



CMST 410 • Topics: Communication & Difference

Department of Communication Studies Fall 2017
Room: N/A (online) Course ID: 005069
Dates & Times: Arranged (online) Section: 50

Instructor: Justin J. Rudnick, Ph.D. (“Dr. J”)
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Office Hours: Schedule a meeting at <https://justinrudnick.youcanbook.me/>
Mondays: 2:00—5:00pm (Online, or In-Person @ Normandale)
Tues/Thurs: 2:00—4:00pm (Online only)
Wednesdays: 2:00—5:00pm (Online, or In-Person @ Mankato)
*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:

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 this iteration of CMST 410, 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.

Your successful completion of this course 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.

Technology Requirements:

We will use a variety of online learning tools in this class, including Desire2Learn (D2L) and VoiceThread. 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 VoiceThread. 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/>).

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.

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:

Any late work will be subjected to an automatic 50% grade deduction. I will not accept ANY late work more than a week after the due date.

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 a serif font (either Times New Roman or Cambria) in size 12;
- Margins should be 1” all around;
- Assignments more than two pages long must include a cover page with the paper title, your name, and the course number (e.g., CMST 410);
- 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, 6th 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. Your work will be subjected to the late work penalty.

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 Julie.Snow@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.

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>.

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; simply completing the work does not guarantee you a passing 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 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.

<u>Assessment:</u>	<u>Points Earned / Points Possible</u>
1. Reading Quizzes (8 @ 10 pts each)	____ / 80
2. Weekly Discussions (12 @ 15 pts each)	____ / 180
3. Current Controversies Facilitation	____ / 50
4. Ethnography Site Proposal	____ / 25
5. Observation Essay 1	____ / 30
6. Observation Essay 2	____ / 30
7. Observation Essay 3	____ / 30
8. Self-Reflection Essay	____ / 60
9. Ethnography Presentations & Defense	____ / 75
10. Analysis of Difference Essay (Final Paper)	____ / 100
Total:	____ / 660

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 21—27	Getting Started: What is “Difference?” <i>Assign: Ethnography Site Proposal</i>	Reading Quiz 1 Week 1 Discussion
2	Aug 28—3	Introducing Power & Privilege	Reading Quiz 2 Week 2 Discussion Ethnography Site Proposal
3	Sept 4—10	Race as a Social Construction <i>Assign: Observation Essay #1</i>	Reading Quiz 3 Week 3 Discussion
4	Sept 11—17	Social Class and Opportunity	Reading Quiz 4 Week 4 Discussion
5	Sept 18—24	Gender and Sex-Based Inferiority <i>Assign: Current Controversies Facilitation</i>	Reading Quiz 5 Week 5 Discussion Observation Essay #1
6	Sept 25—1	Sexuality and Normative Desire <i>Assign: Observation Essay #2</i>	Reading Quiz 6 Week 6 Discussion
7	Oct 2—8	Ability and Age as Social Disqualifiers	Reading Quiz 7 Week 7 Discussion
8	Oct 9—15	Difference in Context: Immigration, Refugees, & the Discourse of “Illegals”	Facilitation #1 Week 8 Discussion Observation Essay #2
9	Oct 16—22	Difference in Context: Islamophobia & the Muslim Veil <i>Assign: Observation Essay #3</i>	Facilitation #2 Week 9 Discussion
10	Oct 23—29	Difference in Context: Indigenous Peoples, Government Apologia, & Environmental Agency	Facilitation #3 Week 10 Discussion
11	Oct 30—5	Difference in Context: Reproductive Rights & Bodily Autonomy <i>Assign: Self-Reflection Essay</i>	Facilitation #4 Week 11 Discussion Observation Essay #3
12	Nov 6—12	Difference in Context: Police Brutality & Whose Lives Matter	Facilitation #5 Week 12 Discussion
13	Nov 13—19	Communicating Difference: Violence & Microaggressions	Reading Quiz 8 Self-Reflection Essay
14	Nov 20—26	No work—Thanksgiving Break!	
15	Nov 27—3	Ethnography Presentations & Defense	Ethnography Presentation
F	Dec 4—10	Final Papers Due 11:59pm Friday	Analysis of Difference Essay

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)

Week 3: Race as a Social Construction

- Allen, Chapter 4 (textbook)
- Clemetson, “Politics of speaking well” (D2L)
- Cunningham, “Case for Black English” (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)
- Lewin, “When richer weds poorer” (D2L)
- Hutson, “Social Darwinism isn’t dead” (D2L)

Week 5: Gender and Sex-Based Inferiority

- Allen, Chapter 3 (textbook)
- Krischer, “Everyday sexism” (D2L)
- Alter, “Transgender men see sexism” (D2L)
- Conant, “In their words” (D2L)

Week 6: Sexuality and Normative Desire

- Allen, Chapter 6 (textbook)
- Green, “When doctors refuse” (D2L)
- Mortimer, “Can straight people be queer?” (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)
- Shinn, “Disability is not just a metaphor” (D2L)
- DePillis, “Taking on ageism” (D2L)

Week 8: Difference in Context: Immigration, Refugees, & the Discourse of “Illegals”

- DePalma, “15 years on the bottom rung”
- Gjelten, “The immigration act of 1965”
- Harlan, “In these six American towns”
- Kantor & Einhorn, “Canadians adopted”
- Nayeri, “The ungrateful refugee”
- Romain, “The term ‘illegals’”

Week 9: Difference in Context:

Islamophobia & the Muslim Veil

- Hamid, “Is Islam exceptional?” (D2L)
- Green, “How much discrimination” (D2L)
- Green, “White evangelicals” (D2L)
- BBC, “The Islamic veil across Europe” (D2L)
- Daley & Rubi, “French Muslims” (D2L)
- Ali, “Behind the veil” (D2L)

Week 10: Difference in Context:

Indigenous Peoples, Government Apologia, & Environmental Agency

- Bosman, “Flint residents are desperate to leave”
- Espinoza, “Mille Lacs netting decision”
- Enzinna, “How a movement was born”
- Gunderson, “Not invisible anymore”
- Friedman, “The politics of apologizing”
- Johnson, “How to apologize for slavery”

Week 11: Difference in Context:

Reproductive Rights & Bodily Autonomy

- Green, “America’s profound gender anxiety”
- Hamblin, “The culture of sexual assault”
- Marling, “The economics of consent”
- Landman, “Making primary care trans-friendly”
- Gay, “The alienable rights of women”
- Russell-Kraft, “The right to abortion”

Week 12: Difference in Context:

Police Brutality & Whose Lives Matter

- Coates, “Blue lives matter”
- Friedersdorf, “Blue reforms and black lives”
- Ewing, “We, too, are targets of police violence”
- Asquith, “Recruiting more women”
- Perry & Carter-Long, “Disability leads to police violence”
- Fields-Meyer, “When police don’t know the ADA”

Week 13: Communicating Difference:

Violence & Microaggressions

- Allen, Chapter 9 (textbook)
- Runyowa, “The impact of microaggressions”
- Vega, “Students see many slights”
- Barbash, “The war on microaggressions”