

## **Sample Syllabi – Subject to Change**

### **Talking to Others: The Psychology of Communication**

**Instructor:** Ashley Leung

#### **Description**

Talking to people is seemingly easy—we do it all the time. But think about all the people you’ve talked to in the last month, or even just the last week. Every person we talk to is different from us in some way, and when we consider all the things that go into making communication with each individual successful, conversation doesn’t seem so trivial any more. What allows us to understand (and be understood by) others in conversation? Successful communication not only relies on a common language (spoken or otherwise), but also our ability to account for the knowledge and perspectives of our conversational partners. This psychology behind communication: how it works, when it doesn’t work, and how children learn to become fluent conversationalists like us.

In this course, we will read both theoretical and empirical work on human communication in the fields of psychology and psycholinguistics. We will start by discussing basic theories of communication, and evaluate the evidence presented by various researchers for or against these theories. We will also consider the various methods (experimental, observational, etc.) used for studying communication, and the unique contributions each method brings to the field. Later in the course, we will also dedicate time to explore non-verbal communication (e.g., gesture and sign language), as well as the development of conversational abilities in children.

#### **Course Structure**

This class will be a combination of lecture (pre-recorded), discussion (synchronous), and other activities. There will be some assigned readings for students to do on their own, as well as empirical articles that we will walk through together in class. Students will have the opportunity to engage in small-group and large-group discussions, and will be working in groups for various assignments and activities.

#### **Student Learning Outcomes**

In this course, students will:

- Develop an understanding of basic theories and concepts of communication
- Read and engage with scientific research articles
  - o Identify research questions and hypotheses
  - o Analyze the methods and its advantages / limitations for addressing the research question
  - o Discuss the findings and its implications for the field
- Understand how different research methods help us address specific questions in the study of human communication
- Design a study that answers a specific scientific question in the field of communication

## Course policies

My goal is for students to achieve the learning objectives above. To that end, I expect students enrolled in this class to do the required readings, participate actively in discussion (in the classroom and/or on Canvas), and complete assignments on time. At the same time, I understand that there are many factors outside the classroom that may interfere with academic performance. In an endeavor to be accommodating and transparent, I have included the following policies.

### Attendance

Students are expected to attend synchronous discussion on Zoom each day, and to come prepared to discuss assigned readings and/or material from asynchronous lectures and activities. Your attendance and active participation during these synchronous sessions (as well as asynchronous participation through Canvas or other activities) will count towards your participation grade.

### Absence

When possible, please send me an email if you will not be able to attend discussion sections. You do not need to disclose a reason if you do not wish to do so. All students will be given 1 excused absence. If you have extenuating circumstances that require you to miss more classes, I am happy to discuss arrangements for how you can participate, and how I can make this class beneficial to your learning.

### Late policy

There are three short essays and a group project for this course. Both assignments have in-class components (e.g., peer review, in-class presentations), for which no extensions will be granted. Students needing an extension for the final submission of either assignment should request one at least 24 hours before the deadline.

## Lectures and Readings

Lectures will be pre-recorded and available on the Pages tab in Canvas. Readings will be available electronically on Canvas, with the exception of one book (please see details under “Language and Social Groups”). You will be expected to come to class having watched the relevant lectures and completed the assigned readings. Some readings will be together done in class, and will be noted as such in the syllabus.

## Sample Readings and Assignments

Kashima, Y. (2020). Language and language use. In R. Biswas-Diener & E. Diener (Eds), *Noba textbook series: Psychology*. Champaign, IL: DEF publishers. Retrieved from <http://noba.to/gq62cpam>

Stovall, J. & Hull, R. (2016). The Communication Connection. In *The Art of Communication: Your Competitive Edge* (pp. 26-29). EBSCO Publishing : eBook Academic Collection (EBSCOhost).

### Conversational Maxims: What are the rules of communication?

Shariatmadari, D. (2020). What you say is what you mean. In *Don't Believe a Word: The Surprising Truth About Language* (pp. 187-216). New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

*Activity: AI Chatbot (link provided on Canvas)*

Grice, H. P. (1975). Logic and conversation. In *Speech acts* (pp. 41-58). Brill.

(In class) Stiller, A., Goodman, N. D., Frank, M. C. (2011). Ad-hoc scalar implicature in adults and children. *Proceedings of the 33rd Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society*.

Understanding Others: What makes conversation possible?

Clark, H. H., & Murphy, G. L. (1982). Audience design in meaning and reference. In *Advances in psychology* (Vol. 9, pp. 287-299). North-Holland.

(In class) Clark, H. H., Schreuder, R., & Buttrick, S. (1983). Common ground and the understanding of demonstrative reference. *Journal of Verbal Learning & Verbal Behavior*, 22(2), 245–258.

Common Ground: Do you see what I see?

Krauss, R. M., & Glucksberg, S. (1977). Social and nonsocial speech. *Scientific American*, 236(2), 100-105.

Clark, H. H., & Wilkes-Gibbs, D. (1986). Referring as a collaborative process. *Cognition*, 22(1), 1-39.

*Assignment: Bring one of the three short essays (see Assignments) to class for peer feedback*

Language and Social Groups

Prof. Katherine Kinzler guest lecture

Kinzler, K. D. (2020). *How You Say It: Why You Talk the Way You Do—and What It Says About You*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Options for accessing the reading:

- Buy the ebook (or audiobook, or a physical copy) online
- Access the ebook via Library Reserves (*Note: due to licensing restrictions, students may need to “take turns” using the ebook. If you choose to use the Library Reserve copy, please try to do the reading a little earlier, and be courteous with how long you’re using the ebook so that everyone can get a chance to read it!*)

Adapting to Others: How do we talk to different people?

Clark, H. H. (2014). How to talk with children. In I. Arnon, M. Casillas, C. Kurumada, & B Estigarribia (Eds.), *Language in interaction: Studies in honor of Eve V. Clark*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Yoon, S. O., & Brown-Schmidt, S. (2019). Audience design in multiparty conversation. *Cognitive science*, 43(8), e12774.

*Activity: Watch the WIRED’s “5 Levels” video (linked on Canvas). Complete the handout and come prepared to discuss with the class.*

Developing Conversationalists: How do children learn to communicate with others?

Wells, G. (2009). Learning to Talk: Learning the Structure of Language. In *The Meaning Makers: Learning to Talk and Talking to Learn: Vol. 2nd ed.* Multilingual Matters.

Matthews, D., Lieven, E., & Tomasello, M. (2007). How toddlers and preschoolers learn to uniquely identify referents for others: A training study. *Child development*, 78(6), 1744-1759.

*Assignment: Bring one of the three short essays (see Assignments) to class for peer feedback*

More Than Words: What factors other than speech contribute to communication?

Goldin-Meadow, S. (2014). Language and the manual modality: The communicative resilience of the human species. In N. Enfield, P. Kockelman, & J. Sidnell (Eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Linguistic Anthropology* (Cambridge Handbooks in Language and Linguistics, pp. 78-101). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

*Assignment: Bring one of the three short essays (see Assignments) to class for peer feedback*

Group projects + presentations

Work on group project presentations during class

*Assignment: Deadline to submit short essay assignment*

In class presentations of group projects

*Assignment: Deadline to submit group project reflection*

SAMPLE

## **Assignments and Grades**

### Grade composition

Discussion: 30% (synchronous and asynchronous participation both count towards grade)

Daily reflection: 10%

Short essays: 30%

Group project: 30% (15% presentation; 15% short reflection)

### Discussion

In-class participation is key to this course. Students should be prepared to share their thoughts and ideas with the class, and are encouraged to pose questions. While seminar-style discussion will make up the bulk of this course, there will also be opportunities for small-group discussions. Not all students are as comfortable speaking up and voicing their opinions, and I encourage students with concerns to approach me via email or during office hours. I am open to suggestions for making the classroom more welcoming for those who are hesitant to participate in discussion. I hope our class will be welcoming and inclusive to students of all backgrounds.

There will be a Canvas discussion board for the course. Students should post their own discussion points at least 3 times per week, and respond to other student's posts 2 times a week. This discussion board is particularly beneficial to students who may feel less confident sharing in live discussion.

### Daily reflection

At the end of each day, students will write a one-sentence reflection on what they learned that day. There will be a Canvas discussion board for these reflections. Students will edit their post each day to add their daily reflection. Daily reflections are not scored, and students will receive full credit as long as they post their reflections after class each day.

### Short essays

Students will write three short essays (250-300 words). The prompt is the same each time: write about what you have learned in this course so far. However, each essay will be written for a different audience: 1) a peer who has not taken this course, 2) an older relative back home, and 3) an elementary school student. Students will review each other's essays in groups (either during synchronous Zoom sessions or asynchronously), and have the chance to edit them before submitting them. Along with the three essays, students will also submit a short reflection about their experience writing these three essays. Details for this assignment are available on Canvas.

### Group project

Students will form project groups at the beginning of the course. Throughout the course, students are expected to meet with their groups to complete components of the group project. Each group will identify a research question of interest, brainstorm ideas to test their hypotheses empirically, and design a simple study. During the last week, groups will present their study and expected findings to the class. There will be no formal write-up required, but students will turn in a short reflection (~250 words). Specific guidance and instruction for this project will be given during class. Students should expect to meet with their groups outside of class, as well as with the instructor or TA.