

Interviewing & Communication

University of Illinois-Chicago • COM 311 • 930-1045a T-R • BSB 285

Instructor

Thomas Conner is an editor at the Chicago Sun-Times and has 18 years experience as a journalist conducting interviews of every stripe.

Contact

You may reach me by phone at the Sun-Times during business hours, (312) 321-3033. (I am only scheduled on campus for our class sessions; I do not have a campus office. However, I can meet with students on campus by appointment.)

The email address for use in this course, for both communication with your instructor and delivery of assignments, is com311@me.com. (In case of network failure only, use tconner@suntimes.com as a backup.)

The book

Interviewing: Principles & Practices (12th Edition) by Charles J. Stewart & William B. Cash Jr. (McGraw-Hill)

— Selected videos, journal articles, and other readings may be assigned in class.

What are we doing here?

Interviewing & Communication is designed to introduce students to the communication principles applicable to various types of interviews. We'll talk theory, then we'll put that into practice in several practical interview situations. We'll look at nonverbal communication, listening skills, planning and conducting interviews, questioning, setting interview goals and interaction factors. When December rolls around, you should be able to demonstrate an understanding of interviewing principles and their functions and apply them to practical interviewing situations.

House rules

Learn 'em: (1) **If it's late, keep it.** You miss the deadline, you miss the grade. Written assignments are due at the *beginning* of class. (2) **Be here.** It's a communication course, so you won't learn anything unless you're here communicating. You miss more than two classes, your final grade drops one letter for each additional absence. By signing up for this course, you have entered into a professional business contract for these regularly scheduled meetings. (And, remember, you paid to be here.) Also, no make-ups without an excused, *prior-arranged* absence. (3) **Participate in class**, ask questions and be respectful of your mates. The only dumb question is the one you don't ask. (4) **Type all assignments**, with a heading in the upper-right corner containing your name and the name of the assignment. Put your name on all successive pages, too. (5) **Turn off cell phones, pagers, PDAs** and all other personal communication devices before class starts. If your phone rings in the middle of my lecture or your fellow students' interview exercises, the punishment is likely to be creative and uncomfortable.

Class schedule

This is, of course, subject to alteration and adjustment.

Date	Before class	In class
Tues 8.26		Introduction
Thur 8.28	READ Chapter 1	<i>Discuss</i> : Elements & process
Tues 9.2	READ Chapter 2	<i>Discuss</i> : Two-party interaction
Thur 9.4	Email a CHECK THIS OUT link by 3 p.m. Wed. 9.3	— <i>Discuss</i> : Verbal and non-verbal interaction — <i>Watch/discuss</i> : Check This Outs
Tues 9.9		<i>SPEAKER</i> : The work of Studs Terkel
Thur 9.11		<i>FILM</i> : “Hold Your Breath,” a health care dilemma
Tues 9.16	READ Chapter 3	<i>Discuss</i> : Say What?: Framing questions
Thur 9.18	READ Chapter 4	<i>Discuss</i> : Interview structure: Going with the flow
Tues 9.23	READ Chapter 5	<i>Discuss</i> : Probing deeper: Getting to the heart of it
Thur 9.25		<i>SPEAKER</i> : Probing in journalism
Tues 9.30	Prepare for IV 1	— <i>SPEAKER</i> : Probing in the law — IV 1: Probing
Thur 10.2		IV 1: Probing
Tues 10.7	READ Chapter 6	<i>Discuss</i> : Survey says ...?
Thur 10.9	Prepare for IV 2	IV 2: Survey
Tues 10.14	READ Chapter 7	<i>Discuss</i> : Job interviews: The recruiter on the hunt
Thur 10.16	READ Chapter 8	<i>Discuss</i> : Job Interviews: The applicant prepares
Tues 10.21		<i>SPEAKER</i> : Human relations
Thur 10.23	Email a CHECK THIS OUT link by 3 p.m. Wed. 10.22	— <i>Discuss</i> : Job Interviews: The applicant gets grilled — <i>Watch/discuss</i> : Check This Outs
Tues 10.28	Prepare for IV 3	IV 3: Job interview
Thur 10.30		IV 3: Job interview
Tues 11.4	READ Chapters 10 & 11	<i>Discuss</i> : Selling an idea
Thur 11.6	Prepare for IV 4	<i>Discuss</i> : The mark: Being the persuadee
Tues 11.11		IV 4: Persuasive interview
Thur 11.13	READ Chapter 12	— <i>Discuss</i> : Counseling and social work — <i>SPEAKER</i> : Counseling
Tues 11.18	READ Chapter 13	<i>Discuss</i> : What’s up, doc? Health care interviews
Thur 11.20	Email a CHECK THIS OUT link by 3 p.m. Wed. 11.19	— <i>Watch/discuss</i> : Check This Outs — <i>SPEAKER</i> : Health care
Tues 11.25	Prepare for IV 5	IV 5: Health care interview
Thur 11.27	<i>Go home!</i>	<i>NO CLASS: Thanksgiving</i>
Tues 12.2		Final exam preparation
Thur 12.4		Conclusions

Assignments

What are you graded on?

Pop quizzes (5 x 10 points) = 50 points

Check this out (3 x 10 points) = 30 points

IV Planning paper (1 x 50 points) = 70 points

IV Analysis paper (1 x 150 points) = 140 points

Observations (1 x 30 points) = 30 points

Final exam (1 x 150 points) = 150 points

Class participation = 30 points

TOTAL = 500 points

All assignments will be graded and returned as fast as my aging eyes can read them.

Pop quizzes

There will be five, unscheduled quizzes covering material from the text and class discussions. These can only be made up in the event of an excused (prior-arranged) absence on the date of the quiz, and must be made up during the next class period.

Check This Outs

Three times during the semester, according to the class schedule, you will email the instructor a link to an interview available online — something you like, something you think is funny, but it must be something that reflects what we've been discussing in class. The link can be to either (a) a text interview published online by a reputable media outlet or blog, or (b) a video interview posted by a reputable media outlet or blog, or on YouTube or other appropriate video-sharing sites.

In the email message with the link, you will write one paragraph explaining what it is about this particular interview you like or find interesting, and why that is. You will explain how at least one factor of this interview reflects a concept from the text and/or our class discussions. You will identify a specific portion in the interview that would be suitable for reading or viewing in class, and why this section is worth checking out.

Final exam

One final exam will be given at the end of the course. The exam will cover all the semester's material from the textbook and supplemental readings, from class discussions and from guest speakers. The exam will include multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank and essay work.

In-class interviews

Each student will role-play one of the specialized interview (IV) forms in front of the class — once as the interviewer (ER) and once as the interviewee (EE). Each student also will participate as observers (OB) for each slate of interviews.

In the first week of class, students will select which day they will act as ER and which day they prefer to be EE.

ERs are graded for each of the five IVs; only in the job interview (IV3) are the EEs graded also.

ERs write two graded papers about the task. EEs are not graded directly but expected to be cooperative (part of the class participation grade), except in IV3 when EEs will also write two graded papers about the task. OBs receive 10 points per evaluation.

The IV Planning paper

On the day of the IV, the ER provides four (4) copies of his/her interview plan (for each of the three OBs and the instructor). List your interview topic and assignment. In a brief introductory paragraph, describe your objectives, and explain what question sequencing strategy you plan to use and why. In another paragraph, describe the research you have conducted to prepare for the interview, including any pre-interview preparation with the EE. Then, describe your planned opening and list your planned questions in the order to expect to ask them. Include any transitions you may have planned.

For IV3 EEs: Same drill — list the topic and assignment, explain what questions you anticipate, how you prepared for the interview, what research was conducted, etc.

You will be evaluated on how well you prepared for the interview (adequacy and thoroughness of research, appropriateness of questioning strategy, effectiveness of question wording and preparation, sequencing, transitions, etc.) as well as presentation, style, grammar, proofreading, etc. Your grade will be assigned by the instructor, who will consider the grades suggested by the OBs.

The IV Analysis paper

On the second class date following your IV (if not sooner), your analysis paper is due. This 5- to 7-page paper should follow the format and guidelines below. Use the provided topics and subheadings and number each as shown below. (The italicized numbers following the subheadings indicate the relative emphasis, attention and amount of space you should devote to each area — *1=relatively less, 2=moderate, 3=relatively more*. Pay attention to what deserves the most attention and develop that more fully.)

Write clearly and concisely, and develop your points completely. You can't cover everything that happened in the IV, so analyze the events and factors you think had the greatest impact on the IV. You must include clear and relevant examples of behaviors, verbalizations and other factors from the IV to support your claims. You must use and cite concepts from the class and the text to guide your analysis of the IV. Your paper will be evaluated on the depth, insight and quality of analysis, application of concepts and — as always — presentation.

For IV3 EEs: Same drill — prepare the same paper, simply reversing the perspective.

1. **Interview topic: Planned and actual (1).** State your planned IV topic in one sentence. Briefly indicate whether the topic changed or was modified during the IV, indicating how and why that occurred.
2. **Adequacy of IV planning (2).** Indicate how you planned your IV topic and how much the EE/ER and other sources were used in planning. What did you cover in the pre-IV? What background research was conducted? How did that research affect your planning, and the IV itself? What was the overall strategy for topics to be covered, and for sequencing of questions and use of probes? Did you plan any special questioning techniques? Why or why not?
3. **Opening of the IV (2).** How did your initial approach go? How could it have been improved? How did the first 2-3 questions go? How was the initial rapport level?
4. **Use of question sequencing and transitions (2).** What question sequence did you plan to use (tunnel, funnel, etc.)? What sequence did you actually use and why?
5. **Questions and probes (3).** Evaluate your use of questions and probes during the IV and indicate how the other person responded to them. Illustrate your analysis by citing your two best questions or probes and your two worst questions or probes. Explain why these are best or worst and how they affected the IV. Then suggest improved questions for each of the worst choices.
6. **Relationship and nonverbal issues (3).** Evaluate the quality of the EE/ER relationship. Did it change? How and why? Evaluate the issues of inclusion, affection and control, and cite specific examples of behaviors that affected these. Cite examples of the two best and worst behaviors that affected the relationship between EE and ER. Explain how you'd improve on the worst behaviors. Cite examples of at least two nonverbal behaviors of the EE or ER that affected the IV, and explain how they affected the IV.
7. **Other IV factors (1-2).** Include anything not noted above that affected the IV — the setting, distractions, differences in culture/gender/age, recording, note taking, etc. How did these affect the IV?
8. **Conclusion (1).** Was it a success or failure? Were objectives met? Did you get the information you set out to acquire? In the case of IV3s: Will you hire this person, or do you think you got the job?

OBs

Each student will evaluate the interview planning conducted by the ER/EE prior to the IV. You will study the IV Planning paper prior to the start of the IV. You will complete an Observer Evaluation form to comment and make suggestions on the IV Planning paper, delivering a suggested grade. You are only evaluating preparation, not performance. Don't let a brilliantly conducted (but poorly planned) interview lure you into giving a falsely high score; likewise, don't let a horrible (but excellently planned) interview lure you into giving a falsely low score.

OBs are graded on the evaluations they provide. Your evaluations as peers will be based on the quality of evaluation, the insight you bring to the evaluation, and the helpfulness and appropriateness of the suggestions you make. You will be graded on the extent to

which your comments reflect an understanding of the concepts presented in class and in the text. (For example, did the ER say he/she planned to use a funnel sequence, but it was actually a tunnel sequence?)

Plagiarism

Plagiarism means taking material from another source (published or unpublished) and presenting it as your own without proper citation. This is a *serious* academic offense. If any plagiarism is discovered in a student's work, that student will automatically fail the course and be referred to the dean for immediate consequences.