



CMST 485 • Senior Seminar

Department of Communication Studies
Dates & Times: Thursdays, 6-9:45pm
Rooms: P 2804 & P 1804

Spring 2019
Course ID: 006382
Section: 60

Instructor: Justin J. Rudnick, Ph.D. (“Dr. J”)
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Office Hours: Schedule a meeting through MavConnect! www.mnsu.edu/mavconnect/login.html
Tuesdays: By appointment (email me to set up)
Wednesdays: 2:00—5:00pm (Online, or In-Person @ Mankato)
Thursdays: 2:00—5:00pm (Online, or In-Person @ Normandale)
<i>*I am also available by appointment. Please contact me to set up a meeting.</i>

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.

Course Description and Objectives:

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. Demonstrate your ability to give an effective presentation;
2. Explain the role communication plays in relationships;
3. Explain how context impacts communication;
4. Analyze how humans use symbols to communicate;
5. Engage in meaningful communication research utilizing appropriate research methods;
6. Evaluate your proficiency in communication skills, analysis, and research;
7. Assemble an academic portfolio showcasing your educational accomplishments.

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.

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:

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 one (1) class session without question. Missing more than one session will result in your final semester grade being lowered by 5% (the equivalent of ½ letter grade) for each absence beyond one. Absences are *excused* if they are for *documented university-sponsored travel* or *dire personal emergencies*. 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 as resources to assist you.

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, so that failure to complete one assignment inhibits your ability to complete the rest. 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 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 409);
- 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, subjected to the late work penalty.

Accessibility and Academic Accommodations:

Minnesota State University, 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, MSU, 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.

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.

Academic Portfolio Components:

- 1. Portfolio Component 1: Welcome (25 points each).** 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: Presentations (25 points each).** Component 2 will illustrate your mastery of oral communication skills. You will need to provide a short contextualization of the importance of oral communication skills, upload evidence of your excellent communication skills, and provide a reflection of your skills / abilities in oral communication & presentational speaking.

- 3. Portfolio Component 3: Relationships (25 points each).** Component 3 will illustrate your understanding of the role communication plays in relationships. You will need to provide a short contextualization of the role of communication in relationships, upload evidence of your understanding of communication in relationships, and provide a reflection of your learning / understanding of communication in relationships.
- 4. Portfolio Component 4: Context (25 points each).** Component 4 will illustrate your understanding of how context / culture impacts communication. You will need to provide a short contextualization of the impact of context / culture on communication, upload evidence of your understanding of that impact, and provide a reflection of your learning / understanding of the influence context / culture exerts on communication.
- 5. Portfolio Component 5: Symbols (25 points each).** Component 5 will illustrate your ability to analyze how humans use symbols to communicate. You will need to provide a short contextualization of human communication as symbolic, upload evidence of your ability to analyze communication for symbol use, and provide a reflection of your learning / understanding of the symbolic nature of human communication.
- 6. Portfolio Component 6: Research (25 points each).** Component 6 will illustrate your ability to conduct meaningful communication research using appropriate methods. You will need to provide a short explanation of the importance of human communication research, upload your final research paper, and provide a reflection of your learning / understanding of the human communication research.
- 7. Final Portfolio (50 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: Literature Review / Topic Statement (25 points).** Students who have made appropriate progress in CMST 301 and 306 will complete a revised introduction and literature review essay. Students who are starting their research projects from scratch will complete a problem statement, tentative research question, and bibliography essay.
- 2. Research Milestone 2: Revised Research Design / Intro & Lit Review (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 starting from scratch will need to complete a draft of the introduction and literature review.
- 3. Research Milestone 3: Theoretical Memo / Research Design (25 points).** Students who have made appropriate progress in CMST 301 and 306 will complete a preliminary analysis of their data using appropriate communication theories & concepts, to begin exploring the data analysis process. Students starting from scratch will complete a draft of their proposed research methods.
- 4. Research Milestone 4: Results & Discussion (25 points).** All students will complete a draft of their comprehensive data analysis, a report of their findings, and a discussion of the theoretical, methodological, or practical significance of those findings.
- 5. Final Research Paper (100 points).** You will revise previous essays in the class and stitch them together to produce a full-length (20-25 page) research paper.
- 6. Research Presentation (50 points).** At the end of the semester, you will present your research project to the class in a 10 minute presentation with presentational aids.

Assessment:

Points Earned / Points Possible

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. Portfolio Component 6	_____ / 25
7. Final Portfolio	_____ / 50
8. Research Milestone 1	_____ / 25
9. Research Milestone 2	_____ / 25
10. Research Milestone 3	_____ / 25
11. Research Milestone 4	_____ / 25
12. Final Research Paper	_____ / 100
13. Research Presentation	_____ / 50

TOTAL _____ / 450

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 17	Course Overview <i>Assign: Component 1; Milestone 1</i>	
2	Jan 24	Conceptualizing a Research Study Workshop: Milestone 1 <i>Assign: Component 2</i>	Due: Portfolio Component 1
3	Jan 31	Designing Research Procedures & Protocols Workshop: Component 2 <i>Assign: Component 3; Milestone 2</i>	Due: Research Milestone 1
4	Feb 7	Research Methods Refresher Workshop: Component 3 & Milestone 2	Due: Portfolio Component 2
5	Feb 14	Research Methods Refresher Workshop: Milestone 2 <i>Assign: Component 4</i>	Due: Portfolio Component 3
6	Feb 21	Data Collection Refresher (Goal: Survey Launch) Workshop: Component 4 <i>Assign: Component 5; Milestone 3</i>	Due: Research Milestone 2
7	Feb 28	Data Collection Check-In Workshop: Component 5	Due: Portfolio Component 4
—	Mar 7	No Class—Spring Break!	
8	Mar 14	Data Collection Check-In Workshop: Milestone 3	Due: Portfolio Component 5
9	Mar 21	Data Analysis Refresher <i>Assign: Milestone 4</i>	Due: Research Milestone 3
10	Mar 28	No Class—work on data analysis & research milestone 4	
11	Apr 4	No Class—work on data analysis & research milestone 4	
12	Apr 11	Research Project Check-In <i>Assign: Component 6; Presentation; Final Paper</i>	Due: Research Milestone 4
13	Apr 18	No Class—work on final paper & presentation	
14	Apr 25	Research Paper & Presentation Check-In <i>Assign: Final Portfolio</i>	Due: Portfolio Component 6
15	May 2	Research Presentations	Due: Final Papers
F	May 9	Research Presentations	Due: Final Portfolio