Course Description

This graduate seminar will focus on theoretical and practical issues regarding relationships between communication processes in contemporary U.S. organizations and socially constructed aspects of identity. Specifically, we will concentrate on gender, race, sexual identity, social class, ability, and age. The primary theoretical foundation of this course is social constructionism, which basically contends that humans create reality through interaction.

Based upon the idea that individual/group differences make a difference (they “matter”), course materials and activities will address a variety of related concerns (“matters”). These include theoretical perspectives, socio-historical developments, research issues, and practical issues. To explore these issues, the course focuses on how systems of power and privilege help shape perceptions of salient social identity groups within the United States, and how individuals and groups resist and transform those systems.

The course also delves into communication issues relevant to ways that we learn about social identities from such sources as our families, the media, and organizations. To explore these matters, we will take a critical approach, which means looking for power dynamics, including domination, compliance, and resistance. We also will self-consciously delve into our personal perceptions, perspectives, and experiences as related to course materials. In addition, we will discuss implications of our studies for social change.

We will analyze and discuss work from several disciplines, including communication, sociology, organizational behavior, ethnic studies, psychology, education, disability studies, and philosophy. We will consider diverse types of organizations, such as corporations, educational institutions, non-profits, and media conglomerates. And, we will address many modes of communication.

We will explore how communication helps to create and sustain understandings of ourselves in relationship to different and similar others in society and in organizational contexts. We will engage the term ‘organization’ as a noun and a verb by investigating how communication occurs in organizations as well as how it functions to organize social and organizational relationships.

Required Readings


Additional readings on Blackboard. [https://blackboard.cudenver.edu/](https://blackboard.cudenver.edu/) Please be sure to post your current email address in your profile for the course.

Recommended Resources


Check Blackboard for additional resources. Please send me any resources you’d like to post.
Assignments and Evaluation

You must complete and be prepared to discuss all assigned readings by the date indicated on the syllabus. Also, you must submit assignments by the beginning of the class session on designated due dates. Your course grade will be based upon the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation and attendance</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection Papers</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Project</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Presentation</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Test</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Point Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1000-950</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>900-949</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>870-899</td>
<td>B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>835-869</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>800-834</td>
<td>B-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>770-799</td>
<td>C+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>735-769</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below 735</td>
<td>C-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grading System for Graduate Courses

A = Excellent
A- = Very good
B+ = Good
B = Satisfactory
Grades below B WILL NOT BE COUNTED toward the M.A. or M.S. degree

Participation and Attendance

Active student participation is imperative to maximize the learning potential of this course. Therefore, you should attend each class. Please inform me if you are not able to come to class, and we can negotiate whether or not and how you might receive partial credit.

You should always be prepared to participate fully in class. Grading criteria for participation include the following behaviors: seems prepared; listens actively; offers thoughtful comments and responses; asks thoughtful questions; allows and invites others to speak; solicits feedback; responds well to feedback; demonstrates cumulative learning; and, shows initiative.

Reflection Papers: Details forthcoming. (Worth 100 points each)

Final Project: Research Paper. This 15-20 page paper must present a fully developed research argument, correctly follow APA style, and have few, if any, grammatical errors. I will require you to meet with me at least twice before your oral presentation to discuss drafts of your paper. You will complete assignments leading to the paper throughout the semester. Also, I will give you detailed grading criteria for the final project and presentation.

Oral Presentation

You will develop and conduct an oral presentation of your final project to the class.

Due Dates: February 27 RP #1

March 1 Declare Research Topic
March 27 RP #2
May 8 Oral Presentations
May 10 Final Project and RP #3
COURSE SCHEDULE

January 16  Intro and Overview

January 23  Theoretical perspectives continued

*Difference Matters* Chapter 1, 2


January 30  GENDER MATTERS

*Difference Matters*, Chapter 3


February 6  Gender continued


February 13  RACE MATTERS

*Difference Matters*, Chapter 4


**February 20  Race continued**


**February 27  SOCIAL CLASS**

*Difference Matters, Chapter 5*


**March 6  Social Class continued**


**March 13  SEXUALITY MATTERS**

*Difference Matters, Chapter 6*


March 20       SPRING BREAK.

March 27       Sexuality continued


April 3       ABILITY MATTERS

Difference Matters, Chapter 7


April 10       Ability continued


April 17       AGE MATTERS

Difference Matters, Chapter 8


April 24  Age continued


May 1  Course Wrap Up

May 8  PRESENTATIONS

May 10 Final and Reflection #3  Due

* * *