

COM 320: Truth, Ethics, and Deception  
Fall 2015  
Dr. Darrin J. Griffin  
University of Alabama

**Textbook:**

Knapp, M. L., McGlone, M. S., Earnest, W. J., & Griffin, D. J. (2015). *Lying and deception in human interaction* (2nd ed.). Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt.

**Course Description and Learning Outcomes:**

The class begins by requiring students to think about the dynamics of truth and knowledge – followed with a journey into the multifaceted world of lying and deception. This class will not teach you how to become a better liar. You will not learn how to become a better poker player, nor will you become a master of deception detection! It will introduce you to the intriguing study of truth, ethics, and deception in social science. The class surveys the study of deception through a wide array of fields and topics of communication: truth & ethics, interpersonal communication, business & organizational, computer mediated communication, relationship & family, television & media, advertising, political & law enforcement, U.S. history, health, and animal behavior. The topics will assist students in being able to identify deceptive behavior and understand it in ways that will benefit their professional and personal lives.

Upon completion of this course, you will:

- increase your understanding of truth and ethics
- become familiar with key concepts and differentiate between lying and deception
- discuss major theoretical concepts in the field of deception research
- analyze your use of "the truth" in sustaining and creating interpersonal relationships
- evaluate the research findings on deception detection
- understand how deception influences many areas and facets of life

**Course Requirements:**

**Show and tell speech - deceptive item:**

To facilitate your learning and understanding of deception I am asking you to bring a physical item (legal and safe) to class that illustrates something about deception. This will take place during the first part of the semester and you will be required to give a two-minute speech about your item to the class and submit a speech outline that reflects your talk. I will assign you a partner in the class and ask you to help one another create an outline and proper speech for your show and tell item. More details about this assignment will be discussed in class. (5 points)

**Truth journal:**

After we read the first few chapters about truth and ethics I will ask you to write a truth journal about your own personal experiences and communication patterns. To earn all the points you must cite the textbook and **bold and underline** places where

you cite the book material - also you will include page numbers that will direct me to the location of concepts or vocabulary that you rely on in your paper. You must cite the textbook at a minimum of three times and relate this material to your journal writing. (5 points)

**Deception Journal:**

The deception journal will be assigned after we cover some of the chapters on deception - it will follow the same format as the truth journal above and will be discussed in class when it is assigned. (5 points)

**Wikipedia assignments:**

You might have noticed that Wikipedia is dominating the web. It is not uncommon for Wikipedia to come up as the first search term returned by Google. Search the term "deception" and see what happens. To facilitate your understanding of this information communication technology and of lying and deception research in communication you will learn about Wikipedia and be asked to edit some pages. I will guide you through this process so do not be intimidated. You will have five assignments for Wikipedia. (15 points)

**Reading quizzes:**

To motivate you to read for class I will pass out reading quizzes at the beginning of class. The format will be five questions multiple choice and true/false answer. (50 points)

**Interviews:**

I am asking you to conduct three interviews throughout the term. I will give you ample directions and prompts for these interviews and they will revolve around topics relevant to lying and deception in communication. For example, I may ask you to interview someone in business, or academics, or a teenager. You will then write a reflection after each of these interviews. All prompts and directions for interviews will be discussed in class and posted on Blackboard. (30 points)

**Reflection journals/papers:**

After reading you will submit reflection journal papers through Blackboard and on paper in class (as posted on syllabus). These papers will encourage you to read and think deeper about the topics discussed in the book. They will also help us begin class and to discuss the details from the reading. Papers that are shallow and do not show any time spent on the chapter will earn 1 point, 2 points for those showing an attempt to provide connections to the material in the textbook, and 3 points are reserved for student reflections that clearly stem from time spent reading and thinking about the topic and that cite material in the textbook. (15 points)

**Five homework assignments:**

Throughout the semester I will assign you homework assignments. These will be relatively simple assignments that will be a fun way to extend your thinking about

truth, ethics, and deception. (15 points)

**Midterm Exam:**

The midterm will consist of 25 multiple choice and true/false questions that evaluate your learning of the readings and course lectures. Each question is worth 1 point. (25 points)

**Self-reflection paper - "What I learned":**

Towards the end of the course I am going to ask you to write a paper where you share your changed (or unchanged) views on truth, ethics, and deception. You are likely to have a new view of these topics after taking this class so it will be interesting to complete this assignment. (10 points)

**Final Project:**

After the midpoint in the semester we will reserve class time to discuss a final paper or project for the course. You will have the choice to either write a final paper or conduct a final project. Either way you will eventually provide me with a proposal and at some point turn in a draft. (25 points)

**Tentative Schedule:**

Week	Topic(s)	Class details – Assessments & Due Dates
1	Introduction	Cover syllabus and introductions Discuss the self-deception of grades in college!
	Preface *Quiz 1	Reading quiz covers Preface of book & Syllabus Activity: "What are you doing?"
2	Chapter 1 *1 <sup>st</sup> reflection journal due	Read Ch 1 before class and submit reflection journal on Blackboard before midnight on Tuesday 1/13
	Defining terms Assign S&T Wikipedia#1	Discuss terminology for the semester and go over "show and tell" speech assignment, assign partners; Assign 1 <sup>st</sup> Wikipedia assignment
3	Chapter 2 *Quiz 2	Read Ch 2 before class <i>How detection really works activity</i>
	Assign Truth Journal	Continue discussion about Ch 2 & "Truth" and assign the Truth Journal & due date
4	1 <sup>st</sup> speeches	Half of the class to give show and tell speeches
5	2 <sup>nd</sup> speeches	Remaining students to give show and tell speeches
6	Chapter 3 *2 <sup>nd</sup> reflection journal due	Read Ch 3 before class and bring reflection journal Assign 2 <sup>nd</sup> Wikipedia assignment
	Ch 3 cont.	Continue discussion about Ethics & assign 1 <sup>st</sup> interview assignment and due date
7	Chapter 9 *Quiz 3	Read Ch 9 before class and take quiz
	Chapter 10 *3 <sup>rd</sup> reflection paper on BB	Read Ch 10 and submit reflection paper on Blackboard

8	Activity; Assign HW#1	Activity "Box of Lies" Assign homework #1
9	Chapter 4 *Quiz 4; Assign HW#2	Read Ch 4 and take quiz Assign homework #2
	Chapter 5 *4 <sup>th</sup> reflection paper due	Read Ch 5 and bring reflection paper to class; Assign Deception journal and due date
10	Chapter 6 *Quiz 5	Read Ch 6 and be prepared for quiz Assign 3 <sup>rd</sup> Wikipedia assignment
	<b>Midterm Exam</b>	<b>Midterm Exam</b>
11	Overview of exam	Assign 2 <sup>nd</sup> interview assignment and due date
	Chapter 7 *Quiz 6	Read Ch 7 and come prepared to take quiz; Assign 4 <sup>th</sup> Wikipedia assignment
12	Interviews	Conduct 3 <sup>rd</sup> interview assignments during class (on campus) - meet in classroom to discuss
	Chapter 8 *5 <sup>th</sup> reflection paper due	Read Ch 8 and submit last reflection paper on Blackboard
13	Chapter 11 *Quiz 7	Read Ch 11 before class Assign homework #3
	Discuss final project/papers Assign HW#4	Discuss criteria for the final paper/project Assign homework #4 (which will relate to the paper/project - e.g., your preference etc.)
14	Chapter 12 *Quiz 8	Read Ch 12 before class and be prepared to take quiz
	Workshop	Wikipedia Workshop in class Complete 5 <sup>th</sup> Wikipedia assignment in class
15	Chapter 13 *Quiz 9 Assign HW#5	Read Ch 13 and take quiz Assign homework #5
	Epilogue	What does it all mean Discuss "what I learned" paper and assign due date
16	Student- Teacher deceptions reading *Quiz 10	Student-Teacher deception reading posted on Blackboard and last quiz is over this reading;