Communicating with Instructors

**Uncertainty Reduction Theory**

- Helps to explain how we seek to reduce our uncertainty when we are faced with strangers or new situations
- Describes how we strategically interact with others to enhance our understanding of them so they seem less strange to us

**Ways to Reduce Uncertainty**

- **Passive Strategy** – observe the situation
- **Active Strategy** – ask other people about the unsure person or situation, or personally look for information
- **Interactive Strategy** – directly talk to the person or people in the situation you are unsure about, use self-disclosure

**Reasons to Talk to Instructors**

**Psychological Data**

- People respond to each other as members of the class or groups to which they belong (Ex: student to teacher or student to student)
- As relationships become more personal, the professor and student both begin to respond not as members of groups but as individuals

**Explanatory Knowledge**

- You can predict someone’s behavior if you get to know the person more through the use of self-disclosure
- You will be better able to explain their behaviors (late to class)
Mutual Influence

- Both the professor and student are affected by the transaction and receive knowledge

Other Reasons

- To build a relationship with the teacher at the beginning of the semester
- Better grades
- To get help when it is needed

Nonverbally Communicating with Instructors

- Verbal and nonverbal communicative actions should match
- Appropriate facial expressions (smiling)
- Eye contact maintained
- Natural gestures and body movement
- Open body position
- Good posture
- Physical closeness and body arrangement for one-on-one interaction

24-Hour Rule

- It is better for a student to wait 24 hours before confronting an instructor regarding a grade
- This gives the student time to cool down and develop rational thoughts
- Example – If you get mad at a teacher because of a bad grade and you yell or argue with the teacher, it cannot be erased

Resolving Interpersonal Conflict

- Explain what is wanted in a descriptive, non-evaluating way
- Make personal statements that refer to I, me, my, or mine
- Describe specifically your wants, needs, and goals, and establish their legitimacy
Effective Self-Disclosure

- Voluntarily giving information about ourselves that instructors are unlikely to know or discover from other sources
- It is important in establishing relationships but must be appropriate for the situation

Checklist

- Is the timing of the self-disclosure appropriate?
- Consider…
  - The other person’s capacity to respond
  - The short-term effects
  - Motives for self-disclosure
  - How much detail is called for
  - Whether the disclosure is relevant to the current situation

Self-Validation

- If we disclose information such as “I think…” with the hopes of obtaining the listeners’ agreement, we are seeking validation on our behavior(s) – confirmation of a belief we hold about ourselves
- Listening to someone is a form of recognizing and validating that person’s worth
