

COMMUNICATIVE AND SOCIAL COGNITIVE FOUNDATIONS OF HATE  
COMM 129.3 SYLLABUS

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**Purpose**

The purpose of *Communicative and Social Cognitive Foundations of Hate* is to expose students to the nature of hate in American life. As we attempt to understand the essential quality of hate we will learn that hate is made possible through communication (sometimes in the form of hate speech) and human perception (sometimes in the forms of stereotypes and bias). We will learn that hate may also be resisted through communication. This fact is what motivates groups like the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) to argue that the answer to hate speech is more speech (not a prohibition on speech). In this course, students will learn how communication may serve to teach respect and tolerance, rather than hate. The word “tolerance,” like most words, has multiple meanings. Tolerance should be understood in this context as a willingness to embrace and value social and cultural differences, a definition of this term adopted by the Southern Poverty Law Center. Knowledge of the essence of hate will place students in a position to fight hate when they encounter it in their own lives. Just as students can learn to be vigilant to the presence of hate in their own lives they can learn to help other people be vigilant to the hate and intolerance that may threaten their communities.

In truth, understanding the nature of hate is a formidable task. Different hate groups are motivated by different goals and the evidence of their hate is found in different activities that pursue those goals. Individuals who hate bring various personal experiences that shade their hate with different hues and colors. Sometimes these personal experiences lead people to subscribe to what would appear to be incongruous beliefs and to produce what would appear to be incompatible actions. Lester Maddox, a former Governor of Georgia, who helped define an era of Southern segregation, chased several African Americans away from his Atlanta chicken restaurant the day after the Civil Rights Act was signed into law. Yet, he was fired from Atlantic Steele for refusing to fire two African American men who had been seen in the company of a union organizer. Barry Goldwater, after seeking the advice of William Rehnquist and Robert Bork, refused to sign the very Civil Rights Act that Lester Maddox held in contempt. Yet, Barry Goldwater hired an African-American woman (and a member of the N. A. A. C. P.) as his first assistant when he was elected to the senate. An understanding of hate that is more than superficial requires the examination of such complicated characters and activities. It is this examination that will prove necessary to understand the relationship between Tom Metzger (White Aryan Resistance) and many mainstream politicians. It is this examination that will help us to understand the diverse ways the state contributes to hate in American life.

There is another reason that a less-than-superficial understanding of hate is a formidable task. Most of us come to this class because we view hate as a significant social and communication problem, one that demands our attention. Therefore, an adequate understanding of hate will require that we begin to explore the world from the point of view of the hatemongers. However, this does not mean that we must treat such points of view as worthy of acceptance.

After students have learned about the nature of hate and how communication can be used as a tool to promote respect for differences, students will work together in groups to develop workshops to teach tolerance to a community partner. *Communicative and Social Cognitive Foundations of Hate* is a service-learning course. The assumption of service learning is that communities have much to offer the faculty and students who are studying social phenomena in the traditional context of the college classroom. In this case, we expect that we will all learn more about the nature of hate in our community by working with our community partner. It is important that you understand that this course is not like an internship, activism (although it may feel like activism due to my enthusiasm for this topic and my desire that we make our communities less hateful), or public service (although I hope that we will be offering an important service to our community). My desire to structure this course as a service-learning course is motivated by the belief that you will learn more about the topic of hate in our daily lives if your own scholarship is engaged with our community.

### **Important Assumptions of the Course**

Our views will change as we read and talk with one another throughout the semester. However, there are a few assumptions that serve as the foundation for this course. I am not asking everyone to accept these assumptions. Indeed, we will test these assumptions in our discussions and we may revise or reject them based on those discussions. I will try to make those assumptions explicit so that we may begin the class on common ground. First, this course was developed with the belief that the essential organizing principle underlying groups' interactions with one another is "identity" (racial, ethnic, gender, and sexual orientation). Conflict occurs when groups see the advancement of one identity as a challenge to another identity. For example, advances in civil rights, economic opportunities for women and other minorities, immigration, biracial marriages, etc. are all challenges to whiteness, maleness, and femaleness in America. Second, the current social and political organization, including hate groups in America, is a natural extension of a white, male, heterosexual hegemony in American society. Third, hate is not an unusual state of mind that is evident only in depraved individuals who have "something wrong with them." Hate is made possible and arises from the very processes that help people to function effectively in their social and interpersonal environments (e.g., categorizing, forming impressions, and developing implicit personality theories). Fourth, communication can be a tool to spread hate and fear or it can be a means of fighting hate and teaching tolerance.

### **Required Texts**

Perry, B. (2001). In the Name of Hate: Understanding Hate Crimes. Routledge: New York.

Stern-LaRosa, C., & Bettmann, E. H. (2000) Hate Hurts: How Children Learn and Unlearn Prejudice. Anti-Defamation League: New York.

Reading Packet: Student Stores

### **Suggested Readings/Resources**

The following readings will be helpful if you are not familiar with the literatures on hate, social perception, and communication.

Allport, G. W. (1958). The Nature of Prejudice (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: Doubleday.

Carrier, J. (2000). Ten ways to fight hate: A community response guide (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Montgomery, AL: Southern Poverty Law Center.

Darbishire, H. (1999). Hate Speech: New European Perspectives. See <http://errc.org/romarights/legalde1.shtml>

Stryker, S., et al. (2000). Self, Identity, and Social Movements. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Trenholm, S., & Jensen, A. (1996). Interpersonal Communication (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Belmont: Wadsworth.

Whillock, R. K. (1995). The use of hate as a stratagem for achieving political and social goals. In R. K. Whillock & D. Slayden (Eds.), Hate Speech (pp. 28-54). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Wood, J. T. (1998). But I Thought You Meant . . . : Misunderstandings in Human Communication. Mountainview: Mayfield. *This was a required reading for students one year ago. You will find it useful and I will make reference to it at different points in the semester.*

### **Assignments**

Book Review (and report to the class) – 30% of final course grade

Analysis of Internet Web Page or Analysis of Film – 30% of final course grade

Workshop – 40% of final course grade

Class Business – 0% of final course grade

### **Book Review (30% of final course grade)**

The student should select a book (that is not a required reading for this class). Attached to this syllabus is a list of books that students may select for this assignment (accompanied by questions and comments that will assist the review of each book). There are more students in this seminar than books on this list. So, some students will present texts of their own selection. The review should provide a cogent analysis and report of the text. The review should examine the text chapter by chapter with a summary at the end of the review. The written review should be 8-10, double-spaced pages in length (length may vary due to the number of chapters and the relative importance of each chapter to this course). You may find examples of book reviews in most communication journals. I recommend that you examine Communication Monographs, Journal of Applied Communication Research, Communication Education, Southern Journal of Communication, and Western Journal of Communication (as a beginning) for models of how book reviews are organized.

Students will provide a brief in-class presentation/discussion (20-30 minutes) of the book before the book review is completed and turned in. This is intended to benefit the writer by providing him/her with constructive feedback.

Due: February 4 and 11

### **Analysis of Internet Web Page/Film (30% of final course grade)**

The student should select an internet web page that has been constructed by a specific hate group or a specific group that monitors the activities of hate groups (e.g., SPCL's Klanwatch) and analyze the group's use of the web page as a tool in the accomplishment of the group's goals. You may select a WebPage analyzed in class but your analysis should be different. You should analyze the WebPage in theoretical terms that you learn in this class or in another COMM class. Papers should be approximately 8-10 double-spaced pages in length.

Or

The student should select a film (or documentary) that deals specifically with the topic of hate. You should analyze the film in theoretical terms that you learn in this class or in another COMM class (e.g., content analysis or narrative analysis). Papers should be approximately 8-10 double-spaced pages in length.

It is difficult to provide an exhaustive list of theoretical perspectives that you might find useful for this assignment. Similarly, it is just as difficult to provide an exhaustive list of sources that you might consult for such perspectives. However, a good beginning point is Frey et al.'s book, Investigating Communication: An Introduction to Research Methods. Dr. Waltman will discuss a number of theoretical "lenses" that you may use in your analysis of a WebPage/film. You should select a WebPage/film and theoretical lens with the assistance of Dr. Waltman.

Due: April 29

### **Workshop (40% of final course grade)**

Students will develop workshops for our community partner that will examine some aspect of hate: (a) Ways that communities may respond to hate and hate groups, (b) Ways that individuals may cope with hate speech or hate crimes that have been directed at them, (c) Understanding the nature of hate (for younger children). These are three among many topics that might be developed for this workshop. Students in this class will be divided into two groups. Each group will prepare their own workshop. After workshop teams are formed, each group will elect a “team leader” who will assist Dr. Waltman in the oversight of the workshop.

The energy that students must devote to this workshop must be sustained over the course of the semester and will require meeting with our community partner before and after the workshop. This workshop and our community partner must be a priority for all of us. This workshop is a wonderful opportunity for us (and a major responsibility). The workshop will probably take place outside of class.

Formal grading criteria for the workshop will be provided at a later date.

### **Class Business**

Dr. Julia Wood uses the term “class business” to refer to student initiated discussions in Gender and Communication. Class business will focus on some idea or artifact (e.g., newspaper clippings) that relate to our class. Topics for class business may or may not relate to the specific topics scheduled for discussion that evening. We will begin each class period by asking if there is any “class business” to discuss. There will be no time limit for this discussion (except for the need to deal with other class matters).

## Schedule

This schedule *will* change due to the needs of our community partner. Be prepared for changes and check your email regularly.

- Jan 7 Overview of the Course and the Many Forms of Hate.
- Jan 14 *The Sociology of Hate: Forms and Ideologies of Hate Groups in America* (Perry, Chapter 6; films viewed in class) Speaking for and about the hated? (lecture; see also Wood Ch. 10)
- Jan 21 *From Lester Maddox and the Reinvention of David Duke to "40 Bullets:" The Buttressing of Hate in America by the State* (Perry, Chapter 7; Wood, Ch. 8; R. Whillock reading; Readings and films on the media's contribution to hate; Hate and the Internet--lecture)
- Jan 28 *Dogs Bark Before They Bite: Hate Crimes and Hate Speech* (Perry, Chapter 1 & 2; Wood, Ch. 2; Rita Whillock reading) Explanation of workshop & initial group work
- Feb 4 **Report on Book Reviews;** Workshop preparation
- Feb 11 **Report on Book Reviews;** Discussion of frameworks for internet/film analysis
- Feb 25 Discussion of frameworks continued; Workshop preparation; **Book Review Due**
- Mr 4 Workshop Preparation
- Mr 11 Spring Break
- Mr 18 Class Discussion of Workshops
- Mr 25 *How Cognition Takes Us to the Threshold of Group Antagonism and Beyond: Cognitive Processes Contributing to Hate* (Lecture & Wood Ch. 10—recommended reading)
- Apr 1 *Cognitive Processes* continued
- Apr 8 *More on The Role of Communication in Hate* (D. Whillock reading; Lecture on Symbolic Interactionism & films viewed in class); *Functions of Racist Humor and Cartoons* (Billig reading; Meyer reading)
- Apr 15 Preliminary Presentation of Internet/Film Material and Class Discussion

Apr 22      Debriefing and Discussion of Workshop with community partner

Apr 29      Final Examination Period (Internet/Film Paper is Due @ 6 pm)