

ARTS 130 – Inquiry and Communication: How to Talk to Strangers, Enemies, and Friends

Winter, 2018: Wednesday, 2:30-5:20 in ML-117

Professor Robert Danisch

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Course Description:

All ARTS 130 courses are designed to emphasize foundational communication competencies that ought to be useful for students in their university careers and beyond. These seminars are intended to help build students' social awareness, ethical engagement, and communication competencies in comprehension, contextualization, and conceptualization. Students will be expected to engage with the work of others, articulate positions, situate writing and speaking within contexts, practice writing and speaking for situations beyond the classroom, engage in basic forms of research, and workshop, revise and edit writing.

This particular section of ARTS 130 examines the ways in which interpersonal relationships between strangers, enemies, and friends help build communities and how communities then acquire political power. Such a process is largely a result of specific face-to-face communication practices. And that process is also essential for the dissemination of innovation, the creation of social movements, and the development of ethically responsible public cultures. Creating and maintaining communities requires specific forms of conversation between strangers, enemies, and friends. This course asks how communicative acts are constitutive of community life and how communities acquire and exercise political power. The distribution of power to communities and the exercise of that power through communicative acts (often interpersonal communicative acts) are at the core of political life in a democracy. So this course will also ask questions about the defining characteristics and the functional practices of democratic life. Democracy requires active and engaged communities held together by talk between strangers, enemies, and friends.

Learning Outcomes for ARTS 130:

1. Students will learn to identify and enhance their own diverse experiences, strengths, and goals as communicators with other Arts students in a community of practice.
2. Students will critically explore their own positions and agency while practicing interpersonal communication skills.
3. Students will analyze context, audience and genre and apply this rhetorical knowledge in iterative communication assignments.
4. Students will provide, reflect on, and incorporate feedback on their communication in collaboration with peers.

5. Students will develop processes to inquire about and analyze ideas—their own and those discovered through research.
6. Students will use multiple technologies for creating and communicating.

Course Policies and Procedures:

- *In the Classroom* – This is an introductory undergraduate seminar. The topic of the seminar was chosen based on your professor’s research interests. As a seminar, however, the main objective is for a small group of students to engage in study and conversation. Seminars are characterized by high degrees of interactivity between students and between professor and student. This is not a lecture course; I expect classroom conversations to demonstrate a high degree of intellectual engagement and sophistication. In addition, we’ll be doing lots of exercises in class. Students must do the readings for the week before coming to the seminar and all students are expected to participate in lively conversations each class period.
- *Attendance* – Your presence in class is mandatory. You should be aware that the best way to do well in this course is to show up to every class, prepared and attentive. Inevitably, at the end of the semester, students who missed classes do poorly, while students who show up consistently do well. I do not post lecture notes on the Internet, nor do I respond to emails that say “what did we talk about in class on Thursday.” We cover lots of material, and we do lots of exercises, in class and for that reason it is critical that you attend in order to do well. Attendance also means refraining from playing with your cell phone, reading the newspaper, surfing the internet, using other electronic devices or doing other coursework while in the classroom. If I notice you engaged in some activity that does not pertain to what is happening in the class, I will ask you to leave. This course is designed for courteous, motivated students who attend each class, do all the reading, and ask questions when they don’t understand something. If you miss class, you are responsible for getting materials we covered from a classmate. Students who fail to meet these basic and reasonable expectations can assume that their performance on assignments will suffer.
- *Policy on the Use of Technology* – There is mounting evidence that the use of laptops hampers student learning. We also know that cell phones can interfere with the development of interpersonal relationships. I kindly ask that we maintain a “technology-free” environment while in class. This means no laptops, no cell phones, and no other electronic devices, unless you’ve discussed your learning needs with me first. I suggest everyone bring a pen, some paper, and whatever we are reading for the week. If you wish to use your laptop during a writing exercise, that is fine, but once the exercise is completed I’ll ask you to put it away and turn toward your other classmates in order to genuinely and authentically interact with them. We spend our lives with our devices, I believe we can make it through our class periods together without them and we’ll be better off because we did that.
- *Academic Integrity* – I expect that the work you complete for this course will be your own, which is to say that cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Any written assignment that borrows from other sources without giving proper credit or that is plagiarized in whole or in part from another source (including other

student's work) is grounds for an "F" on the assignment, or depending on the severity of the crime, is grounds for an "F" in the course.

University Policies on Academic Integrity:

Academic Integrity: In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility.

Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about "rules" for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Undergraduate Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under Policy 71 – Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71 - Student Discipline,

<http://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-71>

Grievance: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4,

<http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/student-grievances-faculty-guidelines/policy-70>

Appeals: A student may appeal the finding and/or penalty in a decision made under Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances (other than regarding a petition) or Policy 71 - Student Discipline if a ground for an appeal can be established. Read Policy 72 - Student Appeals, <http://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-72>

Academic Integrity website (Arts):

http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/arts/ugrad/academic_responsibility.html

Academic Integrity Office (University):

<http://uwaterloo.ca/academic-integrity/>

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities:

The AccessAbility Services (AS) Office, located in Needles Hall, Room 1132, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the AS Office at the beginning of each academic term.

Required Texts and Readings:

I like books - I like buying them, I like reading them, I like keeping them on my bookshelf, I like talking to people about them. Reading makes you smarter. You should read a lot. I wish I could assign a book a week, but that isn't exactly the purpose of these seminars. Instead, we will try to read selections of some things very carefully and use those readings as jumping off points for our own conversations and our own writing and speaking projects. During the first class I will ask all of you to write down your email addresses, and afterwards I will construct a class list. What I'm going to do is email the class, each week, a set of pdfs of the following week's readings. You should print the readings out or bring some electronic device to class that allows you to read them off a screen. I expect students to access all readings regardless of their location. I will ensure that the readings are available at least one week prior to when we will discuss them in class.

Assignments:

- 1) **Deliberation** – During the second week of the semester you'll be paired up with a partner (or two partners) for two assignments. Your first task with your partner(s) is to participate in a deliberation about one of the key issues that we will be dealing with throughout the semester. Your “deliberation” is a sustained back and forth conversation between you and your partner(s) that unfolds over several weeks and in which the two (or three) of you think through some controversial issue and some examples of what we have talked about in class. At the end of your deliberation, you and your partner(s) will edit what you discussed and hand it in as a kind of paper. This assignment will be graded on a scale of 0-100. You will receive explicit instructions for the deliberation in class. This assignment will be worth 20% of your final grade and is due on April 6th.

- 2) **My Story is Our Story** – Your second task with your partner(s) is to make a presentation to the class. This presentation is an oral exercise in brevity and clarity. One of the key ways in which we meet and bond with others is through the disclosure of parts of our personal story. This becomes especially effective when our personal stories are bound to other's stories to form what Marshall Ganz has called a “public narrative.” Accordingly, we nest our own stories within larger stories in the formation of communities. You'll try this out in a public speaking exercise with your partner. These presentations will not require or involve technology of any sort. You'll have 10-12 minutes with your partner(s) to give your presentation, and we'll pick dates for the presentations some time in the 3rd-4th week of the semester. More details on this assignment will follow. You should feel, at the end of the semester, deeply bonded to one another in the class if we've been effective at nesting our personal narratives. You will be graded on the overall quality of your presentation (organization, clarity, coherence, relevance, time, the quality of your research, and the completeness of your script). I'll hand out more explicit instructions and guidelines in class. Your performance will be worth 20% of your final grade.

- 3) **Exegesis** – An Exegesis is a short explanation of a passage from a text. It involves the personal interpretation of a part of the reading, and an explanation of why that passage is important for the reading and for the themes from the class. The style of the exegeses will differ from student to student but there are some general guidelines to follow that we will discuss in class. You will perform an interpretation of a text in two different steps. In the first step, you will choose a short quotation from something we have read and offer an explanation of that quotation. In the second step, you will revise, expand, extend, and deepen your interpretation after feedback from your instructor and classmates. The exegesis will be worth 20% of your final grade. The first draft will be worth 10% and the second will be worth 10%, part one due on January 24th and Part two on February 7th.
- 4) **Position Paper: Analyze, Synthesize, and Persuade:** This is an iterative, three-part writing exercise with different audiences and different purposes. In the first part of this exercise, you will analyze some political controversy or issue facing a community to which you belong. First, you will write a short paper that analyzes the issue. Analysis in this context means understanding the origins of the controversy, articulating the multiple views held by different constituencies, assessing the strengths and weaknesses of various positions, and investigating the arguments used within the controversy. Second, you will then do some research into the various positions and synthesize existing data, evidence, and examples that help show the depth and shape of the issue. This research will result in a short report complete with bibliography. Third, you will write a letter to the editor of a news outlet that covers the issue. This letter will state your position and attempt to persuade the reading audience that you are correct. In total this assignment is worth 30% of your final grade, with each part worth 10%, part one due on February 28th, part two due on March 14th, and Part three due on March 28th.
- 5) **In Class Writing and Speaking Exercises** – This is a seminar class, and so we will all be speaking and writing in class. During different class meetings I may ask everyone to stop and reflect on some aspect of a reading or a discussion by writing a short paragraph. Or I may pose a question to the class and ask for you to make a brief (1-3 minute) oral statement in response to that question. Each student is expected to participate in at least 5 in-class writing or speaking exercises. These will be graded in class on a scale of 0-2 (0=did not do the assignment, 1=completed the assignment, 2=completed the assignment impressively). The in-class exercises will be worth a total of 10% of your final grade.

***I will hand out detailed assignment sheets for each of these assignments in class. Each of these assignments is designed to deliver on one or more of the learning outcomes listed above. These assignments require you to identify and understand your own experiences and strengths as communicators, to collaborate with others, to respond to feedback, to write and speak in different genres and for different audiences, and to analyze ideas. In other words, the goals of these assignments are the general goals of a liberal arts education.

Grades:

- *How are Grades Calculated?* - For each of the four assignments you will receive a score out of 100 points. I will then average the marks based on the percentage weights listed above. I do not like giving students numerical marks and I think it is an inferior system of grading. In my mind, I often think in terms of a letter grade. So that you know, your number out of 100 points translates into the following letter grades:

90-100 = A+	73-76 = B	60-62 = C-	0-50 = F
85-89 = A	70-72 = B-	57-59 = D+	
80-84 = A-	67-69 = C+	53-56 = D	
77-79 = B+	63-66 = C	50-52 = D-	

- *What do the Grades Mean?* – Loosely translated the letter grades mean the following: an A+ is truly outstanding and spectacular work that goes well above and beyond the normal expectations of an assignment and demonstrates a complete mastery of the subject matter. An A or an A- is excellent and exceptional work. A grade in the B range is good to very good work that demonstrates a solid grasp of the material. A grade in the C range is average work that demonstrates a satisfactory but incomplete grasp of the course material. A grade in the D range is unsatisfactory work of poor quality. And an F is failing work that does not meet the minimum requirements for the course. Because grades in the A range are exceptional and grades in the C range are average, A grades are rare and difficult to obtain. I'm telling you this so that you know that if you earn a 75 on an assignment it means that I think the assignment is good not excellent. If you earn a 95, it means it's one of the best pieces of work I've have ever seen for this kind of class.
- *Extensions* – There are no extensions for any assignment. Assignments are announced well in advance of due dates. If you know in advance that you cannot make a due date for an assignment, please discuss it with me beforehand. Requests for extensions after a due date has passed will only be granted in exceptional and unavoidable circumstances and must include (a) one typed, double-spaced page explaining the reason for missing the deadline, and (b) relevant documentation such as an official doctor's note. The written request for an extension must be in my hands within one week after the scheduled due date. I am under no obligation to accept late assignments; assignments that are accepted may suffer a significant penalty (5 points for each day late).
- *Negotiations and Missed Assignments* - I do not haggle with students over grades, nor do I listen to declarations about why a student deserves an extra point here or there. You and I will not be negotiating your grade for the class – you will be earning a grade based on criteria that are explicitly stated in class. In addition, after the final grades are posted for the semester I will not re-mark or re-consider any grade from earlier in the semester. If you do not understand why you got a particular grade or why you lost points on a given assignment, you should come to my office hours or make an appointment to see me and I will explain your grade. If you do not participate in, or hand in, the final exam or either of the collaborative papers you will receive an F for the course.

Course Schedule:

Week #1 – January 3rd

“Introduction to the Course: How Do We Talk to Strangers, Friends and Enemies?”

Reading:

Atul Gawande, “Slow Ideas: Some Innovations Spread Fast. How do You Speed the Ones that Don’t,” *The New Yorker* (July 29, 2013).

Week #2 – January 10th

“Aristotle and Classical Origins of the Link Between Friendship and Politics”

Reading:

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (books viii and ix).

Week #3 – January 17th

“American Pragmatism, Part I: The Argument for Community Life as the Essence of Democracy”

Reading:

John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems* (Swallow Press, 1954): pp. 3-36.

Week #4 – January 24th

“Narrative and The Rhetorical Constitution of a Public”

Readings:

Marshall Ganz, “What is Public Narrative?” – unpublished (2008).

Maurice Charland, “Constitutive Rhetoric: The Case of the *Peuple Quebécoise*” from *Quarterly Journal of Speech* vol. 73 (1987): 133-150.

*****Part #1 of Exegesis is Due.**

Week #5 – January 31st

“American Pragmatism, Part II – Why Immigrants Ought to be Friends in a Democracy”

Jane Addams, “The Subjective Necessity of Social Settlements,” from *The Jane Addams Reader* (Basic Books, 2001).

Week #6 – February 7th

“Communication Interlude #1 – Reflection and Feedback on Researching, Revising, Editing, Writing, and Speaking, and Practical Ways of Talking to Strangers, Enemies, and Friends”

No New Reading

*****Part #2 of Exegesis is due.**

Week #7 – February 14th

“Saul Alinsky and the Origin of Social Movements and Community Organizing”

Readings:

Saul Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals: A Pragmatic Primer for Realistic Radicals* (Vintage Books, 1971): 3-23, 48-62, and 81-97.

Week #8 – February 28th

“Does Alinsky’s Method Still Work?”

Readings:

Jeffrey Stout, *Blessed are the Organized: Grassroots Democracy in America* (Princeton University Press, 2012): 1-20, 93-124, and 148-164.

*****Part #1 of Analyze, Synthesize, and Persuade Due.**

Week #9 – March 7th

“Civility and Incivility as Rhetorical Practice: The Burgeoning Free Speech Crisis on University Campuses”

Reading:

For today’s class, each student will find an example, article, or primary source related to arguments around free speech on university campuses. We’ll be especially interested in examples of how these debates over free speech involve appeals to civility and uses of incivility.

Week #10 – March 14th

“Friendship, Politics, and Talking to Strangers”

Readings:

Danielle Allen, *Talking to Strangers: Anxieties of Citizenship Since Brown V Board of Education* (University of Chicago Press, 2006): Chapter 9 & 10.

*****Part #2 of Analyze, Synthesize, and Persuade Due.**

Week #11 – March 21st

“How Leaders Build Communities through Communication”

Reading:

Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis, and Annie McKee, *Primal Leadership: Unleashing the Power of Emotional Intelligence* (Harvard Business Review Press, 2013): 3-32 and 91-112.

Week #12 – March 28th

“Communication Interlude #2: Putting it all Together, or How to Be an Excellent Writer, Speaker, and Friend”

No New Reading.

*****Part #3 of Analyze, Synthesize, and Persuade Due.**

*****Final Draft of Deliberation is Due on April 6th by 5pm**