



CMST 485 • Senior Seminar

Department of Communication Studies
Rooms: P-0844, and through Zoom
Dates & Times: Thursdays, 6-9:45pm

Spring 2022
Section: 60
Course ID: 000799

Instructor: Justin J. Rudnick, Ph.D. (“Dr. J”) (pronouns: he/she/they)
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Phone: (952) 358-9219 (office; also patches through to Microsoft Teams)
Office Hours: [Book an appointment with me here!](#)
Mon / Tue: 2:00 – 4:00pm (Online or @ Normandale)
Wed / Thurs: 2:00 – 5:00pm (Online or @ Normandale)
**I am also available by appointment. Please contact me to set up a meeting.*

Required Texts:

There are no required textbooks for this class. All necessary readings will be made available on the Desire-2-Learn (D2L) system (<https://mnsu.ims.mnscu.edu/>). You are welcome to bring these readings to class in whatever format you prefer (electronic or printed), but you are expected to have them when you arrive for their assigned class session.

About the Course:

CMST 485 is a required capstone course to conclude the Communication Studies major. In this course, you showcase your expertise through two major assessments: an academic portfolio demonstrating successful accomplishment of the CMST departmental learning outcomes, and an independent research project. By the completion of the course, you will convey your mastery of communication skills, analysis, and research.

Your successful completion of this course will fulfill the following learning objectives:

1. Review and assess your learning experiences in the Communication Studies major;
2. Conduct meaningful communication research utilizing appropriate research methods;
3. Present the findings from a research study in a public, professional setting to peers and/or professors;
4. Evaluate your proficiency in communication skills, analysis, ethics, and research.

About Me:

My name is Dr. Justin Rudnick (students call me “Dr. J”), and I’ll be your guide as we study the intersection of communication and gender! I have a doctoral degree in Communication Studies and a graduate certificate in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies from Ohio University, and my research specialties are in identity, performance, and gender/sexuality studies. I joined the CMST department in 2016, and have been teaching mostly at our twin-cities program housed at Normandale Community College. On a personal level, I consider myself an amateur foodie and love exploring new food and drinks, I enjoy staying active, and I also play a lot of video games.



Nondiscrimination and Classroom Etiquette:

We live in a multicultural world that is diverse, distinct, evolving, and complex. As an instructor, you can expect me to facilitate an amicable environment where ideas and thoughts can flow

freely, creatively, and comfortably. As students, I expect you to enter our class with a similar commitment. We will entertain many ideas, hear conflicting perspectives, and remain open to challenging others and being challenged. As a final note, all MNSU nondiscrimination policies will be upheld and enforced in our class.

Accessibility and Academic Accommodations:

Minnesota State University, Mankato provides students with disabilities reasonable accommodation to participate in educational programs, activities, or services. Students with disabilities requiring equal access to participate in class activities or meet course requirements should first register with Accessibility Resources, (Memorial Library 132, telephone 389-2825, or TDD 711) to establish an accommodation plan and then contact me if needed. 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.

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>.

COVID-19 Notice:

Minnesota State University, Mankato holds as paramount the health, safety and welfare of every member of its community. Minnesota State Mankato, however, cannot guarantee a COVID-19-free environment. Unfortunately, the risk of COVID-19 exposure exists in all public places where people are present. Minnesota State Mankato is taking all recommended steps to mitigate this risk, but we cannot categorically guarantee you will not get sick. Minimizing the risk of COVID-19 infections (or any other spread of disease) at Minnesota State Mankato is a shared responsibility. Every member of our community – including you – must do their part. Requirements for masking may change as changes in infections in our community change as well. You will be notified by the University if and when mask requirement practices are altered.

For questions about **symptoms, testing, or risk of COVID-19**, call the Student Health Services COVID Healthcare Hotline at 507-389-5591 or the Minnesota Department of Health hotline at 651-297-1304 or 800-657-3504.

To **report a positive COVID case** among our campus community, call the COVID Reporting Hotline at 507-389-2030.

Students who need assistance with services should contact the Student Affairs Office at student-affairs@mnsu.edu or 507-389-2121.

For **general questions**, contact the Provost's Office at provost@mnsu.edu or (507) 389-1333.

Our goal is to mitigate the potential transmission of COVID-19; therefore, we strongly encourage students and employees who have not already been vaccinated to do so. Learn more about our campus vaccine opportunities at <https://mankato.mnsu.edu/coronavirus/safety-measures/vaccinations/>.

Potential Shifts in Class Format and Instruction

Due to higher education COVID-19 guidelines or other factors outside the University's control that results in a decision to end face-to-face instruction before the end of the semester, the format of this class will adapt as needed. In the case of such a scenario, the instructor will communicate with the students and clarify the nature of these changes.

Should the instructor become ill for an extended period, the department will take steps for a substitute instructor to teach the remainder of the class.

Should you, as the student, need to change your class attendance plan that was developed by the instructor, contact the instructor to discuss this further.

Attendance Policy:

CMST 485 is a writing-intensive course with a considerable amount of challenging work. Guided in-class workshops are crucial to your timely and successful completion of this work. As such, regular attendance and participation is expected. I will take attendance every day and keep track of your meaningful participation. You have the opportunity to miss two (2) class sessions without question. Missing more than two sessions will result in your final semester grade being lowered by 5% (the equivalent of ½ letter grade) for each absence beyond one. **If you are unable to come to class for any reason, please check in with me so I know not to expect you.** Please note that it is your responsibility to make up any work you miss as a result of missing class. Any student missing more than 1/3 of the semester's class sessions should withdraw and re-take the course in another term, as you will not be awarded a passing grade in the class. As a final note: I am not responsible for "catching you up" if you miss class—it is your responsibility to stay current in your work. Please use your classmates, **and class recordings on D2L**, as resources to assist you.

Additionally, those of you attending class live through Zoom are expected to actively, and appropriately, engage in class sessions. This involves tuning in at the start of class, staying for the duration of class, and keeping your camera on throughout the class session. I also expect you to situate yourselves in a mode that is safe and conducive to your learning (i.e., do not tune in while you are driving).

Dr. J's Tips for Learning in an Online Synchronous Course:

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way we are able to learn together, creating new opportunities and new barriers. Your success in the course is my top priority, but success in this environment requires a new kind of effort on your part as well. Based on my observations from the fall, here are my suggestions to ensure you get the most out of our time together:

- Do your best to create a **designated workspace** from whatever location you join class. Creating small barriers or separations in your living space helps you enter—and more importantly, leave—the classroom “environment.”

- **Minimize your distractions** when you tune into class. Avoid taking advantage of the increased flexibility the Zoom classroom affords us—attending class from the car, for example, is neither safe nor conducive to your learning.
- **Avoid multi-tasking** while tuned into class. Learning from home presents temptations that can interfere with your focus. Preparing dinner, painting your nails, or watching TV during class will 100% affect what you take from our time together.

Work Policies:

Because this course is a capstone to your studies in the major, all assignments are required. Work in this class is also set up in a scaffold, such that failure to complete one assignment inhibits your ability to complete the next. As such, late work is unacceptable in this course; you should make every effort to complete assignments on time.

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 will return the work to you—ungraded—and you will have the ability to make corrections, subjected to a penalty for late work.

Course Assignments and Grades:

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%	

Please note the definition of each letter grade:

- “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.

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 restrictions: (1) you may not ask me about your grade before you have received my feedback; and (2) I will not discuss 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. Please note: **all assignments are required to successfully complete the course.** You can determine your percentage (and grade) by totaling the points you have accumulated and dividing those points by the number of points possible.

<u>Assessment:</u>	<u>Points Earned / Points Possible</u>
1. Portfolio Component 1	_____ / 25
2. Portfolio Component 2	_____ / 25
3. Portfolio Component 3	_____ / 25
4. Portfolio Component 4	_____ / 25
5. Portfolio Component 5	_____ / 25
6. Final Portfolio	_____ / 75
7. Research Milestone 1	_____ / 25
8. Research Milestone 2	_____ / 25
9. Research Milestone 3	_____ / 25
10. Research Milestone 4	_____ / 25
11. Final Research Paper	_____ / 100
12. Capstone Presentation	_____ / 50
TOTAL	_____ / 450

Academic Portfolio Components:

- 1. Portfolio Component 1: Welcome (25 points).** We will begin crafting your academic portfolio by setting up the structure in D2L. Component 1 will require you to input biographical information, a photograph, links to relevant social media platforms (as desired), and a statement about your studies in Communication.
- 2. Portfolio Component 2: Communication Skills (25 points).** Component 2 will illustrate your mastery of communication skills. You will need to provide a short contextualization of the importance of appropriate message creation, upload evidence of your message creation abilities, and provide a reflection of your skills / abilities in appropriate message creation.

3. **Portfolio Component 3: Communication Analysis (25 points).** Component 3 will illustrate your ability to apply theories and concepts to make sense of communication. You will need to provide a short contextualization of the importance of analyzing communication in social, cultural, or relational issues, upload evidence of your ability to apply theories and concepts to communication issues, and provide a reflection of your learning / understanding of communication in relationships.
4. **Portfolio Component 4: Communication Ethics (25 points).** Component 5 will demonstrate your ability to engage in communication for social justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion. You will need to provide a short contextualization of the importance of engaging in communication (skills, analysis, or research) to advance justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion; upload evidence of your ability to engage in ethical communication; and provide an assessment of your ability to employ ethical communication practices and perspectives.
5. **Portfolio Component 5: Communication Research (25 points).** Component 4 will illustrate your critical thinking abilities in evaluating, applying, and engaging in communication research. You will need to provide a short contextualization of the importance of reading and conducting research, upload evidence of your ability to conduct research, and provide an assessment of your ability to evaluate, apply, and engage in communication research.
6. **Final Portfolio (75 points):** Your final portfolio will contain revisions to all of the above components, and will be graded on completeness, depth of analysis, and visual appeal.

Individual Research Project Milestones:

1. **Research Milestone 1: Revised Research Design / Topic Statement (25 points).** For students who have made appropriate progress in CMST 301 and 306, this assignment will require you to complete an enhanced draft of your research design and proposed data collection strategies. Students who are starting their research projects from scratch will complete a problem statement, tentative research question, and bibliography essay.
2. **Research Milestone 2: Introduction & Literature Review (25 points).** All students will complete an introduction, problem statement, and literature review essay. Students starting from scratch will be advised to complete this project in multiple phases; students who have made appropriate progress in CMST 301 and 306 will revise their literature reviews from previous coursework.
3. **Research Milestone 3: Draft Results / Research Design (25 points).** Students who have made appropriate progress in CMST 301 and 306 will complete a preliminary analysis of their data and complete a draft of their results or findings. Students starting their projects from scratch will complete a draft of their proposed research methods.
4. **Research Milestone 4: Draft Discussion / Results (25 points).** Students who have made appropriate progress in CMST 301 and 306 will complete a draft of their discussion

section detailing the theoretical, methodological, or practical significance of their findings. Students beginning from scratch will include a draft of their comprehensive data analysis with this discussion section.

- 5. Final Research Paper (100 points).** All students will revise previous essays in the class and stitch them together to produce a full-length (20-25 page) research paper.
- 6. Capstone Presentation (50 points).** At the end of the semester, you will present your completed portfolio and research project to the class in a 10-minute presentation.

Tentative 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	Day	Topic	Assignment
1	Jan 13	Introduction; Conceptualizing a Research Study <i>Assign: Research 1; Portfolio 1 (Welcome)</i>	
2	Jan 20	Designing Research Procedures & Protocols Workshop: Portfolio Construction <i>Assign: Portfolio 2 (Skills)</i>	Due: Portfolio 1 (Welcome)
3	Jan 27	Refresher: Qualitative Research Design; Workshop: Research Instruments <i>Assign: Research 2</i>	Due: Research 1
4	Feb 3	Refresher: Quantitative Research Design; Workshop: Survey Construction	
5	Feb 10	Refresher: Recruitment (Goal: Project Launch) & Writing Literature Reviews <i>Assign: Portfolio 3 (Analysis)</i>	Due: Portfolio 2 (Skills) Due: Lit Review Outline*
6	Feb 17	Refresher: Qualitative Data Analysis	
7	Feb 24	Refresher: Quantitative Data Analysis <i>Assign: Research 3</i>	Due: Research 2
8	Mar 3	Check-In: Data Collection & Analysis <i>Assign: Portfolio 4 (Ethics)</i>	Due: Portfolio 3 (Analysis)
—	Mar 10	No Class—Spring Break!	
9	Mar 17	Workshop: Data Analysis	
10	Mar 24	Workshop: Data Analysis <i>Assign: Research 4</i>	Due: Research 3
11	Mar 31	Refresher: Drawing Implications from Research <i>Assign: Portfolio 5 (Research)</i>	Due: Portfolio 4 (Ethics)
12	Apr 7	Research Project Check-In (Triage as needed) <i>Assign: Capstone Presentation; Final Paper</i>	
13	Apr 14	Research Project Check-In (Triage as needed) <i>Assign: Final Portfolio</i>	Due: Research 4
14	Apr 21	Capstone Presentations!	Due: Portfolio 5 (Research)
15	Apr 28	Capstone Presentations!	Due: Final Papers
F	May 5	Final Portfolios due 11:59pm Thursday	Due: Final Portfolio