

**Psychology of Communication**  
**Psyc406-001 - Spring 2012**

**Mon/Wed – 12:00-1:15 – Robinson B, Room 228**  
**Office hours: Mon/Wed 1:30-3:00 or by appointment**  
**Website: <http://classweb.gmu.edu/dbitler/psyc406-2011>**

**Instructor: Dr. Doris Bitler Davis**  
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**Office: David King Hall 2051**

**Course goals:** This course will provide a broad, comparative overview of animal and human communication, with an emphasis on understanding how and why different forms of communication behaviors might have evolved.

**University synthesis:** This course has been approved to meet the University's General Education requirement for Synthesis.

**Required reading:** Reading should be completed by the dates indicated on the schedule. Reading the material in advance will help you to get the most out of lectures, discussions and observations. Readings can be found on E-Reserves (<http://furbo.gmu.edu/cgi-bin/ers/OSCRgen.cgi>) or through the Mason Libraries (<http://library.gmu.edu/>).

**Grading:** The final grade will consist of the following weighted components, based on a 100-point scale

Mid-term exam	20%
Final exam	20%
In-class quizzes (12 @ 1% each)	12%
Projects and Presentations (3 @ 16% each)	48%

Final grades will be assigned as follows:

A	93-100%	C+	77-79%
A-	90-92%	C	73-76%
B+	87-89%	C-	70-72%
B	83-86%	D	60-69%
B-	80-82%	F	< 60%

**Projects:** Each project will consist of background research; identification of the subjects and/or setting of interest; and development of an ethogram to quantify observed behavior. The details and requirements of each project will be discussed in class. Projects 2 and 3 will include a brief, in-class presentation.

**Absences:** In general, assignments and exams cannot be rescheduled or made up except in cases of serious, unavoidable, and documented circumstances that are clearly beyond the student's ability to control. Students must be in class to take quizzes.

**Technology expectations:** All students are expected to maintain and regularly access their Mason e-mail accounts. Students will need to visit the class website in order to download slides and access the online syllabus and other course-related information.

**Attendance and decorum:** Class attendance is not recorded, but it is important for students who want to do well in PSYC406 to be in class, prepared, and attentive. In addition to other important information, any extra credit opportunities will be announced in class and will often consist of in-class participation. Preparation for class includes completing reading by the assigned due date. Lectures and presentations will be more interesting and more meaningful for students who have done the reading in advance. In order to be attentive, you should not engage in any multi-tasking activities during class – that means no texting, e-mail, web surfing, doing homework for other classes, etc. Please turn off all cell phones and other potential sources of disruption at the start of class. During class, laptops may only be used for taking notes. If you must arrive late or leave early, please do so as quietly as possible and be considerate of your classmates by sitting near an exit.

**Disability accommodations:** If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me early in the semester. If you have not already done so, contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 703-993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office. Please keep in mind that it might not be possible to grant last-minute requests for accommodations, so it is important to make all arrangements well before the date when the accommodation is needed.

**Honor code:** All students are expected to be familiar with, and abide by, the University Honor Code. As required by the Honor Code, all suspected violations will be reported.

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**Important dates:** Last day to add – January 31  
Last day to drop – February 24

**Enrollment:** Students are responsible for verifying correct enrollment. Graded work will not be returned to students who are not officially enrolled.

## Schedule:

- Jan 22 Introduction; defining communication
- Jan 25 The evolution of behavior; observing behavior; discussion of project details  
\* Smith, W. J. (1980). *The behavior of communicating: An ethological approach*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Chapter 1, Introduction, p. 1-21. (E-Reserves)
- Jan 30 The evolution of communication  
\* Hauser, M. D. (1998). *The evolution of communication*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press. Section 1.1 - 1.2, p. 1-13. (Available online through Mason Libraries, call number QL776 .H38 1996eb)  
\* Smith, W. J. (1980). *The behavior of communicating: An ethological approach*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Chapter 2, The diversity of displays, p. 23-45. (E-Reserves)
- Feb 1 Form and function; multiple modalities  
\* Braune, P., Schmidt, S., & Zimmerman, E. (2005). Spacing and group coordination in a nocturnal primate, the golden brown mouse lemur (*Microcebus ravelobensis*): The role of olfactory and acoustic signals. *Behavioral Ecology and Sociobiology*, 58, 587-596.
- Feb 6 Introduction to observation
- Feb 8 Introduction to observation
- Feb 13 Visual signals  
\* Petrie, M & Halliday, T. (1994). Experimental and natural changes in the peacock's (*Pavo cristatus*) train can affect mating success. *Behavioral Ecology and Sociobiology*, 35(3), 213-217.  
\* Loyau, A., Saint Jalme, M., Cagniant, C. & Sorci, G. (2005). Multiple sexual advertisements honestly reflect health status in peacocks (*Pavo cristatus*). *Behavioral Ecology and Sociobiology*, 58(6), 552-557.
- Feb 15 Visual signals (cont'd)  
\* Borgia, G. (1995). Complex male display and female choice in the spotted bowerbird: Specialized functions for different bower decorations. *Animal Behavior*, 49(5), 1291-1301.  
\* Friend, T. (2004). *Animal talk: Breaking the codes of animal language*. New York: NY: Free Press. Chapter 7, Flash and dance, p. 165-191. (E-Reserves)
- Feb 20 Auditory signals  
\* Seyfarth, R.N., Cheney, D.L. & Marler, P. (1980). Monkey responses to three different alarm calls: Evidence of predator classification and semantic communication. *Science*, 210(4471), 801-803.  
\* Cheney, D.L. & Seyfarth, R.N. (1985). Vervet monkey alarm calls: Manipulation through shared information? *Behavior*, 94(1/2), 150-166.
- Feb 22 Auditory signals (cont'd)  
\* Sayigh, L.S., Esch, H.C., Wells, R.S., & Janik, V.M. (2008). Facts about signature whistles of bottlenose dolphins, *Tursiops truncatus*. *Animal Behavior*, 74(6), 1631-1642.  
\* Rosenberg, J., and Tunney, R.J. (2008). Human vocabulary use as display. *Evolutionary Psychology*, 6(3), 538-549.
- Feb 27 Chemical signals  
\* Wyatt, T.D. (2003). *Pheromones and animal behavior*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1, Animals in a chemical world, p. 1-21. (E-Reserves)  
\* Wyatt, T.D. (2003). *Pheromones and animal behavior*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 5, Scent marking and territorial behavior, p. 87-100. (E-Reserves)
- Feb 29 Tactile signals  
\* Roces, F. & Holldobler, B. (1996). Use of stridulation in foraging leaf-cutting ants: Mechanical support during cutting or short-range recruitment signal? *Behavioral Ecology and Sociobiology*, 39(5), 293-299.
- Mar 5 Extreme senses  
\* Payne, K.B., Langbauer, W.R. & Thomas, E.M. (1986). Infrasonic calls of the Asian elephant (*Elephas maximus*), *Behavioral Ecology and Sociobiology*, 18(4), 297-301.  
\* Poole, J.H., Payne, K., Langbauer, W.R. & Moss, C.J. (1988). The social contexts of some very low frequency calls of African elephants, *Behavioral Ecology and Sociobiology*, 22(6), 385-392.
- Mar 7 **MIDTERM EXAM due by 5:00 pm**
- Mar 12 Spring Break – NO CLASS
- Mar 14 Spring Break – NO CLASS
- Mar 19 Presentations

Mar 21 Presentations

Mar 26 Presentations

Mar 28 Presentations

Apr 2 Presentations

Apr 4 Presentations

Apr 9 Human communication (gesture and facial expression)

\* Iverson, J. & Goldin-Meadow, S. (1998). Why people gesture when they speak. *Nature*, 396, 228.

\* Kendon, A. (1997). Gesture. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 26, 109-128.

Apr 11 Culture and gender

\* Eckman, P. and Friesen, W.V. (1971). Constants across cultures in the face and emotions. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 17(2), 124-129.

\* Bryant, G.A. & Barrett, H.C. (2008). Vocal emotion recognition across disparate cultures. *Journal of Cognition and Culture*, 8(1-2), 135-148.

Apr 16 Presentations

Apr 18 Presentations

Apr 23 Presentations

Apr 25 Presentations

Apr 30 Presentations

May 2 Presentations

**May 14 FINAL EXAM due by 1:15 pm**