Don’t

Panic!

**A Cyber-Hiker’s Guide to the**

**Interpersonal Communication**

**Galaxy**

**This Course Could Change Your Life**

That’s a pretty bold statement, but almost every semester I hear someone tell me that taking this course has improved their marriage, helped them communicate better with their children, improved their business relations on the job, and in general simply helped them live a happier more fulfilled life. Why? Because this course is about relationships and especially about the glue that holds relationships together -- Communication. Improve your interpersonal communication, you improve your relationships. Improve your relationships and your improve your life. That’s why this course, taken seriously, can do more than simply fulfill a general education requirement. It can change your life.

**What You Will Learn**

In this course you will learn:

1. How messages are transmitted from one person to another, how those messages can be distorted and how to reduce that distortion.

2. How to understand other people and empathize with them in spite of differences in culture, gender, occupation, or education.

3. How to deal with difficult people ( and how not to be a difficult person )

4. How to improve relationships with your family, your friends, your business associates and with those you love.

5. Psychological principles for understanding your own communication with yourself and how that affects your communication with other.

6. How to develop a sense of ethics concerning your communication.

**The Basics**

**Textbook**

*The Interpersonal Communication Book 12th Edition* by Joseph Devito

Also available online at:

http://www.coursesmart.com/9780205506767?\_instructoruserid=1830464

**Assignments**

Book Review - 100 points

Journal Entries – 140

Final - 200 points

Term Paper - 200 points

Blackboard Discussion Posting – 70 points

Book Review Speech – 100 points

Term Paper Speech – 100 points

Position Speech – 100 points

Academic Writing Guide Quiz – 50 Points

**Grading Scale**

819-910 = A

728– 818 = B

637– 727 = C

546-636 = D

Under 546 = F

**Due Dates (Written assignments are considered “on time” if received by 11:59 pm on the due date)**

February 10 -- Post Book to Review, Topic for Research Paper and Choose Topic for Position Speech. These are to be posted to the appropriate forums on the discussion board.

February 15 – Quiz on Guide to Academic Writing Due

February 24 – First Speech of Three (Book Review, Research Paper, Position Speech) You choose which speech to give.

March 8 – Chapter Journals 1-5 due

March 16 – Second Speech of Three

April 8 – Chapter Journals 6-10 Due

April 26 – Book Review and Research Paper Due (I will give 25 points of extra credit for each paper submitted to me for critique prior to April 1)

May 9 – Chapter Journals 11-13 Due

May 12 – Last Speech of three

May 13 – Final Due

***A note about late papers: Assignments that do not make it to me by the due date will receive a 10 percent reduction in grade up to a week after the due date. I will accept no papers past one week following the due date. In the event that BlackBoard is down at the school on the due date, I will allow until the school computer is up and running again without penalty. However, I will not afford the same accommodation if it is down during the week of "grace" following the due date.***Do not wait till the last minute to submit your papers. Technical issues can and do occur. I cannot extend deadlines based on your technical difficulties. As a precaution, complete your assignments at least 24 hours in advance of the due date and have a backup plan in case your computer goes down like using a library computer, a friend or relatives computer, etc. The week of grace should cover enough time to find an alternative.

**[Note: The due dates for the discussion board postings are listed on the discussion board within the description or the topic for discussion. To receive full credit the initial posting must be received by Wednesday and the responses to other student postings by Saturday]**

**Getting in Touch**

One of the basic myths of online education is that instructors are unavailable to students. Indeed, I find myself communicating more on a one to one basis with my online students than my face-to-face ones. That communication takes place in a different venue such as email or instant messaging, but it takes place. A similar myth is that in an online setting you get answers from instructors more slowly online. In one sense this is true. You can’t just walk up to me and ask the question like you would in class. But, consider this if you have a question which arises outside of class, in a face-to-face setting you have to wait until class time or an office hour to ask the question and get an answer. Online you can fire off an email and usually get the answer within a few hours.

Here are the basic ways to get in touch with me.

**Email**

This is your best option most of the time. I check email several times a day and try to answer student email as quickly as possible. You can usually expect a 24 hour or less turn around.

To expedite matters, I would like you to include the word **student** in the subject line of your email. For instance, “Student Question about the Term Paper.” I have my email program set up to send all student email to a special file which I check first. Also, make the subject line specific. Instead of a subject line like “Your student,” use “Student needs help with book review.”

If you are emailing me through the Blackboard system, you will be using a school provided email account. So, be sure you have activated that account. You can find out more at the Reedley College home page.

**Instant Messaging**

You can instant message me online using Yahoo! Messenger, AIM, or MSN Messenger. My ID is webservant2003 for all of them . If I am online, I will respond. However, please identify yourself as a student. If I’m busy, I may ignore people who just want to chat, but I don’t ignore my students. I leave my IM on most of the time I’m online so you should be able to reach me if I am working on the computer.

**Office Hours**

I do not keep office hours during summer session. However, you can make an appointment with me by email.

**The Book Review**

**750-1000 Words**

**100 Points Possible**

**[Complete guidelines for the book review are found in the *Student Guide to Academic Writing. If you fail to follow those guidelines you will lose points]***

Many of you are familiar with book reports where basically you summarize the general subject of the book. A book review is different. In a book review you do more than summarize the book you give a critique of the book. What did you agree with and why? What did you disagree with and why? Think about it as a formal way of telling someone who hasn’t read the book why they should or should not read it.

The bulk of the book review should be focused on critique and not summary. No more than one-third of the review should try to summarize the book. If more than 1/3 of the review involves summary, you will lose points. The most common mistake students make in reviewing a book is that they summarize too much. Give only enough summary for me to know the basic them of the book and the author’s general approach to the subject matter. This should be no more than 3-4 paragraphs. If you spend more space than that summarizing the book, you will be docked points. This is for the summary only. Obviously, the entire book review is more than 3 paragraphs. The rest of the review needs to be analysis and critique.

Analyzing a book is not simply summarizing what the author says and then tacking on to it, “I agree with the author here” without providing any reasons for agreement. You must, for this assignment, give your personal critique of the book identifying *and discussing* its strengths and weaknesses.

This book is to be a **nonfiction book** dealing with the subject areas of interpersonal communication, interpersonal relationships, marriage and family or business communication on an interpersonal level. ***No novels, short story collections, devotional books, personal experiences or biographies***. If you submit a book review of a book that is not related to the subject matter of this class or which is a fiction book, biography, personal experience, family history or devotional book, then you will receive **zero** points for both the paper and the oral presentation. Nearly every semester I give out two or three zero grades to students who fail to pay attention to this rule. So, if you are unsure of whether or not the book is appropriate, please contact me. However, be sure to tell me the full title and give me some of the blurbs from the book jacket and a short summary of the content of the book so I can judge well. I don’t know every book on the market.

Books that have a religious world view are alright as long as they address the issues of interpersonal communication or relationships and are not simply collections of inspirational stories or religious lessons. Thus, *The Strong Willed Child* by James Dobson would be fine. However, *Chicken Soup for the Soul* or *Springs in the Desert* would not be.

**Definitions:**

Fiction: A story told in a narrative style which is not true and has as its main goal to entertain the reader.

Novel: A book length work of fiction.

Short Stories: Short works of fiction.

Biographies: Literature which tells the story of a real person’s life or the story of a portion of that person’s life or the “life” of a group like a family.

Personal Experiences: Books written in the first person recording a person’s life or experience. May also be called a memoir. This would include an individual or family’s “personal journey” or experience of building better personal relationships. If the book is primarily about an individual or family’s personal experience, then it is not proper for this course.

**Book Approval**

To eliminate any confusion about what is or is not an appropriate book for your review, I require that all books be approved by me prior to completion of the Assignment. Therefore, you must post to the appropriate forum on the discussion board, the title and author of the book and a one line description of the book. Please to avoid embarrassment, read the guidelines above before choosing a book. Your book choice must be posted by **February 10** in the **Writing Workshop Discussion Board Forum for that Purpose.**

**Writing the Book Review**

You probably have written book reports since grade school. Most of them probably did little more than summarize the basic points found in the book. A book review is different. Like a movie review, a book review evaluates a book and makes a recommendation concerning it.

To write a book review well, you must first read well. Read the book with a pen or highlighter in hand. If the book you are reviewing belongs to someone else or is on loan from a library use Post-it notes to record your comments. As you read, mark passages which stand out to you. These can be both passages you like and those which you do not like.

Next you need to write the review. The book review has four parts: The introduction, the summary, the analysis and the recommendation.

**The Introduction.**  As with any writing you need to grab the reader’s attention right away. Don’t think that just because you are turning in a paper to an instructor who has to read the paper that the aesthetics of writing are unimportant. After reading a stack of dull papers, one that is well crafted catches an instructor’s attention and that usually translates into a higher grade for you.

The introduction should be engaging and it should clearly identify the tone of the review. It should indicate whether it will be a positive or negative review. For instance, a review of the book *Love is Never Enough* by Aaron Beck, might begin: “In the 1960’s Sonny and Cher sang “Love will Keep Us Together.” We all know how that worked out. The fact is that affection alone is not sufficient to ensure a good marriage. Aaron Beck contends that maintaining a marriage involves hard work. His book *Love is Never Enough* provides the reader with a practical guide to what really will keep a couple together.”

**The Summary.**  In order for the reader to understand your analysis, they need to know a little bit about the book. However, the summary should be very limited. For this assignment, it should be no more than one to three paragraphs or about 100 words or less. Just give a brief overview of the basics of the book. It’s alright if you leave out specifics as long as your reader understands the general themes of the book. For instance, that review of Beck’s book could read:

“In this book Beck applies the principles of cognitive therapy to achieving marital bliss. Beck shows how dysfunctional thought patterns, assumptions, symbolic thinking and unrealistic expectations lead to discord in a marriage. He also gives specific strategies to improve one’s marriage by improving one’s thought life.

**The Analysis.** This section might be divided into two sub sections: those things you agreed with and those things you didn’t agree with. Under each section identify two or three specific items to analyze. Identify the point made by the author, give your opinion of that point, and, this is most important, give a reason why you agreed with that. For instance, I might write the following: “Beck identifies symbolic thinking as a key problem in many marriages. Couples often place symbolic meaning on actions taken by their partners which are often inaccurate. For instance, a husband forgets an anniversary and the wife believes he doesn’t love her anymore when in fact, he just isn’t good remembering dates. I thoroughly agree with this. I have seen in my friends’ marriages that many are angry at their partners for things done innocently, but my friend has placed a meaning to the action which wasn’t there.”

**The Recommendation.** Finally, in the last paragraph make a recommendation to the reader. This recommendation might be to read the book or to not read it. This can be an unqualified recommendation like, “This book is a valuable addition to any library.” It can also be qualified. For instance, you might say, “This book is excellent for those in committed relationships or about to enter into one. However, for a person not ready to settle down, it probably isn’t worth reading.”

This is obviously not the only way to write a book review, but it is one good way to do it. I look forward to reading your reviews.

**Research Paper**

**2000-2500 Words**

**200 Points**

This paper is a major project. This research paper is to be on a topic related to interpersonal communication, interpersonal relationships, marriage and family, or business communication on an interpersonal basis.  **Topics on any other topic will receive a zero score.** You must post your topic on your writing workshop group discussion board by **June 22** and have your topic approved by me. This helps prevent students using inappropriate topics.

This paper is a research paper. That means you must do research. You have a minimum of 4 sources of information in order to receive a “C”. You need to have 5 sources for a “B.” You need 6 sources or more for an “A.” Of course, having this number of sources does not guarantee a certain grade. However, you cannot be considered for the grade without them. This means sources which are cited in the paper and not simply listed in the bibliography.

A research paper or term paper is NOT a personal essay. While I will allow some latitude in using the ***occasional*** personal reference, such references should comprise no more than 5 percent of the total paper. Keep your focus on the research. Do not give me your opinion, just give me the facts.

**Research Sources**

***Now, a few words about the research sources. You must have at least one from traditional print sources. That means books, magazines or newspaper articles and not web sites. More research guidelines are found in the Student Guide to Academic writing and the Tegrity Class on the subject.***

*Web research*

One of the great things about the World Wide Web is that it enables anyone to create a web page and become their own publisher. One of the terrible things about the World Wide Web is that it enables anyone to create a web page and become their own publisher. The World Wide Web is abundant in both trash and treasure. In recent years, I have noticed that many students can't tell the difference between the trash and the treasure. Therefore, I am setting some guidelines relative to what types of online resources are appropriate for this class.

**Library resources.** The Reedley college library subscribes to several excellent online resources. These can be found on the Reedley College website . Also, anything accessed through ProQuest would be considered a “print” resource because that service simply stores the text from traditional journals and newspapers.

**Online peer-reviewed journals.** Some academic journals are published primarily online. An example is The Journal of Computer Mediated Communication ([http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/117979306/home](http://jcmc.indiana.edu/) ). This type of journal has a panel of experts which review the articles prior to publication. You can tell if the Journal is a peer-reviewed journal by reading the submission guidelines for articles. If you are in doubt, e-mail me with the URL for the site.

**News organization sites.** This refers to web site set up by broadcast or print news sources. These would include new sites by the major networks, the cable news networks, a major local and national newspapers. Any "news organization" with a stated bias is not appropriate. Therefore the online newsletter of the Environmental Defense Fund would not be considered a news organization even though it might contain "news" items.

If you have found a web site which you feel is an appropriate site containing reliable, accurate, and reasonably unbiased information, which does not fit in to one of those three categories, e-mail me with the URL. I will let you know whether or not it is an appropriate site.

**A note about Wickipedia** : many of my students use Wickipedia as their primary source for information. This is a very dangerous thing to do. Wickipedia is not an encyclopedia in the same manner as *Encyclopaedia Britannica* or *World Book* is an encyclopedia. In *Encyclopaedia Britannica, Encarta*, and *World Book,* the articles are written by recognized experts in the field, they are reviewed by other experts in the field, and finally they are edited for publication. Wickipedia , on the other hand, has articles written by anyone who wants to write an article, and those articles are open to be edited by anyone who wants to edit the article. While it sounds very the egalitarian and democratic, there's no way of knowing whether or not the person writing the article knows what they're talking about. And even if the original author was careful, another person can come along and insert inaccurate information. Even the Wickipedia management advises caution when using their site for research. ***You may not use Wikipedia as a resource for this paper. Twenty Points will be deducted if you do.***

*Balance*

I don’t wish to step on anyone’s toes, but do not take all your materials from religious documents, magazines with a political bias, books or periodicals with a specific social agenda or bias. When bias is unavoidable, then seek out opposing points of view and accurately and objectively report the major ones including those with which you disagree.

*Religious Sources*

I am personally heavily involved with my own church. The reason I say that is to put what I must say in context. In general, avoid using books, articles, and websites which promote a particular religious point of view unless your paper is specifically about how a particular religion approaches the topic. For instance, if you are writing about arranged marriages in the Sikh religion, you would obviously reference Sikh writers. However, if you use the writings of Sikh religious leaders as evidence that arranged marriages are best, that would probably not be appropriate. Likewise, if you want to discuss a family structure in which the wife is subordinate to the husband, that is fine. But don’t write a paper which uses Bible quotes or the quotes of religious writers as evidence that such a structure is best. You need to provide unbiased research to support such a contention. This does not mean you can’t use anything published by a religious publisher. Some religious publishers publish books which are essentially secular in nature. You may use these books if they meet the following criteria:

1. The author is recognized as an authority on the subject with appropriate secular credentials such as degrees from liberal arts colleges, state credentialing, etc.
2. The material referenced is based on published scientific studies or unbiased references.
3. Does not depend on religious doctrine or the holy writings of the religion as the sole basis of the observation.

Faith-based writing is appropriate for Bible studies or religious magazines, but is not appropriate for academic writing.

**Writing Your Paper**

While it is impossible to give you a complete education on writing term papers in a few paragraphs, here are a few tips.

1. **Start Early.** Select a topic in the next few days. The summer will rush by quickly. The longer you wait to get started, the more rushed you will be at the end. Set yourself a schedule. Map out when you will research, write and rewrite your paper.
2. **Source Everything.** If you have never written a term paper or formal research paper, you need to know that writing a term paper is very different than writing a personal essay. We have already mentioned the fact that it is research-based. This also means that you need to “source” everything which comes from someplace other than your own imagination. What we mean by “sourcing” is using in-text source citations. These take the form of a short phrase contained within parentheses giving a reference to the original source of the information. It will look like this (Jones, 1999) in APA style. I do require you to follow APA style and not MLA. See the writing guide for details on APA style.
3. **Save as a single file.** I don’t know what it is with some people, but when they send me their paper, they send separate files for the cover sheet, the paper and the works cited. Don’t do that! You wouldn’t turn in a hard copy paper that way. Send the whole paper as a whole paper.
4. **Write and Rewrite then Rewrite Again.** After you have written your paper, go back and look at it critically. Did you cover everything you needed to cover? Were your transitions tight? Is it organized well? Did you support all your points with specific research? Were you using too much personal experience and personal opinion? How was your spelling and punctuation? Read your paper out loud. This should help you spot problems you might not see reading silently. If English is your second language, have someone else check your spelling, punctuation and grammar.
5. **Ask for help.** If you need help, be sure to email me and ask. Better to ask for help than to make an avoidable error.

**Your paper needs to conform to APA style**. *The Student Guide to Academic Writing* (in the documents section) included instructions on APA style. Following another style will result in a deduction in points.

**Guidelines for your Papers**

1. All papers must be double-spaced with 12 point font. Approved fonts include: Arial, Helvetica, Times Roman (any variation), Verdana or Tahoma.
2. Papers must be sent through TurnItIn as complete documents. That means that title sheet, paper and works cited page must be included in the same file. If the works cited is not contained in the same file as the paper, you will lose 25 points.
3. Source citations and works cited pages must conform to APA style. If sources are not cited at all, you will lose 50 points. If you fail to have a works cited page you will lose 50 points. Inconsistent source citation will result in a variable loss of points at the discretion of the instructor and in proportion to the lack of diligence to providing proper credit.
4. Late papers will lose 10 points.
5. Your paper must conform to the guidelines listed in *The Student Guide to Academic Writing.* Failure to do so will result in reductions in grade in accordance with the guidelines contained within that handbook.

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**Extra Credit**

For all the obsessive-compulsive types out there who want extra credit, you can have it. You can make up to 75 points of extra credit in this class. Here are a few ways:

1. Create a web page on a topic related to one of the topics covered in this class. (15-50 points) There are many places online where you can create your own web site for free. These include [Lycos.com](http://www.lycos.com/), [Yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com/), and [Tripod.com](http://www.tripod.com/) among others. Choose one of the topics covered in class related to interpersonal communication, interpersonal relationships, marriage and family or interpersonal in a business setting. The depth of coverage of the topic will determine the number of points you will receive for this assignment.
2. Keep a “blog” or online journal with at least 15 entries related to interpersonal communication or relationships. (15-25 points) Blogging has become a major form of self-expression online. You can set up a personal blog at any number of places on the web including [Blogger.com](http://www.blogger.com/), [Blogspot.com](http://www.blogspot.com/), [Livejournal.com](http://www.livejournal.com/) , Focus your entries on interpersonal relationships. I can also set up a blog for your use here on BlackBoard. Just let me know.
3. Write an extra credit book review of 500-700 words on a book related to course content. (50 points) Basically, this is the same as the book review assignment and will be graded in the same way.
4. Think up something on your own and get it approved through me. You may have another idea related to interpersonal communication or relationships. If so, let me know.
5. Bluelight Specials. Occasionally, I’ll post an extra credit opportunity in the announcements section of the Blackboard. These will vary in terms of the point value.

**Submitting Chapter Journals**

For each chapter you will do three things: Outline the chapter, identify three things you found personally useful and give a personal example of one principle discussed in the chapter. You must submit your chapter outlines on the forms contained in the **Assignment**s section of BlackBoard

**Posting to the Discussion Board**

Another myth of online education is that you don’t have any interaction with other students. However, many of my students indicate that they have more interaction in an online class than in a face-to-face one. For one thing, you are not limited by time. In a 50-minute hour class, there is only so much time for discussion and those students who are more loquacious tend to dominate the conversation.

Online everyone has an equal shot at “air time.” Also, you can think through what you want to say. Of course, how much interaction you get depends on you. Some students approach the discussion board and just try to post the minimum number of messages to meet the requirement. But, if you really read other people’s responses and respond to them, you can start a satisfying conversation, albeit in a different type of environment.

Nearly every week discussion questions are posted on the discussion board. You will need to post an original response by Wednesday of the week. This response needs to be at least 100 words in length. You will also need to post responses to at least two other student posts by Saturday of the week of at least 50 words.

**Other Forums**

In addition to the content forum we have three other forums both for your convenience and to help build a sense of community.

* Student Lounge. In this forum you can discuss anything you like. I promise I will not access this forum. So, feel free to even criticize me or the class.
* Ask Me. This forum provides you with a vehicle for posting questions which you believe other people might want to know the answers to as well as yourself.
* Goods and News. To help build a sense of community, its nice to share news. So, if something interesting is happening in your life, why not let us know about it?
* Getting Networked. If you wish you can post social networking information like Facebook, Twitter, Shoutlife, MySpace, GoodReads or other networks. You can also post links to your blogs, if you wish. This is purely voluntary and will not affect your grade one way or another. It's just a nice way to build and maintain relationships.

**To Post an Original Message on the Discussion Board**

1. Click on **Discussion Board**
2. Click on the title of the forum on which you wish to post your message
3. Click on the button marked **Add New Thread**
4. Type in a subject heading and type your message
5. Click **Submit**

**To Post a Reply to a Message**

1. Click on the button marked **Reply**
2. Post message according to the instructions above

**Some Cautions**

The anonymity of the internet can be liberating. Many can find it easier to talk about certain subjects when not physically present. That can be both good and bad. Sometimes it is good to move outside your comfort zone and share feelings and experiences. However, sometimes you can share too much. Likewise, the anonymity of the internet can bring out the worst in us. So here are a few cautions.

First, don’t share too much personal information online. Avoid giving your address or phone number online.

Second, share only up to your personal level of comfort. One of the problems with the internet is that material put out online can be copied and passed on indefinitely. So, sharing intimate information about your divorce say, could find its way back to your ex.

Third, don’t pass on information you read on the discussion boards. If I find out you have done so, I may remove all of your discussion points.

Fourth, play nice. Ugly or insulting posts will be pulled. Repeat offense will result in the loss of you discussion points.

**Protecting Yourself**

No matter how efficient a system, whether human or electronic, there can be glitches. This means you have to take some responsibility for protecting yourself. Here are a few tips:

1. When submitting a quiz, print out the page which gives you your score.
2. When submitting a paper through TurnItIn, print the page confirming receipt and the page listing everything in your drop box.
3. Save copies of your book review and term paper in three formats: paper, online and on disk.

**Appeal Procedure**

Some students (not many, but some) try to manipulate the system by claiming to have turned in work which they did not. This means, as much as I might like to, I can’t take everyone’s word at face value. Yet, we know mistakes happen. So, here is the procedure for appealing a “missing” assignment.

I will post an announcement when all the grades are recorded for a particular assignment (except for quizzes since they are automatically scored). After this announcement, you will have two weeks to appeal a missing assignment. Contact me by email or in class (in the case of face to face classes) and resubmit your assignment through the drop box.

If I do not hear from you in two weeks, I will assume the assignment did not come in on time and you will receive the reduction for a late assignment or a zero grade if it does not come in at all. It is your responsibility to monitor the Blackboard at least once a week for announcements. Please DO NOT wait until the last week of class to contact me about missing assignments. If you do, regardless of their disposition, I will impose a 10 percent deduction in the grade.

**Time Management for Online Courses**

It is embarrassing to admit, but the first time I taught an online course, I got way behind in my work. Because I wasn’t in class everyday, I just kept putting off my online work. Big mistake! Suddenly I had all these papers coming in. Students were asking about their grades. I ended up pulling all-nighters just to get through the course.

I learned right then and there that you need to manage your time diligently to get through an online course. What is true for me as a teacher is equally true for you as a student. Without a regular class meeting reminding you to do the work you need to do in your class, it is easy to just keep pushing off the work until the due dates are upon you. Here are some tips from the trenches on how to manage your time for an online class.

1. **Set a Schedule.**  This is really vital. Even though we don’t meet at a specific time and place, act like we do. But here’s the good news you can set that time on your own. So you could set an hour at 7 p.m. Monday, a half hour at 3 p.m. Wednesday, etc. Be sure to have at least three hours a week scheduled just like you would in class. However, you also need to realize that there is more than basic class time and time on Blackboard. You will be reading your text, writing a book review and a term paper, studying for exams, etc.
2. **Avoid Distractions.** I know many of you are saying, “Yeah, right, you don’t know my house. Phones are ringing, kids want stuff, the TV goes constantly.” I do understand this. However, if you were in a class at school you couldn’t take a phone call or run and get something for the kids. Treat those scheduled hours just like you were in the classroom. Turn off the cell phone and the TV. If you have an office or den, close the door and put a sign up that says something like “Mommy/Daddy is at school.” If you need to, go to a public library and work. You’ll find you spend a lot less time on your schoolwork if you do this so you actually will have more time to spend with your family in the long run.
3. **Break Big Jobs into Little Jobs.** There’s an old riddle that goes: “How do you eat an elephant.” Obviously, the answer is “One bite at a time.” Take out a calendar and mark off dates to have completed some aspect of this class. For instance, “June 20 have read book for book review.”
4. **Use the minutes.** Sometimes people think they have to have an hour or more to do any work at all on this course. But how long does it take to post one message on the discussion board Can you write a paragraph or two on your book review in 15 minutes? If you are on a bus going to an appointment across town, take your book with you and read on the ride. Make notes about your term paper at lunch. Log on to the discussion board while waiting for the electrician to come over to fix the wall socket.
5. **Prioritize tasks.** We often fall victim to the tyranny of the urgent. That good TV show is on so you put off an important assignment to watch the show. But that pushes off another assignment and so you end up rushing around to complete important things because you put them off for something that isn’t a high priority. Time management people tell us that to be efficient, we need to prioritize our time. That means sitting down with our To-Do list for the day and putting our tasks in order of importance. Then, as much as possible, take care of the important stuff first.
6. **Plan for Delays.** I have a standing appointment in San Francisco. I know that from my house to the appointment location my driving time is about 4 hours. But I always give myself 5 hours. Why? Well, there are frequently traffic jams on the Bay Bridge. There is road work during the summer. There’s the possibility of detours. I could have trouble finding a parking place. More than once I’ve been glad I allowed for delays. You need to do the same thing. Sometimes, the server will be busy or your ISP will be running slowly. The server might even be down. If you wait until the very last minute to turn in your work or if you only budget the minimum time you need to complete your work, you may find yourself missing your deadlines. Always add at least 10 percent to your estimated time for completing a project. That way you have a buffer in case something unforeseen arises.
7. **Have a Backup Plan.** While not strictly a time management issue, this does affect your time planning. If you computer goes down, what are you going to do? I know if my computer goes out, I can go to the local public library or go to the college library and use one of theirs. With some of the bargains on computers I’m seeing on TV right now, you can almost afford to buy a “spare” computer. I’m thinking about it. Planning for the worst can sometimes help you do your best.

**Concerning Plagiarism**

I had taught for 6 years before I had my first case of blatant plagiarism. Now, I get 2-3 cases per year.  In spite of my warnings that plagiarized work will result in an “F,” students continue to foolishly turn in the exact same papers as two or three other students in the same class.  It may reflect a general moral bankruptcy in our times, a Napster mentality, or just declining intelligence in the student population.  I suspect, that strange as it seems to me, many students simply do not know what it is and may not know it is wrong.  And I suspect many do not understand why it is a serious offense.  In the next few paragraphs I will discuss what constitutes plagiarism, why it is wrong, and how it can endanger your academic future.

**How Plagiarism will affect your Grade in this Class**

Any plagiarized work I receive will result in zero points for both the paper. That means, if your term paper is plagiarized, you will lose 200 points for the paper. If you plagiarize two papers, you will fail the class.

**What is Plagiarism?**

Put simply, Plagiarism is taking someone else’s work and passing it off as your own. At its most blatant, it’s directly copying a paper or purchasing one from someone else.  Incidentally, if you are considering purchasing a paper from some Internet company, don’t!  I have access to a web-based service where I can compare your paper to thousands available online.  So can virtually any instructor.

Sometimes the sheer stupidity of the plagiarizers amazes me.  I’ve had four students in a single class who sat together and were best friends turn in the same paper right down to the misspelled words.  Like, I wouldn’t notice? Others have turned in papers with one person’s name obviously whited out and the student’s name typed in with a different font and color ink.

 But a paper doesn’t have to be exactly word for word to count as plagiarism.  If the paper is “substantially similar” to another paper, it is still considered cheating.  For instance, I had two students, a boyfriend and girlfriend, turn in two papers which were identical except that the first two paragraphs were reversed from each other.  Just shuffling the order of the writing doesn’t create an original paper.

 Sometimes a paper is plagiarized because it is made up of paragraphs taken almost bodily from books and articles and pieced together without any commentary by the student and with no source citations.  These tend to be obvious by the different styles of the authors of the paragraphs clashing and the lack of transitional material.  I had one person give a speech that she read directly from a Xerox copy of a magazine article. I could hardly believe it when I saw her turning the pages of the article.

Certainly, you can quote from other people, but give due credit and don’t pass the work of others off as your own.  Also, you need to create an original work which incorporates the quotes and doesn’t simply string a bunch of them together without obvious synthesis.

 Sometimes plagiarism occurs in take-home essay exams and even with the in-class exams in which I allow you to bring notes.  Many times I find that the answers are direct quotes from the text book.  That may have pleased your high school teachers, but it doesn’t please me.  Your answers must be your original work.  Likewise, if you have had one person write down the notes for everyone, don’t copy them word for word.  I had one class where no less than 8 people answered the same question the same way misspelling the same words.  And, frankly, the answers weren’t that good to begin with.

 In other words, if the paper, exam or speech is largely the work of someone else, then it is plagiarism.  These papers or speeches will receive an “F” grade and two such papers will give you an “F” in the class.

**Why is Plagiarism Wrong?**

I shouldn’t even have to address this, but I feel I need to.  A number of students when confronted with the fact of their plagiarism, look at me in all apparent innocence and say, “But I got the paper in on time.”  One explained that the plagiarism was okay because it was for extra credit.  Obviously, something has gone wrong with the moral compass of our society when students can be caught and not even realize that cheating is wrong.

Plagiarism is wrong on two levels. The first level is that of basic honesty.  When you turn in a paper, you make an implied claim that this is something original.  When it is not original, that quite simply is a lie.  Secondly, plagiarism is wrong because it represents an attempt to obtain the benefits of a college degree without doing the work.  Completing the courses necessary for your degree will give you an edge in the job market, and provide a certain social status in society.  However, if you have obtained that degree by cheating, you are benefiting from something you did not earn. And, of course, on a personal level, you won’t learn anything unless you do your own work.  That will reduce the skills you need to succeed in business and personal life.  You can’t cheat on the job and expect to do your job well.

In some ways, I have to admit that the college system which places such a high emphasis on grades rather than on comprehensive evaluation of learning, contributes to this.  We all know that grades do not always equate to learning.  And sometimes we as instructors lose sight of the purpose of assignments.  They are not simply products to be delivered, but tools to facilitate learning.

However, in admitting this, it does not excuse students cutting corners by cheating.  A paper or a speech is not a product I have ordered which has value independent of your learning experience.  The assignment is for your benefit and not mine.  Only by completing the assignment will you learn.  In writing this policy, I am committing myself to making the effort to keep learning first and grading as merely a natural outcome of the learning process.

**What Effects Can Plagiarism Have on your Academic Future?**

Most Four-Year colleges and universities treat plagiarism as a major infraction of the rules.  You can be placed on academic probation, fail a class or even be expelled from the college.  If expelled for plagiarism, you will find it hard to be admitted to another college. Even if you are not removed from the school, your hopes of graduate work could be diminished.  You can find it difficult to get a faculty advisor for your thesis or dissertation.  If an academic probation becomes part of your transcripts, it can also impact your ability to get a good job.

This type of thing can haunt you for years.  About 20 years ago, Sen. Joe Biden was running for President.  He had a reasonable chance of taking his party’s nomination.  However, it was discovered and reported that he had plagiarized a paper in law school.  His support vanished and eventually he withdrew from the race over something that had taken place more than two decades before.

Is it really worth the risk.  Do your own work.  It’s  the right thing to do.  It’s the smart thing to do.