The University of Oklahoma
College of Continuing Education
Advanced Programs – Course Syllabus

Course Title:
Terror Management Theory and Communication

Course Number:
COMM 5960-425

Course Description:
Terror Management Theory (TMT; Greenberg, Pyszczynski, & Solomon, 1986), essentially posits that humans are motivated to alleviate the potential for existential anxiety (i.e., terror) inherent in the inescapable awareness of their mortality, and a wide range of superficially distinct forms of human behavior are oriented toward the pursuit of self-esteem and faith in a cultural worldview (CWV) based on the anxiety buffering utility of these two constructs. TMT posits that because culture serves a death-denying function, the existence of differing CWVs undermines one’s own defense against the fear of death, leading to potentially devastating intergroup strife.

This course will examine the empirical research generated by the theory over the past 20 years, drawing from over 300 studies conducted in a dozen countries around the world. We will address a wide range of human social phenomena fundamentally tied to communication behavior, including the nature of self-esteem motivation, self-awareness, romantic and interpersonal attachment, sexuality and attraction, physical health, risk taking, creativity, needs for structure and meaning, unconscious cognition, group identification, political preferences, prejudice, disgust, aggression, stereotyping, religion, and martyrdom.

Course Dates:
September 1-December 31, 2012
Last day to enroll or drop without penalty: September 1, 2012

Site Director:
Please see your local Site Director or e-mail Carolyn Taylor at cataylor@ou.edu

Professor Contact Information:
Course Professor: Dr. Claude Miller
Mailing Address: The University of Oklahoma
Burton Hall, Rm. 125,
610 Elm Ave, Norman, OK 73019
Telephone Number: 405-235-0861
E-mail Address: chmiller@ou.edu
Virtual Office Hours: M-T 1:30-2:30 PM, or by appointment
Professor availability: The professor will be available via e-mail to students during the above listed Virtual Office Hours and other methods by arrangement.

Textbook(s) and Instructional Materials:
Student materials are available at the Follett/AP Bookstore located in the Oklahoma Memorial Union, 900 Asp Ave., Norman, OK. Orders can be placed online at www.oklahomaunion.bkstr.com or by telephone at 866-369-9713 (toll free in the U.S.) or 405-325-5960 (outside the U.S.). E-mail orders may be sent to oklahomaunion@bkstr.com. Representatives are available from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. CST Monday through Thursday and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. CST on Friday. Summer hours: 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. CST. Faxed orders may be placed 24 hours a day to 866-223-5607 (toll free in the U.S.) or 405-325-7140 (outside the U.S.).

2. Materials posted on the OU Desire to Learn (D2L) system: Access D2L at http://learn.ou.edu; enter your OU NetID (4+4) and password, and select course to access material. Please contact your local Site Director if you require assistance.

Note: The Follett/AP Bookstore is the Advanced Programs contractual textbook provider. Should text changes become necessary after publication of the course syllabus, Advanced Programs will facilitate text returns/refunds only for texts purchased through the Follett/AP Bookstore.

**OU E-Mail:**

All official correspondence from distance learning instructors will be sent only to students’ ou.edu address.

**Online Learning Resource Center:**

The Online Learning Resource Center of the University of Oklahoma’s College of Arts and Sciences Online Program is here to serve you and assist you with any questions, problems, or concerns you may have. For assistance go to http://casweb.ou.edu/olr/ or contact us by telephone at: (405) 325-5854 or Email: casonline@ou.edu

**Course Objectives:**

1. Develop a basic understanding of the theory relevant to socio-psychological processes.
2. Comprehend the general findings of empirical research in support of TMT.
3. Consider and evaluate the application of TMT to various interpersonal, intercultural and international issues.

**Assignments, Grading, and Due Dates:**

There will be one paper and one related PowerPoint (PPT) presentation. The paper will correspond to material from the text and readings, and be accompanied by a self-narrated PPT presentation summarizing its content dealing with an issue raised within a chapter of the text or one or more of the supplemental readings. The paper should synthesize the readings with students’ personal experiences and understandings about interpersonal and/or intercultural, and/or international interaction relevant to and informed by TMT. Each PPT presentation should run approximately 20 minutes (see instructions and assignment due dates below).

The paper should be 13-17 pages of double-spaced text, in APA format with separate title page, abstract page, and reference section (i.e., 19 page max not counting references), and provide an assessment of the relevant empirical evidence found in the literature. You do not necessarily have to choose an aspect of the theory you agree with, you may choose to take a critical approach. A handout on APA format for the paper, and instructions on how to prepare a self-narrated PPT presentation are available via the course Website on D2L.

Papers should address an issue of interest concerning an aspect of social cognition and/or human behavior as it relates to terror management processes and communication. The topic for this assignment may come from the textbook, supplemental readings or any other source. The paper will (a) summarize current literature relevant to the issue; (b) feature and explicate a TMT perspective applicable to the topic; and (c) review (or suggest) relevant empirical research. This paper should include a 100 word abstract and follow APA format. Students will first submit a short proposal introducing the topic they wish to address and some potential sources. Once the proposal has been accepted work may begin on the paper. All work must be original. For information about the nature of plagiarism and other issues related to academic integrity, see: http://www.ou.edu/provost/integrity/

Each student will read and evaluate each of the other student’s papers, and view and evaluate each of the other’s PPT presentations. Regarding the papers, you should look for how others highlight important aspects of the material they present and how they support their points with empirical evidence from the literature. Regarding the PPT presentations, base your assessments on how polished each project is, and
how it complements and clarifies its accompanying paper. A criteria sheet for evaluating and rating these assignments will be available on D2L.

Grading: This course is graded Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory (S/U). A grade of S is equivalent to B or better. The assessment will be apportioned as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Percent of Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paper</td>
<td>6th week (October 13)</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Eval. of Papers</td>
<td>9th week (November 3)</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPT Presentation</td>
<td>12th week (November 24)</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Eval. of PPT Presentations</td>
<td>15th week (December 15)</td>
<td>20%</td>
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</tbody>
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NOTICE: Failure to meet assignment due dates could result in a grade of I (Incomplete) and may adversely impact Tuition Assistance and/or Financial Aid.

Incomplete Grade Policy:

A grade of “I” is not automatically assigned, but rather must be requested by the student by submitting to the instructor a “Petition for and Work to Remove an Incompleted Grade” form. An “I” can never be used in lieu of an “F” nor can an “I” be assigned because of excessive failure to participate in class activities.

Supplemental Readings:


**Technical Support Information:**

If you experience technical problems, contact Information Technology by visiting their website at: [http://webapps.ou.edu/it/](http://webapps.ou.edu/it/) or contacting them by telephone at: (405) 325-HELP (4357).

**Important information you should know about online courses:**

- To sign on to Desire2Learn (D2L), go to [www.learn.ou.edu](http://www.learn.ou.edu) and log in using your 4+4 and your OU network password (note that this is the same 4+4 and password that you use to access your OU email). Once you are logged in, please look on the right-hand side for “My Courses,” locate your course and click on it. Remember to check your course site on D2L every day.

- Students enrolled in online courses may be required to take the CAS student orientation in Desire 2 Learn. To take the orientation, sign-on to D2L and then click on “Self Registration” at the top left corner of the page. Information about and instructions for the orientation can be found at [http://casweb.ou.edu/olr/public/students/orientation.htm](http://casweb.ou.edu/olr/public/students/orientation.htm)

- If the course is using a course website, you will find a link for the website on the first page of this syllabus. Please click on this link to start your course.

- Course Materials are available at Follett/AP Bookstore. On this syllabus you will find a link to the Follett Bookstore.

- If you need to drop or withdraw from a course, please contact your Site Director. You can drop a course without a penalty up to the add/drop date. Courses dropped after the add/drop date may result in a penalty.

- After the class has started, you can only withdraw from the course with the professor’s permission; you will not receive a refund for your tuition. You can only drop without a penalty after the add/drop date by providing proper documentation and receiving approval from the Advanced Programs Theater Director. Provide this documentation to your Site Director.
POLICIES AND NOTICES

Attendance/Grade Policy

Note: Attendance/absences do not apply to online courses. However, participation in all course activities is extremely important to student success in online courses.

Attendance and participation in interaction, individual assignments, group exercises, simulations, role playing, etc. are valuable aspects of any course because much of the learning comes from discussions in class with other students. It is expected that you attend all classes and be on time except for excused emergencies.

Excused absences are given for professor mandated activities or legally required activities such as emergencies or military assignments. Unavoidable personal emergencies, including (but not limited to) serious illness; delays in getting to class because of accidents, etc.; deaths and funerals, and hazardous road conditions will be excused.

If you are obtaining financial assistance (TA, STAP, FA, VA, Scholarship, etc.) to pay all or part of your tuition cost, you must follow your funding agency/institution’s policy regarding “I” (Incomplete) grades unless the timeline is longer than what the University policy allows then you must adhere to the University policy.

Students who receive Financial Aid must resolve/complete any “I” (Incomplete) grades by the end of the term or he/she may be placed on “financial aid probation.” If the “I” grade is not resolved/completed by the end of the following term, the student’s Financial Aid may be suspended make the student ineligible for further Financial Aid.

Students are responsible for meeting the guidelines of Tuition Assistance and Veterans Assistance. See the education counselor at your local education center for a complete description of your TA or VA requirements.

Academic Honesty

Honesty is a fundamental precept in all academic activities and … [you] have a special obligation to observe the highest standards of honesty. Academic misconduct in any form is inimical to the purposes and functions of the University and is therefore unacceptable and is rigorously proscribed. Academic misconduct includes:

- cheating (using unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise), plagiarism, falsification of records, unauthorized possession of examinations, intimidation, and any and all other actions that may improperly affect the evaluation of a student’s academic performance or achievement; assisting others in any such act; or attempting to engage in such acts.

All acts of academic misconduct will be reported and adjudicated as prescribed by the student code of the University of Oklahoma. All students should review the “Student’s Guide to Academic Integrity” found at http://www.ou.edu/provost/integrity

Accommodation Statement

The College of Continuing Education [Advanced Programs] is committed to making its activities as accessible as possible. For accommodations on the basis of disability, please contact your OU Site Director.

Course Policies

Advanced Programs policy is to order books in paperback if available. Courses, dates, and professors are subject to change. Please check with your OU Site Director. Students should retain a copy of any assignments that are mailed to the professor for the course.

Copyright

Any and all course materials, syllabus, lessons, lectures, etc. are the property of professor teaching the course and the Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma and are protected under applicable copyright.

For more information about Advanced Programs, visit our website at: http://www.goou.ou.edu/
INSTRUCTOR VITA
Claude H. Miller, Ph.D.

Education
- 2000 Ph.D. The University of Arizona, Major: Communication; Minor: Psychology
- 1986 M.A. American University, Major: Film & Video
- 1978 B.A. The University of Florida, Major: Photography

Current Position
- Associate Professor, Department of Communication, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK.
- Advanced Programs Professor since 2003
- Director of Advanced Programs, Department of Communication since 2006

Frequently Taught Advanced Programs Courses
- COMM 5113 Nonverbal Communication
- COMM 5553 Persuasive Campaigns
- COMM 5213 Interpersonal Communication
- COMM 6433 Seminar in Intercultural Comm
- COMM 5253 Cross Cultural Communication
- COMM 6970 Seminar in Relational Comm
- COMM 5353 Conflict Management
- COMM 6970 Seminar in Social Influence
- COMM 5453 Social Influence
- COMM 6970 Seminar in Affective Processes

Major Areas of Teaching and Research Interest
Current Program of Research includes investigative collaborations focusing primarily on emotion, motivation, and social influence theories as they apply to a wide range of health communication settings, including mass media campaigns targeting the counter-initiation of drug, tobacco, and alcohol behaviors among adolescent and minority populations.

Representative Publications and Presentations

**Representative Honors and Awards Received**

• 1999  Top Three Paper Award, Health Communication Division, NCA
• 2000  Top Student Paper, Information Systems Division, ICA
• 2001  Gerald R. Miller Outstanding Dissertation Award, NCA
• 2004  Top Three Paper, Communication & Social Cognition Division, NCA