

COM203 Introduction to Communication

Professor Robins

Mini Paper Assignment

To assess your understanding of the course content you will be required to complete THREE mini papers throughout the semester, each worth 100 points and 10% of your overall grade. **The due dates for the three papers are in the syllabus.** Late papers are not accepted and will receive a ZERO.

Assignment Guidelines

Each paper will require you to do something a little different and they cover a variety of topics. In each case, you are expected to answer the question(s) posed by the paper requirement as well as apply concepts you learned about the subject from class. It is important that you JUSTIFY and EXPLAIN your answers. Remember, you are “teaching” me something or attempting to convince me about your point of view. Your job is to make the connections for me.

While the paper topics are different there are some requirements that apply to all papers: It must be:

- Typed, 12 point font, Times New Roman, 1 inch margins - Double spaced
- Minimum three pages, maximum four pages - It must be submitted via TurnItIn AND as a hard copy, stapled in the upper left hand corner – no exceptions
- Grammar and spell check required - Logical flow and structure of argument are important
- **Put your name on the paper**
- Avoid excessive “spacing” or “indentations”

Assignment Mini Paper Topics – Pick three (3)

Paper #1

What does communication mean to you? In your own words, describe your personal definition of communication. Make sure that you explain why you feel this way. In doing so, however, keep in mind that your professor makes a big issue of communication and control/power. Is he correct about this? Do you see communication as something more or something less than participants’ efforts to control the communication contexts in which they find themselves?

Paper #2

In class we discussed various forms of non-verbal communication. Conduct an experiment where you sit in a public space (e.g., Student Center, Library lobby, etc.) and identify four or five people, some of whom may be alone, but some of whom must be interacting with others. Write their personal and relational biographies given only what you can determine nonverbally. Explain your stories. What do they tell you about our social behavior?

Paper #3

Using the library, find a research article on any topic from Communication Monographs, Communication Research Reports, or Mass Communication and Society published in the last 3 years. Read the article (as best you can, do not worry if you don’t understand everything). Summarize briefly what it was about (do not worry about the statistics) and tell me whether you think the authors are objective or interpretive in their approach to research. Pick two of the other criteria in research that we discussed in class and tell me which side of the continuum you think the authors occupy. Please make sure to print off the first page of the research article you read and attach it to the hard copy (this doesn’t count as one of your pages).

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Paper #4

Pick a movie relationship that you find particularly interesting (family, friendship, romantic). Using social penetration theory, please analyze that relationship. What stage/layer are the people in? How did they get there? Did they utilize all of the parts of the theory (breadth, depth, valence, etc.)? Does your selected relationship conform to the theory? How does it? If it doesn't, how does it diverge?

Paper #5

What are the seven media literacy skills? Describe each and examine your own media consumption behavior in terms of each. Then convince me that you are media literate, or if you determine that you are not, explain why you are content in that diminished state. Paper #6 - In class we discussed the idea of conglomeration and concentration. Please discuss your opinion on the subject. Do you think that it is a problem in a democracy such as ours? Research the recent NBC/Comcast (or Google/YouTube or AT&T/DISH or other big media) merger and explain why you think it is a good idea or a bad idea for American consumers and citizens. - Paper #7 - In class this week (and in your text) you were presented with a wide variety of theories and concepts that explain how media may (or may not) have an impact on us. Do you think that media have an effect on our behaviors (violence, drug use, sexual behavior, attitudes towards others, stereotyping, alcohol consumption, etc.)? Which of the theories/concepts that were discussed makes the most sense to you? Which one makes the least sense? Please make sure you explain why.

Paper #8

Your text offered a definition of culture. Take its individual parts and explain how they manifest themselves in your everyday life. Here it is expressed in those individual parts: - Culture is the world made meaningful. - It is socially constructed and maintained through communication. - It limits as well as liberates us; it differentiates as well as unites us. - It defines our realities and thereby shapes the ways we think, feel, and act.

Paper #9

Your text lists and explains a number of strategies for successfully managing conflict. Your task is to do a Personal Conflict Style Assessment. To do this, you

- a) Must decide which style is your default, or most frequently used conflict management style.
- b) Describe that style and why you believe it to be your personal conflict resolution style (and why it is best for you).
- c) Take any three of the following potential conflict partners and convince me how and why your usual style is the most effective for managing conflict with each OR why you might adopt a different style with each of these conflict partners. Conflict partners: Boyfriend/girlfriend; parent; sibling; co-worker; best friend; boss; roommate; package store salesperson who refuses to accept your ID as legitimate.