

**Honors 360: Family Communication in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**  
**Spring 2015**  
**Dr. Pamela Lannutti**  
**La Salle University**

**TEXTBOOK:**

Baxter, L. A. (Ed.) (2014). *Remaking “family” communicatively*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Suggested text: *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). (2010).

**COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES:**

All of us are members of families, and as such, we can benefit from understanding how family communication and relationships are affected by larger forces in society. Families in the United States today are faced with opportunities and challenges that have never been experienced by families before. The first 15 years of this century have produced large social, civil, and technological changes that affect the relationships and communication among family members. This course incorporates recent research on family communication to better understand how diverse types of families cope with modern communication opportunities and challenges.

After completing this course, students should be able to:

1. Identify and explain concepts relevant to understanding family communication and influences on family communication.
2. Synthesize, explain, and critically evaluate research on family communication.
3. Reflect upon family communication research and apply the family communication research to their own experiences.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

**Assignment 1: Family Application Assignment**

**Purpose:** Course objective 3 states that at the end of the course, students should be able to “reflect upon family communication research and apply the family communication research to their own experiences.” The multipart “family application assignment” is designed to help you achieve course objective 3.

**Part 1: Introduce your family**

*Up to 50 points*

For part 1, you will introduce your family to the class. During the first weeks of class, we will discuss various ways of defining a family. You are encouraged to think carefully about the various ways of defining a family as you complete this assignment. To introduce your family, please prepare a brief paper (no more than 5 pages) describing your family and why you have chosen to define your family as you have. You will also prepare a Powerpoint presentation

about your family to present in class. Each in class presentation should last no longer than 7 minutes.

**Part 2:**

*Paper due: before midnight on May 5*

*In class presentation: During the finals period for the course*

*Up to 100 points*

Throughout the course, we have discussed topics related to families and family communication. For this paper, please choose a topic we have discussed in the course. Write a paper (no more than 8 pages) that explains how this topic is related to your own family. Be specific as you integrate readings into your application of the topic to your family. Your paper should incorporate at least 2 additional peer reviewed journal articles beyond those that we read as part of the course. You will also prepare a brief presentation (no longer than 7 minutes) that explains the connection between your family and the topic to the class.

**Assignment 2: Relational Research Institute Symposium Assignment**

*Up to 75 points*

**Purpose:** This assignment will help to achieve course objectives 1, 2 and 3.

**Directions:** On Feb 12, various researchers from La Salle will be discussing their work focusing on relationships. For this assignment, you must attend one session of the symposium (schedule can be found on the Canvas page). You will write a response paper (no more than 5 pages) to what you heard in the session that addresses the following:

- 1) Briefly summarize what you heard in the session (no more than 1.5 pages)
- 2) How does what you learned in the session relate to our readings/discussions (any so far!) of families and communication in families? (Please specifically reference relevant course material)
- 3) How does what you learned in the session relate to your own family experiences?

**Assignment 3: ECA Convention Assignment**

*Up to 75 points*

**Purpose:** This assignment will help to achieve course objectives 1, 2 and 3.

**Directions:** The Eastern Communication Association (ECA) will hold its annual convention in April. Various sessions will relate to families and family communication. For this assignment, you must attend one session of the convention that is relevant to families and/or family communication. You will write a response paper (no more than 5 pages) to what you heard in the session that addresses the following:

- 1) Briefly summarize what you heard in the session (no more than 1.5 pages)
- 2) How does what you learned in the session relate to our readings/discussions (any so far!) of families and communication in families? (Please specifically reference relevant course material)
- 3) How does what you learned in the session relate to your own family experiences?

## **Assignment 4: Class discussion facilitation/participation**

*Participation up to 25 points*

**Purpose:** Course objective 2 states students will be able to “synthesize, explain, and critically evaluate research on family communication.” To help achieve this goal, each student will choose one recently published article family communication article and facilitate a class discussion based on that article. I have already chosen the articles to discuss, and students will have an opportunity to pick an article in first weeks of class. Due dates will vary according to when the article falls in our tentative schedule. All students are expected to be active participants in these discussions.

### **What’s expected:**

- 1) The student facilitator will carefully read the article well before the discussion date.
- 2) The student facilitator will prepare 5 to 8 substantive questions to guide our discussion of the article (examples will be discussed in the first weeks of class). These questions must be submitted to Dr. Lannutti on the date indicated on the tentative course schedule. Dr. Lannutti will post them to the Canvas page once approved. All students are expected to use the questions to guide their preparation for the article discussion.
- 3) In class, the student facilitator will lead the course discussion. This involves using the discussion questions and encouraging participation in the discussion. All students are expected to actively and meaningfully participate in the discussion.

### **Evaluation:**

Dr. Lannutti will evaluate the student facilitator’s work. Facilitation will be worth up to 75 points.

The student facilitator will use a form created by Dr. Lannutti to evaluate each of his or her classmate’s participation in the article discussion. Participation is worth up to 25 points.

## **Quizzes**

**Purpose:** Course objective 1 states that students will be able to “identify and explain concepts relevant to understanding family communication and influences on family communication.”

Quizzes are designed to evaluate how you are doing in terms of his objective and to encourage your timely and careful course reading.

Some quiz dates appear in the tentative schedule, but unannounced quizzes may also be used throughout the semester to motivate your reading. Missed quizzes may not be retaken or made-up in any way. Quizzes may include multiple choice and short answer items. Each quiz is worth 25 points and quizzes may add to a total of 100 points.

**\*Quizzes and cell phones in class:** I’d like to drop your lowest quiz grade. But, I’d also like it if you did not use your cell phones in class. Here is my policy to help us to meet both of these desires: I will give you a 3 strikes policy on cell phones. If I catch any member of the class using a cell phone for any reason during class, it will be one strike against the class. If the class

earns 3 strikes during the semester, I will not be able to drop your lowest quiz grade. If the class earns less than 3 strikes during the semester, I will be able to drop your lowest quiz grade.

### **TENTATIVE SCHEDULE:**

<b>Week:</b>	<b>Topics, Readings, and Assignments:</b>
1	Overview of Course Introduction to Family Communication Studies
2	Foundations for research on family communication Read: Baxter book, Chapters 1, 2, 3
3	<b>Family application assignment part 1 presentations</b> <b>Family application part 1 paper due</b> Upcoming Assignment discussion
4	Families centered upon a same sex relationship Read: Baxter book, Chapter 4 <b>Quiz 1</b> <b>Article discussion: Lannutti (2013)</b>
5	Single parent families Read: Baxter book, Chapter 5 <b>Relational Research Institute Symposium Assignment</b>
6	Stepfamily relationships Read: Baxter book, Chapter 10 <b>Article discussion: DiVerniero (2013)</b> <b>Relational Research Institute Symposium paper due</b>
7	Adopted families Read: Baxter book, Chapter 9 <b>Quiz 2</b> <b>Article discussion: Suter and Ballard (2009)</b>
8	Grandparent/parenting Read: Baxter book, Chapter 6 <b>Article discussion: Mansson (2013)</b>
9	Deciding not to parent and parenting ambivalence Read: Baxter book, Chapter 8 <b>Article discussion: Faulkner (2012)</b>
10	Families and working life <b>Article discussion: Breagh and Frye (2008)</b>

