

## COM300: Interpersonal Communication \* Fall 2023 \* Tuesday, 3-5:30 \* VanHoesen B134

**Instructor:** Dr. Knopf ["nope"] or Prof. Knopf or "CK" (she/her)

**OFFICE:** VanHoesen B-125G (and WebEx)

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**DROP-IN OFFICE HOURS:** ~~DROP-IN OFFICE HOURS:~~ Monday 1-2:30, Tuesday 2:30-3, Thursday 2:30-5

Regular drop-in office hours are held for you when classes are in session & you do not need an appointment to attend, call, or login to WebEx during those hours. You can [use office hours](#) to discuss class, get help on assignments, or seek advice on college or career matters, or talk about other things. ~~Please be aware that while you are welcome, even encouraged, to discuss personal experiences or concerns in office hours, that I am legally obligated to report any incidences of violent crime that impacts the campus or campus community - including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, stalking, assault, burglary, motor vehicle and larceny theft, arson and hate crimes - as well as sexual harassment, discrimination, or violence. Because I am not a counselor, I do not have confidentiality and am legally bound to report violations I am told about.

You can also reach me through email. Before emailing, please check available course resources; answers to such questions like "what did I miss in class?" "is there anything due?" "what am I supposed to do for this assignment?" and "can my absence be excused?" When you email, please be [clear and polite](#) (take the opportunity [to practice professional communication](#) that you'll need in the career-world). Also, when you email, please respect my need for work-life balance. I cannot be available 24/7. Though you are free to email at any time of the day or night, I will primarily respond to emails during regular working office hours (M-F, 8am-5pm). Also, please understand that I regularly get 50-100 emails per day and responding takes time.

**Course Description:** Application of communication principles and concepts to two-person and small group situations; discussion of processes in relational development and disintegration; skills for improving interpersonal relationships, self-awareness, assertiveness, listening, and value clarification are included. Prerequisite: COM 100. Fulfills: LASR. (3 cr. hr.)

**Student Learning Outcomes:** Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Identify and analyze theories and perspectives of interpersonal communication.
2. Identify aspects and qualities inherent to interpersonal interactions.
3. Observe and critique communication within interpersonal contexts.

**Required Materials:** ♦ [Interpersonal Communication: A Mindful Approach to Relationships](#) ♦ Notebook, paper, pens/pencils

### Grading Policies & Breakdown:

60% of this course is graded traditionally with exams, and 40% of this course is self-graded through assignments, participation, and instructor feedback.

There are four tests, each worth 15% of your course grade. [SLO2]

Exams are designed to help you learn the core concepts that will better prepare you to achieve the course Learning Outcomes. Psychological research on the science of successful learning proves that the acts of preparing for and taking tests is a great boost to memory, making tests learning, not just assessment, instruments. Exams are also a proven way to help you keep up with classwork - they encourage attendance, preparation and review in ways that less traditional or structured means don't. Test questions will be taken from both class discussion and from the textbook, so attention to both lecture and reading is vital. Exams will be primarily limited choice (multiple-choice, true/false, matching), 30-45 questions each. Bonus questions may be included, meaning that you might be able to earn more than 100% on some exams. Plan to take each exam in the classroom, during class time, on paper. ~Exams will be administered through Brightspace for those who need or can benefit from the accessibility provided by the computer - and for anyone who may be quarantined during the exam day *with advance arrangements* (if you are absent from class and take the test online without communicating with the instructor first, your grade will be void.)

There is also one, multi-part, semester-long written project, for which you will be given learning objectives and requirements and feedback from the instructor on your submission. Based on these things, you will grade your own work based on a.) how you think you did, b.) how much purposeful thought and effort you put in, and c.) how much you think you learned or benefitted from the work you did. Each of these will be worth 10% of your grade (for a total of 30%). ~These self-assessments will be submitted as short papers explaining the grade you have assigned to the work. [SLO1 & SLO3]

**The Project.** Each person gets to work on something of importance to them, allowing you to use the information in this course to help you make changes you want to make in your life. It also shows you how to identify a problem, implement a solution, and evaluate the results of your solution, which are skills that will be useful regardless of your career field. 1. Identify an interpersonal communication behavior that you wish to improve. Gather information about the behavior (3 expert sources) and write a short, 3-4 page double-spaced, paper that summarizes your research and outlines a specific plan for improving the behavior. 2. Keep a record of your progress in the form of a twice-weekly journal (kept for one month, between October 17 and November 14). Each entry should describe your active efforts to improve your chosen interpersonal skills, in line with the plan you created in part 1. Be specific! Reflect on your successes and failures. After the description, suggest reasons why you might have been more or less successful in the situation, applying concepts from your

research and the course. These entries will provide the “data” for your final paper. 3. You will write a short evaluation of your progress and the project, re-presenting [a shortened version of] the problem you set out to address, the research you found related to it, and your plan of action, providing a summary of the data you collected in your journal, and offering a realistic assessment of the results of your plan, explaining successes and/or failures with ideas/concepts/theories from the course. This should be no more than 5 double-spaced pages, with bibliography. Suggested deadline is December 5. Drop-dead-eadline is December 12.

Finally, there is an expectation for active-learning in the class - attendance, participation, and engagement. As a course in interpersonal communication, you will be asked to communicate with one another regularly. Again, you will be able to self-assess your active-learning, in accordance with your own personality, learning goals, and effort. This will be worth another 10% of your grade. ~This self-assessment will be submitted as a short paper explaining the grade you have assigned your activity. Because you get to direct much of your own learning and contribution to the course, there will be no extra credit assignments or activities.

The grade breakdown for this course is as follows:

	B+: 87-89%	C+: 77-79%	D+: 67-69%	E: 0-59%
A: 94-100%	B: 83-86%	C: 73-76%	D: 64-66%	
A-: 90-93%	B-: 80-82%	C-: 70-72%	D-: 60-63%	

(Based on [CollegeBoard’s conversion chart](#))

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:** All students are expected to uphold academic integrity standards. Plagiarism is defined as taking the ideas of others and using them as one's own without due credit. Students who cheat in examinations, course assignments, or plagiarize in this course may be disciplined in accordance with university rules and regulations. (College Handbook, Chapter 340)

ChatGPT and other AI interfaces are proving to be [adequate, but bland and generic](#), generators of essays, stories, speeches, blog posts, and cover letters. The study and practice of communication is about participation, art, and ethics. It is about the careful creation of messages that link what is uniquely you to what is uniquely your intended audience. These are things AI cannot accomplish. Therefore, use of AI to create content for assignments in this course (unless specifically assigned to use AI to generate content) is likely to earn a poor grade because it will miss the point of communication and rhetoric; content created by ChatGPT will [not have your voice nor speak to the interests of your audience](#), and it will not capture the nuances of class materials and discussion. Content created by ChatGPT and the like also lacks academic and journalistic rigor; it does not provide sources or offer examples. And it tends to be very repetitive. Additionally, the main purpose of class assignments is for you to learn through the process of completing them. Without going through the process, you will decrease the value of the course and will not improve the communication skills, organizational abilities, reliability, or problem-solving skills that are [key to your employability](#). Good uses of AI: It is great to help with brainstorming, offering ideas that you can then explore in more depth (not all of its ideas are good or right or useful). It can be very helpful in providing examples for organizing papers, speeches, proposals – as starting points. It can help you to clarify or clean up your writing, especially if you struggle with English usage or grammar.

**DEADLINES & LATE WORK:** All work is due by the start of class time on the date given (not "end of day"). Work submitted late is not guaranteed to receive prompt feedback, which may negatively impact your overall success in the course. Deadlines are important for scaffolding coursework, so that you can learn from one assignment before doing another. Deadlines help you to manage your time, set priorities, and meet your goals. Deadlines help to coordinate and structure the class, providing the instructor with feedback about how the class is going that allows for necessary adjustments. Deadlines set expectations for our mutual responsibilities to each other in this class community. They are also a basic job skill and are paramount in many communication and media related industries – they determine what is or is not a newsworthy story, drive marketing campaigns, and are embedded into the nature of planning and promoting events.

A 2022 career advice column in [Indeed](#) noted, “Being able to meet deadlines is a desirable skill for candidates to have in a wide variety of industries. This ability can help professionals succeed while under pressure, overcome challenges and meeting expectations accordingly.” [ZandaX](#) reports that “Time management is considered to be one of the primary ‘soft skills’ valued in the workplace, and effective time management skills are key to a successful work life, and play a major part in many of the top attributes valued by employers.” And [FairyGodBoss](#) notes that missing deadlines at work is a sign that you are setting yourself up to get fired.

**Exams must be taken at the scheduled time.** Alternative testing arrangements for access/accommodation must be made in advance of the scheduled exams. Emergency arrangements will be made only with notification of absence prior to the exam (like having to call into work sick *before* missing your shift).

**Any class presentations must be given at the scheduled time.** Emergency arrangements will be made only with notification of absence prior to the presentation (like having to call into work sick *before* missing your shift).

**ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION:** This is a synchronous, live, in-person class that meets only once a week. Attendance is crucial and expected, but it is not graded; missing classes is already likely to be harmful to your success in the course.

Class meetings will be roughly divided into three 45-50 minute segments, with two short breaks. These segments will be a combination of lecture, discussion, activity, and/or media engagement, as appropriate for the week's topic. We will spend class time learning about concepts, discussing them and applying them. In order to be an active learner you must do the following: a.) read the assigned readings and complete any assignments prior to coming to class, b.) come to class, and c.) take an active role in class discussion and in completing individual and group activities, including taking notes. Class attendance is a necessary condition for contributing to our learning community; however, it is not sufficient in and of itself. You must do your part to enrich the learning experience by sharing examples, asking questions, participating in course activities, and being curious.

♦ *Be here, on time, for the entire class meeting.* Showing up is a job skill. According to [Business Insider](#), one of the top ten reasons people get fired is because of absenteeism – either not showing up to work, being chronically tardy, or taking too many or too long breaks during working hours. Attendance is not graded, but missing class can be harmful to your success. Arriving late to class may cause you to fall behind in class work by missing notes or important announcements. Being late may mean that your time in class is less productive or less useful because you may feel less prepared or organized, you may be disoriented or unsure of what is going on in the lecture or conversation because of what you've missed. Arriving late also impacts the larger classroom community. It can disrupt the flow of a lecture or discussion, distract other students, impede learning, and generally erode class morale. If you arrive late, be respectful, enter quietly and do not let the door slam, and find a seat quickly and near the door to minimize the distraction you cause to others. If you must get up or leave during class, reduce the disruption you cause to the classroom by sitting near the door if possible, leaving only when absolutely necessary, and keeping your time away from the class as brief as possible.

♦ *Be engaged.* The class will be more enjoyable, more meaningful, more interesting, and more effective if you are an involved learner. Be curious. Ask questions. Look for relevance. Make connections. Don't wait for the information and its usefulness to come to you; go after it. If you want class to be interesting, you need to be interested in the class. Some people think course participation is the responsibility of the professor. That it must be required through grades and enforced through structured exercises - but that reduces "participation" to an assignment at best, and coercion at worst, by policing classroom behavior. True participation should be voluntary and based on your active, engaged, involvement fueled by your motivation and curiosity. It should be about you having a part, a stake, and a role in the class – and you are the best person to know what that is, to determine what you want to get out of the course and to determine the kind of experience you want to have during the semester. If you want class to be interactive, you need to be active. Listen mindfully. Ask questions. Express, explain, and support opinions. Do the readings before you come to class so you have things to say and ask – a knowledge base to build on, work with, and explore in the classroom space and community. Seek out additional information during or outside of class. Follow current events to bring up topics for discussion. [Take notes](#) that will be useful and meaningful to *you*; don't just copy PowerPoints (they are only a guide, not a doctrine); write down the ideas that help you to better understand the material or that matter to you.

♦ *Be attentive, mindful, focused.* Some people need their phones, tablets and/or laptops to monitor their glucose or other health metrics. Some need them because of family responsibilities. Some need them to improve course accessibility. Etcetera. Therefore, technology use in this classroom is allowed, with the expectation that each individual will be mindful and responsible with their use of it. Unnecessary use of technology during class is strongly discouraged. Multiple studies find that [digital multitasking is correlated to reduced academic performance](#). The physiological reality of our brains is that we can hold only a little information in the mind at any single moment, and so the more things we do at once, the more likely we are to slow our work down, make mistakes, miss and/or forget information, and limit our creative and problem-solving abilities. You are accountable for yourself and your own decisions. If you allow your devices to distract you from the class and to detract from your learning, that is on you. If your device use is a distraction to others (such as listening to music audible to others, laughing at loud at what you're looking at, sharing entertaining content with others sitting near you, typing when not taking notes, etc.), that is an unacceptable disruption to the class community, and you will be asked to leave and counted as absent.

You are assigned a textbook in this class for a reason: it is a resource, a reference, a guide. Reading the book and coming to class and making use of optional online resources gives you multiple chances and multiple modes for learning. You will get more out of class if you make an effort to do the readings when assigned.

You are encouraged to take notes on these chapters. Educational psychology tells us that active reading strategies lead to improved comprehension and retention of information and help students perform better in classes: this means, you want to read in a way that forces your brain do something while reading your textbook. As an enticement, you may choose to take notes on a half-sheet of notebook paper (you can use both sides, for each chapter. Bring that small note-sheet with you to class on the day the chapter is due and submit it to the teacher at the start of the class. Any notes you submit will be returned to you for reference on the appropriate test. To help you take notes, consider the following:

- The chapter's main idea.
- Key terms, concepts, or vocabulary
- A summary statement of each section.
- Connections you see between concepts

These note cards can help you to be more prepared for classes; you'll be able to take better in-class notes, because you'll be more familiar with what's already written down for you in book; you'll be more able to participate in discussions, because you might have questions about something from the reading, or even ideas or connections sparked by the reading to share. And,

though there is no guarantee they will contain specific answers to quiz/exam questions, they can be useful memory aids on exams. Because they are not required, there are no makeups for missed/skipped cards and no late notes accepted (they also act as encouragement to come to class regularly if you want to submit them).

**DIVERSITY:** SUNY Cortland is dedicated to the premise that every individual is important in a unique way and contributes to the overall quality of the institution. We define diversity broadly to include all aspects of human difference. The College is committed to inclusion, equity, and access and thus committed to creating and sustaining a climate that is equitable, respectful and free from prejudice for students, faculty and staff. We value diversity in the learning environment and know that it enhances our ability to inspire students to learn, lead and serve in a changing world. We are committed to promoting a diverse and inclusive campus through the recruitment and retention of faculty, staff and students. As a community, we hold important the democracy of ideas, tempered by a commitment to free speech and the standards of inquiry and debate. To this end, we are dedicated to developing and sustaining a learning environment where it is safe to explore our differences and celebrate the richness inherent in our pluralistic society. (College Handbook, Chap 130)

**ACCESS (ACCOMMODATION OF DISABILITIES):** As part of SUNY Cortland's commitment to a diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment, we strive to provide students with equal access to all courses. If you believe you will require accommodations in this course, please place a request with the Disability Resources Office at [disability.resources@cortland.edu](mailto:disability.resources@cortland.edu) or call 607-753-2967. Please note that accommodations are generally not provided retroactively so timely contact with the Disability Resources Office is important. All students should consider meeting with their course instructor who may be helpful in other ways." (College Handbook, Chapter 745). *Even if you do not have an Access Plan, if there is something I can do to help you succeed in the course, please communicate your needs with me.*

**MENTAL, EMOTIONAL, & PHYSICAL WELLBEING:** Diminished mental health, including significant stress, mood changes, excessive worry, alcohol and/or substance abuse, or problems with eating and/or sleeping can interfere with optimal academic performance. *If symptoms are related to your course work, please speak with the instructor.*

If problems with relationships, family worries, loss, or a personal struggle or crisis are negatively impacting your mental health and/or interfering with your academic success, SUNY Cortland offers the following resources to help you manage personal challenges that threaten your personal or academic well-being.

- Counseling Center: 607-753-4728
- Substance Abuse & Prevention Education: 607-753-2066

If challenges securing food or housing are affecting your academic performance, or your emotional wellbeing, you are urged to contact the Associate Vice President of Student Affairs for support (607-753-4721). The college offers a food cupboard and a clothes closet, among other services, that may be able to help.

**INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT:** SUNY Cortland is committed to a diverse, equitable and inclusive environment. The course instructor honors this commitment and respects and values differences. All students enrolled in this course are expected to be considerate of others, promote a collaborative and supportive educational environment, and demonstrate respect for individuals with regard to ability or disability, age, ethnicity, gender, gender identity/expression, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, socio-economic status or other aspects of identity. In an environment that fosters inclusion, students have the opportunity to bring their various identities into conversation as they find helpful but are not expected to represent or speak for an entire group of people who share aspects of an identity. If you have any questions or concerns about this statement, contact the Institutional Equity and Inclusion Office at 607-753-2263.

**TITLE IX:** Title IX, when combined with New York Human Rights Law and the New York Education Law 129-B, prohibits discrimination, harassment and violence based on sex, gender, gender identity/expression, and/or sexual orientation in the education setting. The federal Clery Act and NY Education Law 129-B provide certain rights and responsibilities after an incident of sexual or interpersonal violence. When a violation occurs, victims and survivors are eligible for campus and community resources. Where the College has jurisdiction, it may investigate and take action in accordance with College policy. If you or someone you know wishes to report discrimination based in sex, gender, gender identity/expression, and/or sexual orientation, or wishes to report sexual harassment, sexual violence, stalking or relationship violence, please contact the Title IX Coordinator at 607-753-4550, or visit [cortland.edu/titleix](http://cortland.edu/titleix) to learn about all reporting options and resources.

**DIVERSITY, INCLUSIVITY, EQUITY, & JUSTICE IN THE COMMUNICATION CLASSROOM:** A diversity of viewpoints, opinions, and experiences are welcome. We learn and grow when confronted with new ideas and different perspectives. But we are also here to learn to be more effective, more ethical communicators. Therefore, anything that fits the definition of [hate speech](#) or degrades fellow human beings will not be welcome, anything that violates ethical responsibilities as speakers by advocating violence or actions that could harm any audience member's pursuit of life and liberty (including such activities as illegal drug use or nonconsensual sexual activity) will not be welcome, and anything that violates the college's commitment to diversity and inclusivity cannot be tolerated. As part of being effective communicators, everyone is encouraged toward ethical use of: trigger warnings when presenting sensitive information.

Systemic prejudice and oppression, issues of (mis)representation, harm of stereotypes, and necessity of being not just tolerant but also open-minded, are just some of the topics related to concerns of diversity, equity, inclusion, access, and justice that may be discussed in this class. This class acknowledges and respects the validity of each person's standpoint and their lived

experiences, and this class expects that every person in it will also acknowledge and respect that diversity. These discussions are learning opportunities, not criticisms of individuals or even groups. Learning about racism, sexism, or homophobia is not, for example, an attack on Whiteness, maleness, or straightness.

Communication is a social science; that means it deals with people. Therefore, we will talk about trends common to people as a whole, but there are always exceptions to the trends because people are unpredictable. There are no absolutes; some things can be real and true for some and not others. In this classroom, you can speak *your* truth but should not assume what the truth of others is. (For example, if you haven't experienced prejudice or oppression, do not assume that means it isn't real.) And no one here is considered a symbol of or spokesperson for their entire social group. Furthermore, the exploration of these issues is integral to the specific focus of this course. Therefore, in order to learn the course material, be open to trying to understand (not necessarily agreeing with or accepting) new ideas and perspectives. Check your reactions to move beyond denial ("this is not a problem"), disengagement ("this not my problem"), and/or derailment ("there are other, more important, problems"), and try to understand that "privilege" does not mean one's life is free of hardships or obstacles, just that one's gender identity, sexuality, or race does not generally contribute to those challenges via prejudice or discrimination.

Week	Tuesday	Work Due
1	29 Aug. ⇨	Chapters 1
2	05 Sep. ⇨	Chapter 2 & 3
3	12 Sep. ⇨	Chapter 4 & 5
4	19 Sep. ⇨	Test 1, ch. 1-5
5	26 Sep. ⇨	Chapter 6
6	03 Oct. ⇨	Chapter 7
7	10 Oct. ⇨	Test 2, ch. 6-7
8	17 Oct. ⇨	Chapter 8 Project Part 1
9	24 Oct. ⇨	Chapter 9
10	31 Oct. ⇨	Chapter 10 Part 1 Self Assessment
11	07 Nov. ⇨	Chapter 11
12	14 Nov. ⇨	Test 3, ch. 8-11 Project Part 2
13	21 Nov. ⇨	Chapter 12
14	28 Nov. ⇨	Chapter 13 Part 2 Self Assessment
15	5 Dec. ⇨	Chapter 14 Project Part 3 (strongly suggested)
16	"Exam Week Day 2" = 12 Dec.	⇨4pm-6pm Test 4, ch. 12-14 ⇨4pm Active Learner Self Assessment ⇨3pm Project Part 3 (absolute deadline) Part 3 Self Assessment