COMM 460/510: Communicating about Relationship Challenges  
(a.k.a., THE DARK SIDE OF CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS)  
Spring 2015  
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Office Hours: by appt. or via online system (http://comm.louisville.edu/department/appt.php)

COURSE OVERVIEW

The line between what is considered normal and pathological is often frightfully thin, especially in close relationships. For example, when does a person who texts after a date cross the line from being protective to possessive? When does a person who is appealing become appalling? Or when does a person who is nurturing become smothering? Personal relationships are fraught with paradoxical and often confusing situations, challenges, and interactions. This class addresses relational issues ranging from lying to transgressions, privacy violations to deception, hurtful messages to abuse, and jealousy to relational obsession.

Using the dark side metaphor this class will investigate important, yet often neglected, issues of personal relationships. The dark side metaphor will allow consideration for the hidden and forbidden as well as the contradictory and ironic elements of human relating. More specifically, the class has two main goals—developing understanding of (1) the influence communication has on personal relationships, and (2) how contexts and relational challenges influence perceptions of personal relationships.

In this course, we will identify some of the challenges that people face in their relationships. In addition to experiences that are often characterized as the “dark side” of close relationships, we will also discuss several events that are less “dark” but are challenging to negotiate nonetheless. We also explore the ways in which communication influences and sometimes resolves turmoil within relationships. By the end of the semester, you should be able to:

1. Identify some of the challenging experiences that emerge in close relationships and explain the circumstances surrounding these events and the role of interpersonal communication in resolving those events.
2. Demonstrate competency in library research and an ability to integrate resources to understand a relational phenomenon.
3. To be able to listen, think, and write critically about issues pertinent to the study of interpersonal and personal relationships.
4. Analyze more effectively interpersonal and personal behaviors.
5. Increase the array of available choices about interpersonal and personal behaviors.

REQUIRED READING


All readings should be completed prior to class time on the day that they are assigned in the syllabus.

RECOMMENDED READING


Attendance:
We will be involved in a number of in-class exercises and discussions; therefore, your presence is necessary for class. In addition, your contributions to the class will increase the understanding and retention of the class material for you and your classmates. You will also have in-class activities/quizzes assignments that entail points that cannot be made up if you miss class. You must be present to earn the points.

Announcements and Class Information:
You are responsible for any announcements given in class concerning changes in due dates, schedule, and/or supplemental readings. If you miss a class, you are responsible for obtaining the notes from a classmate in order to be familiar with information covered that day.

Special Needs:
Students with special learning needs are encouraged to discuss accommodations needs with me early in the semester. Students may be asked to contact the Disability Resource Center to determine academic accommodations (852-6938).

Assignment Due Dates:
All papers and exams must be completed and turned in on the date assigned. If you fail to turn in a paper on time you will lose a letter grade for each day it is late. Papers that are more than five days late will not be accepted and the student will receive a grade of zero for that assignment. If you fail to come to class on an exam day, you will receive a zero for the exam, unless an alternate due date has PREVIOUSLY been approved.

Plagiarism:
Plagiarism on any assignment will result in a minimum of a ZERO for the assignment. Plagiarism includes the following:
1. Copying someone else’s work and claiming it as your own
2. Paraphrasing someone else’s work and claiming it as your own
3. Collaborating excessively with another person and claiming the work as your own.

Cell Phones and Beepers:
Turn your cell phones and beepers off when you enter the classroom unless you have prior approval. These interruptions are distracting. In honor of my late colleague Ken Hardy, if your cell phone rings you will be asked to stand and sing “I’m a Little Tea Pot” or a song decided by the class.

Email:
I frequently use email as a means for getting in touch with the entire class; therefore it is important that you have a working email address that you have on record with the university and check on a regular basis.

Access:
Please come to my office hours or make an appointment to speak with me if you are having trouble in this class. I am more than willing to help students who are open about their needs. If you are having trouble understanding the material or if you have issues in your personal life that are impeding your ability to perform in this class as you normally would it is vital that you speak to me about it before you begin to fall behind. I never like to see students slip through the cracks if it can be prevented. So please see me the moment you feel you need some help.
Course Requirements and Grading

**Participation: 100 pts**

Your attendance and participation during class meetings is encouraged and expected. You are expected to respond to course material and to complete and discuss exercises that are conducted during class. Thus, 50 of your participation points will be awarded based on your engagement in the material and your contributions to conversations during weekly class meetings. You MUST be in class to complete these assignments. There are no “make-ups” under any circumstances.

**In Class Participation Educational Opportunities:** (Must be present to earn points)
- **Extra! Extra! Read All About It:** More information to be given in class. You will bring a headline/pop culture article to class. You will need access to the internet during class. (10 pts)
- **Fact or Fiction:** More information to be given in class. You will need access to the internet during class (10 pts)
- **Minute to Win It:** Students will be given 60 seconds to talk about a dark side topic. More information to be given in class (20 pts)
- **Red Carpet:** Movie or show analysis. More information to be given in class (10 pts)

**Reading Experts: 500 pts**

- **Out of the Hat:** Everyone will bring in a thoughtful reaction (or discussion question) from each reading and be prepared to give a 30 second oration to the class or engage in a pair share. You may choose to write about what was muddy/clear about the reading, what surprised you, what you learned, what you wonder about . . . You will turn in your question/reaction for every reading. You do the question/reaction in addition to your other assigned another role(s). (You must be present to get these points total of 150 pts)
- **Follow the Leader:** You will be assigned a class reading in which you are to lead the class discussion. Your role is to make sure the class discusses and engages in the material. Your job is NOT to talk the entire time. You will do a very short summary of the chapter, have an activity, and have questions to lead a thoughtful discussion. You may incorporate a powerpoint if it would help the class discuss the material. Part of your job is to also incorporate the other leaders. You will want to talk with them ahead of class to see how much time they need, what they are discussing, and put it in an appropriate order for the day. You will turn in your “plan” for the day along with your summary, activity, and/or powerpoint. You should find a way to make this assignment engaging and interactive. I may have students fish bowl the discussion leader (Fish bowl: Students are given index cards, and asked to write down one question concerning the course material. Students ask a question of clarification regarding some aspect of the material which they do not fully understand; or, perhaps ask questions concerning the application of course material to practical contexts. Students deposit questions in a fish bowl. The discussion leader then draws several questions out of the bowl and answers them for the class (total of 100 pts).
- **Ankle Deep in Research:** You will be assigned class readings in which you are to bring in additional current research to the topic. You will find one quality research articles, very briefly summarize the findings, and relate the material to the class reading/topic. You should find a way to make this assignment engaging and interactive. You will turn in a one page summary of the article and how you related the article to class. (total of 100 pts)
- **Turning that Frown Upside Down:** You will be assigned a class reading in which you are to bring in contradictory research to the topic. You will find one quality research article, summarize the findings, and relate the material to the class reading/topic. The research article should be in contrast to the class reading. You should find a way to make this assignment engaging and interactive. You will turn in a one page summary of the article and how you related the article to class. (total of 100 pts)
- **Talk to Me Ted:** You will be assigned a class reading in which you are to bring in a TED Talk that best represents an idea from the class reading or compliments the class reading. You will turn in a short summary of the TED Talk and how you related it to the class reading. Do not show the entire clip – find a few moments from the talk that best captures the topic of the day and ways in which we can discuss the TED Talk and topic (total of 25 pts)
- **Bono Approved:** You will bring in a song that relates to the topic. You will turn in a short summary of the song and how it related to the class reading.

**Portfolio of Darkness and Presentation:** 200 pts

Throughout the semester, you will conduct a “scavenger hunt” to find as many interesting and varied illustrations of issues relevant to the dark side of communication as you can. These scenarios will serve an important function in our class.
meetings as we apply scholarly literature to concrete examples. You may locate scenarios in television sitcoms or dramas, news shows, newspapers, movies, comic strips, books (fact or fiction), interviews with laypersons, interviews with experts, song lyrics, personal experiences, observations of strangers or known others, brochures, public service announcements, or anywhere else that provides a wealth of relevant options.

For each scenario,
- you should describe the “dark” issue
- You should include at least a substantial paragraph of observations and connections between the scenario and the content of the course (e.g., the texts, class discussions, relevant outside readings of articles and/or chapters from edited volumes). Most entries will require more than a paragraph of analysis in order to allow sufficient coverage of relevant information.
- You should also include a paragraph on a solution or different way of thinking about the dark issue.
- If you choose to describe a true story about persons who are not public figures, please change the names of the parties.
- Some of your illustrations will be longer than others due to the nature of the materials you choose. Seek to include a variety of sources and topics for your scenarios.

Your final portfolio should include a minimum of 10 different dark side scenario descriptions. Rather than compiling the entire collection all at once, I strongly suggest that you work on your Portfolio of Darkness each week. This will allow you to excel in class discussions and will prevent you from experiencing undue stress during the last part of the semester. Because the scenarios (and corresponding observations) will serve as an important part of our class discussions, you should be prepared to offer examples from your portfolio every week.

Since we will examine different topics relevant to the dark side of communication each week, you may need to write the observations and connections for some of your scenarios incrementally. For example, if you tape a television drama including a “dark” scene on week two of the course, you may make observations and connections relating it to chapters you read during week three and beyond. You can share connections on that scenario in multiple class sessions, but you won’t submit those observations formally until the portfolio is due (see course schedule). Therefore, you can add new insights regarding the scenario to your typed comments each week.

Your final portfolio should have a strong, professional appearance. It should be well organized and “polished.” In addition to including descriptions of and observations concerning each illustration, you are STRONGLY encouraged to submit copies of materials relevant to your scenarios when possible (e.g., a videotape, a photocopy of an article or comic strip, the typed questions and answers from an interview, the typed lyrics of a song). Your materials will not be returned, so please keep copies of everything for your files. All source citations used in the scenario analyses should conform to APA guidelines. There should be at least one relevant course source cited for each entry.

You will present your most interesting illustration to the class. (Prize goes to the most creative presentation)

Grad Students:
- Discussion Leader: In addition to the assignment, you will analyze your topic theoretically in a short paper. More information will be given during the semester.
- Portfolio of Darkness: In addition to the assignment, you will analyze your illustrations with theory. More information will be given during the semester.

Final Grade
Your final grade will be determined by summing scores on all assignments completed this semester.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chapter Reactions</td>
<td>150</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Discussion Leader 100 pts
Current Research 50 pts
Contradictory Research 50 pts
Ted Talk 25 pts
Song 25 pts
Portfolio & Presentation 200 pts
Total = 700 pts

Final grades will be assigned according to the following scale:

Grading Scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100-97</td>
<td>A+</td>
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<tr>
<td>96-93</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92-90</td>
<td>A-</td>
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<tr>
<td>89-87</td>
<td>B+</td>
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<tr>
<td>86-84</td>
<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>83-80</td>
<td>B-</td>
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<tr>
<td>79-77</td>
<td>C+</td>
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<tr>
<td>76-74</td>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>73-70</td>
<td>C-</td>
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<td>69-67</td>
<td>D+</td>
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<td>66-64</td>
<td>D</td>
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<td>63-60</td>
<td>D-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Below 60</td>
<td>F</td>
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Contesting Grades: I am willing to go over any assignment or exam with you to discuss concerns that you might have. I ask that you abide by three guidelines, all of which make it easier for us both to concentrate on your concerns. 1) Wait 24 hours after an assignment/test has been returned to you to contact me. 2) Please write your concerns and your backing for these concerns down so that we can both look them over as we meet. 3) Please approach me only during office hours or during an appointment that we’ve scheduled - discussing your grade in class violates your privacy and doesn’t provide an environment where I can adequately focus on your concerns. Please do not ask to have your grade changed for reasons other than mathematical error. Applying subjective standards after the fact invalidates the standards applied to the entire class and is unfair to every student.
All items in this syllabus are subject to change at the discretion of the instructor with or without prior notification or written confirmation.

# COURSE SCHEDULE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Chapters</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan 8</td>
<td>Introductions &amp; Discussion of Syllabus</td>
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</table>
| Jan 13 | Sign up for Chapters | DS – Preface  
Defining the “Dark Side” and Relationship “Challenges”  
DS II – Ch. 1  
Last day to drop/add |
| Jan 15 | Fairytales and Tragedies – CS 2 | |
| Jan 20 | Swearing – BB 3 | DL: Kirsten  
Current: Sean  
Contradictory: Ben  
Ted: Analiese  
Song: Karen |
| Jan 22 | Rumor and Gossip – BB 8 | Gossip – SC 4  
DL: Analiese  
Current: Karen  
Contradictory: Chris  
Ted: Bryce  
Song: Taylor |
| Jan 27 | Mean Girls – CS 12 | DL: Cassidy  
Current: Nayshen  
Contradictory: Charlotte  
Ted:  
Song: Alena |
| Jan 29 | Jealousy and Envy – SC 2 | Feb 2 – last day to apply for degree  
DL: Taylor  
Current:  
Contradictory: Nayshen  
Ted: Holly  
Song: Bryce |
| Feb 3 | Misunderstandings – SC 3 | Extra! Extra! Read All About It  
DL: Meredith  
Current:  
Contradictory  
Ted:  
Song: Kita |
Feb 5  Fatal Attraction – SC 1
DL: Charlotte
Current:
Contradictory: Bryce
Ted:
Song: Michael

Feb 10  Internet – chapter TBA
Fact or Fiction
DL: Sean
Current: Josh
Contradictory: Cassidy
Ted: Nayshen
Song:

Feb 12  Affectionate Communication – CS 6
Sexual Coercion – SC 7
DL: Ashley
Christopher
Current: Alena
Holly
Contradictory: Kita
Alena
Ted: Charlotte
Song: Analiese

Feb 17  Portfolio Work Day (Conf)
Feb 19  Portfolio Work Day (Conf)

Feb 24  Incarcerated Men – CS 11
DL: Ellen
Current:
Contradictory: Josh
Ted:
Song: Ben

Feb 26  InLaws or Outlaws – CS 9
Stepfamilies – CS 10
DL: Becca
Destinee
Current:
Contradictory
Ted:
Song:

Mar 3  Permitted Disrespect – BB 7
DL: Michael
Current:
Contradictory
Ted:
Song: Holly

Mar 5  Relational Transgressions & Betrayal – BB 9
Relational Transgressions & Forgiveness – DSIC 9
DL: Elizabeth
Jennifer
Current:
Contradictory
Ted:
Song: Megan
Josh
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Chapter(s)</th>
<th>DL</th>
<th>Current</th>
<th>Contradictory</th>
<th>Ted</th>
<th>Song</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mar 10**</td>
<td>Infidelity - DSIC, Ch 8</td>
<td>Narcissism – CS, Ch 14</td>
<td>Brieonna</td>
<td>Ted: Josh</td>
<td>Song: Elizabeth</td>
<td>Ben</td>
<td>Christopher</td>
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<td>Mar 12**</td>
<td>ORI/Stalking – SC 8</td>
<td>Mental Health – SC, Ch 11</td>
<td>Kita</td>
<td>Ted:</td>
<td>Song: Jennifer</td>
<td>Bryce</td>
<td>Nayshen</td>
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<td>Mar 17</td>
<td>Spring Break</td>
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<td>Mar 19</td>
<td>Spring Break</td>
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<td>Mar 24</td>
<td>Unrequited Love – SC 10</td>
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<td>Carissa</td>
<td>Ted: Kita</td>
<td>Song: Ellen</td>
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<td>Mar 26</td>
<td>Conflict – SC 5</td>
<td>Break Ups – SC 9</td>
<td>Alena</td>
<td>Ted:</td>
<td>Song: Destinee</td>
<td>Josh</td>
<td>Carrissa</td>
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<td>Apr 7</td>
<td>Portfolio of Darkness Work Day (SSCA Conference)</td>
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<td>Apr 9</td>
<td>Portfolio of Darkness Work Day (SSCA Conference)</td>
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<td>Apr 14</td>
<td>Catch Up</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Minute to Win It</td>
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<td>Red Carpet</td>
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<td>Apr 16</td>
<td>Darkside Portfolio Presentations</td>
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<td>Apr 21</td>
<td>Last Day of Class</td>
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<td>Darkside Portfolio Presentations</td>
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<td>All portfolios due (turn in paper to safeassign and portfolio in hard copy)</td>
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<td>Apr 24</td>
<td>My birthday</td>
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