Nonverbal Communication: What We Say Without Words

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Meeting Place and Time: Olin 210 weekdays from 1 pm to 4 pm

Textbook: *The Definitive Book of Body Language*, by Allan and Barbara Pease

Office Hours: By appointment

Description: No liberal arts education would be complete without an emphasis on communication. Often we focus on verbal communication, most notably writing. In this course we will look at the other side of the coin: nonverbal communication. Nonverbal communication consists of the ways we communicate that don't have anything to do with words. A smile, a nod, a wink—all of these are obvious ways that we convey meaning without words, but there are many more subtle examples of nonverbal communication that we will study. Through readings, social experiments, classroom discussions, and observations of others, students will learn to decipher the nonverbal communication of others and also to become more aware of their own body language. Each student will also shadow a person in a profession of the student’s choosing and prepare a presentation about the effective use of nonverbal communication in that profession.

Instructional methods will include lecture, discussion, group work, hands-on experiments, and guest speakers, to name a few. Journal entries, the final project, social experiments, and classroom activities will be the means for determining if the goals of the course have been met.

Technology: We will be using Moodle as a class website, where assignments, important dates, and grades will be posted. Your instructors will show you how to log on. Finally, students must use presentation software for the final presentations.

Reading the Textbook: There will be a reading assignment each night posted on the Moodle website. The daily lessons and activities will be designed under the
assumption that every student has thoroughly read the section. That is, students will read the material before it is covered in class. There will be a daily reading quiz to ensure that students are keeping up with the reading. Also, students should bring their textbooks to every class session.

**Journals:** Each student will post journal entries each night on Moodle. This will be an opportunity for each student to assimilate the information. Lots of information will be presented in a variety of different ways, and it is essential for each student to reflect on the material. The nightly journal will also give students practice writing.

Journal Content: Each journal entry should be three complete paragraphs in length. Write about the aspects of the day's lessons that stuck out to you the most. Feel free to comment on classroom activities that worked well, or classroom activities that fell flat. Don't use this as an excuse to suck up to the teachers. The goal is not to figure out exactly what the teachers want from you. Rather, we want to know about your thoughts and feelings on the day's lesson.

Also, please try not to pack the entries with “filler” or “fluff” simply to fulfill the paragraph stipulation. You don't want to write those kinds of entries, and we don't want to read them. So: try to find something that sparks your interest and develop your ideas a little. Oftentimes, the things you think are just tangents or not necessarily that important – things that just occurred to you, for example, while you were reading – are the very things that open up some of the most interesting doors for discussion. While part of the idea behind these journal entries is to make sure you're keeping up with and absorbing the reading, these journal assignments are also geared toward finding out more about what you're thinking.

Journal Evaluation: In addition to content, grammar and structure will be an important component of the grade. You will receive three points for an insightful, well-reasoned journal entry that shows evidence that you have thought about how all the elements of the lesson fit together. You will receive two points if the grammar is particularly bad (e.g., if your entry is packed with run-on sentences or sentence fragments), or if one or more of your paragraphs is too short. You will receive one point if you have only one or two paragraphs, or if it is clear that you expended no thought or effort on the assignment.

While it might seem like the grammar part shouldn't be a big deal, the clarity with which you express your ideas does matter, and it's part of our job to help you improve in this area. So, please think of these journal entries as an opportunity to improve your writing in a sort of “low-stakes” environment. We'll be happy to go over any of the grammatical issues we point out, and you might even find that this work will be helpful for you later on in your other classes.

**Homework:** There will be homework assigned daily, posted on the class website. There will be periodic social experiments for students to perform and report on. These will give students opportunities to observe others' body language and to
learn about behavior directly from other people, rather than by reading something in a book.

Late work may be accepted at the discretion of the instructors in extenuating circumstances like a death in a family.

**Grades:** A grade of H means exceptional, mind-bogglingly good completion of all course requirements. Among other things, a grade of H will indicate
- robust, good-natured, well-informed discussion leading and participation in class activities
- high grades (at least 90%) on quizzes and exceptional journals and other writing assignments
- no more than one unexcused absence
- extraordinary final project

A grade of P means acceptable completion of all of the course requirements including the following:
- quiz average of 70% or better
- solid work on journals and other writing assignments
- excellent effort at discussion leading and participation in class activities
- good work on final project
- no more than two unexcused absences

A grade of U means failure or unacceptable completion of any of the course requirements. ANY of the following would be grounds for a U in the course:
- sad, sad quiz average (under 70%)
- cursory work on writing assignments (or no work on writing assignments)
- utter silence and lethargy during class discussions
- more than two unexcused absences
- lack of effort for final project

**NOTE:** *Attendance is mandatory for the two presentation days. Absence from either of these days would be grounds for a grade of U in the course.*

**Final Project:** There will be one major project that each student will need to complete. Each student will choose someone in a profession for which nonverbal communication is important and shadow that person for two to three hours. Each student will then discuss suggestions for effective use of nonverbal communication with that person, and prepare a formal presentation for the class. The project will consist of several stages, including choosing a profession, setting up first contact, making a preliminary report of nonverbal communication that the student expects to see, shadowing the person for two to three hours, preparing a report on the types of nonverbal communication that the student actually did see, having a short debriefing with the person to talk about effective as well as ineffective nonverbal
communication, and giving a final presentation on the nonverbal communication that the student observed.

The final presentation will be assessed on how effectively the student uses nonverbal communication during the presentation, how well the student demonstrates knowledge of the classroom topics in the project, the quality of the written parts of the project, how well the student responds to the instructions of each part of the project (including deadlines), and the quality of the student’s reports of the observations of nonverbal communications.

**Honor Code:** The Honor Code is upheld in this as in all classes. Students must complete assignments and exams with honesty and integrity. Any work that is to be submitted must be pledged with a signature, indicating adherence to the Honor Code. Collaboration is not allowed on journals or nightly reading quizzes. The Honor Code can be found at [http://www.wofford.edu/uploadedFiles/studentLife/Honor%20Code_RightsResp.pdf](http://www.wofford.edu/uploadedFiles/studentLife/Honor%20Code_RightsResp.pdf)

**Notice:** Syllabus is subject to change upon notice.