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COMM 310  
Fall 2006 TR 11-12:15  
MOLN 144

## **Communication in Everyday Life**

### **Conceptual framework of course:**

This is a course about interpersonal communication, often more specifically termed language and social interaction. That is, this course is about what happens when people interact face-to-face, in a large variety of contexts. We will examine the role of communication in structuring and accomplishing everyday activities. In order to do this, this semester students will participate in a multidisciplinary research project with students in Teacher Education, which we are calling the Classroom Ethnography Project. We will use what occurs in classrooms as one specific example for what occurs in any interaction more generally. The emphasis will be on observing, documenting, and analyzing social interaction, for only by watching real people in real situations can students discover for themselves the regularities in daily interaction. Much interpersonal behavior is learned but unconscious. Successful completion of this course involves a shift in perception: students will learn to consciously *see* what occurs when people interact, and will be given a vocabulary for discussing what they see.

### **Prerequisites:**

Students enrolled in this course should have completed COMM 107, 108, 209 and 211.

### **Texts:**

**Required:** Leeds-Hurwitz, W. (1989). *Communication in everyday life: A social interpretation*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex. (buy this at the bookstore)

LeCompte, M. D., Millroy, W. L., & Preissle, J. (Eds.). (1992). *The handbook of qualitative research in education*. San Diego, CA: Academic. (4 chapters only; they will be posted to the course website for you to download and print out)

**Recommended:** Either of the style guides used in COMM 209 last year will serve as an appropriate resource:

Lunsford, A. A. (2006). *Easy writer: A pocket reference* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's.  
OR Hacker, D. (1993). *A pocket style manual*. Boston: St. Martin's Press.

### **Web page:**

This semester we will serve as the first group on campus to use a wiki for classroom purposes. It permits a collaborative workspace, which neither D2L nor Dreamweaver have. (That means everyone in the class can easily enter information directly onto a website that everyone else can access.) The URL is: <https://tweety.email.uwp.edu/phpwiki/index.php/CEP%20Homepage>  
The site is password protected; use your campus NetID to enter.

### **Department Competencies:**

The Communication Department has developed a list of 12 competencies. These are skills and understandings we expect all students to have mastered by graduation; all courses illuminate at least one of the competencies. This course most directly connects to the following departmental competencies:

1. Working effectively with information, including evaluating materials produced by others, synthesizing viewpoints, and creating new ideas.
2. Attending to detail, negotiating situations, observing one's own place in specific contexts, and thinking systematically.
3. Analyzing rules and patterns in social and mediated interactions.
4. Working constructively and building supportive relationships in groups.
7. Understanding communication as the social construction of reality.
8. Understanding identity as constructed and sustained through language and interaction.
10. Understanding individuals as members of multiple groups, organizations and communities.

### **Course Outline:**

#### **Part 1: Introduction to Social Interaction**

*Reading:* Leeds-Hurwitz, all chapters

Review of syllabus and assignments. Discussion of the structure of the text, and how to make the best use of it. Overview of the field of interpersonal communication and the particular combination of approaches that make up the study of social interaction. Discussion of theoretical framework of course: communication as patterned, learned, context-bound, multichannel and multifunctional.

#### **Part 2: Introduction to Classroom Ethnography**

*Readings:*

Spindler, G., & Spindler, L. (1992). Cultural process and ethnography: An anthropological perspective. In M. D. LeCompte, W. L. Millroy & J. Preissle (Eds.), *The handbook of qualitative research in education* (pp. 53-92). San Diego, CA: Academic.

*NOTE: we are only using part of this chapter! The version on the website is all you need to read.*

Erickson, F. (1992). Ethnographic microanalysis of interaction. In M. D. LeCompte, W. L. Millroy & J. Preissle (Eds.), *The handbook of qualitative research in education* (pp. 201-225). San Diego, CA: Academic.

Deyhle, D. L., Hess, G. A., Jr., & LeCompte, M. D. (1992). Approaching ethical issues for qualitative researchers in education. In M. D. LeCompte, W. L. Millroy & J. Preissle (Eds.), *The handbook of qualitative research in education* (pp. 597-641). San Diego, CA: Academic.

LeCompte, M. D., & Preissle, J. (1992). Toward an ethnology of student life in schools and classrooms: Synthesizing the qualitative research tradition. In M. D. LeCompte, W. L. Millroy & J. Preissle (Eds.), *The handbook of qualitative research in education* (pp. 815-859). San Diego, CA: Academic.

Emphasis on observing in classroom settings, and interviewing within a school setting. History of classroom ethnography as a research topic. Introduction of ethnographic microanalysis of classroom interaction. Explanation of ethical issues faced by researchers in an education context. Synthesis of major strands of research results in prior classroom ethnographies.

### **Part 3: Original research: Classroom Ethnography Project**

Discussion of the connection between library research (locating, reading, and synthesizing publications by others about a topic) and field research (observations of actual behavior), and how to tie the two together. Review of how to write a good research question. Discussion of fieldnotes, making videotapes of interaction, using audiotapes in interviews, and transcribing of either audio or videotapes. Discussion of how to get from data to analysis to implications. Review of how to write a final paper synthesizing prior research with original research.

### **Part 4: Conclusion**

Reintegration of the concepts presented in the course as separate items. Review of major points. Presentation of original research results.

### **Assignments:**

*Exercises:* There are 4 exercises designed to help you develop specific skills that you will need for the research project this semester: they cover creating a record of interaction through fieldnotes, audiotapes, and videotapes, making transcriptions from them, and analyzing data from any of these methods.

*Research project:* This semester we will use classroom ethnography as the site of everyone's research. We will coordinate a multidisciplinary project with TEDU 210. Students in that course are primarily interested in learning to be good teachers; to do so, they must understand interaction in the classroom setting. So this project meets the needs of both groups of students. Students will divide into 7 groups, designed around 7 of the 10 Wisconsin Teaching Standards. Since TEDU students are already required to observe 30 hours of classroom interaction, they will observe and write fieldnotes. Then COMM students will make videotapes and transcribe portions of them. All students will be expected to read a minimum number of relevant prior publications beyond the readings assigned to everyone. All notes on prior publications and original data collected will be posted to the course website, to be shared by everyone in both courses. However, each student will develop a unique research question, analyzing some of the data by him or herself, in order to write an individual paper. Use the concluding chapter of your text as a model for how to do this. At the end of the semester, each student will be expected to briefly present his or her individual research question, and the answer learned to that point.

*Class participation:* This is a course in which involvement in the discussion is expected. Since several activities related to the research project require your participation in class, if you are absent on those days it will not be possible for you to make up those points. You will get points for attendance, participation and for developing your individual wiki page, and posting the

required elements for others to read there. You will get extra credit for additional contributions to the wiki (to be described in class).

*Grading:*

Exercises	75 points
Research project	450 points
Participation	35 points
Total	560 points*

At the end of the semester, the points will be turned into grades using the following scale:

A = 93-100%	A- = 90-92%	B+ = 87-89%	B = 83-86%	B- = 80-82%	C+ = 77-79%
C = 73-76%	C- = 70-72%	D+ = 67-69%	D = 63-66%	D- = 60-62%	F < 60%

Use the point record available on the wiki to keep track of your points. If we change anything, a new point record will be posted there. Reminder: to figure out your grade at any point, divide total points earned by total points possible to get your percentage.

**Tentative schedule**

- 9/7 Introduction to course, review of syllabus and assignments
- 9/12 Introduction to wiki (meet in WYLL classroom)
- 9/14 Chapter 1 of Leeds-Hurwitz (exercise 1 due)
- 9/19 Chapter 2 of Leeds-Hurwitz
- 9/21 Chapter 3 of Leeds-Hurwitz (exercise 2 due)
- 9/26 Chapter 4 of Leeds-Hurwitz
- 9/28 Chapter 5 of Leeds-Hurwitz (exercise 3 due)
- 10/3 Chapter 6 of Leeds-Hurwitz
- 10/5 Chapter 7 of Leeds-Hurwitz (exercise 4 due)
- 10/10 Group meeting with TEDU 210
- 10/12 Methodological and theoretical framework for course: Ethnography of Communication and Social Construction
- 10/17 Writing good research questions
- 10/19 Chapter 2 of LeCompte: Context of Classroom Ethnography
- 10/24 Chapter 5 of LeCompte: Ethnographic Microanalysis
- 10/26 Chapter 13 of LeCompte: Ethical Issues
- 10/31 Chapter 18 of LeCompte: Synthesis of Prior Education Research
- 11/2 Group meeting with TEDU 210
- 11/7 Discussion of fieldnotes
- 11/9 Discussion of audio/videotaping (videotape posted)
- 11/14 Discussion of transcriptions
- 11/16 Group meeting with TEDU 210
- 11/21 Analyzing data (transcription posted)
- 11/23 Thanksgiving break
- 11/28 Review how to write up final paper; integration of prior research with original data
- 11/30 How to develop implications from research results

12/5 Presentations  
12/7 Presentations  
12/12 Presentations  
12/14 Conclusion

**Disabilities:**

If you have a documented disability that will impact your work in this class, please contact me to discuss your needs. Additionally, you will need to register with Disability Services in WYLL D175.

**Honors work:**

This course is available for students who would like honors credit. The honors program on campus has specific guidelines that must be followed if you want to do this; see me about what is required. If you are eligible and interested, we will work together to design an individually tailored project matching your interests to the content of the course.

**Plagiarism and academic integrity:**

Plagiarism is the term for taking credit for work that is not your own. This means you cannot take material from articles and books you find in the library and present it as your own work, you cannot let your friends prepare your assignments, and you cannot copy an assignment from a student who took the same course another semester. Plagiarism is taken seriously because a university is a place for learning and new ideas; your assignments are the evidence you provide of your learning, your original ideas. Providing work that is not your own or that is not unique to the assignment is inappropriate because it is a form of lying. The consequences of plagiarism are severe: you will be given an F on the specific assignment, or the entire course, at my discretion; depending on the severity of the offense, I may feel obliged to pursue it further within the university. Although it is rare, students have been expelled from college based solely on plagiarism. If you need advice on how to appropriately cite the work of others, please ask. Briefly, so long as you acknowledge that an idea is not your own, but give the original source, and so long as the assignment contains sufficient original work in addition to whatever is quoted from others, you are generally not going to get into trouble.

Other violations of academic integrity are also inappropriate though they do not generally have the same severe consequences as plagiarism. One example would be using the same assignment for multiple courses. You may draw on the same data and perform a different analysis, or you may perform a similar type of analysis of different data, in assignments for different courses, but you may not present the same data and the same analysis twice. (If you foresee a potential complication, see me about how to appropriately resolve it.) Other examples would be lying about the reason for an absence, or signing someone else's name to a sign-in sheet when they were not present. Please keep in mind that students generally ask their professors for recommendations when they graduate, whether for jobs or for graduate school. If you are not concerned about today, consider the implications for the future of gaining a reputation as someone uncertain about what constitutes ethical behavior.

This semester the multidisciplinary research project on classroom ethnography will demonstrate exactly what sorts of information you can appropriately share (data, although there will be some

courses for which your professors will not want you to even share that) and what sorts you cannot (your own unique analysis of the data and synthesis of prior research with your original data). Always check with the instructor in a particular course to be sure you understand what level of overlap in assignments is appropriate, and what will be counted as plagiarism, if you have any questions.

Technology Courtesy:

Many students have cell phones and other electronic devices. So as not to disrupt the learning environment, please turn off your cell phone ringers prior to class (note also that vibrating phones can be heard in class) and do not text message during class (this is extremely rude as it is noticeable to your instructor and neighbors). As a general guideline, if your technology distracts your attention from what is going on in class, it is also taking away from your learning. If you need to be available by phone for family or other important situations, please let me know so as to minimize disruptions to the class.