Comm. 655: Instructional Communication

Ball State University, Fall 2026, MW at 5:45

Instructor: Dr. Katherine J. Denker

Course Description: This course will provide graduate students with grounding in the research, theory, practice, and philosophy in communication education, instructional communication and critical communication pedagogy. Overviews instructional communication scholarship including student learning, teacher behaviors, and communication processes that impact higher education. Promotes and advances students' instructional skill development and experience with scholarship.

Course Objectives: By the end of the semester, students will:

1. Describe issues that can impact student's development in the classroom
2. Discuss specific teacher and classroom traits that impact the classroom
3. Discuss the history of the Basic Course
4. Articulate their own philosophy of education
5. Describe pragmatic issues associated with education
6. Construct and argue the importance of choices in course design
7. Conduct research in instructional communication to extend disciplinary knowledge.

Required Readings: Course readings are available on the course Canvas page and are listed in suggested reading order on the course schedule. All readings – assigned text chapters and additional course readings – are to be read in preparation for class on the day the topic will be discussed. Plan to Print these

My Assumptions of a Graduate Course: In a graduate course, I hold the same standards for you that I do for myself. We will be at all classes, unless an emergency occurs, which then we will be in contact with each other asap, or if a pressing conflict arises that we communicated about in advance. We will produce edited, original work that meets professional standards.We will be ready each day to engage in a productive, thoughtful, and respectful conversation about the material at hand and we will all be attentive and make productive, thoughtful, and respectful contributions. If you violate these assumptions, it should be understood that you will either drop a letter grade or fail the class depending on the seriousness of the violations. It is also understood that if I violate these assumptions this should be represented in my teaching evaluations.

Your Responsibilities

Due Dates: If you are having a problem that is impacting your ability to be successful in this course, please set up a time to meet with me as soon as possible.
We are all managing multiple hats, so I want us to have some choice with the schedule. This is of course balanced against my need to keep up with grading and keep the projects on track. Unless noted- All assignments are due during that week listed on the syllabus. My weeks are starting Monday at 1am and go until Sunday at 11:59pm

Thoughts about grading and graduate school: As instructional communication scholars, we want to learn about all the variables that impact the classroom. As students, you have had plenty of experience with traditional grading and evaluation methodologies. As you prepare for a career in teaching or training, it might be helpful to learn about other options. During the semester we will read more on grading, norms for this, as well as the implications for these decisions. We know that we want to foster growth mindsets, that grades should not be our primary motivation for our classroom engagement, yet we balance this with the tension that for many of you feedback alone might cause too much uncertainty.

This semester we will be utilizing a modified specifications-based grading system. What does this mean, for each assignment we will discuss the expectations and criteria for completion. After submitting the assignment, you will get (a lot of) feedback and a summary evaluation- Gold, Silver or Bronze. This

summary evaluation is in place to offer you some guidance as to your performance beyond the comments and to help you prioritize revisions/edits.

How will we do revisions/edits/late work- At the start of the semester you have 4 tokens- You can use a token to submit an assignment up to a week late, or resubmit an assignment for additional feedback. Absolutely no late work will be accepted after Dec. 10th. at 5pm.

At the end of the semester, when you turn in your portfolio for final evaluation, I will ask you to evaluate how you have done in the class. This can just be an additional page submitted in your portfolio. You will provide me with a brief overview and rational for your final course grade. I will use that in consultation with the feedback that I have given you over the semester.

So for those of you nervous- How might this work out? If you earn mostly Gold evaluations, you will get an A in the class, if you earn mostly Silver evaluations, you will get an B+ in the class, and if you earn mostly Bronzes, you will get a B- in the class. If you have missing assignments, this can drop your grade to the next letter.

Academic Misconduct: The university states its philosophy this way: "Honesty, trust, and personal responsibility are fundamental attributes of the University community. Academic dishonesty by a student will not be tolerated, for it threatens the foundation of an institution dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge." We as scholars and researchers cannot tolerate academic misconduct in our classes and individuals will be accountable for their choices, up to and including course failure. All individuals are expected to follow the university's code of behavior regarding all academic matters. I will address the academic misconduct with the student directly, whether the misconduct was intentionally or because of a lack of awareness. Penalties can include receiving a failing grade on the assignment/activity in question, a failing grade in the course, or expulsion from the university. Cheating, plagiarism (the using of another's work, words, or ideas as your own), and double-dipping (turning your own work in for credit in two different courses) are serious academic offenses.

Students may not submit any work generated by an AI program as their own. Doing so is plagiarism. Let's work to build our own intelligence before turning to artificial sources. In courses and assignments where AI use is permitted, I will have guidelines for that use. Work created outside of those guidelines will be considered an ethics violation. For specific information about the university's policies related to academic dishonesty or for descriptions of other behaviors that qualify as "dishonest," please consult the online version of the "Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities" (https://www.bsu.edu/about/administrativeoffices/student-conduct/policiesandprocedures).

Attendance Policy: In order for this class to be successful, your attendance and participation are imperative. We will conduct this class as a seminar, performing the roles of teachers and learners simultaneously. Therefore, your attendance and participation are important not only to your own intellectual development, but also to the development of others. The expectation in graduate school remains that students should attend every class meeting. However, I understand that conflicts arise. You are allowed two absences – save it for when you are ill, have car problems, or a family emergency. Engagement points cannot be made up, unless you have a documented reason for missing those course assignments. To be successful in this course, you must engage with the course material each week. I will record attendance and report student attendance rates in accordance with BSU policy. Attendance, in and of itself, does not earn students points or result in point deductions. Instead, I assess course engagement in a variety of ways throughout the semester as outlined in the course assignments.

University Policies

University Statement: We are committed to ensuring that all members of the community are welcome, through valuing the various experiences and worldviews represented at Ball State and among those we serve. We promote a culture of respect and civil discourse.

Disability Statement: If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, please contact the instructor of record as soon as possible. Ball State's Disability Services Office coordinates

services for students with disabilities; documentation of a disability needs to be on file in that office before any accommodations can be provided. Disability Services can be contacted at 765-285-5293 or dsd@bsu.edu.

Freedom of Expression: In this course, we are committed to fostering a learning environment that values intellectual diversity, encourages free expression, and promotes open inquiry. As members of the Ball State Community, we treat each person in the Ball State community with civility, courtesy, compassion, and dignity and respect and learn from differences in people, ideas, and opinions. Please review Ball State University's Statement on Freedom of Expression, the resources on Ball State's Freedom of Expression webpage, and Ball State's Beneficence Pledge.

Writing Center and Learning Center: All writers improve with practice and feedback, so as a student in this course, you are encouraged to use the Writing Center (in Robert Bell 295 during weekdays, Bracken Library First Floor West in the evenings, or online during any of our regularly scheduled hours) to get additional feedback on your writing. The Writing Center offers free planning, feedback, and accountability sessions (in person and online) to all students. To schedule a free appointment, go to *http://www.bsu.edu/writingcenter*. Online and in-person appointments are available; however, plan ahead because appointments book quickly!*!*

The Learning Center offers free Tutoring and Academic Coaching for many courses at Ball State. Students can make appointments for online (Zoom) or in-person (NQ 350) appointments. To make an appointment, visit my.bsu.edu and click on "Navigate" in the Additional Tools section, or just go directly to *https://bsu.navigate.eab.com*. Testing accommodations for students with disabilities are available for students who have received the appropriate documentation from Disability Services. Tests may be administered in the Learning Center. For more information about Learning Center programming, visit bsu.edu/learningcenter or call 765-285-1006. Follow us on Instagram: BallStateLC.

The Speaking Center: The Speaking Center is a free resource available to all members of the BSU community wanting to improve their public speaking abilities. We offer personalized coaching designed to help you become a more confident and effective speaker. Our trained coaches provide constructive feedback and support throughout the entire speech preparation process, whether you are in the early stages of brainstorming ideas and organizing your thoughts, or you need to practice your delivery and refine your message. The Center is in the David Letterman Communication and Media Building, room 302. To schedule an appointment, please access us through your Navigate app or **use this** direct link **to sign up for a time.** Appointments are available both in person, on Zoom, and in virtual reality (VR) for those interested in practicing in an immersive speaking environment.

Title IX Ball State University is committed to maintaining an educational environment free from sex discrimination, including sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, dating and domestic violence, and stalking. Students who experience or witness conduct that may violate University policy are encouraged to seek support and assistance. The Title IX Office can provide information about reporting options, supportive measures, and available resources. Contact the Title IX Office at 765-285-1545 or titleix@bsu.edu.

Please Note: As your instructor, I am a mandatory reporter. If you disclose information to me about conduct that may constitute sex discrimination or sexual misconduct, I am required to notify the Title IX Coordinator. The Title IX Office will reach out to discuss available resources, supportive measures, and reporting options. If you wish to speak with someone confidentially, you may contact the Counseling Center or the Center for Survivor Support.

Pregnancy and Related Conditions: Ball State University provides reasonable modifications for students affected by pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions. Students seeking academic, housing, or other modifications are encouraged to contact the Title IX Office as early as possible to

discuss available options and support. For assistance, contact the Title IX Office at 765-285-1545 or titleix@bsu.edu.@.

The Basic Needs Hub If you are having difficulty affording enough food, do not have a safe and reliable place to sleep, and/or experiencing an emergency or crisis, help is available through the Basic Needs Hub. The Basic Needs Hub has information, resources, and provides individualized support to students. To talk with a supportive staff member about your experience, receive one on one assistance, or learn more about resources, you can submit a Basic Needs Assistance Form.

The Counseling Center The Ball State University Counseling Center offers free and confidential services to all students. The Counseling Center is located in Lucina Hall, Room 320. To schedule an appointment, you can contact us at 765-285-1736. Ball State also offers a 24/7 Crisis Line, which can be reached at 765-285-HOPE (4673). At the Ball State Counseling Center, we see students for a variety of reasons, some of which include homesickness, relationship concerns, anxiety, and depression. We assist students with getting connected to therapy at our Center as well as connecting students to self-help resources, other on-campus resources, and community-based resources. All Ball State students also have access to several on-demand, self-help resources through a variety of different platforms. All of these resources, including a direct link to our website, can be found here.

General Policies:

1. The syllabus may be adjusted because of scheduling difficulties or instructional need. The student is responsible for all materials and instructions given in class or on/via Canvas.

2. Course & Instructor Evaluation: Students will have an opportunity to participate in formal assessment of this course and the instructor's teaching performance at the end of the semester through the university's on-line evaluation process. I invite and encourage your feedback here as I continue to develop my teaching and this course.

3. I reserve the right to request technology be removed the course to enhance the classroom community. No electronic recording or broadcast of this class is permitted without written permission. This includes the use of and/or wearing Smart glasses/AI glasses.

Assignments and Grading

Assignment (see below for descriptions)	***Possible Points if using them Numbers for reference only***	*Earned Points*
Teaching Portfolio	350	_____
Reflective Essay Project (total of 300 pts)		
Topic Idea List	20	_____
Process Assignment 1	30	_____
Process Assignment 2	45	_____
Optional Peer Review	20	_____
Final Paper	150	_____
Optional Response Letter	20	_____
Final Paper Presentation	15	_____
Participation/Weekly Activities	100	_____
Total Points	*750*	_____

This class uses the typical scale: A 100% - 93%, A- 92% - 90%,
B+ 89% - 87%, B 86% - 83%, B- 82% - 80%,

C+ 79% - 77%, C 76% - 73%, C- 72% - 70%

Note about assignments: Instructional communication scholars primarily utilize APA style, so will we. Paper should be well organized and easy to read. It is important that you do not allow a negative first impression of your papers to overshadow your ideas. Make sure that your paper is free of typographical, grammatical, and spelling errors ("Invention is only half of the writing process"- McCauliff, 2010?). Type source citations and your own name on all documents. Plan to keep a copy of all papers you submit. Students who require assistance with their writing are strongly encouraged to seek help through the university's Writing Center. Students who need help with other academic performance matters are encouraged to consult with staff at the university's Learning Center.

For the purposes of course assessment and development, I may keep copies of your work for assessment purposes or as exemplars for future semesters. Please notify me if you would prefer that your work not be used as an exemplar in the future.

Detailed assignment descriptions and course calendar available in canvas.