and interview them about their family history and stories. After completing your interview(s), you will transcribe your interviews and compile a complete oral history which will be given, as a gift, to the family or individual you have worked with. You will also provide a copy to the Ascension parish staff. The information from your oral history will serve as a valuable historical document for Ascension, and will be a treasured gift for the person you interviewed.

   **ORAL HISTORY DOCUMENT (10%)**

   The oral history you prepare will be graded on its completeness and the extent to which you followed the guidelines for preparing and delivering the oral history (worth 10% of your final grade). I will share some sample oral histories with you in class.

   **ANALSYS PAPER (20%)**

   After completing the interviews and the oral history paper, you will synthesize and solidify your learning from this assignment in an analysis paper. The analysis paper is a chance for you to articulate the many connections you have seen between the information you received during your interviews and the many topics about family communication we have read about and discussed in class. This analysis paper (worth 20% of your final grade) is kind of like a take-home final exam – your chance to put everything together that you have learned over the semester.

   In total, this project is an incredible opportunity to learn a great deal about family stories as we will read extensively about in class, as well as apply almost every concept and theory we will discuss related to family communication. Furthermore, you each will be providing a priceless service to members of the twin cities community and the Ascension community and parish.

   More complete guidelines for this assignment are attached to the syllabus.

2. **Family Narrative** (5% of your final grade)

   Past student report this assignment as one of their all-time favorites of their college career! Your assignment is to write a short story about a significant family member or a significant family event in your life. The narrative should simply tell a story. I will bring a few examples from past semesters for you to view.

   The story should not exceed 1500 words (about 5 pages); there is no minimum length. Make two copies of the story, one to hand in on the assigned date and one to read aloud in class to a small group of classmates (approximately five people, including yourself).

   Evaluation of the story is based on the extent to which it clearly describes the family member or family event and why the person or event is significant. Also, evaluation is based on how well the story presents an insight or understanding of an aspect of families in general, or at least one family in particular. Each of these evaluations hinges on your ability to write well.
3. **Discussion Leader Assignment** (15% of your final grade)

During the first week of class, you will select a day on which you and a partner will be the "discussion leaders" for about 30 minutes of our day. Being the "discussion leader" comes with three primary responsibilities:

1. You will prepare a brief discussion outline using the format attached to this syllabus. Your outline must be typed and a maximum of 2 pages. You should make a copy for each member of the class. You should use this outline as a guide for organizing your discussion.

2. The most important part of your discussion leading is preparing and leading discussion about issues and topics from your assigned chapter. You will actually include a minimum of 5 discussion/thought questions right on your discussion outline to be used as a guide in your discussion.

3. You will be prepared to offer thoughtful, critical, and informative comments concerning the day's readings during the discussion.

Your grade on this activity will be based on the following criteria:
   a. Your attention to the details and guidelines of the assignment, outline, and purpose.
   b. Your understanding of the chapter contents you select to discuss.
   c. The effectiveness of your discussion questions (are they thoughtful, creative, and provocative?) and your ability to manage and facilitate an active discussion
   c. Your ability to offer insightful examples and critical thoughts related to the day's topic.

SEE ATTACHED GUIDELINES FOR MORE DIRECTIONS ON PREPARING FOR THIS ASSIGNMENT

4. **Daily Eye-Openers and Application Journal** (10% of your final grade)

You have no tests or exams in this class. Instead, for each chapter you will have the chance to reflect on, apply, and demonstrate your comprehension of the material we are reading and discussing by writing short paragraphs and entries in an Application Journal (kept in a separate and designated folder). One part of every entry is an “eye-opener” wherein you comment on information, ideas, or topics that “opened your eyes” in that part of the reading.

Generally, your Application Journal is a chance for you to apply at least one concept from each reading to something you have personally witnessed or experienced related to families and their communication. Your application journals will be strictly between you and me, unless you choose to share the contents with class members. Some weeks I will direct you to apply a particular concept or theory or answer a question that relates to the reading; other weeks you will select among the many topics in the reading and write your own reflection and application of it. There will be at least one entry required for every class meeting.

These daily writing assignments function kind of like tests, only are more consistent and immediate to the readings. Most importantly, they require that you come to class not only having read the assigned material, but thoughtfully processed it and applied it to your own experiences. In total, your completed set of eye-openers and application journal, at the end of the semester, will be worth 10% of your grade. See attached guidelines for more details related to this assignment.

5. **At the Movies: Family Analysis Paper** (15% of your final grade)

We will be attending a movie at one time during the term. I will attempt to arrange our viewing of this movie during scheduled class time. If that is not possible (due to movie schedules/availability), as a class we will select the best time to attend this movie together.

You are required to view this movie (at your own expense) and write an analysis of the family communication dynamics in this movie applying what you’ve been reading and what we’ve been discussing in class. This paper serves the purpose of a midterm exam in that it will demonstrate your level of understanding of class concepts and required readings, and will require you to apply course concepts to the family communication dynamics you are viewing. You should keep this in mind as you write this paper. You will want to make sure your analysis demonstrates a solid grasp of the concepts and your ability to synthesize your learning.
A. **Introduction.** Select a few of the theories/concepts/issues that we’ve been discussing that you’ve decided to use to analyze the family dynamics in the movie we view (for example, systems theory, dialectical approach, family stories, family metaphor, and/or gender roles). In your introduction, briefly explain what concepts you have selected to use in your analysis. Offer a clear statement of purpose and a preview of what you are about to analyze. Also, any introduction should be interesting and engaging. You decide how to do that.

B. **Analysis.** Using the concepts you just introduced, apply these concepts to the family communication dynamics that you witnessed in the movie. The best papers will briefly review what the concept/theory is first, and then explain how that concept/theory helped them understand what was happening with the family in the movie. The best papers also make explicit reference to the text (using direct quotes, page references, the correct and specific terminology of the authors) and also support their analyses by using direct and clear references to dialogue, characters, situations, and events in the movie. Be sure to support your analyses and observations fully and completely. One tip for success: It’s better to develop one or two things well than to try to analyze too much and not do it with enough depth and critical thought.

C. **Personal Eye-Opener.** Conclude your paper by reflecting on how this movie and your analysis helped you think about some aspect of family communication in a new, different, or heightened way. What insights has this assignment/movie/analysis given you about your own family and its communication?

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### 6. **Book Review and Oral Report** (15% of your final grade)

This assignment, I think, is the greatest opportunity for all of you in this class. You will select a book about something interesting to you related to family communication and you’ll read it. Since each person in this class is starting at a different place and has different backgrounds and interests, I think it’s important to give you the chance to select a book according to your needs and interests. And as members of a 400 level class, you should be prepared to do some independent reading and synthesis of the ideas in this class.

After reading your book, you will write a “review” of its contents. This is not a book “report.” Rather, a book review is a critical analysis of what you have read and how you see it connected to what we have been learning in class.

Your review of this book will be approximately 4 pages, and you will have the chance to orally share your thoughts and insights from the book with the class during the last two weeks of the semester.

I’ve attached a list of book options and ideas. You may choose a book not on the list but the book needs to be approved by me. As soon as you select your book (and don’t do it just by looking at the list—you might be highly disappointed in your selection and you CAN NOT CHANGE YOUR SELECTION ONCE MADE), you need to sign up on the book list which I will have with me everyday in class. ONLY one person in the class may select any one book. Hence, you might want to get going on your selection so your first choices aren’t gone.

You should do the following for your book review:

1. Pick a book from the attached list of choices (again, you should actually page through the book before selecting. Many titles are deceiving). If you have an idea for a book not on the list, you are more than welcome to read it; just bring a copy of the book by and get it pre-approved by me.
2. Sign up with me to make sure your book isn’t already chosen by someone else.
3. Begin reading it immediately. I will ask throughout the semester for you to share what you are learning in your reading. Such are great chances to boost your participation grade.
4. After completing the book, you should write a convincing review, including the following:
   a. **Intro:** Include a complete citation of the book, and an overview of the book (summary of the book, highlights, compelling arguments).
   b. **Eye-openers/Thoughts:** Include your well-developed and convincing thoughts/eye-openers about the contents (or particular parts) of this book. I will evaluate carefully how well it seems you’ve thought about and how carefully you’ve read the entire book. Hence, you should not be brief or shallow here.
   c. **Connections to Course:** About 50% of your review should be an application of the book to the contents of this course. What did you read that is similar, different, or disparate from our readings? How did the book highlight, extend, or contradict our readings/discussions? What is significant about the material in this book for our learning in this class? What from the book would you add to this class if you had the chance?
   d. **Conclusions:** What is the most important/insightful thing you take from this book? Would you recommend it to others? Why/why not?

**Oral Report of book review:** In class, the last two weeks of the semester, you will be asked to share the highlights of your
paper. It should be informative and interesting. Your ability to do this well will be factored into about 5% of your book review grade.

7. **Participation and Class Contributions** (10 % of your final grade)

The success of this course is based on your participation, leadership, and overall contribution to this class. Crucial to the success of this class is your motivation, willingness to be present, conscious, and offer thought-provoking comments and observations, your thoughtful preparation of your daily eye openers and probes, and your attempt to bring to class relevant and insightful experiences and examples. You can earn 10% of your grade according to your effort in these areas.

Absences, general drowsiness (which communicates a lack of interest and/or motivation), talking to your friends in class, unfinished or underdeveloped responses to application journal entries or eye openers, and lack of participation in activities, discussions, next-day assignments and exercises will be reflected in your final grade. Essentially, a positive attitude and attention to the class dynamics and daily activities is an essential part of your demonstrated leadership in this class.

You will have many opportunities to demonstrate your leadership, including assignments built into the course which provide opportunities for leading class discussions, sharing eye-openers from each chapter, and debating opposing viewpoints on family and communication issues. Your participation/performance grade will be assessed each day. At any time you are welcome to come to my office and chat with me about your grade in this area. I will not discuss this after, before, or during class or in the hall; I will only discuss your grade in the privacy of my office.
### Tentative Course Schedule

**Topics/Dates/Assignments**

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<tr>
<th>Week One</th>
<th>Readings &amp; Journal Assignments</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tuesday Feb 4</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Intro class, intro students &amp; self, family myths quiz</td>
<td>Begin reading chpt 1</td>
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<td>Assign family name/heritage/definition activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hand out SE survey (due Thursday)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Thursday Feb 6</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Family name/heritage/definition activity</td>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discuss Discussion</td>
<td>EO + AJ #1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collect completed SE surveys</td>
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<td>Select discussion leader days</td>
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<tr>
<td>Begin Discussing Family Definitions, Diversity, and the Communication Perspective on family</td>
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**NOTE:** Who wants free tickets for “To Kill a Mockingbird”? 

### Week Two

**Tuesday Feb 11**

- Introduction to Family Communication and Family Types

**Thursday Feb 13**

- 10:00 – 11:30 Class meets at Ascension Parish, North Minneapolis (directions attached). Orientation to the Ascension project, neighborhood, and your oral history project will be conducted.
- Light lunch + treats will be provided.

### Week Three

**Tuesday Feb 18**

- Discuss assignment and prepare for Oral History Project

**Thursday Feb 20**

- Theoretical Frameworks for Studying Families
- Systems theory, Social construction Theory, Dialectics, Development Theory

### Sunday, February 23rd

**CLASS BONUS ACTIVITY:** As a member of this class, you can have free tickets to the History Theatre for the 2:00 p.m. showing of **To Kill A Mockingbird**. This is not a required activity and you don’t even have a write a paper about it if you decide to go. Just a great chance to take in some free theatre in the twin cities... and get together with your classmates and other UST students on a Sunday afternoon.

**Directions to History Theatre:** Take 94E to 10th street exit, #241b. Turn slightly left to take the 10th street ramp. Turn left onto 10th St. There is parking across the street (minimal fee for parking). Address is: 30E 10th street, St. Paul. 651-292-0432. [www.historytheatre.com](http://www.historytheatre.com).
Week Four
Tuesday Feb 25
Finish Discussing Chapter 2, Family Theories
Begin Chapter 3: Family Stories and their functions
Chapter 3
EO + AJ #6

Thursday Feb 27
Finish discussing family stories
ASSIGN FAMILY NARRATIVE ASSIGNMENT
Discuss Family Themes, rituals, myths, and metaphors.
Be prepared to share your metaphor (AJ#7) in class
Chapter 3
AJ #7

Week Five
Tuesday Mar 4
Roles and Rules in Families
Discussion Leaders: ____________________________
Chapter 4
EO + AJ #8

Thursday Mar 6
Catch-up day
Finish Discussing Chapter 4
Discuss progress on Oral History Project

Week Six
Tuesday Mar 11
Separating Messages from Metamessages in Family Talk
Connection and Control in Family Arguments
Article by Tannen in reading packet
EO + AJ #9
Article by Tannen in reading packet
EO + AJ #10

Thursday Mar 13
Communicating Conflict, Power, and Violence in Family
Discussion Leaders: ____________________________
EO + AJ #11

First interview with Oral History partner should be completed by today.

Week Seven
Tuesday Mar 18
Studying Marital Interactions and Conflict
Discussion Leaders (pick 1 article): __________________
2 Articles by Gottman in Reading packet
EO + AJ # 12

Thursday Mar 20
Family narratives due today.
In-Class reading of family narratives.

Week Eight
Spring Break: Coming to class is optional this week.
**Week Nine**

*Tuesday/Thursday Apr 1 & 3*

MOVIE WEEK: Meet for class movie at time/place to be determined

NOTE: Movie analysis assignment is in the syllabus

Second and/or final interviews with oral history partner should be completed by today.

**Week Ten**

*Tuesday Apr 8*

Movie Analyses Due in Class today.

Discussion of your Movie Analyses.

*Thursday Apr 10*

Communicating Intimacy in Families
Relational Currencies and Expressing Affection

Discussion Leaders: ______________________

EO + AJ #13

Transcripts of Oral History interviews should be well underway by now.

**Week Eleven**

*Tuesday Apr 15*

Continue Discussing Chapter 6: Private Languages in Marriages and Families

Discussion of the importance of Rituals in Marriages and Families

*Thursday Apr 17*

Rituals and Dialectical Tensions in Blended Families

EO

**Week Twelve**

*Tuesday Apr 22*

Family communication, Stress, and Stressors

Discussion Leaders: ______________________

EO + AJ #15

Prepare questions for Thursday panel of parents/babies/children

**Oral History papers need to be completed in draft-form. Bring drafts to class today.**

*Thursday Apr 24*

**Guest Panel:** Parents and their babies/young children come to class to discuss the stressors and reality of the transition to parenthood.
**Week Thirteen**  
**Tuesday Apr 29**

Discuss parent/child panel from Thursday.

Societal Influences on Family Communication  
Discussion Leaders: ______________________  
Chapter 8  
EO + AJ # 16

**Thursday May 1**

Managing Challenging Dialogues in Families  
Discussion Leaders: ______________________  
Chapter 9  
EO + AJ #17

Completed oral histories due today.  
Copy due to your Oral History partner.  
Bring two copies of completed oral history to class; I will provide one copy to the Ascension parish staff.

**Week Fourteen**  
**Tuesday May 6**

Final Event for Ascension Project. This is REQUIRED of all class members. Class meets at Ascension from 12-1:30 today. PLEASE PUT ON YOUR CALENDARS and schedule accordingly. We will not meet as a class during our regularly scheduled time, but will meet at Ascension during the convo hour (12-1:30).

**Thursday May 8**

Book Reviews Due and oral reports on Book reviews in class today

**Week Fifteen**  
**Tuesday May 13**

Finish Oral Book reviews.  
Oral History Analysis paper due today. Discuss in class.

**Thursday May 15**

Final activity.  
All completed Application Journals due Today.  
Post SE Assessment.  
Final class Discussion.  
Course evaluations.
Application Journal Assignments

Chapter 1
EO: Complete eye-opener(s) as assigned for this chapter
AJ #1: Do you agree that a communication perspective is significantly different from a psychological or sociological approach to studying family? Suggest some questions that are rooted in a communication approach to families. How are these questions different from ones you would ask if you took another approach? List at least 3 questions/issues (communication-based, of course) that you personally hope to answer and explore this term.
AJ #2: Reflect on and discuss the cultural pressures on people to get married in the United States.
AJ #3: Free reflection/application entry on something in the chapter.

Chapter 2
EO: Complete eye-opener(s) as assigned for this chapter
AJ #4: Think about your family as a system and describe (even sketch) your family “system” using the systems concepts presented in the chapter. Give examples of how your family (or a family you know well) functions as a system in terms of its wholeness, interdependence, hierarchy, boundaries, calibration, and equifinality. What can and have you learned about your family’s interaction patterns by looking at them from the systems theory approach?
AJ #5: Which theory of family communication presented in this chapter seems to make the most sense to you? Which is most helpful in explaining your own or others’ family communication. Explain.

Chapter 3
EO: Complete eye-opener(s) as assigned for this chapter
AJ #6: Free reflection/application entry on something in the chapter
(One idea: Select a common story told in your family. Does it fit into one of the common types mentioned in the chapter? What function(s) does it serve?)
AJ #7: There are three parts to this Journal entry:
   a. What would your family’s theme be (or a family you know well)?
   b. Identify a common family ritual you have in your family (or know of in another family).
   c. If you had to develop a metaphor to explain what your family is like, what would it be?
      In a paragraph, develop and explain a metaphor or image that reflects your family and explain how this metaphor reveals how your family interacts and what they believe in. For example, “Our family is like a Basketball team because . . .” or “I see our family like rock band because . . .” Offer a complete analysis of how your family is like the metaphor you select. How does the metaphor begin to reveal communication in your family (or the family you are writing about)? If appropriate, include a visual image of your metaphor also. (note: You will be sharing these with the class).

Chapter 4
EO: Complete eye-opener(s) as assigned for this chapter
AJ #8: Free reflection/application entry on something in the chapter

Messages/Metamessages Reading by Tannen
AJ #9: When have you experienced or observed a misunderstanding in your family based on the failure to distinguish between message and metamessage? Explain what happened and what the actual message (versus the metamessage) was in the situation.

Connection and Control Reading by Tannen
AJ #10: Describe a relationship, or set of relationships, in your own family (or a family you know well) and where they fall on both the control-connection and hierarch-equality continua. Describe a family conflict that resulted in someone in the family moving around on the grid (the intersection of the two continua – see p. 70 of the article) in a way that made others uncomfortable.
Chapter 5
EO: Complete eye-opener(s) as assigned for this chapter
AJ #11: According to information in this chapter, do you believe that your family members respond to conflict effectively (either currently or in the past)? What specific examples can you provide to support your answer? What advice would you offer to them (and yourself) based on the models and ideas offered in this chapter?

“Why Marriages Fail?” And “Two Marriages” -- Articles by Gottman
EO: Complete eye-opener for these articles.
AJ #12: Free reflection/application entry on something in these two readings.

Chapter 6 and Wilkinson Article
EO: Complete eye-opener(s) as assigned for this chapter
AJ #13: Using all the various categories and examples of ways to express intimacy and affection offered in the chapter and in the reading, provide some examples of the most common ways your family expresses affection and love for one another. Try to identify at least 5 examples from five different categories offered (for instance, examples of playful rituals, when self-disclosure has been an expression of intimacy, an example of a nonverbal expression, an example of how/when money or gifts has been used in your family to express affection, and/or examples of direct relational statements). Have you noticed a gender difference in the way that people express intimacy and affection in your family experiences?

Rituals and Blended Families: Case Study and Reading by Braithwaite et al.
EO: From article (not from case study)
AJ #14: Answer the following VERY briefly after reading the Case “Becoming a Family. . . “
   a. The dialectical approach claims that relationships are organized around opposing tensions or pulls in opposite directions. What simultaneous dialectical tensions or pulls can you identify in Lonnie’s account of the development of her blended family?
   b. What are the major turning points, that is, significant points of negative or positive change, in the development of Lonnie’s blended family? (Hint: I found twelve Turning Points).
   c. As you read earlier, rituals are recurring interaction events that hold importance to their participants. What rituals can you identify in this case study? How did rituals change as Lonnie’s families Changed? Why were some rituals able to adapt to new circumstances while other rituals were not? (in answering, use the information in the “Blended Families” article you read for today)

Chapter 7
EO: Complete eye-opener(s) as assigned for this chapter
AJ #15: Discuss whether or not you believe divorce is a developmental or an unpredictable stressor in a family. Is it possible to predict that about half of all marriages will dissolve? Or is divorce still an unexpected event? Incorporate examples from your own experiences and support from the chapter.

Chapter 8
EO: Complete eye-opener(s) as assigned for this chapter
AJ #16: Free reflection/application entry on something in the chapter.

Chapter 9
EO: Complete eye-opener(s) as assigned for this chapter
AJ #17: Free reflection/application entry on something in the chapter.
Guidelines for the Application Journal and Eye Openers

As stated in the syllabus, you have no tests or exams in this class. Instead, you will write short paragraphs about things that “opened your eyes” and apply the daily readings to your life experiences in an application journal. Your application journal entries will function kind of like tests in that you need to be carefully and critically thinking about and understanding the readings; the important difference, however, is that AJ entries are more consistent and immediate to the readings. They are due according to the schedule on the syllabus. Below are some additional details about doing the eye-openers and completing application journal entries.

a. Eye Openers: As you read each chapter you are to select the idea presented that you found most interesting, intriguing, or “eye-opening”. State what that idea is, what it makes you think about, why this idea was most interesting to you. You will often be asked to share these topics with the class. Chapter eye-openers are to be placed at the start of each application journal entry. They should be at least one paragraph in length.

b. Application Journal entries: The purpose of this course is to provide you with a framework for becoming a more astute observer (and participant) in family communication. To heighten your ability to focus on family communication issues and patterns, you will be asked to reflect on and apply information from our daily readings in your application journal. Some application journal assignments have been prepared for you in the form of a question (or two) asking you to apply or reflect on a specific concept from the reading; other application journal entries are a free chance for you to select an idea to apply. Each AJ entry is a chance for you to probe deeper into your own experiences, into the readings, and into our discussions by challenging you to apply what you’re learning and reflect systematically on it. AJ entries should be a minimum of 2 paragraphs and a maximum of 1 page. Below are answers to a few commonly asked questions about, and tips for, about completing your application Journal:

1. Yes, I will randomly collect Application Journals during the semester. You need to bring them to class every day.
2. Yes, there is a penalty for late and/or missing eye opener or AJ entries; each late or missing entry (as assessed when randomly collected) will result in a 1% reduction in your final grade for this class.
3. No, each EO or AJ entry will not be graded individually. Rather, you will receive a mid-term and final grade assessment on the total of your EO’s and AJ’s (worth 10% of your final grade).
4. Journal responses must be no shorter than 2 paragraphs and no longer than 1 page for EACH question asked in an AJ assignment. Anything over 1-page will be ignored. Anything under 2 well-developed paragraphs will be considered incomplete (and counted as if it wasn’t done at all). Chapter eye-openers should be at least one paragraph.
5. All entries must be typed and well written (no credit for un-typed entries).
6. Your journal entries must all be kept, in chronological order, in a separate folder that you bring to class every day.
7. If you have more than one AJ entry for a given chapter or day, you should staple those together.
8. Again, AJ’s are collected randomly over the semester. As stated above, 1% reduction in final grade for each late or missing AJ when due and collected.
9. The pre-assigned AJ questions are found on an attached list.
10. GRADING: As stated, entries will be graded randomly. I might ask you to turn in your application journal on any particular day, so be ready and have you work done.
11. Although the AJ is only worth 10% of your final grade, your participation/performance grade in this class will be calculated based, in part, on the quality and depth of your journal entries.
12. Re-write the question you are responding to at the top of each entry
13. Again, your collection of Application Journals must be kept together in one folder and turned in as indicated on the course schedule. You will receive no higher than a “d” grade for this assignment if you fail to turn in all entries (previously and yet to be graded) the last day of class.
14. Follow the following format for numbering and labeling each entry:

Chapter 1
EO: blah, blah, blah . . .
AJ #5: (ALWAYS re-write any pre-assigned questions here before giving your response). Which theory of family communication presented in this chapter seems to make the most sense to you? Which is most helpful in explaining your own or others’ family communication. Explain.

Your name: Bob Vila
Your answer here . . . blah, blah, blah . . .
Discussion Leading Guidelines and Outline

The following pages contain all the information you should need about how to be the discussion leaders on the day you have selected.

Essentially, your job as discussion leaders is to help us discuss a number of the topics from the readings so that we can learn more about them, engage actively with them, and think critically about them. The student-lead discussion is an exciting alternative (my students have reported over and over again) to the (not-so-interesting, passive, okay, even boring) “lecture” on course reading material.

Your job as discussion leader requires three essential and related tasks, each accomplished by preparing and then following the discussion outline as a guide. Below I preview these three tasks. Following this preview is the sample Discussion Outline that you should use as a framework for preparing your own outline and discussion leading activities.

Three tasks for your job as discussion leader:

a. **Set the stage.** Before you get a group into discussion, you need to warm them up – to get them ready. You don’t need much time to do this (3-5 minutes max). You will set the stage for the class by introducing what aspect of the chapter you decided to focus on for your discussion. This section on the outline is simply called “Focus of Discussion” and is a chance to state your objectives for your discussion. What you need to do is not think of this as a “presentation” as much as it is something you would do at the beginning of a meeting to remind people of the agenda for the meeting and for what we will be discussing. Please avoid the temptation to talk too much. If you do, you’ll just bore the class (and me). Remember, we have already read the chapter and have a basic understanding of the concepts.

b. **Review and Refresh memories.** Your next job is to refresh our memories and briefly review a few of the main concepts we read about; only review those that are absolutely central to the discussion you plan to lead. This part of your discussion leading should also be brief (another 5-7 minutes). Again, remember that we have already read the chapter and have a basic understanding of the concepts. Simply refresh and renew our memories with a few definitions, a quick overview of a model or theory, or a review of a concept you personally found a little confusing or complex.

c. **Lead the discussion.** Using your discussion questions presented on your outline as a guide, your job is to lead us in an interesting, active, and critical discussion of the concepts and issues at hand. As discussion leader, it is your job to have the conversation run smoothly. That means that you will need to monitor when the conversation is drifting off the point and bring it back to the central question. It is also important for you to help the class use their critical abilities wisely and well. Thus, part of your role will be to help people see connections and relationships (perhaps between two different comments, or to material covered at an earlier time). It is also valuable to raise questions about the nature of our evidence or knowledge when that is appropriate. It might also be useful to consider applications of the concepts we are discussing. Choosing good discussion questions will help you accomplish these goals and provide an interesting learning experience for all. Your discussion should last 35-40 minutes.

Note: Your discussion leading activities, in total, should be approximately 45 minutes. That’s not very long. Be sure to plan accordingly.
Format for the

Discussion Outline

On your outline, first provide a citation of the chapter or reading you are discussing. Use the following citation as a guide:


(NOTE: Use the following format and headers for preparing your outline. Make a copy for everyone in the class and do not exceed the two page maximum on discussion outlines. PLEASE copy back to back or staple multiple pages together).

Focus of Discussion
On your outline here (and verbally with the class), briefly state the main focus of your discussion. Provide a bit of preview about the parts of the chapter your group will focus on in discussion of the chapter or article. This section might be only a few sentences. NOTE: you are NOT required to ever cover an entire chapter’s contents or try to discuss an entire chapter’s worth of material. Remember, this is not a lecture, but a chance for us, as a class, to “discuss” a few items from the chapter. You should select a few issues or topics from the chapter and focus your discussion on them. If you try to do too much, you likely won’t be able to do it well and hence your grade will suffer.

Refresher of Discussion Topics
Here, in a paragraph or two, review the issues/topics/ideas you have selected to discuss from the chapter. Because you should assume everyone has completely read and comprehended the chapter, your summary should be a quick refresher of just some of the main points, highlighting those that you would like to spend some time talking about as a class. This section of your discussion should be a very brief (about 5-7 minute) reminder/refresher. If a concept was complex or needs explanation, spend a little time on that. Sincerely ask the class if they thought a particular aspect was confusing or needs clarification.

Eye-Openers
You and your partner should bring together the eye-openers you each wrote for this chapter and synthesize them here into one paragraph which will serve to get the class thinking about what you found most interesting about this chapter. You should share your eye-openers verbally with the class and use them as a transition to the discussion that will happen next. It’s a good idea to use the ideas in your eye-openers to develop some of your discussion questions. You might also ask members of the class to share their eye-openers from the chapter . . . a good way to warm people up for the discussion that follows next.

Critical Thinking Discussion Questions
The main point of this entire assignment is to have you help us, the class, critically discuss some of the family issues/topics that were raised in the particular chapter we’re reading. The purpose is NOT to have you present the whole chapter or be the “expert.” Instead, think of your job as something similar to running a meeting. Presentations are easy; meetings are not. They involve unpredictable responses and the need to manage comments, thoughts, and opinions. Your job as discussion leaders is to run the “meeting” by offering some points which you (the meeting leaders) feel we need to discuss and then help facilitate our discussion of those points and questions. Unlike doing a presentation, running a meeting demands that you are prepared with a tentative outline of the plan for the meeting. That’s the easy part. The tough part of running a meeting is that it demands spontaneity and fast-thinking to make impromptu decisions about how to respond to participants, how to alter your plan, how to decide (based on what people are saying and talking about) which questions to go to next. Effective discussion leaders will be ready to respond to these group dynamics.

Good Discussion questions are the most important part of your job as discussion leader. You should spend MOST of your effort on this assignment developing what you think will elicit interesting and engaging discussion that demands a great deal of critical thinking on the part of the class. Your questions should challenge the class to think about the material, debate issues, offer personal opinion and experiences, and most of all, talk thoughtfully and in a
Essential to your job as discussion leader is to help the class use their critical abilities wisely and well. Thus, part of your role as discussion leaders will be to help people see connections and relationships; these connections and relationships might be between two different comments, or to material covered at an earlier time. It is also valuable to raise questions about the nature of the evidence being presented or to the source or validity of the knowledge when that is appropriate.

You can do whatever you want with the class during your “discussion,” such as break them into smaller groups to discuss, bring a media example of an issues or topic to motivate discussion, or design an activity (role-play, group assignment, etc) to get the discussion going. Or, you may simply guide an all-class discussion of the topics/issues your group thinks we should discuss using your discussion questions as a guide (which is often the most effective).

List 5 discussion questions here as the last part of your discussion outline. You are not required to use them all in your actual discussion, but you should be able to prepare at least 5. Look at the end of chapter questions for ideas on topics that might be good discussion questions (often where your application journal questions come from). You shouldn’t copy them, but you can use them for ideas.

**WHAT MAKES A GOOD DISCUSSION QUESTION?**

Developing good discussion questions is the TOUGHEST part of this assignment, because good discussion questions are very hard to create. What makes a good discussion question? Good discussion questions DON’T have easy or right answers. They aren’t too directive or closed-ended. They can’t be “answered” quickly nor can they ever really be answered fully. Rather, good discussion questions often ask people to think critically about the topics, to consider their own opinions and experiences with the evidence in the reading, or to ask more questions. They elicit “discussion” by inciting a debate about something, or provoking critical thoughts about the topics. A good discussion question should invite dialogue on a point BECAUSE of the fact that the question doesn’t have a clear or easy answer. So, develop at least 5 really good discussion questions and write them here. Your grade on the abstract will be partially determined by how well your discussion questions actually elicit a thoughtful discussion demanding our critical thinking abilities, and how well you are able to manage the discussion based on your new knowledge from the chapter.
Reading List Options and Ideas
Family Communication


Oral History Project Guidelines

If at any point in this project you have questions or problems, please contact me first. If I can’t answer your questions, I will suggest you contact one of the following people who have been instrumental in the planning of this multi-disciplinary effort and who have expertise in different areas of this project:

**Contact at Ascension:**
Melissa Streit: Melissa@ascensionmpls.org
612-529-9684

**Contact for conducting Oral Histories:**
Linda Schloff: Linda@schloff.com

**Directions to Ascension Church, North Minneapolis**
(a tear-out page of these directions can also be found earlier in the syllabus)

From St. Thomas:
Take 94W through MPLS. After the Lowry Hill Tunnel and the Basilica of St. Mary, exit at the Broadway Avenue/Washington Avenue exit. At the lights at the top of the ramp, turn left (N) onto Washington Avenue. Stay in the left lane. At the next light, turn left (W) onto Broadway Avenue. Continue through 3 sets of lights and past the Target store. Turn left onto Bryant Avenue. Go one block, through a stop sign (although make sure you stop and then go through), and the church is on the right. You can park on the street or in the lot across from the church.

**Project overview and orientation**

As stated in the syllabus, you will be involved in an exciting project this semester. Essentially, this project is designed to help us meet one of our course objectives: Understanding how family stories shape others and us. It is also designed to provide a wonderful service to Ascension Parish in Minneapolis by giving them a documented history of some of their long-standing parishioners, and a priceless service to a group of individuals who will, after your project is completed, have a document of their family history and stories.

As you know, our class is one of 8 classes that are all working with Ascension parish this semester in various ways. Together our 8 classes will be providing a variety of valuable services to the Ascension community and school. At least 2 times during the semester we will meet with a number of the other classes participating in this effort to learn about the history of Ascension and the north Minneapolis neighborhood of which they are a part and to understand the many issues impacting this community and the families it serves. See the course schedule for these activities and plan accordingly. Many are required activities that you will need to make arrangements to attend. As a class, we can arrange and share transportation to these events.

Working in pairs, each of you will interview and collect the oral histories (listen to and document the families stories) of the Ascension parishioner you will be assigned. You will schedule approximately two meetings (usually in the individual/couple’s home) to listen to (and tape record) the stories of their lives. Upon completion of your oral history interviews with this person/couple, you will transcribe their stories – their oral history – and provide a typed copy of this oral history to the resident. Separately, you will also write an analysis paper based on your collection of these stories for this class. The analysis paper is graded separately from the oral history document. Completion of the oral histories and transcription into a story is required for each member of this class as is completion of the analysis paper.
What’s “Service-Learning”?

The project we are completing is what we call a ‘service-learning’ project. Service learning is not just doing volunteer work. As you can see from the project I designed for this class, doing service-learning means providing meaningful service in a way that helps us reach a particular learning objective. There is no better way to learn about the nature of family stories, for instance, than to actually get out there and talk to people who have lived a full-life of family stories. You will also learn a great deal about your own family and family communication across generations by talking with your partner(s) and hearing their life stories. You will find the service-learning project in this class challenging, rewarding, life changing (probably for you and your partner from Ascension), and a learning experience like no other. I know that it will be a lot of work, but I also believe that you will agree, upon completion, that all your time and effort is very well spent. Hopefully, this project will inspire you to collect and document the oral histories of people in your own family.

What do I have to do?

As alluded to already, there are essentially two parts to the oral history project. 1) The interviewing, transcribing, and writing of the oral history of your partner(s), and 2) the analysis paper you will write after completing the oral history.

1. The oral history interview, transcribing, and final document are worth 10% of your final grade. We will talk at length in class about how to conduct the oral history interviews (it usually requires between 2-3 meetings with your Ascension partner(s)). Part of your responsibility in completing this project is to provide a complete, typed oral history to your Ascension partner(s) by the date specified on the syllabus. On the attached contract, you will record the days, times, and number of hours spent with you partner.

2. The analysis paper related to the oral history collection and writing is worth 20% of your final grade. Guidelines for the analysis paper are described on the following pages.

How am I going to go about doing it?

First, you will be paired with a person or couple from the Ascension parish. You will make your own arrangements for meeting that person/couple. PLEASE COMPLETE and GIVE THE ATTACHED DATA SHEET to your Ascension partner (includes your name and phone number), at your first meeting with your partner. Upon meeting, your goal is to interview, audiotape, and then transcribe the stories of your partner(s). Your transcriptions can then be used to write a complete oral history of the person(s) you interviewed. A sample oral history will be given to you in class. Also, as a class we will develop a set of interview questions and I will provide additional questions used by the Minnesota Historical society for collecting oral histories.

After completing your meetings and the writing of the oral history, you will write a 4-5 page analysis about what you have learned about family communication by doing this oral histories project. You will base your analysis paper on our class discussions about what family stories are, what they mean, and what forms they take. You will also be asked to make connections between other aspects of our class readings/topics and the family you are learning about in your oral history interviews. Please see attached guidelines for writing this paper.

Answers to commonly asked questions:

1. Can I work with a partner on this project? Yes, you can pair with another member of this class for interviewing your Ascension partner(s). However, when you are done with the oral history collection, transcribing and writing (which can be one completed document), EACH person will write his/her own analysis paper, to be graded separately.

2. Can I use my grandparent to complete this project? You can’t use your own grandparent for the class project, but I highly encourage you to use this same format and the skills you will learn in interviewing to conduct oral histories on anyone and everyone in your own family.

3. Do I have to give you (my instructor) a copy of the oral history transcript AND analysis paper? Or just the analysis paper? Good question! You must give me, by the assigned dates, a copy of BOTH the oral history document you provide to your Ascension partner AND your completed analysis paper. They are graded separately and due at different times in the semester.

4. What if I run out of things to ask when I’m interviewing my partner? In the past, this is rarely a problem. Most people LOVE to talk about themselves. One helpful hint is to think of your sessions less as interviews, and more as conversations. In doing so, you allow the natural flow of topics to emerge and develop, and are often likely to discover a lot about the person that you’d never have thought to “ask” about. But, if you do feel like you’re running out of “questions,” one idea is just to bring up “mundane” topics (like food, childhood games, the weather as he/she remembers it growing up, weekends, etc) and follow your partner’s lead in developing the topics and the memories that hopefully come from it. You can also get ideas about topics from others in class. Ask your fellow students what they have been talking about with their partners. I will provide a lengthy list of
5. **What if my partner says she doesn’t want a copy of her oral history I spent all this time preparing?** All the people who signed up for this project are eager to have their oral history completed. If, by chance, you do have a person who decides they don’t want a copy, you should send one to the person in the mail anyway if he/she insists you not leave one. Often it is the family of the person who enjoys and appreciates the history more than the person him/herself (although this isn’t *always* true). In the past, when I have had students work with residents at an assisted living facility, a number have initially said they didn’t want a copy of their history only to request a copy a few weeks later. So, please encourage your partner to accept a copy of the document you have prepared.

6. **What should I do with the contract where I record my meetings and hours?** You do need to have your partner sign the contract found in the syllabus when you deliver your completed oral history. You should also sign it and then turn it in to me by the assigned date. You will NOT receive a grade in this class until your signed and completed contract is submitted.

7. **How will the oral history paper be graded?** The oral history paper is graded on its completeness, the extent to which all guidelines were followed, and on the quality of the writing and organization of the information.

8. **What if I can’t find anything to analyze in my final paper because my partner didn’t tell me anything that connected to our class?** If this is your question, then you are not thinking hard enough about the hundreds of topics we have read about and discussed this semester or you haven’t been reading carefully and engaging in the material of this class as fully as you should have been. The connections between the oral history information and the class are not always obvious. But part of your grade on this assignment is your ability to make informed and interesting connections and analyses – the best of which often AREN’T the obvious ones.

9. **What if my partner tells me he doesn’t want me to come back after our first meeting because he doesn’t have anything else left to say?** You should encourage your partner that the information he/she is providing is VERY worthwhile and interesting, and that you’d like to come back for just a short time to go over a few details of the information you recorded to check for accuracy. At minimum, you should do this on your return visit. Most often, the person is willing to talk more in depth and discuss a range of other topics on the return visit. Remember, you are developing trust and a relationship with your partner – both of which might take some time.

10. **What if my partner can’t hear what I’m saying, or doesn’t understand my questions?** Some of your partners will be a little harder to understand and have a little difficulty hearing your questions. We will discuss tips for talking with such individuals during our preparation in class for this project. The bottom line is that you should be flexible, sensitive and aware of the communication needs of the situation and your partner.

11. **How can I possibly write everything down while listening attentively during my interviews?** You can’t. That’s why MUST tape record these interviews. It might be helpful to jot a few notes while the person talks, but overall, you should listen intently and rely on the tape recorder to get all the details. You will need to have the person sign a consent form for participating in the oral history and for being recorded. If the person is uncomfortable with a tape recorder (many people are), be sure to put the tape recorder so that it is out of their direct sight and encourage the person to not think about it. Most often, after the first few minutes of talking, people forget all about being tape recorded. Also, remind the person that you want to do a complete and excellent job, and you can’t do so by simply taking notes.

12. **What if I don’t own a tape recorder?** Not a problem. Our department and the service-learning office have a number of tape recorders available for your use during this project. Just let me know (with at least a week’s notice) if you’ll be needing a recorder and I’ll bring one to class for you.

13. **How long will it take me to transcribe all the notes into a written oral history?** According to past students, it will take you a lot longer than you ever imagine. Transcribing details (especially from a tape recorder) is a lengthy, time-consuming process. Knowing that, you shouldn’t wait until the last minute to try and finish this project.
Oral History Project:  
Guidelines for Analysis Paper

After completing your oral history transcript and document, you will be writing a separate paper, called an analysis paper, which will be the graded separately from your oral history document. Your analysis paper is due as indicated on the course schedule, should be no longer than 5 pages, and should follow the format outlined below. If you were working with a partner on the interview phase of this assignment, please note that you EACH must complete a separate analysis paper. Please use the headers identified below to organize your paper (Intro, method, analysis, and conclusion) and be sure to use complete and accurate references to the text/readings in the analysis section.

Introduction:
In a paragraph or two, introduce your partner(s), provide a quick overview of his/her history, age, defining characteristics, career(s), etc. Also, provide a statement of purpose for your paper (like you would in ANY paper) identifying your goals for this paper/analysis (assume you reader knows nothing about the assignment). For instance, be sure to clearly state: “The purpose of this paper is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the stories of Mr. and Mrs. Joe and Edith Larson and understand the functions and types of their family stories.” You should come up with your own statement of purpose . . . but you get the idea.

Method:
Identify in a paragraph how many meetings you had with your partner(s), how long the meetings were on average, what it was like talking with your partner(s), and anything else that will help the reader (me) understand the time spent gathering the oral histories. Technically, this is considered your “method” of data collection, if you were doing a research project.

Analysis:
This section is the most important and comprehensive part of your paper. It will also be the lengthiest. You should do the following in this section:

• Identify what concepts and theories from our course readings and discussions are illustrated in the stories told to you during the oral history interview. You should connect specifically to the text/readings (make reference to author(s) and particular quotes/concepts) to help you make sense of the stories of your partner. In doing so, you might want to include information about the following:
  • What stories did your partner(s) consider the defining points of his/her life? Why?
  • How did your partner(s) personal, family, or professional lives change or stay the same?
  • What social, economic, political, historical, or personal events influenced changes in their lives, particularly in their family?
  • What theories from the readings help you explain the family communication in this family?
  • What was this family system like?
  • Did this family experience common dialectical tensions? How did they manage them over time?
  • Did factors such as age, sex, education, martial status, ethnicity, religion, etc. influence the event of their lives or the stories they told?

Conclusion:
In a concluding paragraph or two, talk briefly about what you learned about your own family, or your family’s stories, by doing this project with your partner? What did you learn about the nature of family stories and their importance? What did you learn generally about family communication? What did you learn from your partner? How does it feel to provide such a “service” to your partner? Reflect on the nature of “service” and how this project might be meaningful to your partner and/or his or her family. Include any final thoughts about the project as a whole.
Oral History Project Contract
University of St. Thomas and Ascension Parish

Thank you for working with the St. Thomas student named below. We at St. Thomas believe integration into the community is an important part of a liberal arts education. The opportunity to work with you, a member of the Ascension Parish Community, is a great pleasure. Please sign at the bottom of this form indicating that the student meeting with you has completed the stated number hours meeting with you, and that he/she has provided you with a copy of your oral history.

Student’s Name: ______________________________
Phone number of student: ________________________
Did you work with a partner in this class? Y  N
Partner’s Name: ________________________________

Name, phone and address of Ascension Partner:

Name: _______________________________________
Address: _____________________________________
___________________________________________
___________________________________________

Phone: _______________________________________

Please record each day, and number of hours on each date, you met with your Ascension Partner:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Total Hours that day</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

To the student: Please have your partner sign and date below AFTER providing him/her with a copy of the completed oral history, and then turn this contract in to me by the assigned date.

I acknowledge the above information is complete and accurate.

________________________________________
Signature of Student

________________________________________
Signature of Interviewee

I have received a copy of my oral history from the above named student.

________________________________________
Signature of Student

________________________________________
Signature of Interviewee
Ascension Parish & University of St. Thomas Partnership

Thank you for agreeing to allow one of our students to meet with you to collect your family/personal history and provide you with a written copy for your personal use and records. The student you are meeting with is currently enrolled in a course at St. Thomas called Family Communication. ALL information you give the student shall remain confidential. If you have any questions about this project, please contact Melissa Streit (at Ascension, 612-529-9684) or Dr. Carol Bruess, professor of Family Communication at the University of St. Thomas (651-962-5829).

Name of STUDENT interviewing you:

____________________________________

Student’s PHONE Number:

___________________________________

DATE and TIME of next scheduled meeting with student:

____________________________________
Directions to Ascension Church, North Minneapolis

From St. Thomas:

Take 94W through MPLS. After the Lowry Hill Tunnel and the Basilica of St. Mary, exit at the Broadway Avenue/Washington Avenue exit. At the lights at the top of the ramp, turn left (N) onto Washington Avenue. Stay in the left lane. At the next light, turn left (W) onto Broadway Avenue. Continue through 3 sets of lights and past the Target store. Turn left onto Bryant Avenue. Go one block, through a stop sign (although make sure you stop and then go through), and the church is on the right. You can park on the street or in the lot across from the church.