

## COM 190: Interpersonal Communication MWF, 11:00 am – 11:55 am in C 102

Department of Communication & Theatre  
Point Loma Nazarene University

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**Office Hours:** Tues/Thurs: 11:00 am – 12:15 pm and by appointment.

### PLNU MISSION

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To Teach ~ To Shape ~ To Send

Point Loma Nazarene University exists to provide higher education in a vital Christian community where minds are engaged and challenged, character is modeled and formed, and service becomes an expression of faith. Being of Wesleyan heritage, we aspire to be a learning community where grace is foundational, truth is pursued, and holiness is a way of life.

### REQUIRED MATERIALS & RESOURCES

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Guerrero, L. K., Andersen, P. A., & Afifi, W. A. (2014). *Close Encounters: Communication in Relationships*, Fourth Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Rosenberg, M. (2015) *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life*, Third Edition. Encinitas, CA: Puddledancer Press.

\*Please read and save this syllabus. If you remain in the course after the first day of class, then you are stipulating that you will abide by the university and course policies described within this syllabus.

### COURSE DESCRIPTION & LEARNING OUTCOMES

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Relationships are a central component of our everyday lives and influence how we construct our personal sense of identity. In this course, we will be taking a relational approach to the study of interpersonal communication (communication between individuals) by focusing mainly on close relationships (family, friends, romantic partners). We will critique positive and negative communication patterns that we have observed in the media and past interactions and we will apply interpersonal theory and concepts to improve our communication within our own close relationships. In addition, we will be learning the language of Nonviolent Communication to implement into our daily interactions. Through NVC practice and reflection, we will cultivate a practice of empathetic communication to both self and others.

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Explain theories and concepts of interpersonal communication and apply these concepts to personal relationships.
- Identify the guiding principles of Nonviolent Communication and apply this communication process/language to your relationships, workplaces, and communities.
- Distinguish empathetic communication from other forms of non-empathetic communication and demonstrate empathic communication to both self and others.
- Evaluate the positive and negative effects of communication behaviors and their impact on close relationships.
- Self-reflect and assess your own communication behaviors in relationships through journaling and sharing in a supportive group environment.

## COURSE FORMAT AND POLICIES

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**Support:** I am committed to helping every student attain their best possible education.

I AM HERE TO HELP! Please do not hesitate to ask questions, or ask for help, in or out of class. I will also be available if you would like me to review your work and give you feedback before it is turned in or presented. If you have any special needs that it would be helpful for me to be aware of, please do let me know.

**Attendance:** As members of a learning community, your presence is appreciated, and your absence is noticed. The class sessions are set up to help people learn from each other (through discussions, activities, etc.) and you are expected to attend each class session. Everyone has useful and insightful information to offer to the class. Participation is the core of this work, and to help keep track of that, I take attendance.

You are allowed two (2) excused or unexcused absences in the course of the semester without penalty. The only absences excused after that will be university approved absences (see section below). It is your choice how you use these absences and it is encouraged that you use them wisely. Please note that these 2 absences DO include instances of illness and family obligations. Each absence over two will result in a 12-point deduction to your overall grade.

As noted in the University catalog: If you are absent from more than 10 percent of class meetings (5 classes), I have the option of filing a written report which may result in de-enrollment. If the absences exceed 20 percent (9 classes), you may be de-enrolled without notice. If the date of de-enrollment is past the last date to withdraw from a class, you will be assigned a grade of W or WF consistent with university policy in the grading section of the catalog. See [Academic Policies](#) in the undergrad student catalog.

**University Approved Absences:** Absences for certain events and obligations recognized by the University (i.e.: participation in sports, forensics, music tours, etc.) may be counted as “excused.” Please notify me at least one week prior to such absences with documentation and contact information from the sponsoring program/department. You are responsible for making up all work missed due to absences in a timely manner, to be worked out ahead of time with me.

**Late to Class/Leaving Early:** It is an expectation of this class community that we begin our class time *together*, and complete our class time *together* each day. Instances of habitual lateness are a distraction to our class community and may impact your ability to participate fully in the course. Therefore, I do make note when you are late to class and four tardies will equal one absence. Please talk to me early in the semester if you have any questions or concerns about this policy.

Being absent for more than 20 minutes during any part of a class period, whether at the beginning, middle, or end, will constitute an absence. Similarly, it is expected that you remain actively engaged in the classroom activities until the entire class has been dismissed for the day. If you absolutely must leave early one day for an important/legitimate/emergency reason, please approve it with me at the class period prior or via email. (Please arrange any meetings with your major adviser so that they do not conflict with your class schedule.)

**Late Work/Make-Up Work:** All work is expected on the planned “due dates” - at the beginning of the class period when they are due. In general, no late or makeup written assignments/presentations will be allowed. In the event of a personal emergency with written documentation and at my discretion, make-up work *may* be accepted for half credit. If you are absent on the day of a test or a presentation, I will only consider a make-up opportunity if you have communicated with me in advance of your absence and you have written documentation of a personal emergency. Depending upon the circumstance, a make-up opportunity may not receive full credit.

**Incomplete:** Incompletes will only be granted under extreme circumstances, given reasonable justification.

**Electronic Devices:** The use of cell phones and laptops/tablets during class is prohibited unless I ask for

them to be used as a specific part of a class activity. Please join me in turning off or silencing all cell phones, laptops, and similar electronic devices and keeping them out of sight for the duration of class. This policy was influenced by two important pieces of research: 1. Faria Sana, Tina Weston, and Nicholas J. Cepeda, "Laptop Multitasking Hinders Classroom Learning for Both Users and Nearby Peers," *Computers and Education* (March 2013): "We found that participants who multitasked on a laptop during a lecture scored lower on a test compared to those who did not multitask, and participants who were in direct view of a multitasking peer scored lower on a test compared to those who were not. The results demonstrate that multitasking on a laptop poses a significant distraction to both users and fellow students and can be detrimental to comprehension of lecture content." 2. Pam A. Mueller and Daniel M. Oppenheimer, "The Pen Is Mightier Than the Keyboard: Advantages of Longhand Over Laptop Note Taking" (April 2014). In this study, the authors found that students who hand wrote their notes during lectures remembered more material than students who used laptops for notetaking because they could not write everything down verbatim. The extra processing required by the hand writers to select important over extraneous information was beneficial for their retention of the material they were learning.

**Email:** I will frequently use email to communicate with you and I do my best to respond to your emails as promptly as possible. I will respond to emails Monday-Friday from 8:00 am – 4:00 pm. If you send me an email over the weekend or on a holiday, I will respond on the following school day.

**Written Work:** Please type, double-space and staple all written work unless instructed otherwise. It is my expectation that all writing will be clear, coherent, and free of grammatical/spelling errors. Please proof all written work – your grade will reflect both the substance and the style of your writing. When working on the computer, try to plan for the "unexpected" but predictable problems: plan extra time for library printing lines and back up files as you go.

**Student Responsibility:**

It is the student's responsibility to maintain his/her class schedule. Should the need arise to drop this course (personal emergencies, poor performance, etc.), the student has the responsibility to follow through (provided the drop date meets the stated calendar deadline established by the university), not the instructor. Simply ceasing to attend this course or failing to follow through to arrange for a change of registration (drop/add) may easily result in a grade of F on the official transcript.

**Final Exam Policy:**

Successful completion of this class requires taking the final examination on its scheduled day. The final examination schedule is posted on the [Class Schedules](#) site. Final exams will not be given early before our assigned date/time. Please arrange any activities or transportation for the break around this finals schedule so that you can be present to take the test at the assigned time.

**Academic Dishonesty:**

Students should demonstrate academic honesty by doing original work and by giving appropriate credit to the ideas of others. As stated in the university catalog, "Academic dishonesty is the act of presenting information, ideas, and/or concepts as one's own when in reality they are the results of another person's creativity and effort. Such acts include plagiarism, copying of class assignments, and copying or other fraudulent behavior on examinations. A faculty member who believes a situation involving academic dishonesty has been detected may assign a failing grade for a) that particular assignment or examination, and/or b) the course." See [Academic Policies](#) in the undergrad student catalog.

**Academic Accommodations:**

While all students are expected to meet the minimum academic standards for completion of this course as established by the instructor, students with disabilities may require academic accommodations. At Point Loma Nazarene University, students requesting academic accommodations must file documentation with the Disability Resource Center (DRC), located in the Bond Academic Center. Once the student files documentation, the Disability Resource Center will contact the student's instructors and provide written recommendations for

reasonable and appropriate accommodations to meet the individual learning needs of the student. This policy assists the University in its commitment to full compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities (ADA) Act of 1990, and ADA Amendments Act of 2008, all of which prohibit discrimination against students with disabilities and guarantees all qualified students equal access to and benefits of PLNU programs and activities.

**Ferpa Policy:**

In compliance with federal law, neither PLNU student ID nor social security number will be used in publicly posted grades or returned sets of assignments without student written permission. This class will meet the federal requirements by (each faculty member choose one strategy to use: distributing all grades and papers individually; requesting and filing written student permission; or assigning each student a unique class ID number not identifiable on the alphabetic roster.). Also in compliance with FERPA, you will be the only person given information about your progress in this class unless you have designated others to receive it in the "Information Release" section of the student portal. See [Policy Statements](#) in the undergrad student catalog.

**PLNU Copyright Policy:**

Point Loma Nazarene University, as a non-profit educational institution, is entitled by law to use materials protected by the US Copyright Act for classroom education. Any use of those materials outside the class may violate the law.

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## CLASS ASSIGNMENTS & COURSE SCHEDULE

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**Exams:** There will be a midterm and a final exam in this course. These exams will consist of a mix of multiple choice, T/F, fill-in-the-blank, and short response/essay questions. **No early or late exams will be given.** Please arrange any activities and transportation for the breaks around our schedule so that you can be present to take the tests at the assigned time.

**Reading Quizzes:** You will have reading quizzes throughout the semester (see schedule). All reading for the week is "due" on the day of the quiz, and we will discuss it in class throughout the week. You may bring one sheet of paper (8.5 x 11, front and back) of handwritten notes to class as an aid for the quiz. You will turn in your notes with the quiz. Quizzes will consist of a mix of multiple choice, T/F, fill-in-the-blank, and short response/essay questions. At the end of the semester, **the quiz with the lowest score will be dropped.**

**Quiz Policy: Quizzes will not be given early.** If you are absent (for illness or travel, for example) on the day of a quiz, that first quiz grade will be dropped. If you miss more than one quiz, make-up quizzes will only be given if you have a personal emergency with written documentation *and* you notify me in advance of your absence. Exception to this policy: a first and subsequent missed quiz may be made up only for instances of University approved absences (debate team, athletic team travel, field trip for another class, etc.). Reading quizzes will be given at the beginning of class. If you come late to class, you will not be given extra time to complete a quiz.

**Empathy Partners:** In an effort to grow in our NVC skills within the context of community, I encourage you to have regular meetings with one or more empathy partners from this class throughout the semester. With your empathy partners, you will have the opportunity to practice giving and receiving empathy and expressing yourself honestly. Your goal will be to meet at least 5 times during the semester (phone calls or video chats are okay too.) At the end of the semester, please write me a 2-3 page typed reflection about your experience. Please include the names of your empathy partners and the dates/times that you met. In addition, summarize the ways and the extent to which your empathy partners/group experiences met your needs and how your contributed to the lives of your empathy partners.

**NVC Journals:** Your NVC journals will include reflections on thoughts, feelings, and experiences from any aspect of your life. We will look at a sample together in class that demonstrates how to journal using the NVC

components. Ideally, try journaling once a week, and I will collect at least one journal entry twice during the semester. (You may turn in what you consider to be your best, most complete and in-depth efforts, and keep the others as practice.) In reviewing the journals, I will be looking for completion and a thorough use of the NVC components. I will offer supportive feedback/guidance on these, rather than editing.

**Final Project:** In consultation with me, please, you will create a final creative project for this class that reflects and extends your learning and interests in the course. You will also have a consultation meeting with me about your project during weeks 12/13 of the course.

For this project, you will turn in something tangible that reflects your work (typically this would be something written, but I am also open to other forms of work, (ie: creating a video, etc). Some possible ideas might be: consulting with a group/individual and providing mediation feedback with reflection on the process, designing a game to teach the NVC process to children, researching/extending a concept of interpersonal communication and finding an interesting way to present it to the class, creating a class activity to illuminate the concept of empathy, writing NVC-style letters to family members or friends, etc. During the last two weeks of class, you will present your project to the class using visuals. You may choose to work on this project individually, or with a partner, or a group of 3.

**In-Class (or take home) Assignments:** At times, you will be given short assignments or exercises in class (or to take home) that are worth points toward your final grade. These assignments may include written responses/reflections, home learning, group work, etc. The point value for these assignments may vary, but will be clearly designated on the assignment.

**Extra-Credit Opportunity:** I am offering one extra credit opportunity this semester for Com 190. On Wednesday, Feb. 21<sup>st</sup>, Krista Tippett will be speaking at the PLNU Writer's Symposium (a wonderful and unique opportunity for us! ☺). Tippett will discuss her books and her podcast *On Being*. I believe you will be able to make many meaningful connections between this event and our learning in Com 190. Her interview with Prof. Dean Nelson will take place in Brown Chapel at 7 pm. This is a ticketed event (cost is \$5 for students). For more information and to purchase tickets, visit: <https://www.pointloma.edu/events/writers-symposium-sea>

I am a big fan of Tippett's writing (her newest book is *Becoming Wise: An Inquiry into the Mystery and Art of Living*) and her interviewing skills on her podcast *On Being*. Before the event, I recommend taking a walk near the ocean and listening to one of the podcast episodes found here: <https://onbeing.org>. To receive 10 points extra credit, please write a complete 2-page reflection that discusses what you learned from the experience. In addition, please make specific connections between what you heard in the interview and your learning in Com 190. Your write-up is due in class on Friday, Feb 23<sup>rd</sup>.

## ASSESSMENT & GRADING

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Grade Scale (% to Letter): Final grades will be calculated as follows and will not be rounded.

93-100	A	73-76.9%	C
90-92.9%	A-	70-72.9%	C-
87-89.9%	B+	67-69.9%	D+
83-86.9%	B	63-66.9%	D
80-82.9%	B-	60-62.9%	D-
77-79.9%	C+	0-59	F

### Point Distribution

<b>COURSE REQUIREMENTS</b>	<b>Number of Points AVAILABLE</b>	<b>Number of Points I EARNED</b>
Reading Quizzes (20 pts each x 5 quizzes)	100	
NVC Journals 1 & 2	50	
Empathy Partner Reflection	30	
Midterm Exam	60	
Final Exam	100	
Final Project & Presentation	100	
In-Class (or take home) Assignments	25	
<b>TOTAL</b> <b>- Absence/Tardy penalties (12 pts. per absence after 2 absences)</b>	<b>465*</b> <b>(e.g., 3 absences = -12)</b>	

\* At the end of the course, the total point value may be slightly higher or lower than the number above. While I strive to stay close to this amount, there may be occasions where we will need to add or delete short assignments or quizzes that would adjust the total point value of the course.

### **Tentative Course Schedule**

- Subject to change with fair notice.
- Please complete reading prior to arriving at class on the assigned due date.

WK	Date	In-Class	Reading/Assignments Due
1	T 1/9	Welcome/Course Introduction	
	W 1/10	Definitions and Principles of Relational Communication	Close Encounters Ch. 1 NVC Ch. 1
	F 1/12	Giving from the Heart	
2	M 1/15	<i>MLK Holiday</i>	<i>No Class</i>
	W 1/17	Communicating Identity <b>Practice Reading Quiz</b>	Close Encounters Ch. 2 NVC Ch. 2
	F 1/19	Communication that Blocks Compassion <i>Discuss Empathy Partners</i>	
3	M 1/22	Forces of Social Attraction <b>Reading Quiz</b>	Close Encounters Ch. 3 NVC Ch. 3
	W 1/24	Forces of Social Attraction	
	F 1/26	Observing without Evaluating <i>Discuss NVC Journals</i>	
4	M 1/29	Managing Uncertainty	Close Encounters Ch. 4 NVC Ch. 4
	W 1/31	Identifying and Expressing Feelings	
	F 2/2	Changing Relationships <b>Reading Quiz</b>	Close Encounters Ch. 5 NVC Ch. 5
5	M 2/5	Changing Relationships	
	W 2/7	Taking Responsibility for our Feelings	
	F 2/9	Revealing and Hiding Ourselves <b>Reading Quiz</b>	Close Encounters Ch. 6 NVC Ch. 6
6	M 2/12	Revealing and Hiding Ourselves	
	W 2/14	Making Requests	
	F 2/16	Dr. Raser will be presenting at the Western States Communication Conference at Santa Clara University	No Class – Meet with Empathy Partners
7	M 2/19	Communicating Closeness	Close Encounters Ch. 7

		<b>Reading Quiz</b>	NVC Ch. 7
	W 2/21	Communicating Closeness	Optional: Krista Tippett at the PLNU Writer's Symposium – 7 pm in Brown Chapel
	F 2/23	Receiving Empathically	Optional: Extra Credit Write-Up due
8	M 2/26	Styles of Love and Attachment	Close Encounters Ch. 8 NVC Ch. 8 <b>NVC Journal 1 Due</b>
	W 2/28	The Power of Empathy	
	F 3/2	<b>Midterm Exam</b>	<b>Midterm Exam (Ch. 1-7 of CE &amp; NVC)</b> Please note: The midterm will not be given before or after this date/time. Please arrange any activities and transportation for the break around this schedule so that you can be present to take the test in class.
9	3/5-3/9	<b>Spring Break</b>	<b>No Classes</b>
10	M 3/12	Communicating Sexually <i>Discuss Final Projects</i>	Close Encounters Ch. 9 & 10 NVC Ch. 9
	W 3/14	Maintaining Relationships	
	F 3/16	Connecting Compassionately with Ourselves	<b>Hidden Brain podcast reflection due</b>
11	M 3/19	Coping with Conflict <b>Reading Quiz</b>	Close Encounters Ch. 11 NVC Ch. 10
	W 3/21	Coping with Conflict	
	F 3/23	Expressing Anger Fully	
12	M 3/26	Dominance and Power Plays Conflict Resolution and Mediation	Close Encounters Ch. 12 NVC Ch. 11 <b>Turn in final project plan</b>
	W 3/28	Final Project Consultations	Sign up for a meeting time
	F 3/30	<b>Easter Break</b>	<b>No Class</b>
13	M 4/2	<b>Easter Break</b>	<b>No Class</b>
	W 4/4	Final Project Consultations	Sign up for a meeting time
	F 4/6	Hurting the Ones We Love <b>Reading Quiz</b> (will focus on CE Ch. 13 and NVC Ch.12)	Close Encounters Ch. 13 & 14 NVC Ch 12 & 13
14	M 4/9	Relationship Repair and Reconciliation	
	W 4/11	The Protective Use of Force Liberating Ourselves and Counseling Others	<b>NVC Journal 2 Due</b>
	F 4/13	Ending Relationships Expressing NVC Appreciation	Close Encounters Ch. 15 NVC 14 <b>Submit Appreciation Notes to Canvas after class</b>
15	M 4/16	Final Project Presentations	<b>Project materials due on the day you present</b>
	W 4/18	Final Project Presentations	
	F 4/20	Final Project Presentations	
16	M 4/23	Final Project Presentations	
	W 4/25	Final Project Presentations	
	F 4/27	Exam Review	<b>Empathy Partners Reflection Due</b>
17	Finals Week	<b>Final Exam</b> 10:30 am – 1:00 pm Friday, May 4 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Final Exam CE (Ch. 8-15), NVC (Ch. 8-14)</b> Please note: The final exam will not be given early before our assigned date/time. Please

			arrange any activities and transportation for the break around this finals schedule so that you can be present to take the test at your assigned time above.
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