

MENNONITE BRETHREN BIBLICAL SEMINARY  
MF 540 INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION: PERSON, FAMILY, COMMUNITY

2-3 Semester Hours, Thursday 6-9 p.m.  
January 11-March 22  
March 29, April 12, April 19 (3 unit students only)

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**I. Course Description:**

This course works from a family systems approach to integrate concepts of basic communication theory with Biblical models of communication, and skill practice. Communication is viewed as a major method of intervention in counseling and pastoral ministry. One's own understanding of communication patterns is important for any kind of counseling or ministry. This course assumes a preventative stance, i.e., that a reduction of interpersonal problems may occur as a result of personal communication skill development. Listening, self-awareness, conflict resolution, confirmation, feedback, and assertiveness skills will be among those practiced.

**II. Course Objectives: (Knowledge, Skill Building, Personal and Spiritual Formation)**

1. To acquire knowledge about and competency in communication and counseling skills including identification of one's own individual style of communicating.
2. To integrate communication skills, and theory with the biblical model of communication.
3. To explore the contributions of communication theory to the therapeutic process.
4. To identify and decrease one's own barriers to communication.
5. To develop skills in listening, empathy, disclosure, recognizing verbal and nonverbal cues, assertiveness, confrontation, conflict resolution and self-awareness.

**Approach:** This is a skills oriented class, and the process of feedback, inquiry, and learning may open new areas of self-understanding and self-perception. We will seek to "speak the truth in love" and support one another, so that we may "build one another up." Matters of self-awareness, confidentiality, esteem, and growth are not to be treated lightly. Come prepared to grow and share! The teaching/learning format will include:

1. **Involvement:** Structured activities will help participants discover for themselves the relevance and importance of what is being learned.
2. **Understanding:** Brief lectures will expand on the reading, emphasize the points most important to know and clear up misconceptions.
3. **Modeling:** Demonstrating, practicing and applying the skills to one's personal life and ministry or counseling situations is key to the teaching-learning process.
4. **Action/Practice:** Because the learning of a skill rarely takes place without actual use of the skill, class participants will be encouraged to practice the skills outside of class.
5. **Reflection:** The written reflection papers are designed to develop self-awareness.
6. **Critique & Feedback:** By evaluating one's own performance and receiving feedback from others, students will discover and build on their strengths and improve their areas of

weakness. Study and practice groups are also encouraged.

III. **Required Textbooks** (\* are on two hour reserve at Hiebert Library)

- \*Bartel, Barry (1999). Let's Talk. Herald Press. Arch HM 132 B37 1999 (Paper 2)
- Galvin, K. M. and P. J. Cooper (2006). Making Connections: Readings in Relational Communication. Fourth Edition, Los Angeles: Roxbury Publishing Company. BF637.C45 M33 1996 (Paper 1, 2, 3)
- \*Schrock-Shenk C. and Ressler, L. (1999). Making Peace with Conflict. Herald Press. BV 4597.53 C58 M34 1999 (Paper 2)
- \*Sofield, Juliano, Hammett. (1990) Design for Wholeness: Dealing with Anger, Learning to Forgive. Building Self-Esteem. Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press. BV 4627 A5 S14 1990 (Paper 1)
- \*Wachtel, Paul L.(1993). Therapeutic Communication. Guilford. (for third unit MFCC students only) RC480.8 W33 1993 (Paper 1, 2, 3)

**Please Note:** A compilation of articles and handouts will be available for 24 hour check out at the Campus Center. These are particularly helpful for the self-reflection papers.

**Recommended Textbooks:** Some excerpts from these are assigned for all students, both two and three units of credit. (On Reserve at Hiebert Library and the Campus Center.)

- \*Bolton, Robert (1979). People Skills. Simon & Schuster. HM132.B65 1986 (Paper 1, 2)
- \*Daniels, David, and Virginia Price (2000). The Essential Enneagram, Harper Collins. BF698.35.E54 E88 2000 (Paper 1, 3)
- \*Elmer, Duane. (1993) Cross-Cultural Conflict. Intervarsity Press. BV4597.53.C58 E55 1993 (Paper 2)
- Gilmore, S. and P. Fraleigh. (1992) Style Profile for Communication at Work. (\$11.00) Friendly Press. See also: Personal Style Profile for Intimate Partners, Students. (Paper 1, 3)
- \*Greene, John O. and Burleson, Brant R. (2003) Handbook of Communication and Social Interaction Skills. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. HM1111 H36 2003 (Paper 1, 2, 3)
- \*McKay, M, Fanning, P. and K. Paleg. (1994). Couple Skills. New Harbinger. HM132 M3742 1994 (Paper 2)
- \*McKay, et.al. (1995). Messages: The Communication Skills Book New Harbinger. P90 M253 1995 (Paper 1, 2)
- Orbe, Mark P. and Carol J. Bruess. (2005) Contemporary Issues in Interpersonal Communication. Roxbury. (Paper 1, 2, 3)
- \*Stewart, John. Bridges Not Walls. (There are 8 copies of the 7<sup>th</sup> edition available in the campus center. Other editions are available in the library and on internet.) BF637 C45 B74 2006 (Paper 1, 2)
- Stewart, John, Karen Zediker, and Saskia Witteborn (2005) Together: Communicating Interpersonally. Roxbury, (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). See also Bridges Not Walls by John Stewart. (Paper 1, 2)

\*Vanier, Jean. (1997). Community and Growth, Paulist Press. BX2350.2 V25313 1989 (Paper 3)

\*Yerby, Janet, Buerkel-Rothfus, Nancy, & Bochner, Authur P. (1995). Understanding Family Communication. Gorsuch Scarisbrick, (2nd ed.). HQ518 Y47 1995 (Paper 2)

#### IV. Course Assignments/Grading and Due Dates:

Students taking the course for two hours need to read the assigned textbooks and additional readings, (approximately 800 pages), keep a reading log, take the final exam, and complete three, 4-5 page reflection papers. The requirements are as follows:

1. **Participation and Attendance**. Active, thoughtful participation in class discussion, role plays and activities. All absences must be cleared with the professor. **(10%)**
2. **Reading**. Careful reading of the assigned texts **and outside readings** is expected **before** the topic is discussed in class. A reading log should be kept with dates and what was read, plus a brief statement of the major thesis, how the author dealt with the material, and how you interacted with the ideas presented. Because this class is being taught in a weekend format, there will be quizzes covering the reading assigned each weekend. **Log for two units Due March 29; Log for three units Due April 19. (10%).**
3. **Preparation for Each Class**. The detailed assignment sheet gives the outline of readings, topics and action steps for each section of the course. Nine percent of your grade will be based on the requested readings, activities and questions. **(9%).**
4. **Self-Assessment**. Three 4-5 page reflective papers will be written. The purpose of these assignments is to develop personal awareness of interpersonal issues and communication styles. They are not research papers, although students should draw on various readings and must include a bibliography of sources consulted and footnotes where appropriate. Reflection on experience, personal insight, and feedback is crucial. The purpose of the written assignments is to engage in communication with yourself, God, and others. When you use a direct quotation, the APA style of footnoting (author, date, page) is preferred. Please acknowledge your sources, including experience, on which the paper is based. Include relevant skills worked on and feedback you have received. Further directions for these papers are on page 5. **Due Dates: January 31, February 28, March 29. (45%)**
5. **Quizzes and Final Exam**: **(26%)** Quizzes will be given each weekend over the assigned reading materials. The final exam will focus primarily on communication theories and vocabulary covered in assigned readings, and lectures. It will also include case studies, and short essay questions. Study questions will be provided and study groups are encouraged.
6. **Three Unit Requirements**: The additional project (workshop), reading, and take home questions which are due on **April 19** are described on the final page of the syllabus.

7. **Grading:** The assignments will be given the following weight:

Reflection Papers (3 x 15)	45%	Reading Log	10%
Class Participation & Attendance	10%	Final Examination	20%
Activities/questions/exercises	9%	Quizzes	6%

**Please Note: Students are expected to submit written assignments on time. Late Work will be graded down 2% for each day after the due date. ALL assignments must be completed to receive a passing grade in the course. The third unit work is worth one third of the course grade.**

VI. **Course Outline and Overview:** (A more detailed schedule will be provided in class.)

- I. Communicating as Persons: Valuing, Understanding and Disclosing Self.
- II. Communicating as Families: Attraction, Intimacy, Conflict, Forgiveness
- III. Promoting Communities of Growth and Healing: Therapeutic Communication, Conflict Resolution Skills, Group Communication, Stories, Metaphors.
- IV. Communication Theories and Interpersonal Approaches to Therapy and Pastoral Work

**January 31: Reflection Paper 1 is due, Early Papers are Welcome!**

**February 28: Reflection Paper 2 is due, Early Papers are Welcome!**

**March 15: Tentative Date for Final Exam for both two and three unit students.**

**March 29: Reflection Paper 3 is due. Reading Log for two unit students is due.**

**March 29,**

**April 12, 19: Workshop Presentations (These can be presented earlier.)**

**April 19: Take home study guide questions, Reading Log and Presentation Projects are due for three unit students.**

### **Self-Assessment Reflection Papers**

Each 4-5 page paper should reflect an understanding of the issue as it relates to interpersonal communication, and its relationship to Christian life and/or Scripture. Demonstrate an awareness of self as perceived by others, including both personal insight, and feedback from others. Please talk to at least one person about each paper. Describe your willingness to make changes and skills you are developing and working on. It is important to show the relevance of texts and other readings and all bibliography and sources must be noted. Finally, please reflect on how, why, and when these issues and questions might be important in your vocation of counseling or ministry. The references in parentheses are suggestions for additional, optional readings and Biblical passages that will assist you in answering the questions and writing your papers.

I. **Communicating As Persons: Valuing, Understanding & Disclosing Self** (Jan. 31, Mt.5-7)

- A. What aspects of verbal and nonverbal communication are important for you to attend to? What are your communication barriers and "red flag" words/actions? What social and conversational skills do you need to develop? (See Fast, Henley)
- B. What is your basic temperament and communication style? (Gilmore, Myers-Briggs) What are your strengths and growth areas as a communicator? (Bolton, Lawyer) Where are you on the continuum of passive-assertive-aggressive communication?
- C. How does your self-esteem and self-disclosure affect your communication? (Wachtel) What builds and negates your self-esteem and self-disclosure? (See Ellison, Stoop) What kinds of self-talk & self-care do you need to work on? How do you avoid burnout?
- D. Which of the Johari windows apply to you? To your spouse or friends? (Draw them!) What is the value and risk of self-disclosure as a Christian? As a counselor or minister? How can you help yourself and others in the area of **shyness**? (See Zimbardo, Binder)
- E. What are some things you have learned about yourself from Jesus' example or teachings?

**II. Communicating as Families: Attraction, Intimacy, Conflict (Feb. 28, Ephesians, Yerby, Greene & Burleson, McKay, Couple Skills, Pipher, The Shelter of Each Other)**

- A. Why is it important to be aware of gender differences in communication? (Penner) How do you encourage members of the opposite sex to feel heard/understood? Where are your growth points (strengths and weaknesses) in communication with the opposite sex? In couple or dyadic communication? (See Tannen, Hiebert)
- B. Why are you attracted to a certain person? What attracts others to you? (Stewart, Yerby) How will you deal with interpersonal attraction in yourself and others when you work as a counselor or pastor? What are your personal guidelines in this area? How comfortable are you in male/female relationships? (See Stewart, Tannen, Penner, both McKay, et. al.)
- C. Briefly describe your family's communication and conflict rules and patterns (Yerby, page 277) and discuss how this has affected you. Do you prefer the one up or the one down position? Why? How might you change this? (Watzlawick, Elmer, pp. 80-98)
- D. Give several examples of paradoxical communication which you have experienced. How do you deal with a double bind? (Fredman & Sherman, Haley, Berger, Sluzki)
- E. Please include in this paper your own personal and/or congregational guidelines for keeping yourself, your clients, colleagues and parishioners safe from sexual molest. (Edelwich & Brodsky, Sexual Dilemmas for the Helping Professional, etc.)

**III. Promoting Communities of Growth and Healing (March 29, James, Vanier, Yalom)**

- A. How does your style affect the way you function in community and how you respond to

conflict? (Bartel) How do you function in groups? Where are you connected and supported? Where do your communities need to grow? What are your growth plans? (Yalom, Theories of Group Psychotherapy, workbook & on reserve, Egan, Janis)

- B. How do you practice and experience forgiveness in your daily life? (McCullough, et.al) Are there times when you should "not forgive"? (Augsburger, Smedes, Davis)
- C. How and when has communication been therapeutic (healing) for you?(SSR, Wachtel) Which techniques of therapeutic communication (metaphor, myth, story, imagery, paradox, etc.) will you use and why? How will you use interpersonal/relationship theory in your work? (Wachtel, Barker, Bergmann, Fredman, & Sherman, Klerman, Hiebert)
- D. How do you say goodbye and deal with loss, grief, failure, challenge? (Worden, Vanier)
- E. Please include in this paper at least one example of how you manage ( or have learned from) cross-cultural communication or conflict (Shrock-Shenk, Ressler, Elmer)

Many of the books on reserve at Hiebert Library and the articles and excerpts in the Binders in the North Wing will be useful for self-assessment papers. You will find Articles in Binders on:

- 1. Self-Esteem & Self Disclosure
- 2. Shyness, Zimbardo
- 3. Communication Style
- 4. Burnout and Stress
- 5. Assertiveness Skills
- 6. Interpersonal Attraction
- 7. Leas, Conflict in the Church
- 8. Running Through the Thistles
- 9. Suicide, Force & Faberow

MBBS academic policies are described in the *Academic Handbook*, which is updated annually. The *Handbook* includes policies on extensions for incomplete coursework, academic integrity, non-discriminatory language, academic appeals, etc. Students are expected to be familiar with MBBS academic policies and to follow them. Copies of the *Academic Handbook* are available on the MBBS Web Site.

### **Supplemental Reading**

- Braithwaite, Dawn O. and Leslie A. Baxter. (2006) Engaging Theories in Family Communication: Multiple Perspectives. Sage.
- Cormier, S. and Hackney, H.(1999) Counseling Strategies and Interentions. Allyn & Bacon.
- Floyd, Kory and Mark T. Morman. (2006). Widening the Family Circle: New Research on Family Communication. Sage.
- Klerman, G. L., M. M. Weissman, B.J. Rounsaville & E. S. Chevron. (1984). Interpersonal Psychotherapy of Depression. Basic Books.
- Spiegel, S. (1996). An Interpersonal Approach to Child & Adolescent Psychotherapy. Jason Aronson.

### **First Paper**

- \*Bolton R. and D.G. Bolton. (1984). Social Style/Management Style. Amacom.HF55488 B635 1984

- Bower, Sharon A. and Bower, Gordon H. Asserting Yourself: A Practical Guide.
- \*Brody, Clair. (1984). Women Therapists Working with Women. Springer. RC489 F45 W67
- \*Dinkmeyer, Don and Lesoncey, Lewis. (1980). The Encouragement Book. Prentice-Hall. BF637 E53 D56
- \*Ellison, Craig, Ed. (1993). Your Better Self: Christianity, Psychology & Self-Esteem. Harper. BV4639 Y64
- \*Fast, Julius. (1970). Body Language. Pocket Books.
- \*Griffin, Emory A. (1987). Making Friends and Making Them Count. InterVarsity Press. BV4647 F7 G74
- \*Henley, Nancy. (1977). Body Politics. Prentice Hall. BF637 C45 H44
- \*Lawyer, John and Neil Katz. (1985). Communication Skills For Ministry. Kendall-Hunt.
- Meier, Paul, Frank Minirth. (1993). What They Didn't Teach You in Seminary. Thomas Nelson.
- Miller, Sherod, D. Wackman, E. Nunnally, & P. Miller. (1988). Connecting with Self and Others. See Workbook also. Interpersonal Communication Program, Inc.
- Miller, Sherod, (1982). Straight Talk. Signet.
- \*Sanders, Randolph K. (1985). Speak Up: Christian Assertiveness. Westminster Press. BV 4647 A78 S26 1985
- \*Stewart, John. Bridges Not Walls. 6th ed. Random House, 1995, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, 1986., 4<sup>th</sup> edition.
- \*Stoop, David. (1982). Self Talk: Key to Personal Growth. Revell.

## Second Paper

- Bandler, R., Grinder, D. (1976) Reframing. Structure of Magic II. Science and Behavior Books.
- \*Berger, M. M., Editor. (1978). Beyond the Double Bind. Brunner/Mazel. RC514 B48
- \*Edelwich and Brodsky. Sexual Dilemmas for the Helping Professional. RC480.8 E3 1991
- \*Elmer, Duane. (1993) Cross-Cultural Conflict. Intervarsity Press. BV4597.53.C58 E55
- Fein, Melvyn I. (1993). I.A.M.: A Common Sense Guide To Coping With Anger. Praeger.
- \*Fredman & Sherman. (1986). Handbook of Structured Technique. Brunner/Mazel. RC488.5 S49 1986
- \*Haley, J. (1977). Problem Solving Therapy. Torch Books, Harper & Row, Jossey-Bass.
- \*Hiebert, William, Joseph P. Gillespie, Robert F. Stahmann. (1993). Dynamic Assessment In Couple Therapy. Lexington Books.
- Kassinove, Howard. (1995). Anger Disorders. Washington D. C. Taylor & Francis.
- \*Kraybill, Ronald. (1981). Repairing the Breach. MCC. 2nd ed. Herald Press.
- \*Leas, Speed B. (1982). Leadership and Conflict. Nashville: Abingdon. BF637 L4 1982
- \*McKay, M., P. Fanning, K. Paleg. (1994). Couple Skills, New Harbinger.
- \*McKay, et.al. (1995). Messages: The Communication Skills Book New Harbinger. P90 M253 1995
- \*McCullough, Michael, Kenneth Pargament and Carl Thoresen. (2000). Forgiveness: Theory, Research & Practice. Guilford. BF637 F67 F67 2000
- \*Penner, Carol. (1998). Women & Men: Gender in the Church. Herald Press. Arch BT700 W65
- Pipher, Mary. (1997). The Shelter of Each Other. Ballantine.
- Richardson, Ronald W. (1984). Family Ties that Bind. Self Counsel Press.
- \*Sluzki, C. E., & Ransom, D. C., ed. (1976). Double Bind. Grune & Stratton. RC454.4 D68

- \*Stewart, John. Bridges Not Walls. 6th ed. Random House, 1995, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, 1986.,4<sup>th</sup> edition.  
Tannen, Deborah. (1990). You Just Don't Understand. New York: Ballantine Books.
- \*Watzlawick, P., Beavin J., and Jackson, D. Pragmatics: A Study of Interactional Patterns, Pathologies, and Paradoxes. Norton. BF637 C45 W3
- \*Yerby, Janet, Buerkel-Rothfus, Nancy, & Bochner, Authur P. (1995). Understanding Family Communication. Gorsuch Scarisbrick, (2nd ed.). HQ518 Y47 1995

### Third Paper

- \*Augsburger, David. (1979). \*Anger and Assertiveness in Pastoral Care, Fortress, \*Caring Enough to Forgive. Caring Enough Not to Forgive. See also, \*Freedom of Forgiveness.
- \*Barker. (1985). Using Metaphors: In Psychotherapy. Bruner/Mazel. RC489 M47 B37 1985
- \*Bergmann, Joel. (1985). Fishing For Barracuda. Norton.RC480.55 B47 1985
- \*Davis, Ron Lee. (1978). A Forgiving God In An Unforgiving World. Harvest House. BT795 D38 1984
- \*Egan, Gerard. (1977). You and Me: The Skills of Communicating and Relating to Others. Wadsworth/Brooks/Cole. HM 132 E34 1977
- \*Elmer, Duane. (1993) Cross-Cultural Conflict. Intervarsity Press. BV4597.53.C58 E55
- \*Fredman & Sherman. (1986). Handbook of Structured Technique. Brunner/Mazel. RC488.5 S49 1986
- \*Heldmann, Mary Lynne. (1988). When Words Hurt. Ballantine. BF637 C74 H45 1990
- \*Hiebert, William, Joseph P. Gillespie, Robert F. Stahmann. (1993). Dynamic Assessment In Couple Therapy. Lexington Books.
- Hill, Clara and Karen O'Brien. (1999). Helping Skills, APA. See especially Chapters 6, 8, & 15.
- \*Janice, Irving Lester (1982). Group Think. Houghton Mifflin.
- Klerman, G. L., M. M. Weissman, B.J. Rounsaville & E. S. Chevron. (1984). Interpersonal Psychotherapy of Depression. Basic Books.
- \*Schrock-Shenk C. and Ressler, L. (1999). Making Peace with Conflict. Herald Press. BV 4597.53 C58 M34 1999 (Paper 2)
- \*Schlossberg, N., E.B. Waters, J. Goodman. (1995). Counseling Adults In Transition. Springer See Ch. 8, "Group Counseling", pp. 203-240. BF637 C6 S325 1984
- \*Smedes, Louis. (1984). Forgive and Forget: Healing the Hurts We Don't Deserve. Harper. BJ1476 S64 1984
- \*Vanier, Jean. (1997). Community and Growth, Paulist Press. BX2350.2 V25313 1989
- \*Wachtel, Paul L.(1993). Therapeutic Communication. Guilford.
- Watzlawick, Paul, Weakland, John and Fisch, Richard. Change: (1974). Principles of Problem Formation and Problem Resolution. New York: Norton.
- Watzlawick, Paul. (1978). The Language of Change. Basic Books.
- \*Worden,William J. (1982). Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy. Spring. RC455.5 L67 W67 1982
- \*Yalom, Irving. (1975). Theory of Group Counseling. Basic Books. RC488 Y3 1995
- \*Most of these will be on two hour reserve at the Hiebert Library, and in the Campus Center.

### For The Third Unit of Credit:

Students will be expected to work at understanding the therapeutic value of good interpersonal communication and basic communication theories of counseling and group dynamics. Haley and Satir's videos and writings will be used as representative of communication theorists and therapists. There will be other assigned readings in Wachtel, Watzlawick, et. al. To receive the third unit of credit: (1) Each student will develop a workshop or seminar style presentation on some aspect of Interpersonal Communication that can be used in his or her work as a counselor or pastor. This will include goals, objectives, resources, and activities to help persons, families, or communities communicate with self and others. (2) This project should reflect 400 pages of additional reading and research beyond the required textbooks. A list of resources and annotated bibliography is expected. (3) Students are expected to give a brief oral presentation, sharing their topic, goals and at least one activity or intervention with the class, so others can benefit from these projects. There will be feedback given by class members to each presenter, focusing on how the ideas might be used and further developed dynamics. (4) There will also be take home study guide questions for this section of the course, which need to be completed and turned in. Additional information on the presentation and feedback requirements will be given in class.

**Grading:** The development of the Interpersonal Communication workshop/seminar, extra reading and take home study guide questions will count as 33% of your final grade. All work for the third unit will be due on or before **April 25**.

**Books Needed For Take Home Questions for the third unit of credit:** (The first four entries are primarily for pastoral majors; the last six entries are for MFCC majors.)

- \*Augsburger, David (1979). Anger and Assertiveness in Pastoral Care. Fortress.  
See also Caring Enough to Forgive; Caring Enough Not To Forgive, Freedom of Forgiveness, Hearing Enough To Hear and Be Heard, The Love-Fight. (Paper 1, 2)
- \*Haley, J. (1977). Problem Solving Therapy. Torch Books, Harper & Row, Jossey-Bass. (Paper 2)
- \*Hiebert, William, Joseph P. Gillespie, Robert F. Stahmann. (1993). Dynamic Assessment In Couple Therapy. Lexington Books. (Paper 2)
- \*Janice, Irving Lester (1982). Group Think. Houghton Mifflin. (Paper 3)
- \*McCullough, Pargament, Thoresen. (2000) Forgiveness: Theory, Research & Practice. Guilford. (Several hardback copies are available for \$10. from the instructor.) (Paper 2)
- \*Satir, Virginia. The Magic of Satir: The New Peoplemaking. Changing with Families. Conjoint Family Therapy, and other titles or videos by Satir. (Paper 2)
- \*Wachtel, Paul L.(1993). Therapeutic Communication. Guilford. (Paper 1, 2, 3)
- \*Watzlawick, Paul, Beavin Jane and Jackson, Don. Pragmatics: A Study of Interactional Patterns, Pathologies, and Paradoxes. New York: Norton. (Paper 2)
- \*Yalom, Irving (1975) Theory of Group Counseling. Basic Books. (Paper 3)