

Arizona State University
Hugh Downs School of Human Communication

Syllabus for:
Communication 691 Seminar
Sex, Communication, & Relating

Spring Semester 2014
3:00 – 5:45 p.m. Thursdays
Stauffer Hall A431

Instructor

Instructor: Dr. Paul A. Mongeau
Office: Stauffer Hall A410C
Mailbox: Stauffer Hall A412
Phone: 480.965.3773
E-Mail: Mongeau@ASU.edu
Office Hours: 10:00 – 12:00 Mondays
AND BY APPOINTMENT

Course Overview

This graduate seminar *Sex, Communication, & Relating* will focus on the role of sexual interaction and communication in the initiation and maintenance of relationships. The role of sexual interaction and communication in a variety of relationships (e.g., same-sex and opposite sex; marital and premarital; long-term and short-term) will be investigated. Seminar topics will focus on sexual communication in relationships (e.g., condom use negotiation, sexual disclosure, *pillow talk*, and parent-child interaction about sex), sexual consent, casual sex (e.g., hookups and friends with benefits), and the role of individual differences (e.g., personality and culture). A variety of theoretical frames (e.g., sociobiological, cultural, scripts, norms) will be considered. Assignments will include discussion leadership of at least one article through the semester, a sort recall paper, and a major data collection project.

There are no prerequisite courses for this class; however, a course in research methodologies (e.g., qualitative methods, statistics, and/or empirical research methods) will help students understand course material. We assume that students will read assigned readings ahead of time and will be willing and able to discuss them in class.

Requirements and Grading

Completion of *all* assignments is necessary for successful completion of the course. No one may receive a passing grade (i.e., D or better) without completing all assignments.

| <u>Assignment</u> | <u>Number</u> | <u>Each</u> | <u>Total Points</u> |
|--------------------------|---------------|-------------|---------------------|
| Recall Project | 1 | 100 | 100 |
| Data Collection Project | 1 | 200 | 200 |
| Discussion Leadership | 1 | 50 | 50 |
| Attendance/Participation | 1 | 50 | <u>50</u> |
| Total | | | 400 |

The sexual landscape in Western cultures has changed dramatically over the past half-century. The recall project will involve analyzing some depiction or description of sexual activity that was developed before you were born and to analyze it from modern social science theory and research. The depiction or description could be from a movie, a book, magazine, or television show (fictional or nonfictional) or an actual event or societal controversy. So part of the project will involve describing the depiction or description as well as describing the theoretical or conceptual frame from which it is analyzed. Finally, the description/depiction needs to be analyzed from a modern frame (theory or construct). By modern, I mean that the theory or construct must be one that is used today to consider sexual interaction. Thus, one of your tasks is to consider the extent to which a modern theory is relevant, or can be effectively used to evaluate, a particular event or depiction from 30 (or more) years ago.

In addition, each student will lead a class discussion of one reading (or set of readings). Evaluation is based on the extent to which the important points in your reading are brought out in the course of the discussion. Your task is to bring out the reading's important points.

On the class sessions that you do lead discussion, you must provide the instructor with a list of your discussion questions *before class begins*. While you may start your discussion leadership off with a brief overview of the reading, your task is to lead discussion, not to lecture. A subsequent handout provides advice for this assignment.

On the class sessions that you do not lead discussion, you are required to submit at least three open-ended questions suitable for generating discussion of the readings for that particular evening. Evaluation of these discussion questions will count toward your class participation grade. Course discussion boards will be established on the course Blackboard site.

There will be a total of 400 points available in this course. The number of points you accumulate during the semester will determine your grade. Use of the following scale will determine grades.

| | |
|---------------|------|
| 396.0 – 400.0 | = A+ |
| 372.0 – 395.9 | = A |
| 360.0 – 371.9 | = A- |
| 348.0 – 359.9 | = B+ |
| 332.0 – 347.9 | = B |
| 320.0 – 331.9 | = B- |
| 308 – 319.9 | = C+ |
| 280.0 – 307.9 | = C |
| 240 – 279.9 | = D |
| 00 – 239.9 | = E |

Readings

There is no required text for this course. Readings will come from sources available online through ASU library, Google scholar, and the Library course reserve.

Policies

Attendance

Attendance - Fifty points of students' final grade (or 12.5%) comes directly from their attendance, active discussion of class material, and discussion questions (submitted when students do not lead discussion). From our perspective, seminars are *discussion* classes. We expect that every student will attend class every night and that active participation in discussions will be the class norm. Class attendance is also important because seminars are discussion classes. Moreover, examinations will cover class discussion and readings. Your active participation in class will facilitate all students' understanding of course material.

Late Work

Due dates for all assignments are provided in the semester schedule. For recall paper assignment, I will institute a one-class period grace period beyond which we will penalize late work. At the beginning of the class period following the posted due date, a 10% penalty will be deducted for each week that the assignment is late. So for example, the midterm exam is due on Thursday, March 20th (i.e., the Thursday after Spring Break). Up until the beginning of the next class period (i.e., March 27th) there will no penalty for late submissions. At the beginning of that class period, however, we will take a 10% deduction of the assigned score for that assignment. An additional 10% deduction will accrue for each subsequent week the assignment is late.

Incomplete

The instructor gives a mark of “I” (incomplete) only when a student who is otherwise doing acceptable work is unable to complete a course because of illness or other conditions beyond the student’s control. The mark of “I” should be granted only when the student can complete the unfinished work with the same instructor. However, an incomplete (“I”) may be completed with an instructor designated by the department chair if the original instructor later becomes incapacitated or is otherwise not on campus. Students must arrange with the instructor to receive an incomplete (including signing the appropriate form and agreeing on the nature of the work to be completed) *before the end of the semester*.

Academic Dishonesty

Academic honesty is expected of all students in all examinations, papers, laboratory work, academic transactions and records. The possible sanctions include, but are not limited to, appropriate grade penalties, course failure (indicated on the transcript as a grade of E), course failure due to academic dishonesty (indicated on the transcript as a grade of XE), loss of registration privileges, disqualification and dismissal. For more information, see <http://provost.asu.edu/academicintegrity>.

Disability Accommodations and Eligibility

Qualified students with disabilities who will require disability accommodations in this class are encouraged to make their requests to me at the beginning of the semester either during office hours or by appointment. **Note:** Prior to receiving disability accommodations, verification of eligibility from the Disability Resource Center (DRC) is required. Disability information is confidential.

Students who feel they will need disability accommodations in this class but have not registered with the Disability Resource Center (DRC) should contact DRC immediately. Their office is located on the first floor of the Matthews Center Building. DRC staff can also be reached at: 480-965-1234 (V), 480-965-9000 (TTY). For additional information, visit: www.asu.edu/studentaffairs/ed/drc. Their hours are 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday.

COMMUNICATION 691 – SEX, COMMUNICATION, AND RELATING
SPRING 2014 TENTATIVE SEMESTER SCHEDULE

| DATE | TOPIC | READINGS |
|-------------------|--|--|
| 16 <i>January</i> | Introduction to the Course | |
| 1 – 23 | Change over time | Petersen & Hyde Perlman & Sprecher Wells & Twenge |
| 1 – 30 | Hookups | Paul et al. Fiedler et al. Holman & Sillars Garcia et al. Epstein et al. |
| 6 <i>February</i> | Sex and Drugs and Rock and Roll [Guest: Dr. Linda Lederman] | Menegatos et al. Abbey Griffin et al. Labrie et al. |

No Class: Thursday, 13 February: Western States Communication Association

| | | |
|----------------|----------------------------------|---|
| 2 – 20 | Friends with Benefits | Hughes et al. Vanderdrift et al. Mongeau et al. |
| 2 – 27 | Sex and Relationship Initiation | Rose & Zand O'Meara Buss Theiss & Solomon |
| 6 <i>March</i> | Sex and Relationship Maintenance | Theiss & Nagy Birnbaum et al. Regan |

No Class: Thursday, 13 March: Spring Break

| | | |
|--------|--------------|---|
| 3 – 20 | Love and Sex | Neto Rosenberger et al. Hendrick et al. |
|--------|--------------|---|

| DATE | TOPIC | READINGS |
|-------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| 3 – 27 | Sexual Norms and Behaviors | Neighbors et al. Rimal & Real Lambert et al. |
| 3 April | Condom Negotiation | Holland & French Noar et al. Munoz-Silva et al. |
| 4 – 10 | Sexual Consent | Humphreys (2004) Beres et al. Humphreys (2007) Humphreys et al. |
| 4 – 17 , | Sexual Consent, Coercion, and Assault | Abbey et al. Benson & Grohm Burnett et al. |
| 4 – 24 | Sexual Health Communication Campaigns | Noar et al. Meyer-Guse & Nabi Morrison |
| 5 – 1 | Communicating About Sex | Montesi et al. Babin Denes Busse et al. |

DATA COLLECTION PROJECT 11:59 P.M., THURSDAY, MAY 8TH

COM691: *Sex, Communication, & Relating*
Reading List

Week 1: Change Over Time

- Petersen, J. L., & Hyde, J. S. (2010). A meta-analytic review of research on gender differences in sexuality, 1993–2007. *Psychological Bulletin*, *136*, 21-36.
- Perlman, D., & Sprecher, S. (In press). Sex, Intimacy, and Dating in College. In R. D. McNulty (Ed.), *Sex in College*. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger Press.
- Wells, B. E., & Twenge, J. M. (2005). Changes in Young People's Sexual Behavior and Attitudes, 1943-1999: A Cross-Temporal Meta-Analysis. *Review of General Psychology*, *9*, 249-261.

Week 2: Hookups

- Paul, E. L., McManus, B., & Hayes, A. (2000). "Hookups": Characteristics and correlates of college students' spontaneous and anonymous sexual experiences. *Journal of Sex Research*, *37*, 76-88.
- Fielder, R. L., Carey, K. B., & Carey, M. P. (2012). Are hookups replacing romantic relationships? A longitudinal study of first-year female college students. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, *657-659*.
- Holman, A., & Sillars, A. (2012). "Talk about "hooking up": The influence of college student social networks on nonrelationship sex." *Health Communication*, *27*, 205-216.
- Garcia, J. R., Reiber, C., Massey, S. G., & Merriwether, A. M. (2012). Sexual hookup culture: A review. *Review of General Psychology*, *16*, 161-176.
- Epstein, M., Calzo, J. P., Smiler, A. P., & Ward, L. M. (2009). "Anything from making out to having sex": Men's negotiations of hooking up and friends with benefits scripts. *Journal of sex research*, *46*, 414-424.

Week 3 – Sex and Drugs and Rock and Roll

- Menegatos, L., Lederman, L. C., & Hess, A. (2010). Friends don't let Jane hook up drunk: A qualitative analysis of participation in a simulation of college drinking-related decisions. *Communication Education*, *59*, 374-388.
- Abbey, A. (1991). Acquaintance rape and alcohol consumption on college campuses: How are they linked? *Journal of American College Health*, *39*, 165-169.

Griffin, J. A., Umstatted, M. R., & Usdan, S. L. (2010). Alcohol use and high-risk sexual behavior among collegiate women: a review of research on alcohol myopia theory. *Journal of American College Health, 58*, 523-532.

LaBrie, J., Earleywine, M., Schiffman, J., Pedersen, E., & Marriot, C. (2005). Effects of alcohol, expectancies, and partner type on condom use in college males: Event-level analyses. *Journal of Sex Research, 42*, 259-266.

Week 4 – Friends with Benefits

Hughes, M., Morrison, K., & Asada, K. J. K. (2005). What's love got to do with it? Exploring the impact of maintenance rules, love attitudes, and network support on friends with benefits relationships. *Western Journal of Communication, 69*, 49-66.

Vanderdrift, L. E., Lehmilller, J. J., & Kelly, J. R. (2012). Commitment in friends with benefits relationships: Implications for relational and safe-sex outcomes. *Personal Relationships, 19*, 1-13.

Mongeau, P. A., Knight, K., Williams, J., Eden, J., & Shaw, C. (2013). Identifying and explicating variation among friends with benefits relationships. *Journal of Sex Research, 50*, 37-47.

Week 5 – Sex and Relationship Initiation

Rose, S. M., & Zand, D. (2002). Lesbian dating and courtship from young adulthood to midlife. *Journal of Lesbian Studies, 6*, 85-109.

O'Meara, J. D. (1989). Cross-sex friendship: Four basic challenges of an ignored relationship. *Sex Roles, 21*, 525-543.

Buss, D. M. (2007). The evolution of human mating. *Acta Psychologica Sinica, 39*, 502-512.

Theiss, J. A., & Solomon, D. H. (2007). Communication and the emotional, cognitive, and relational consequences of first sexual encounters between partners. *Communication Quarterly, 55*, 179-206.

Week 6 – Relationship Maintenance

Theiss, J. A., & Nagy, M. E. (2010). Actor-partner effects in the associations between relationship characteristics and reactions to marital sexual intimacy. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 27*, 1089-1109.

- Birnbaum, G. E., Reis, H. T., Mikulincer, M., Gillath, O., & Orpaz, A. (2006). When sex is more than just sex: attachment orientations, sexual experience, and relationship quality. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, *91*, 929.
- Regan, P. C. (2000). The role of sexual desire and sexual activity in dating relationships. *Social Behavior and Personality*, *28*, 51-59.

Week 7: Love and Sex

- Neto, F. (2012). Perceptions of love and sex across the adult life span. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, *29*, 760-775.
- Rosenberger, J. G., Herbenick, D., Novak, D. S., & Reece, M. (2013). What's love got to do with it? Examinations of emotional perceptions and sexual behaviors among gay and bisexual men in the United States. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, *43*, 1-10.
- Hendrick, C., Hendrick, S. S., & Reich, D. A. (2006). The brief sexual attitudes scale. *Journal of Sex Research*, *43*, 76-86.

Week 8: Sexual Norms and Behaviors

- Neighbors, C., LaBrie, J. W., Hummer, J. F., Lewis, M. A., Lee, C. M., Desai, S., & Larimer, M. E. (2010). Group identification as a moderator of the relationship between perceived social norms and alcohol consumption. *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*, *24*, 522-528.
- Rimal, R. N., & Real, K. (2005). How behaviors are influenced by perceived norms: A test of the theory of normative social behavior. *Communication Research*, *32*, 389-414.
- Lambert, T. A., Kahn, A. S., & Apple, K. J. (2003). Pluralistic ignorance and hooking up. *The Journal of Sex Research*, *40*, 129-133. doi:10.1080/00224490309552174

Week 9: Condom Negotiation

- Holland, K. J., & French, S. E. (2012). Condom negotiation strategy use and effectiveness among college students. *Journal of Sex Research*, *49*, 443-453.
- Noar, S. M., Morokoff, P. J., & Harlow, L. L. (2004). Condom Influence Strategies in a Community Sample of Ethnically Diverse Men and Women1. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, *34*, 1730-1751.
- Muñoz-Silva, A., Sánchez-García, M., Nunes, C., & Martins, A. (2007). Gender differences in condom use prediction with Theory of Reasoned Action and Planned Behaviour: The role of self-efficacy and control. *Aids Care*, *19*, 1177-1181.

Week 10: Sexual Consent

- Humphreys, T. (2007). Perceptions of sexual consent: The impact of relationship history and gender. *Journal of Sex Research, 44*, 307-315.
- Beres, M. A., Herold, E., & Maitland, S. B. (2004). Sexual consent behaviors in same-sex relationships. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 33*, 475-486.
- Humphreys, T. P. (2004). Understanding sexual consent: An empirical investigation of the normative script for young heterosexual adults. In M. Cowling & P. Reynolds (Eds.) *Making sense of sexual consent* (pp. 209-225). Burlington, VT: Ashgate.
- Humphreys, T. P., & Brousseau, M. M. (2010). The Sexual Consent Scale–Revised: Development, reliability, and preliminary validity. *Journal of Sex Research, 47*, 420-428.

Week 11: Sexual Assault and Rape

- Abbey, A., Parkhill, M. R., Jacques-Tiura, A. J., & Saenz, C. (2009). Alcohol's role in men's use of coercion to obtain unprotected sex. *Substance Use & Misuse, 44*, 1329-1348.
- Benson, B. J., Gohm, C. L., & Gross, A. M. (2007). College women and sexual assault: The role of sex-related alcohol expectancies. *Journal of Family Violence, 22*, 341-351.
- Burnett, A., Mattern, J. L., Herakova, L. L., Kahl Jr, D. H., Tobola, C., & Bornsen, S. E. (2009). Communicating/muting date rape: A co-cultural theoretical analysis of communication factors related to rape culture on a college campus. *Journal of Applied Communication Research, 37*, 465-485.

Week 12: Sexual Health Communication Campaigns

- Noar, S. M., Palmgreen, P., Chabot, M., Dobransky, N., & Zimmerman, R. S. (2009). A 10-year systematic review of HIV/AIDS mass communication campaigns: have we made progress?. *Journal of Health Communication, 14*, 15-42.
- Moyer-Gusé, E., & Nabi, R. L. (2011). Comparing the effects of entertainment and educational television programming on risky sexual behavior. *Health communication, 26*, 416-426.
- Morrison, K. (2005). Motivating women and men to take protective action against rape: Examining direct and indirect persuasive fear appeals. *Health Communication, 18*, 237-256.

Week 13: Communication About Sex

- Montesi, J. L., Fauber, R. L., Gordon, E. A., & Heimberg, R. G. (2011). The specific importance of communicating about sex to couples' sexual and overall relationship satisfaction. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 28*, 591-609.

- Babin, E. A. (2013). An examination of predictors of nonverbal and verbal communication of pleasure during sex and sexual satisfaction. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 30, 270-292.
- Denes, A. (2012). Pillow talk: Exploring disclosures after sexual activity. *Western Journal of Communication*, 76, 91-108.
- Busse, P., Fishbein, M., Bleakley, A., & Hennessy, M. (2010). The role of communication with friends in sexual initiation. *Communication research*, 37, 239-255.

COMMUNICATION 691 – DATA COLLECTION PROJECT ASSIGNMENT:
DUE: THURSDAY, MAY 8TH

This purpose of this paper is to allow you to investigate some aspect of sexual interaction and/or relationships in depth and detail. The topic and nature of the study performed is up to the student to decide; however, because it represents a detailed investigation, the paper's topic should be of some interest to the student. Students may choose a topic discussed in class (e.g., Friends with Benefits) or a topic not discussed in class (e.g., Sexual Script Theory).

Nature of the Project

This project must involve data collection in one form (and/or method) or another. Studies could include qualitative, quantitative, or content analytic methods (depending on the nature of the question being asked). The study could also come in the form of a meta-analysis. Given any of the formats, a written document should review the relevant literature (i.e., theory development and/or research) relevant to the topic. In any format, one of students' primary tasks in writing this paper is to describe what we know (and what we do not know) about the chosen topic and how it is that we know it. Students should use the appropriate data (define broadly) sources, find the appropriate books, book chapters, and/or journal articles, and synthesize what they have to say into a paper (or part of your paper, depending on the format).

The final research report, or meta-analysis, should begin with a rationale that includes a literature review that clearly develops a series of predictions (or research questions) that should provide the proper context for your study. In addition to the review of the literature (described above) students will need to explain the methods used to test the prediction(s) made or the question(s) posed. Research reports should follow the standard format given the project's design (e.g., rationale, methods, results, and discussion in a quantitative piece). Be explicit.

I expect most papers to be in the 20-25 page range with a maximum of 30 pages (of text, i.e., not counting title page, abstract, references, tables, figures, appendixes, etc.). The instructor will return any papers substantially longer than the upper limit for pruning before evaluation can occur. Source citations and reference list should be consistent with the sixth edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (i.e., APA style).

Evaluation Criteria

Evaluation will occur on each major part of the paper and might vary somewhat depending on the particular format chosen. Evaluation of a literature review depends upon the extent to which it is complete and the quality of your synthesis and analysis of the literature. Evaluation of the hypotheses and methods (if any) section(s) depend upon the extent to which they are compelling, appropriate given the literature review, and ask (and potentially attempt to answer) interesting questions.

The primary criteria used to evaluate all formats will include completeness, organization, and clarity. (See *Mongeau's General Criteria for Evaluating Papers*, for a more detailed discussion of these criteria.)

We will be available to discuss possible topics and, within reason, to examine preliminary written drafts of papers. We will not be available to review drafts on the evening before the assignment is due. You should set some reasonable period for the submission and return of rough drafts. You should generally count on a *one week* turn-around time in returning a variety of drafts (i.e., not only for drafts of this paper, but other written work as well).

DISCUSSION LEADERSHIP ASSIGNMENT

As one of the assignments for this course, you will lead the class discussion of one reading during the semester. Evaluation depends on the extent to which you bring out the important points in the reading in the course of the discussion. There is no single best way of doing this. Based on past feedback I have given to students for this assignment, here are some issues to consider.

1. Know your article or chapter. The better you know what your article or chapter says, the more effectively you should be able to perform the tasks required to best complete this assignment.
2. Manage your time well. You will have approximately 75 minutes (or so) to lead discussion. Make sure that you do not spend too much time on a single issue (particularly if that issue is tangential to the reading) that might cause you to go over other issues in less detail later in the discussion. Make sure that the class has an adequate opportunity to discuss the important elements of the reading.
3. I tend to come into class with more questions than I can possibly pose in the time that I have. I realize that I have more questions than I need, but I also make sure that the most important questions are covered. If you have more questions than you need, realize which of your questions are the most important.
3. Provide a brief introduction to your reading. Provide class with an idea of what the article is about, but do not include too much information that might work better as discussion questions. Remember that your task is to lead discussion, not to lecture.
4. Follow up on student comments (sometimes this can be as simple as asking someone “why?” or “how so?”). Following up on student's comments forces you to *listen* to what students are trying to say and turn their contribution into a question, even if it means bringing a topic up “out of order.” This is a difficult set of cognitive tasks, but essential to effective discussion leadership.
5. Do not answer your own question. If the class does not respond, wait them out. They might have to think about your question. If the class does not understand your question, they will ask for clarification.
6. Handouts tend to be hit or miss. Handouts should facilitate, rather than restrict, discussion. Do not read from the handout. This is graduate school. People can read.
7. Be innovative. Try something new. Have fun.
8. Ask good questions.

GOOD DISCUSSION QUESTIONS...

1. Are open-ended. Closed-ended (e.g., yes-no or “do you agree?”) questions rarely give the class sufficient room to *discuss* ideas. Closed-ended questions can be useful if you have one or more open-ended questions as a follow-up (e.g., asking “why?” after “do you agree?”).
2. Are clear. Do not use vague terms. Do not use terms from outside class that other students will not know (unless you want to spend the time to explain them).
3. Are simple. Short questions tend to be clearer than long questions.
4. Ask only one thing. Complex questions frequently ask two (or more) things at once. Double-barreled questions tend to be confusing.
5. Do not have objective, verifiable, answer (particularly that ends up with someone reading from the article/chapter (unless you have a good, open –ended, follow-up).
6. Give the class a number of directions that they could go. I try to begin each class with at least one *jump-ball* question to see where discussion will go.
7. Attempt to identify (and/or challenge) implicit assumptions in a particular reading. These questions force students to look beyond what the authors have to say.
8. Relate to earlier course readings. Again, this forces students to go beyond what the authors have to say and to make connections among concepts/theories. You may bring in concepts from other classes or from your experience (but be prepared to explain it).
9. Keeps the discussion on track. Sometimes, course discussions will meander. Under these circumstances, a good question subtly takes the class from the tangential back to the reading (though sometimes you have to bring the class’ attention to the reading more abruptly).
10. Assumes that students have read and understood the reading. Be prepared, however, to discuss basic issues (e.g., definitions).
11. Ask for applications of theoretical positions (or theoretical explanations for applied issues).
12. Are questions. Do not make a statement, state an opinion, or read a passage without an accompanying question. The class may not know how to respond if you do not ask a question.
13. Can be answered by more than one person and in more than one way. Try not to fall into the pattern of: question, answer, question, answer...
12. Are either specific or general. Neither type of question is always preferred. All of one kind (especially specific) gets tedious. Make sure that there is some combination of specific and general questions (e.g., a specific definitional question followed up by a general application).

MONGEAU’S GENERAL CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING PAPERS

Across the various papers that I read for classes I teach and professional service I perform, some of the criteria that I use are specific to the particular paper under consideration (e.g., semester project or journal submission). In course papers, I will typically focus on the quality with which students fulfill each of the tasks outlined in the particular assignment. On the other hand, while the content varies, the general criteria that I use to evaluate them remain pretty much the same across papers. I want to spend a bit of time here discussing these general criteria. These criteria are not mutually exclusive (e.g., a lack of organization influences perceptions of clarity); however, I hope that this gives you an idea of what yardsticks I use when I evaluate papers. I generally use five general criteria in evaluating student papers.

CRITERION 1: CLARITY

The primary criterion that I use when I evaluate a paper (a draft of my own work, a manuscript that I receive as a reviewer for a professional journal, or a [undergraduate or graduate] student’s paper) is clarity. Simply put, is the author communicating whatever it is that s/he is trying to say clearly? It does not matter if the author is trying to describe a past relationship, a reaction to a lecture, or reviewing a theoretical literature on a scholarly topic, it must be done clearly. Saying something simply is better than saying it using complex, convoluted, language. Don’t feel as though you have to use a lot of technical jargon because the research you’ve read does it. If I consistently cannot understand what you are trying to say, your grade will suffer.

CRITERION 2: COMPLETENESS

Completeness is evaluated on two levels. First, completeness is evaluated on a *macro* level. Most of my paper assignment includes multiple parts. When I evaluate completeness on the macro level, I am looking for the extent to which students actually perform each required task. Failure to complete a major part of a paper is a serious error that will result in substantial point deductions. Therefore, it is important that I know what you are doing as you work your way through your paper. It is in your best interest to inform me where you are and what you are doing in your paper. Signposting and transitions between parts (e.g., headings and subheadings) helps immensely in keeping me informed as to what you are doing in your paper.

I also evaluate completeness on a *micro* level. Completeness on a micro level represents the extent to which you adequately tackle *each required task*. The question here is how well did the student perform each required tasks? Completeness, of course, depends on the nature and length of your paper.

CRITERION 3: ORGANIZATION

The third criterion I use in evaluating papers is organization. Your ideas should develop in a logical manner. Words should fit together to form phrases. Phrases should fit together to form sentences. Sentences should fit together to make paragraphs. Paragraphs should fit together to form the major sections of your paper. What I do not want is a paper that rambles from point to point without any connection between them. The semester project allows for a variety of formats, so it is in students’

best interests to inform the instructors of the particular format being utilized early in the paper and then keep readers informed as the paper progresses.

CRITERION 4: VALIDITY

The fourth major criterion I use in grading papers has to do with the validity of the presented arguments. The arguments that you make in your papers must be valid. This means that the conclusions of your arguments must follow from the premises. Further, the premises and conclusions that you draw should be explicit and based on valid evidence. Readers should not have to dig through a paper to identify and understand the arguments being made.

Part of the validity of an argument has to do with the data supporting a particular conclusion. Specifically, properly document all statements of fact from a reputable primary source. For example, if you are making the claim that men and women communicate differently in some important ways, you need to support that conclusion (or claim) with a reference from a reputable and primary source. All works cited in the paper need to be included in a reference list. All items in the reference list must be cited in the paper.

CRITERION 5: MECHANICS

Finally, evaluation also focuses on the technical (or stylistic) aspects of the paper. Final submitted drafts should be devoid of grammatical errors, typographical errors, misspellings, punctuation errors, sentence fragments, and so on. In this respect, it would be helpful to develop the habit of completing rough drafts ahead of time and then spending time cleaning and polishing your writing. If students try to write the entire paper the last day or two before it is due, they will almost certainly encounter stylistic problems, not to mention substantive ones.

I will also evaluate presentational aspects of papers (e.g., spelling, grammar, punctuation, etc.). This mechanics criterion includes evaluating the format of source citations and references provided. The format of the paper, source citations, and reference lists must be consistent with the sixth edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*.