

## COM327—Civil Communication

**Instructor:**

**Office:**

**Office Hours:**

**Office Phone:**

**Email:**

### Course Description:

This course offers a theoretical understanding of civil communication and methods for applying civil communication practices in a variety of contexts. This class is part of the Hugh Downs School of Human Communication's Certificate in Civil Communication. This certificate provides students with the ability to recognize, competently practice, and facilitate the ever increasing demand for civil discourse in society and workplace organizations.

### Course Objectives:

1. To develop an understanding of the terms *civility* and *incivility*.
2. To master speaking and listening skills that promote civil communication.
3. To analyze the relationship between dialogue and civil communication.
4. To become acquainted with the process of the Civil Dialogue (CD) format.
5. To research the use of civil communication in a variety of contexts.

### Required Materials:

All reading material for the course will be available to you through the class Blackboard site. This will include a variety of academic articles and chapter excerpts from the following book:

Olson, C. D., Genette, J., & Linde, J. (2014) *Engaging Civility*. (In preparation)

### Grading:

It is your responsibility as a student to set goals and contribute to the experience of earning a chosen grade. It is my responsibility as a teacher to set a clear standard for determining that grade. I offer the following description of what I judge to be A, B, C, D, and E work in my class.

A—an A is earned when you have excellent attendance and participation and show significant preparation for class discussion, exams, and CD training. You must turn in written work that indicates elevated thinking and conscientious presentation, as well as offering stellar contributions to classroom atmosphere through your interactions with fellow students, and the instructor. An A + will be given for points that equal a grade of 98% or higher. An A+ is difficult, but not impossible, to earn. You will not get an A- in this class.

B—a B is earned when you turn in “above average” written work and demonstrate responsible preparation and good effort in the class. Your attendance and participation, exams scores, and final research project must be good to earn this grade. A B+ will be given for points that equal a grade of 88% to 89.5%. A B- will be given for points that equal a grade between 79.5% and 81%.

C—a C is average work. This means that you have met the minimum requirements asked of the assignments in this course. Attendance and participation is adequate to earn a C. A C+ will be given for points that equal a grade of 78% to 79.4%. You will not get a C- in this class.

D—a D means that you have not met all the requirements of the course. This grade might reflect poor work on one or more assignments, poor preparation for class participation and exams, or poor attendance.

E—Something went wrong. Don't let this happen.

**Point Scale:**

Attendance:	50 points
Participation:	25 points
Midterm Exam:	50 points
Final Exam:	50 points
Civil Dialogue Project	125 points
Research Project in Civility	100 points

**Total: 400 points**

A+ = 392-400    A = 359-391    B+ = 352-358    B = 325-351    B- = 318-324    C+ = 312-317  
 C = 278-311    D = 238-277    E = 237-below

There will be two extra credit opportunities in this class worth a total of 10 points.

**Assignments:**

*Civil Dialogue Project:* This group assignment includes the planning and implementation of a round of Civil Dialogue (CD). The CD format was conceived by John Genette while he was a graduate student in the Hugh Downs School of Human Communication (HDS) in 2004. HDS faculty members Jennifer Linde and Clark Olson have worked with Genette to develop the format for educational and community groups to model and restore civility to controversial communication.

The CD format:

In a round of CD, a hot topic is presented to the audience. Volunteer participants are invited to embody their opinion and values, filling a semi-circle of five chairs on stage: “agree strongly,” “agree somewhat,” “neutral/undecided,” “disagree somewhat,” and “disagree strongly.” A facilitator guides their discussion, following a structure that ensures all voices and positions are heard. The dialogue is then extended to the full audience who are encouraged to respond with their own opinions and questions. The format includes the roles of host and information checker and a round of CD lasts between 30-40 minutes.

**Research Project in Civility:** This research project includes an analysis of a societal context that you think would benefit from civil communication practices. You will write a 5-7 page paper that utilizes information from the course, additional academic sources, and a problem-solution approach to explaining the benefit that civility would bring to the situation. Sample societal contexts include: a workplace environment, a family situation, a neighborhood conflict, or governmental issue. You will present the ideas in your paper to your classmates in an oral presentation.

For each of these projects you will be given a handout that will explain my expectations for the assignment. It will include instructions on the process of completing the assignment, guidelines for written analysis, time limitations, presentation format, due dates, etc...

**Reading:** You will be expected to read the textbook and additional academic articles that I will post on Blackboard. Most of the classroom discussion will center on this assigned reading and the three exams will require your understanding of this material. You may also need to do outside reading to prepare for your Civil Dialogue project and to write your research paper.

**Exams:** You have two exams in this class. They will cover the assigned readings and class lectures/discussions.

## **Policies:**

**Attendance and Participation:** Attendance and participation are two different things. Attendance is showing up on time and is expected at each class. You will lose 3 of your attendance points for each absence. An absence is an absence. I do not differentiate between illness, car trouble, out of town obligations, jury duty, etc. The only absence that will not result in a point deduction is one that involves a university sanctioned event and I require documentation of these types of absences. There will be opportunities to “bank” two absences from class. This does not include absences on days that you are assigned to participate in a CD or present your research to the class. I will explain this opportunity in class.

Participation is your active contribution to class. You can only effectively participate if you are actively engaged in the class. Participation points are based on the following: your understanding of the syllabus, knowledge of assigned readings, and commitment to a productive classroom environment.

**Classroom Atmosphere:** During this class, please unplug yourself from ALL electronic devices – cell phones, tablets, and laptops – and store them out of sight once class has started. Cell phones must be in silent mode (not vibrate).

**Policy on Academic Integrity:** Honesty is expected of all students in all examinations, papers, laboratory work, academic transactions and records. The possible sanctions include, but are not limited to, appropriate grade penalties, course failure (indicated on the transcript as a grade of E), course failure due to academic dishonesty (indicated on the transcript as a grade of XE), loss of registration privileges, disqualification and dismissal. For more information, see <http://provost.asu.edu/academicintegrity>.

***Disability Accommodations:*** Qualified students with disabilities who will require disability accommodations in this class are encouraged to make their requests to me at the beginning of the semester either during office hours or by appointment. **Note:** *Prior to receiving disability accommodations, verification of eligibility from the Disability Resource Center (DRC) is required. Disability information is confidential.*

**Establishing Eligibility for Disability Accommodations:** Students who feel they will need disability accommodations in this class but have not registered with the Disability Resource Center (DRC) should contact DRC immediately. Their office is located on the first floor of the Matthews Center Building. DRC staff can also be reached at: 480-965-1234 (V), 480-965-9000 (TTY). For additional information, visit: [www.asu.edu/studentaffairs/ed/drc](http://www.asu.edu/studentaffairs/ed/drc). Their hours are 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday.

**Important:** Since this class is focused on civility, incivility, and controversial topics, you may find yourself disagreeing with the positions presented in the readings and class discussions. I encourage you to allow that experience to be part of the learning process in this class. Do not censor yourself or others and work to be open to understanding rather than rejecting/attacking others' positions.