**Interracial Communication**

**COMM-4373**

**Course Description:**According to Orbe and Harris, interracial communication is the transactional process of message exchange between individuals in a situational context where racial difference is perceived as a salient factor by at least one person. Therefore, this class will examine on the social problems encountered in communication between people of different races. The class will consist of readings, discussion, and field study on how prejudice, stereotypes, racism and self-concepts can affect communication. We will also explore ways to minimize these problems.

**Required Texts:**

Mark Orbe and Tina Harris. [Interracial Communication: Theory Into Practice. **\*3rd Edition.**](https://www.amazon.com/Interracial-Communication-Mark-P-Orbe/dp/1452275718)Sage Publishing, 2015.

**Grading:**

**Reflection Questions: (20%):** Students are to write a 350-500 word essay on the assigned reflection questions.

**Essay Question (20%):** Students are to write a 600-800 word essay on the assigned essay question.

**Quizzes (20%):**

**Mid-term (20%):**

**Final Exam (20%)**

**Grading: I will report grades based on a plus/minus grading system.**

**Originality:**According to the University of Memphis Student Handbook, your assignments must reflect your own effort. In situations where external sources are used, you must acknowledge your sources and add your own analysis. Otherwise, it is plagiarism. If you plagiarize or cheat, the minimum penalty is an F on the assignment; other penalties could include an F for the course and/or suspension. All instances of academic dishonesty must be reported to the Office of Judicial Affairs.

**Students with Disabilities:**Students with disabilities (including invisible disabilities such as chronic diseases, learning disabilities, and head injuries) are encourage to notify their instructor of their condition within the first two weeks of the semester. The college and your instructor will make reasonable accommodations for persons with documented disabilities.

**Schedule Topics and Readings**

Note: All assignments are in bold type and I expect you to have them read before class on the day they assigned in the schedule. Please bring your books or readings to class for reference during discussions. Written assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date specified in the syllabus.

**Module One**

**August 18-September 6**

**Watch:** [Tina Harris: Interracial Communication](http://sk.sagepub.com/video/interracial-communication)

**Read:** Chapter 1

**(Reflection Paper: #1)** Drawing on standpoint theory, students are to write her or his own personal reflection paper.  Incorporate a critical analysis of a time when you interacted with a member of another race.  How did your standpoint conflict with your communication partner’s standpoint in the interracial encounter?  If you did not see a conflict, comment on that as well.

**Read:** Chapter 2

Watch: [Rise and Fall of Jim Crow; Pt. 1](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0qB_9HG2Ld4)

**(Reflection Paper #2):** Students are to write a personal reflection about what race is to you. You should incorporate your own definition, as well as a discussion of which racial category you would place for yourself.  Why?  Finally, if you had to create a racial typology on your own, what would the classifications be in that typology?

Watch: [Rise and Fall of Jim Crow; Part 2](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=utwE5ZPd7Gk)

**Read:** Chapter 3

**Take Quiz #1: Due September 6th by 11:59pm**

**Module Two**

**September 7-September 27**

**Read:** Chapter 4

**Essay Question #1:** Do you think that the discussion on whiteness has any utility for white identity development? If you do not identify as white, what positive and/or negative aspects of whiteness studies intrigues you? If you do identify as white, has whiteness studies made you think about your own privileges? If not, what has it made you think about? Those that identify as biracial or multiracial, what do you think about whiteness studies? How might this theoretical discussion inform the way you think about yourselves and others?

**Read:** Chapter 5-Intersectionality

Kimberle’ Crenshaw: [The Urgency of Intersectionality](https://www.ted.com/talks/kimberle_crenshaw_the_urgency_of_intersectionality#t-41086)

**(Reflection Paper #3):** Does your personal identity change when you’re in an intraracial group?  Interracial group?  Why does it/doesn’t it change?

**Take Quiz #2: Due: September 27th by 11:59pm**

**Module Three**

**September 28-October 18**

**Read:**Chapter 6

**Essay Question #2:** Describe cultural contracts theory. Do you think that you have “signed” a cultural contract? If you were to choose which cultural contract best describes you, which would it be (e.g., ready-to-sign, quasi-completed, or co-created)?  In what ways might you reframe your understanding of racial and ethnic labels in order to challenge stereotypes?

**(Reflection Paper #4)**Describe an interracial communication encounter you have recently been part of. After analyzing the interaction, propose strategies that would facilitate more effective encounters in the future.

**(Reflection Paper #5)** Which theory or theories works best for you for understanding the interracial communication process? Why is this so?

**Take Quiz #3: Due October 18th by 11:59pm**

**Midterm: Opened October 19-22 until 11:59**

**Module Four**

**October 19-November 8**

**Read:** Chapter 7

**Read:** Chapter 8

**(Reflection Paper #6):** Discuss the influence of family and friends on interracial romantic relationships.  How great of an influence do family members and friends exert over your perceptions of interracial romantic relationships?  Do your opinions differ from earlier generations?  If so, how?

**Read:** Chapter 9

**Essay Question #3:** Why have the authors of your textbook included research that focuses on interracial communication in institutions of higher education? What expectations are you held to as college students once you move toward a career in organizational/workplace contexts? How can you as a student help your university and/or professors and peers engage in dialogue about interracial communication?

**Read:** Chapter 10

**(Reflection Paper #7):** Have you ever experienced conflict with an individual from another ethnicity or race? If so, do you attribute their/your ethnicity or race as an indicator for the conflict? Can you attribute anxiety to the conflict? Did the conflict result in violence? Provide specific examples.

 Take Quiz #4: Due: November 8th by 11:59pm

**Module Five**

**\*October 26-November 17**

**Read:** Chapter 11

**(Reflection Paper #8):** Do you believe that your cultural group is represented accurately in the media? Why or Why not?

Watch: [Whitewashing: Last Week Tonight with John Oliver (HBO)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XebG4TO_xss)

**Essay Question #4:** How do representations of race intersect with other aspects of cultural identity (e.g., gender, sexuality, and/or class)?

**Read:** Chapter 12

**Essay Question #5:** What is meant by the term interracial dialogue? How can interracial dialogue function to transcend racial boundaries? What does peak communication mean in relation to interracial dialogue?

**Reflection Paper #9:** Describe your experience in the class and how will you use what you have learned in the class and in what ways. (800-1000 words) **\*Worth 20 points**

**Take Quiz 5: Due: November 17 by 11:59pm**

**Final Exam:**

**Open: November 18-21 until 11:59pm**