



CMST 4/518 • Communication & Difference

Department of Communication Studies Fall 2021
Room: N/A (online) Section: 60
Dates & Times: Arranged (online) 418 Course ID: 007181
518 Course ID: 007180

Instructor: Justin J. Rudnick, Ph.D. (“Dr. J”) (pronouns: he/she/they)
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Office Hours: [Click here to schedule a meeting through MavConnect!](#)
Mon / Wed: 2:00 – 5:00pm (Online or @ Normandale/Edina)
Tue / Thurs: 12:00 – 2:00pm (Online)
**I am also available by appointment. Please contact me to set up a meeting.*

Required Texts:

This course has one **required** textbook. It is **necessary** for the successful completion of this course (so yes, you need to buy it):

Allen, B. J. (2011). *Difference matters: Communicating social identity* (2nd ed.). Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press. (ISBN: 9781577666738)

Additional required readings will be made available on the Desire-2-Learn (D2L) system (<https://mnsu.ims.mnscu.edu/>).

Course Description and Objectives:

In CMST 4/518, we will interrogate “difference” as a communicative production. We will accomplish this by examining social identities—in the form of race, social class, sex/gender/sexuality, age, and ability—as socially constructed communication phenomena that persons use to understand themselves and others. Our studies will involve both historical and contemporary investigations of how social identities have been produced through time, and how they continue to affect—and be affected by—our everyday communication practices. In short, this course will investigate the dynamic relationship between culture and identity, and how communication facilitates that relationship.

Successful completion of **CMST 418** will fulfill the following learning objectives:

1. Define relevant concepts and theories pertaining to social identity;
2. Explain the importance of social identities in understanding “difference”;
3. Critically analyze representations of social identities in contemporary discourses;
4. Observe manifestations of “difference” in a chosen social context;
5. Construct analytical reflections of social identity and difference;
6. Defend your observations and analyses of social identity and difference to your peers.

Successful completion of **CMST 518** will fulfill the following learning objectives:

1. Explain relevant communication perspectives pertaining to the study of social identity;
2. Explain the importance of social identities in understanding difference through a communication lens;

3. Critically analyze the representation and analysis of difference in communication research;
4. Design an original academic study of difference through a communication perspective;
5. Construct an original communication analysis of the representation of difference;
6. Construct a full-length original scholarly manuscript.

Technology Requirements:

We will use a variety of online learning tools in this class, including Desire2Learn (D2L) and FlipGrid. Course materials are available to you on D2L, and assignments should be submitted to D2L as well; our class discussions and presentations will take place primarily through FlipGrid. To successfully complete this class, **you will need a computer with access to both a microphone and a webcam**. It is your responsibility to ensure you can properly access and use the technology required for this class—**I will not troubleshoot technology issues for you**. As a note, D2L is designed to work best with the Firefox browser, which you can download for free at <https://www.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/>. If you have additional trouble accessing course technology, you are encouraged to contact the IT office (<http://www.mnsu.edu/its/help/servicedesk/>).

Accessibility and Academic Accommodations:

Minnesota State, Mankato provides students with disabilities reasonable accommodation to participate in educational programs, activities, and/or services. Students with documented disabilities requiring accommodation to participate in class activities or meet course requirements should first register with Accessibility Resources (Memorial Library 132, ph: 507-389-2825, TDD 711, or email Oscar Gonzalez at Oscar.gonzalez@mnsu.edu) to establish an accommodation plan and then contact me as soon as possible. Through our Partnership Center, Minnesota State Mankato will cooperate with Normandale Community College to set up any accommodations you need to succeed in this class. I will gladly incorporate any accommodations you might need in order to successfully complete this course.

Nondiscrimination and Classroom Etiquette:

We live in a multicultural world that is diverse, distinct, evolving, and complex—this is a basic assumption of the class, and one I hope you find readily apparent. As you can imagine, in this course we will frequently discuss ideas, issues, and controversies about which we are *socialized* to feel uncomfortable. This discomfort is one of the root causes of many forms of prejudice and discrimination we will encounter in this course, and is something we will all work through together. **We must not be silent or shy away from our perspectives—but we do not have free license to say whatever we want**. In this course, we will critically examine how we communicate *about* different groups of people; this is inherently a problematic endeavor. To that end, I expect us all to **discuss ideas, positions, and perspectives—but not people**. For example, it is fine for you to express your opinions about *the process of abortion*. It is not acceptable for you to express your opinion about *people who have an abortion*. As your instructor, you can expect me to facilitate an amicable environment where conversations about ideas and thoughts can flow freely, creatively, and comfortably. As students, I expect you to engage our class with a similar commitment. We will entertain many ideas, hear conflicting perspectives, and remain open to challenging others and being challenged in turn. As a final note, all Minnesota State, Mankato nondiscrimination policies will be upheld and enforced in our class.

Rigor and Academic Honesty:

In keeping with MNSU's Academic Honesty policy, all work that engages in such inappropriate activities as plagiarism, cheating, or collusion will be subjected to the appropriate academic sanctions. These sanctions may include anything ranging from re-doing the assignment to receiving an automatic failing grade in the course. For more information on your rights and responsibilities as they relate to academic honesty, consult the university's policy at <https://www.mnsu.edu/policies/approved/academichonesty.pdf>.

Attendance Policy and Online Work:

One of the most imposing challenges of online courses is their insistence that students be accountable and proactive. In order to succeed in this class, you *MUST* visit our D2L site **often and regularly**. This class is best experienced through conversation and dialogue, and I will strive to foster that environment regularly. However, it is your responsibility to ensure you are participating to the fullest extent possible. In a typical 4-credit course, you spend 4 hours in class each week discussing and applying the material you reviewed *outside* of class. In this class, you should also expect to log 4 hours of online time each week reviewing lecture presentations, posing discussion questions, and responding to your peers—in addition to the time you spend **reading and completing course assignments**. I expect you to stay on top of the progression of our online class, and to contact me if you have questions about what is expected of you. Similarly, you can expect me to check in with you if, at any point, I feel you are not “present” enough in our course.

Work Policies:

Late work is not indicative of upper-level (or graduate) course preparedness and is not conducive to success in this class. I expect all work to be completed by the assigned deadlines, for your success and for my well-being. Please consult with me if you have issues meeting any deadlines in this class.

I also have stylistic expectations for all written work in this class. Any written work, unless specified otherwise, should comply with the following expectations:

- All work must be submitted electronically through the appropriate dropbox on D2L;
- All work **MUST** be in a Word document or a format I can open with Microsoft Word;
- Type your work and double-space everything evenly;
- Use an APA-approved font and size (e.g., Times New Roman-12, Calibri-11, Arial-11, Georgia-11);
- Margins should be 1” all around;
- All assignments must include a cover page in proper APA format;
- Anything written by someone else and referenced in your assignment **in any way** should be cited in-text and included in a reference section according to the American Psychological Association (APA) style guide, 7th edition.

If the above requirements are not met, I may return the work to you—ungraded—and you will have the ability to make corrections. Your work will be subjected to the late work penalty.

Course Assignments and Grades:

Some students seem to have the misconception that simply doing an assignment results in an “A.” Failure to follow directions or meet criteria will result in you earning fewer points. Also, simply doing an assignment does not guarantee a passing grade regardless of perceived “effort.”

Please note the definition of each letter grade for **undergraduate work in CMST 418:**

- “A” is reserved for work that is exceptional;
- “B” is reserved for work that is above average;
- “C” is reserved for work that is average (**i.e., meets the minimum expectations**);
- “D” is reserved for work that is below average;
- “F” is reserved for work that is failing, late, or not submitted for evaluation.

The university sets more rigorous expectations for graduate work. Please note the definition of each letter grade for **graduate work in CMST 518:**

- “A” is reserved for work that is above average or exceptional;
- “B” is reserved for work that is average;
- “C” is reserved for work that is below average;**
- “D” is reserved for work that represents unacceptable performance;
- “F” is reserved for work that is failing, late, or not submitted for evaluation

The following grading scale will be used in this course:

| | | |
|---------------|--------------|---------------|
| A- = 90—92.9% | A = 93—96.9% | A+ = 97—100% |
| B- = 80—82.9% | B = 83—86.9% | B+ = 87—89.9% |
| C- = 70—72.9% | C = 73—76.9% | C+ = 77—79.9% |
| D- = 60—62.9% | D = 63—66.9% | D+ = 67—69.9% |
| | F = 0—59.9% | |

A note about contesting your grade: If you have questions about your grade, I encourage you to come discuss your grade with me, with these exceptions: (1) you may not ask me about your grade before you have received my feedback; and (2) I will not discuss specific assignment grades more than 2 weeks after they are distributed.

A note about final grades: At the conclusion of the course, I will assign letter grades based on the above percentage scale. As indicated by the scale, *I will round grades to the nearest tenth decimal (0.x)*. I will not round beyond this, so do not ask me to. ☺

The following assignments will be completed by each student in the class. You can determine your percentage (and grade) by totaling the points you have accumulated and dividing those points by the number of points possible.

418 (Undergrad) Assessments:

Points Earned / Points Possible

| | |
|---|-------------|
| 1. Reading Quizzes (8 @ 10-16 pts each) | _____ / 122 |
| 2. Weekly Discussions (13 @ 10 pts each) | _____ / 130 |
| 3. Ethnography Site Proposal | _____ / 25 |
| 4. Observation Essay 1 | _____ / 30 |
| 5. Observation Essay 2 | _____ / 30 |
| 6. Observation Essay 3 | _____ / 30 |
| 7. Current Controversies Facilitation | _____ / 50 |
| 8. Ethnography Presentations & Defense | _____ / 75 |
| 9. Analysis of Difference Essay (Final Paper) | _____ / 100 |

Total: _____ / 592

- 1. Reading Quizzes:** Whenever you have assigned readings, you will complete a short online (D2L) quiz to assess your comprehension of the material. These quizzes are always 10 questions, and will consist of multiple-choice and short-response questions.
- 2. Weekly Discussions:** Each week we have assigned content, you will participate in a recorded video discussion post on FlipGrid (instead of traditional text-based discussion threads). You are expected to make **two posts per week** (5 points each): an original post where you provide your own responses to the questions posed that week, and a follow-up reply post to one of your peers in class. Each post may not exceed 5 minutes.
- 3. Ethnography Site Proposal:** You will conduct a semester-long research project that requires you to choose a public location where you will be able to observe “difference” through people’s communication and behaviors. This project will require you to conduct one (1) hour of observation of public behavior each week, starting in week 3. To begin the project, you will write a short site proposal essay where you describe your chosen location and why you think you will be able to observe “difference” there.
- 4. Observation Essays:** Once you select your research site, you will write a series of three short reports describing how you are observing “difference” at your location. These reports will ask you to synthesize your observations into succinct patterns of behavior and provide evidence from your observations. You will use these essays to help write your final paper.
- 5. Current Controversies Facilitation:** Once during the semester, you will facilitate a special topics unit with a small team of 4-5 peers. All students (undergraduate and graduate) will contribute to choosing important social issues to study in class, Dr. J will provide the readings, and your team will need to present the information to the class, pose discussion questions, and moderate the discussion that week.
- 6. Ethnography Presentations & Defense:** At the end of the semester, you will create a 12-15 minute presentation describing your observation project. You will be put into small groups of 3-4 students based on similar locations. Your group will then be responsible for

viewing each other's presentations and posing challenging or thought-provoking questions that you will then have to "defend" in responses back to your group.

- 7. Analysis of Difference Essay:** Your final semester paper will require you to synthesize your research observations and connect them to course concepts to explain what "difference" is, how you observed difference in action, and what your observations teach us about communication and difference. **CMST majors are encouraged to save this essay for possible inclusion in your senior seminar portfolio in CMST 485.**

518 (Graduate) Assessments:

Points Earned / Points Possible

| | |
|---|-------------|
| 1. Reading Responses (13 @ 10 pts each) | _____ / 130 |
| 2. Class Discussions (13 @ 10 pts each) | _____ / 130 |
| 3. Analysis of Difference Project: | |
| a. Part 1 (Introduction) | _____ / 35 |
| b. Part 2 (Literature Review) | _____ / 65 |
| c. Part 3 (Analysis / Findings) | _____ / 100 |
| d. Part 4 (Online Presentation) | _____ / 100 |
| e. Part 5 (Final Paper) | _____ / 150 |

Total: _____ / 710

- 1. Reading Responses:** Whenever you have assigned readings, you will produce a 2-4 page written reflection on the assigned readings. These reflections should include questions you have about the material and contentions (summaries and arguments) about the content.
- 2. Class Discussions:** Each week we have assigned content, you will participate in a recorded video discussion post on FlipGrid (instead of traditional text-based discussion threads). You are expected to make substantive contributions to these discussions (at minimum, one original post and 3 response posts) each week.
- 3. Analysis of Difference Project, Part 1:** Throughout the semester you will work on an original scholarly project investigating the study or representation of "difference" in a context appropriate to your professional aspirations. Part 1 of this project will require you to introduce your project and justify its relevance to communication studies.
- 4. Analysis of Difference Project, Part 2:** Part 2 of your Analysis of Difference project will require you to synthesize relevant research (in communication studies and adjacent disciplines) into a literature review. This review will help you situate your study within academic research and inform your approach to the analysis you do later.
- 5. Analysis of Difference Project, Part 3:** For part 3 of your project, you will construct a draft of your analysis or findings (depending on your project). This will require you to present the framework or method you used to analyze whatever data or artifacts you collected, and the analysis or lessons learned through that analysis.

6. **Analysis of Difference Project, Part 4:** Toward the end of the semester, you will create a 12-15 minute presentation describing your Analysis of Difference project. You will then view each presentation created by your fellow graduate students, and pose challenging or thought-provoking questions that you will then have to “defend” in responses back to the group.
7. **Analysis of Difference Project, Part 5:** Your final semester paper will require you to revise and synthesize your project portions to construct a full-length original manuscript (approximately 20 pages) presenting your scholarly investigation of “difference.” **I encourage you to submit this essay to relevant professional or academic meetings, conferences, or publications. Please consult me if you would like assistance.**

Tentative Course Schedule

Note: This schedule is subject to change at my discretion. I will attempt to give you fair warning and make reasonable accommodations if I need to adjust the schedule.

| Week | Dates | Topic: | Assignments: |
|------|-----------------|--|--|
| 1 | Aug 23 – 29 | Getting Started: What is “Difference?” <i>Assign: Ethnography Site Proposal; AoD Part 1</i> | Reading Quiz / Reflection 1 Week 1 Discussion |
| 2 | Aug 30 – 5 | Introducing Power & Privilege <i>Request: Facilitation Topics</i> | Reading Quiz / Reflection 2 Week 2 Discussion Due: Site Proposal (418) |
| 3 | Sept 6 – 12 | Race as a Social Construction <i>Assign: Observation Essay #1</i> | Reading Quiz / Reflection 3 Week 3 Discussion Due: AoD Part 1 (518) |
| 4 | Sept 13 – 19 | Social Class and Opportunity <i>Assign: AoD Part 2</i> | Reading Quiz / Reflection 4 Week 4 Discussion |
| 5 | Sept 20 – 26 | Gender and Sex-Based Inferiority <i>Assign: Current Controversies Facilitation</i> | Reading Quiz / Reflection 5 Week 5 Discussion Due: Observation Essay #1 (418) |
| 6 | Sept 27 – 3 | Sexuality and Normative Desire <i>Assign: Observation Essay #2</i> | Reading Quiz / Reflection 6 Week 6 Discussion Due: AoD Part 2 (518) |
| 7 | Oct 4 – 10 | Ability and Age as Social Disqualifiers <i>Assign: AoD Part 3</i> | Reading Quiz / Reflection 7 Week 7 Discussion |
| 8 | Oct 11 – 17 | Current Controversies 1: Topic TBA | Reading Reflection 8 (518 only) Week 8 Discussion Due: Observation Essay #2 (418) |
| 9 | Oct 18 – 24 | Current Controversies 2: Topic TBA <i>Assign: Observation Essay #3</i> | Reading Reflection 9 (518 only) Week 9 Discussion |
| 10 | Oct 25 – 31 | Current Controversies 3: Topic TBA | Reading Reflection 10 (518 only) Week 10 Discussion Due: AoD Part 3 (518) |
| 11 | Nov 1 – 7 | Current Controversies 4: Topic TBA <i>Assign: AoD Part 4</i> | Reading Reflection 11 (518 only) Week 11 Discussion Due: Observation Essay #3 (418) |
| 12 | Nov 8 – 14 | Current Controversies 5: Topic TBA <i>Assign: Ethnography Presentation</i> | Reading Reflection 12 (518 only) Week 12 Discussion |
| 13 | Nov 15 – 21 | Communicating Difference: Violence & Microaggressions | Reading Quiz 8 / Reflection 13 Week 13 Discussion |
| 14 | Nov 22 – 28 | Build & Post Presentations <i>Assign: Analysis of Difference Essay; AoD Part 5</i> | Due: Ethno Presentation (418) Due: AoD Part 4 (518) |
| 15 | Nov 29 – 5 | Project Viewings & Defenses | Due: Presentation Discussions |
| F | Dec 6 – 10 | Final Papers Due 11:59pm Friday | Due: Analysis of Diff Essay (418) Due: AoD Part 5 (518) |

418 Tentative Reading Schedule

Note: These readings are subject to change at my discretion—I might find better readings as the class progresses! I will attempt to give you fair warning and make accommodations if I need to adjust things.

Week 1: What is “Difference?”

- Allen, Chapter 1 (textbook)

Week 2: Introducing Power & Privilege

- Allen, Chapter 2 (textbook)
- Boeskool, “Accustomed to privilege” (D2L)
- Ferguson, “Privilege 101” (D2L)
- Bloom, “People don’t want equality” (D2L)

Week 3: Race as a Social Construction

- Allen, Chapter 4 (textbook)
- Staples, “Black men and public space” (D2L)
- Stevenson, “American prisons & slavery” (D2L)
- McElwee, “Millennials are more racist” (D2L)

Week 4: Social Class and Opportunity

- Allen, Chapter 5 (textbook)
- Ehrenreich, “It is expensive to be poor” (D2L)
- Pilkington, “Through extreme poverty” (D2L)
- Hutson, “Social Darwinism isn’t dead” (D2L)

Week 5: Gender and Sex-Based Inferiority

- Allen, Chapter 3 (textbook)
- Krischer, “Everyday sexism” (D2L)
- Henig, “How science is helping us” (D2L)
- Alter, “Transgender men see sexism” (D2L)

Week 6: Sexuality and Normative Desire

- Allen, Chapter 6 (textbook)
- Green, “When doctors refuse” (D2L)
- Belle, “Knee-jerk biphobia” (D2L)
- Walmsley, “The queers left behind” (D2L)

Week 7: Ability and Age as Social Disqualifiers

- Allen, Chapters 7 & 8 (textbook)
- McCoy, “Disabled, or just desperate?” (D2L)
- Holland, “Invisible disabilities” (D2L)
- Read, “Ageism is everywhere” (D2L)

Week 8: Topic and Readings TBA

Week 9: Topic and Readings TBA

Week 10: Topic and Readings TBA

Week 11: Topic and Readings TBA

Week 12: Topic and Readings TBA

Week 13: Communicating Difference: Violence & Microaggressions

- Allen, Chapter 9 (textbook)
- Sue, “Microaggressions” (D2L)
- Runyowa, “Impact of microaggressions” (D2L)
- Barbash, “The war on microaggressions” (D2L)

518 Tentative Reading Schedule

Note: These readings are subject to change at my discretion—I might find better readings as the class progresses! I will attempt to give you fair warning and make accommodations if I need to adjust things.

Week 1: What is “Difference?”

- Allen, Chapter 1 (textbook)
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1986). The social identity theory of intergroup behavior. In S. Worchel & W. G. Austin (Eds.), *Psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 7-24). Chicago, IL: Nelson Hall.
- Orbe, M. P. (1998). From the standpoint(s) of traditionally muted groups: Explicating a co-cultural communication theoretical model. *Communication Theory*, 8, 1-26. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2885.1998.tb00209.x

Week 2: Introducing Power & Privilege

- Allen, Chapter 2 (textbook)
- Barker, J. R., & Cheney, G. (1994). The concept and the practices of discipline in contemporary organizational life. *Communication Monographs*, 61, 19–43. doi:10.1080/03637759409376321
- Selection from Foucault, M. (1990). *The history of sexuality* (Vol. 1; Hurley, Robert, Trans.). New York: Vintage Books.

Week 3: Race as a Social Construction

- Allen, Chapter 3 (textbook)
- Witteborn, S. (2004). Of being an Arab woman before and after September 11: The enactment of communal identities in talk. *Howard Journal of Communications*, 15(2), 83–98. doi:10.1080/10646170490448312
- Castle Bell, G., Hopson, M. C., Weathers, M. R., & Ross, K. A. (2015). From “laying the foundations” to building the house: Extending Orbe’s (1998) co-cultural theory to include “rationalization” as a formal strategy. *Communication Studies*, 66(1), 1–26. doi:10.1080/10510974.2013.858053

Week 4: Social Class and Opportunity

- Allen, Chapter 4 (textbook)
- Dougherty, D. S., Rick, J. M., & Moore, P. (2017). Unemployment and social class stigmas. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 45(5), 495–516. doi:10.1080/00909882.2017.1382708
- Lucas, K. (2011). The working class promise: A communicative account of mobility-based ambivalences. *Communication Monographs*, 78(3), 347–369. doi:10.1080/03637751.2011.589461

Week 5: Gender and Sex-Based Inferiority

- Allen, Chapter 5 (textbook)
- Butler, J. (1988). Performative acts and gender constitution: An essay in phenomenology and feminist theory. *Theatre Journal*, 40, 519–531. doi:10.2307/3207893
- Cavalcante, A. (2016). “I Did It All Online:” Transgender identity and the management of everyday life. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 33(1), 109–122. doi:10.1080/15295036.2015.1129065

- Medved, C. E. (2016). The new female breadwinner: Discursively doing and *un* doing gender relations. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 44(3), 236–255. doi:10.1080/00909882.2016.1192286

Week 6: Sexuality and Normative Desire

- Allen, Chapter 6 (textbook)
- Rudnick, J. J. (2018). Bodies in dialogue: Arriving at thresholds of dialogic connection. *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies*, 18(4), 288–296. doi:10.1177/1532708617735635
- Taylor, J. (2000). On being an exemplary lesbian: My life as a role model. *Text and Performance Quarterly*, 20, 58–73. doi:10.1080/10462930009366283

Week 7: Ability and Age as Social Disqualifiers

- Allen, Chapters 7 & 8 (textbook)
- Reynolds, J. M. (2017). "I'd rather be dead than disabled"--the ableist conflation and the meanings of disability. *Review of Communication*, 17, 149-163. doi:10.1080/15358593.2017.1331255
- Yamasaki, J. (2014). Age accomplished, performed, and failed: Liz Young as old on *The Biggest Loser*. *Text and Performance Quarterly*, 34, 354-371. doi:10.1080/10462937.2014.942871

Week 8: Topic & Readings TBA

Week 9: Topic & Readings TBA

Week 10: Topic & Readings TBA

Week 11: Topic & Readings TBA

Week 12: Topic & Readings TBA

Week 13: Communicating Difference: Violence and Microaggressions

- Allen, Chapter 9 (textbook)
- Camara, S. K., & Orbe, M. P. (2010). Analyzing strategic responses to discriminatory acts: A co-cultural communicative investigation. *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication*, 3(2), 83–113. doi:10.1080/17513051003611602
- Davis, S. M. (2019). When sistahs support sistahs: A process of supportive communication about racial microaggressions among Black women. *Communication Monographs*, 86(2), 133–157. doi:10.1080/03637751.2018.1548769