Southeast Missouri State University

Department of Social Work

Title: Helping Skills for the Human Services

I. **Catalog Description and Credit Hours of the Course:**
   Developing interpersonal communication competency through study of verbal communication principles and strategies, helping strategies, and influences of culture and gender. (3)

II. **Interdisciplinary Nature of Course:**
   Not applicable.

III. **Prerequisites:** None

IV. **Purposes or Objectives of the Course:**
   A. To provide students with basic information regarding interpersonal communication, including several classification systems for interpersonal communication behavior. (Addresses University Studies objectives 2, 3, 7 and 9)

   B. To familiarize students with beginning effective techniques for interpersonal communication and helping as well as to provide them with opportunities to practice those techniques both in the classroom and outside of class. (Addresses University Studies objectives 2, 3, and 7)

   C. To encourage students’ development of self-understanding and empathy for others in the framework of interpersonal communication and helping. (Addresses University Studies objectives 2, 3, and 7)

   D. To enable students to analyze their own interpersonal communication and develop strategies to improve their communication effectiveness and helping skills. (Addresses University Studies objectives 2, 3, 6, 7, and 9)

   E. To assist students in integrating information about the influence of culture, ethnicity, race, and sexual orientation on interpersonal communication into their communication and helping behaviors. (Addresses University Studies objectives 2, 4, 5, 7, and 9)

   F. To encourage students’ awareness of values in communication and the ethical choices involved in their own interpersonal communication and helping strategies. (Addresses University Studies objectives 2, 6, 7, and 9)

   G. To provide opportunities for students to locate relevant information and research, using traditional and on-line sources, for use in writing about topics in the field of interpersonal communication and helping skills.
(Addresses University Studies objectives 1, 2, 3, and 6)

V. **Expectations of Students:**

A. Students are expected to attend class regularly and to participate in class activities. This is particularly important due to the experiential nature of the course; class activities are experiential, designed to introduce and practice communication strategies and helping skills.

B. Students are expected to complete assigned readings before class and come to class prepared for discussion.

C. Students are expected to complete assigned work on time. Late work will be penalized.

D. Students’ written work is expected to be well organized, clearly written, and grammatically correct. Students will be asked to rewrite assignments that do not meet this standard. The following written assignments will be required: two abstracts of research articles pertaining to interpersonal or helping skills; one research paper on an interpersonal communication or helping topic; three film analyses based on film excerpts shown in class pertaining to interpersonal communication; one book review on a book pertaining to cultural and gender-based aspects of communication; and three communication self-analyses about students’ own communication behaviors in situations outside of class.

E. Students are expected to take exams at the time they are given in class. Any legitimate reason for missing an exam should, whenever possible, be discussed in advance with the instructor. If this is not possible, a written excuse is required; the exam must be made up within one week of the student’s return to class.

F. Students are expected to show respect and tolerance for the ideas of other students, and for other students’ participation in classroom communication experiences.

G. Students are expected to display ethical behavior regarding what is communicated in the framework of this course. This applies particularly to information shared in the Communication Groups; it should not be discussed with the class as a whole or outside the class, other than by the person who originally shared it. Students are also expected, however, to use their own good judgment in choosing what personal information to share and what issues to work on in the Communication Groups and in the Self-analysis assignments.

H. Students are expected to adhere to standards of academic honesty in all assignments and examinations.
VI. Course Outline:

Introduction 2 hrs
Discussion of course expectations and assignments; abstract and term paper instructions distributed to students and discussed, including how to locate and choose appropriate sources.
Reading: Text, Chapter 1 - Interpersonal Process
Class Activities: Communication Groups form; participation in introductory communication exercises.
Assignments: Self-selected text paper assigned
University Studies Objectives: 1, 2, 3

Influence of Culture and Gender on Communication 3 hrs
Reading: Text, Chapter 2 - Culture and Communication
Class Activities: Communication Groups - discuss influence of culture and gender on communication, particularly in with their friends or in their families. Students receive self-selected text list; Self-selected text assignment discussed.
Film excerpt shown.
Film Analysis 1 assigned - focus on culture
Assignments: Film analysis 1 assigned
University Studies Objectives: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 9

Perception and Empathy in Communication 3 hrs
Reading: Text, Chapter 3 - Perceiving Others
Class Activities: Communication Groups – practice empathy exercises and interaction.
Self-analysis 1 assigned - focus on empathy
Assignments: Film Analysis 1 due; self-analysis 1 assigned
University Studies Objectives: 2, 3, 7, and 9

Self-perception and Communication 3 hrs
Reading: Text, Chapter 4 - Communication and the Self
Class Activities: Personality type assessment; Communication Groups - discuss assessment and factors contributing to personal self-concept
Assignments: Self-analysis 1 due; abstract 1 assigned; research paper assigned
University Studies Objectives: 2, 3, and 9

Exam 1 will cover Chapters 1-4 and reserve reading.

How Language Affects Communication 3 hrs
Reading: Text, Chapter 5 - Language
On reserve: Reading about using language strategies to improve communication (For example: Lerner, H. (2001). The dance of connection: How to talk to someone when you’re mad, hurt, scared, frustrated, insulted, betrayed, or desperate. New York: Harper/Collins.)
Class Activities: Communication Groups - work on using “I” messages
Assignments: None
University Studies Objectives: 1, 2, 3, and 9

Effect of Body Language on Interpersonal Communication  2 hrs
Reading: Text, Chapter 6 - Nonverbal Communication
Class Activities: Communication Group - work on nonverbal exercises and observations -- discuss effect of nonverbal behavior on verbal message
Assignments: Abstract 1 due; abstract 2 assigned
University Studies Objectives: 1, 2, 3, and 9

Learning to Listen  3 hrs
Reading: Text, Chapter 7 - Listening
Class Activities: Communication Group - practice active listening, paraphrasing, and other skills of listening.
Assignments: Self-selected text paper due; self-analysis 2 assigned - focus on skills of listening
University Studies Objectives: 2, 3, 7, and 9

Effect of Emotions on Communication  3 hrs
Reading: Text, Chapter 8 - Emotions
Class Activities: Communication Group - work with the Rational Emotive model of combating negative emotion; take and discuss emotional intelligence assessment
Assignments: Self-analysis 2 due
University Studies Objectives: 2, 3, and 9
Exam 2 will cover Chapters 5 - 8 and reserve reading.

Relationships  5 hrs
Reading: Chapter 9 - Dynamics of Interpersonal Relationships
Class Activities: Communication Group - discuss unexpressed relational messages and practice possible strategies for communicating them; discuss ethical considerations of compliance-gaining strategies in relationships; film excerpt shown.
Assignment Due: Abstract 2 due; film analysis 2 assigned – focus on relationships
University Studies Objectives: 1, 2, 7, and 9

Intimacy  3 hrs
Reading: Chapter 10 - Intimacy and Distance in Relationships
Class Activities: Communication Group - use Johari window to examine self-disclosure in a relationship; discuss alternatives to self-disclosure - including ethical considerations
Self-analysis 3 assigned - analysis of self-disclosure two relationships using the Johari window.

Assignment Due: Film analysis 2 due; self-analysis 3 assigned – analysis of self-disclosure in a relationship using the Johari window

University Studies Objectives: 2, 3, 7, and 9

Relational Climate Affects Communication 3 hrs
Reading: Text, Chapter 11 - Communication Climate
Class Activities: Communication Group - identify a relationship with a climate that you would like to change; together with the group, brainstorm strategies promote that change
Assignment Due: Self-analysis 3 due
University Studies Objectives: 2, 3, and 9

Managing Conflict in Interpersonal Communication 5 hrs
Reading: Text, Chapter 12 - Managing Conflict
Class Activities: Communication Groups - identify conflict styles you use in relationships and how they are working for you; discuss misunderstandings in relationship
Assignment Due: None
University Studies Objectives: 2, 3, 6, 7, and 9

Exam 3 will cover Chapters 9 - 12 and reserve reading.

Family Communication 5 hrs
Reading: On Reserve: Materials related to the family system and its influence
Class Activities: Communication Group - discussion of roles, rules, family structure influencing family communication; family sculpture derived from communication patterns; film excerpt shown.
Film analysis 3 assigned - focus on family communication
Assignment Due: Research paper due
University Studies Objectives: 1, 2, 3, and 9

Review 2 hrs
Reading: Using the review sheet, review semester material and identify questions; analyze videotaped conversations using all concepts studied)
Class Activities: Communication Groups - semester review - examine changes in group and individual communication over time
Assignment Due: Film analysis 3 due

Comprehensive Final Exam scheduled during Exam Week
VII. **Textbook:**


Additional readings will be used to supplement the text. Some are suggested in the course outline; readings from other sources in the bibliography may be added or substituted. Readings will be available on reserve at Kent Library; some will be available in the Social Work office.

VIII. **Basis of Student Evaluation:**

Students will be evaluated on class and Communication Group participation, examinations, and written assignments. Communication Groups and written assignments are described briefly here; students will be given more extensive written instructions when each assignment is made. All written assignments must be typed and must adhere to accepted standards of English grammar, syntax, and organization. Papers not meeting these standards must be rewritten in order to receive a grade.

**Communication Group** - Students will form groups of four or five persons. These groups will meet during the class period; they will remain together for the semester unless personality conflicts negatively affect learning and those conflicts cannot be resolved. The goal is for students to become more comfortable with each other over time, increasing the efficacy of the Communication Groups as a vehicle for practicing communication and helping skills. The groups will meet at least once weekly and engage in experiential exercises appropriate to the topic being discussed. The instructor will visit each group during the meeting time (if the class is fully enrolled, there should be five groups) to check on their progress.

**Abstract Assignment** - Students will complete two brief (1-2 pages) abstracts of research articles in the concerning interpersonal or helping skills. These articles must be from professional journals; these are available on-line or in Kent library. The article selected for the first abstract must be cleared by the instructor to make sure that the student has found an appropriate source. The abstract itself should briefly summarize the purpose of the research, study design, results, and discussion. The assignment requires the following components: title page, Xeroxed or printed first page of the article, abstract, and reference page (one reference only - that of the article chosen for the abstract).

**Research Paper** - Students will write a short 5 - 8 page) research paper on an interpersonal communication or helping topic. Some topics will be suggested by the instructor, but students may also choose their own. Topics must be approved by the instructor and all students must consult with the instructor about the topic and research plans before beginning work on the paper. The research paper requires the following
components: title page; body of the paper organized into introduction, discussion of the topic, conclusion, and a reference page. An organizational outline will be given to students; they will be required to follow the outline in writing the paper. At least six references must be used in completing the paper; all must be from professional journals or books. The first page of each source must be photocopied or printed and appended to the paper. Students will have the opportunity to submit a rough draft of the term paper for comment three weeks before it is due; they will not be graded on the draft, nor will they be penalized if they fail to submit a draft.

**Film Analysis** - Students will view three brief film excerpts during class in the course of the semester. These will relate to the interpersonal communication topic being discussed in class. (If a student has a valid reason for missing the class period during which a film excerpt is shown, he/she may obtain the film from the instructor for viewing in the instructor’s department.) The excerpts will apply to the communication topic currently being discussed in class. Students will write a brief (1 – 2 page) analysis of the film excerpt in relation to the assigned topic.

**Self-selected Book Review** - This assignment relates specifically to cultural and gender-based aspects of communication or miscommunication. Students will be given a list of appropriate books to choose from (not textbooks or professional books, but realistic novels or biography); these are books that are available in most public libraries or in paperback. An example would be “The Spirit Catches Me and I Fall Down” by Anna Quindlan, a biographical book about the difficulty a Laotian family in California had when trying to communicate their cultural beliefs to the medical team treating their daughter for a severe seizure disorder. Students may also suggest books to the instructor that they feel would be appropriate for the assignment. After reading the book, students will write a three page paper describing communication issues depicted in book, how these issues affected the people or situation involved, whether/how the issues were resolved, and the student’s ideas about how the issues might have been avoided or a better resolution achieved.

**Communication Self-analysis** - Students will be given an interpersonal communication area that they are to research by observing their own communication behaviors in situations outside of class. Students will write a two page paper analyzing their own communication by using one or two specific incidents relevant to the topic; they will include a information about how/whether they would like to improve their communication skills in the focus area, and, if so, how they propose to accomplish that goal.

Students will be evaluated on the following:
- 3 examinations - each exam is 50 points, the total is: 150
- Comprehensive final exam - 100 points: 100
- 2 abstracts - each abstract is 25 points, the total is: 50
- 1 research paper - 100 points: 100
- 3 film analyses - 25 points each, the total is: 75
- 1 self-selected book review - 50 points: 50
- 3 communication self-analyses - 25 points each, total is: 75
- Class participation - Communication Groups: 50

Total points for the course: 650
Grades will be given according to point total as follows:

650 - 585 = A
584 - 520 = B
519 - 455 = C
454 - 390 = D
389 and below = F

IX. Justification for Inclusion in the University Studies Program:

1. Locate and Gather Information:

This course places significant emphasis on this objective.

_content: Discussion with students about how to do the research necessary to locate and obtain relevant professional information for the abstract and research paper assignments is part of the content of the first class session. It will be suggested to students that they make use of ProQuest and EbscoHost; examples will also be given to help them distinguish professional journal articles from other materials to be found on these databases. Students will also be given a list of bound journals available in Kent Library that would be appropriate for research use in this course. The article for the first abstract must be shown to the instructor before the abstract is written to insure the student has understood the requirements. In addition, it is mandatory that all students discuss plans for their research project with the instructor prior to beginning the work. This provides an opportunity to address the problems or misunderstandings of individual students in the framework of the course. Submitting a rough draft to the instructor, which is not mandatory, but strongly suggested and included in the syllabus, provides another opportunity for students to review their research strategies.

Teaching Strategies: As this course is part of the core curriculum, students may be expected to need considerable help in knowing where to find appropriate sources for the three abstract assignments and the term paper assignment. Strategies for locating and evaluating the appropriateness of information will be discussed in class and made clear in written instructions for both assignments. It is a requirement that the instructor see the article chosen by each student for the first abstract before the abstract is written. This is another opportunity to help students who are having difficulty locating and gathering appropriate information. Students must individually discuss their term paper plans with the instructor before beginning to work on the paper. At this time, research strategies may be discussed. The self-selected text assignment will, in general, be written with one of the suggested texts. If a student, however, wants to find a book addressing a specific culture or situation not yet included on the list, the instructor will be willing to assist that student with information about appropriate ways of locating an a text for the assignment (the text would then have to be seen and approved by the instructor).

Student Assignments: This objective is most clearly met by assignment of three abstracts and one term paper, all of which require source material from professional
journals. This will require the student to search in the library or on-line to find appropriate material and to retrieve it in order to write the abstracts and the paper. A second assignment requiring students to locate and gather information is the self-selected text report. Although students will be given a list of appropriate texts, they are also free to propose alternatives to the instructor.

**Student Evaluation:** An important part of the evaluation of the abstract and research paper assignments is the quality of research done in locating information for the assignments. In the grading scale for each assignment, points are specifically allocated for this component.

2. **Critical Thinking:**

*The course places significant emphasis on this objective.*

**Content:** Integral to this interpersonal communication course is that the student learns various communication theories and strategies, and then makes choices among them based on an analysis of his/her personal needs, style, and preferences. Students receive in-class practice with this in the Communication Groups, an vital part of the content of the course. The need to choose one’s own communication strategies from all those available is also emphasized and illustrated in the text and supplementary reading, as well as in lecture. An example is the lecture detailing various ways we deal with emotion as communicators; choices are presented, with discussion and practice in the Communication Groups.

**Teaching Strategies:** Class discussions encourage critical thinking related to the functionality of one’s established communication patterns. Film excerpts also encourage reflection in class; the creation of the Communication Groups was designed to provide a smaller, safer group in which students could experiment and analyze the results. Lecture also encourages critical thinking about our attitudes towards the communication of others as we analyze content and body language to derive meaning. This is especially important in communicating with those from another culture, in which the meaning of communication style, language, and gestures may vary.

**Student Assignments:** The abstract assignment requires analysis of a single article, while the research paper requires that more extensive research be analyzed and then synthesized into the final paper. The Self-analyses provide an opportunity to think critically about one’s own communication, comparing goals with apparent results and evaluating how changing communication strategies may affect the listener and the result of the communication. The Film Analyses are focused on critically examining the communication of others relative to how well their apparent goals were met by the use of communication strategies selected. The Self-selected Text assignment requires that the student reflect on the meaning of cultural differences in communication, as well as thinking about how cultural barriers might have been overcome in a productive manner.

**Student Evaluation:** As student evaluation is based to a large extent on the assignments detailed in the section above, it must reflect the students’ ability to
think critically, reason, and analyze, as those abilities are critical for successful completion of the assignments.

3. Communication:

The course places **significant emphasis on this objective.**

**Content:** The purpose of this course is to teach students about interpersonal communication, give them opportunities to practice new skills related to interpersonal communication, and encourage them to critically reflect on their own communication and that of others. All content of the course relates to communication in some way.

**Teaching Strategies:** Lectures, assignments, and class discussion are focused on interpersonal communication. For example, the unit on listening will feature lectures about listening skills; the instructor will demonstrate active listening to the class using student volunteers; and a video will be shown about active listening. The text reading assignment covers listening; additional reading materials on reserve will also address listening, specifically active listening. Class discussion will focus on listening skills; these skills will be practiced in the Communication Groups and will be the subject of a self-analysis paper.

regard are the Communication Groups, developed in an attempt to provide a smaller, safer, more supportive environment for students to work on new communication skills and share impressions with their peers.

**Student Assignments:** The abstracts and the term paper present communication research and provide an opportunity to use written communication skills. This is also true for the Self-analyses, but they require students to observe their own communication and reflect critically on it. The Film Analyses focus on analyzing others’ communication, while also furthering practice with writing skills; this is also true for the Self-selected Text assignment.

**Student Evaluation:** Students are evaluated by peers and by the instructor on their participation in the communication exercises that take place in the Communication Groups – a check sheet will be used for the peer evaluation. The instructor will make notes as she/he visits the groups. Students are also evaluated on their analyses of their own and others’ communication in the Self-analyses and Film Analyses, their scholarly production of abstracts and a research paper related to communication, and their reflections on intercultural communication in the Self-selected text assignment.

4. Understand and Relate Human Experiences:

The course places **some emphasis on this objective.**

**Content:** The content reflecting the influences of culture and gender on communication apply to this objective, as cultural and gender differences in communication often relate to the use of communication strategies long practiced
by various cultures and either gender. The content on families also reflects the knowledge of previous generations in a similar way.

**Student Assignments:** The Self-selected Text assignment, which is related to cultural differences in communication, the family communication material, and the family film analysis assignment relate in part to historical material.

5. **Various Cultures and Interrelationships:**

The course places some emphasis on this objective.

**Content:** The affect of culture on interpersonal communication emphasized in this course. One chapter of the book is devoted to inter-cultural information; it is the second chapter, preceding most of the other information, so that students keep it in mind for the rest of the course. The role of culture and gender in communication will also be addressed in one three-hour unit of the course. Students will see a film excerpt illustrating the challenge of intercultural communication and write a Film Analysis about it. They will also discuss the effect of culture and gender on communication in a Communication Group.

**Teaching Strategies:** The three hours of lecture spent on cultural/gender content in this course will be supplemented with films illustrating intercultural communication. The Communication Groups will work on intercultural topics during the week focusing on culture and communication. After studying culture specifically in the second week of the course, it will be integrated into the other sections of the course as various aspects of interpersonal communication are discussed. For example, when conflict is the topic, strategies other cultures may prefer in handling conflict will be covered.

**Student Assignments:** One assignment, the Self-selected Text assignment, focuses on the issue of culture and intercultural communication; the text chosen must tell a story in which the attempt to communicate between or among cultures is an important element.

**Student Evaluation:** Students will be evaluated on the Self-selected Text assignment, as well as tested over material pertaining to culture in Chapter 2 of the text.

6. **Breadth and Diversity:**

The course places some emphasis on this objective.

**Content:** The course focuses on developing understanding and skills related to interpersonal communication. The readings and lecture cover various skills, such as listening, expression of emotion, or expression of conflict. Many behavioral choices are presented to students, who must then sift through the information and decide whether they might want to change their interpersonal communication patterns, and, if so, then how. This requires understanding both what choices to adopt, which integrate with their personal style and their goals, and which communication patterns they might want to use less frequently. In another sense,
the abstracts and research paper also provide students with an opportunity to take information from various sources, to decide what is important, and to integrate it in a meaningful way.

**Teaching Strategies:** The process of sifting through concepts, strategies, and other information about communication is encouraged in this course in various ways. One way is through lecture and whole class discussion - this sifting process will be a major theme in both. Another is in the Communication Groups, which have been designed as a place to experiment with the usefulness of new techniques of communication.

**Student Assignments:** The most important assignment in terms of honing an interpersonal communication style are the three Self-analyses. For these assignments, students observe themselves (as well as having someone else observe, if possible) communicating and trying new behaviors. This helps them to personally conceptualize the different strategies of communication discussed in class. Watching film excerpts and analyzing them is also useful in this regard. The term paper is an opportunity for them to correlate and synthesize scholarly information about interpersonal communication.

**Student Evaluation:** Integrating knowledge and experiences is important in evaluation. It is a major factor in the grade students will receive for the Self-analysis and Film Analysis papers, as well as for the term paper grade.

7. **Valuing:**

**The course places significant emphasis on this objective.**

**Content:** Values and the personal ethical mandates arising out of them are important in communication. The values that are especially important relate to the use of communication honestly, rather than using skill in communication to deceive, manipulate, or overpower others. There is not a specific chapter of the text devoted to values and ethics in communication, but significant material on this topic is included in the chapters devoted to language, relationships, intimacy, and conflict. Learning to understand the value perspective of others is a vital part of understanding other cultures and both genders. This is also a part of empathy, an important skill for interpersonal communication. Values and ethics will frequently be mentioned lecture and will be important in class discussions.

**Teaching Strategies:** The ethics of communication are taught through lecture; the Communication Groups will also discuss at least one topic having to do with making ethical decisions in choosing communication strategies. They will also work on empathy skills, skills that are essential in learning to understand and respect the value perspective of others.

**Student Assignments:** The assignment that focuses most clearly on values and ethics is the Self-selected text assignment. A major goal of that assignment is that students learn to see the world from the standpoint of another culture, and therefore learn to respect and value the ways in which persons from other cultures
communicate. In the Self-analysis and Film Analysis assignments, values and ethics could also be important, depending on the topic assigned.

8. **Aesthetic Responses:**

The course places no emphasis on this objective.

9. **Responsible function in Natural, Social and Political Environments**

The course places significant emphasis on this objective.

**Content:** The ultimate goal of this course is to help students learn to interact in a responsible way with their social environment; good interpersonal communication skills are essential also for effective interaction in the political environment. Examples of learning responsible social interaction would be learning to consider the effect on others of one’s communication and of learning to have empathy with what others are saying. Learning to communicate honestly and yet persuasively is a skill that contributes to effective communication in the political environment.

**Teaching Strategies:** Readings, lecture, assignments, and practice in the Communication Groups are all designed to teach effective interpersonal communication skills, along with an understanding of cultural and gender differences in communication and an appreciation of the values/ethics involved when communicating with others.

**Student Assignments:** With the exception of the abstracts and the term paper, all assignments in this class are focused at understanding and acquiring effective interpersonal communication skills in a verbal context. The Self-selected Text assignment is designed to create understanding of the interpersonal communication and values of different cultures. The Self-analyses are meant to assist students in becoming more aware of how they are communicating and to enable them to critically evaluate some “experiments” in communication. The Film Analyses focus on analyzing the communication of others, yet the is to encourage empathy for others and to help students understand their own communication in a new way.

**Student Evaluation:**

When the written assignments are evaluated, with the exception of the abstracts and the term paper, verbal interpersonal communication understanding is being evaluated; this is a skill that is integral to responsible interaction with the social and political environment. Also, the evaluation of class participation, and, particularly, in the Communication Groups, indicates growth (or not) in interpersonal communication effectiveness.

X. **Background:**

The course instructor should have a background of academic training and experience in the area of interpersonal communication. This background could be found in various disciplines, such as social work, speech communication, psychology, and business.
XI. **Class Size:** 25

XII. **Bibliography:**


