

An Introduction to Communication

Prioritizing brevity and clarity, this textbook introduces the study of communication through examples and applications in a variety of contexts.

With a unique focus on diversity and the impact of culture, each chapter opens with a case study that identifies a communication challenge which the chapter addresses throughout, and concludes with questions that respond to that challenge. A consistent, organized structure with numerous features including *Questions for Understanding and Analysis*, *Theoretical Insight* (examining a particular relevant theory), and a *Skill Set* section, easily guides you through the foundations of the study of communication. The *Connections* feature cross-references between chapters demonstrating the multidimensional nature of communication. The *Everyday Talk* sections demonstrate how each topic relates to technology, the workplace, or health issues.

Offering a wealth of diverse examples from students' personal, professional, and online lives, this book teaches skills allowing students from all academic backgrounds to understand communication.

LYNN H. TURNER received her Ph.D. from Northwestern University and is Professor in Communication Studies at Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Lynn has served as President of the Central States Communication Association as well as President of the National Communication Association (NCA), the oldest and largest professional communication association in the world.

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Together, they have co-authored five books co-edited two anthologies, *The Sage Handbook of Family Communication* and *The Family Communication Sourcebook*, the latter receiving NCA's Distinguished Book Award. They are the co-recipients of the Bernard J. Brommel Distinguished Scholarship in Family Communication Award and have served together as guest co-editors of the *Journal of Family Communication* upon three different occasions.

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Preface

As we write this text, we are very aware of today's changing and challenging communication climate. From highly charged political debates to expressing complex emotional reactions in 280 characters to everyday interactions with our friends and work colleagues, communication is central to our personal and professional lives. As our choices for communication channels multiply, our communication decisions become more complex. Further, despite an ever-increasing range of communication options, many people feel misunderstood, lonely, or frustrated after communicating with others. Indeed, many people feel disconnected.

People enter a communication classroom with skills that have been acquired from observing friends, family members, and co-workers as well as from being a consumer of popular culture. These observations provide a storehouse of practical knowledge, but they fail to offer the richer understanding that comes from pairing practical knowledge with theoretical knowledge. A class in communication both allows for this pairing as well as offers a laboratory for practicing effective communication skills.

OUR GOALS FOR THIS TEXT

In writing this book, we had the following five commitments in mind.

1. **A commitment to a concise and efficient overview of the field of communication.**

We approach this book with the goal of providing a succinct survey of the fundamentals of the communication field. This text provides communication majors with the building blocks for advanced courses. For non-majors we offer a complete survey that prompts them to reflect on how communication relates to their own majors. Frankly, students often get overwhelmed with the amount of material that is presented in this course. An examination of competing texts shows that most books are approximately 500–600 pages in length. Books of this length may leave students with an abundance of information that may not seem coherent. We offer the following:

- A briefer, less expensive text comprising 10 chapters.
- A streamlined approach to coverage, with strategic consolidation of some topics such as treating verbal and nonverbal communication in one chapter, and the fundamentals of presentational communication in only two chapters.

2. **A commitment to student learning and understanding.** We write in a manner that respects students and that offers them examples that are relevant to their lives. To actualize this commitment, we include the following:

- A consistent template for each chapter. This unique template provides a solid framework for the information presented. The four-part sequence in each chapter – Background, Fundamental Issues, Theoretical Insight, and Enhancing Your Skills – provides students with an efficient organizational framework for comprehending the material and eliminates the confusion that may characterize many large, cumbersome introductory texts.
 - *Questions for Understanding* and *Questions for Analysis*. Each chapter ends by testing students both for their understanding and their ability to creatively apply the material in each chapter.
3. **A commitment to a scholarly focus.** We believe it's important to fill the gap between what people learn from experience and what scholars learn from systematic research based in theory. Research and communication theory enable us to acquire critical communication skills and behaviors and to understand our communication encounters. Too many introductory texts fail to incorporate scholarly thinking in order to avoid intimidating students. In contrast, we embrace the dynamic interplay among research, theory, and skills. In service to this commitment, we include:
- *Theoretical Insights*. This section, which appears in each chapter, profiles a specific theory and puts it in the context of the concepts discussed in the chapter. We feature theories from the field of communication as well as from other social sciences.
 - Research supporting counterintuitive findings. With this focus, students are able to see that common sense can be misleading and factually incorrect. For instance, the pervasiveness of so-called reality TV and personal information on public sites like Facebook and Snapchat can lead students to think that disclosing everything is a hallmark of an effective communicator. Yet, research shows that more judicious self-disclosure yields more satisfying relationships. We underscore these sorts of findings throughout the text.
 - Nearly 300 scholarly citations, expressing a balance between classic research and contemporary research.
4. **A commitment to an applied and integrated approach.** Too often, introductory texts in communication fail to provide students with clear links between and among the various topics, or between theory and skills. Yet, students should continually be reminded about the useful and integrated nature of the communication field. We embrace the practicality of communication as we include the following in the text:
- *Communication Encounter/Communication Response* case studies. Each chapter-opening (*Communication Encounter*) is bookended (*Communication Response*) at the end of the chapter. For example, in the chapter on social/mass media and

communication, we explore the romantic relationship of an intercultural couple. One person is Chinese American and the other is European American. We look at how the two of them received mediated images of each other's culture before they met, and how they use social media to keep in touch when one goes to graduate school in a distant state. At the end of each chapter, the *Communication Response* poses a series of questions prompting students to consider how the material in the chapter relates to the case.

- *Connections* boxes to tie concepts together across chapters. To assist students in making connections across the topics of the entire book, this feature asks them to notice how a particular topic, discussed in a different chapter, relates to concepts in the chapter they are reading. For instance, in the chapter on communication in small groups and organizations, we ask students to consider the importance of listening behaviors. In providing this feature, we encourage students to apply the important concepts and principles from Part I of the text throughout all of the contexts we discuss. This feature lets students know that communication is not a series of disconnected facts but, rather, an integrated field.
 - *Enhancing Your Skills* discussions and applications to specific cases. These features get students to think about how to apply the skills they learn in the text to situations they might encounter at work, with friends, or in their families.
 - *Everyday Talk* boxed features. These address a range of issues, including communication and technology, workplace situations, and health issues. These boxes encourage students to reflect on how the content of the chapter applies in a variety of contexts.
5. **A commitment to ethical and civic themes.** This commitment reflects our belief that all communication contains an ethical dimension. Further, we see that participating in the community is part of that ethical consideration. And finally, we acknowledge the ethical imperative to reflect diversity with an international focus. Recent Census data establish the continually increasing diversity of the United States. Further, the world is interconnected, and no country can avoid contact with others outside its borders. Even if a classroom is relatively homogenous, teachers still recognize the need to teach students about diverse communication practices to prepare them for communication in a global classroom. We undertake the following to address this commitment:
- We devote an entire chapter to how culture and communication interrelate. This chapter appears early in the text, Chapter 2, because we believe it's difficult to imagine any communication issue or decision without considering culture. In addition, in every chapter we provide examples from a variety of cultural communities as well as diverse family backgrounds, physical abilities,

socioeconomic classes, and so forth. We take an expansive view of diversity and cannot envision relegating this topic solely to one chapter.

- A solid foundation for ethical thinking. In Chapter 1, we introduce several ethical systems for decision making about communication choices.
- *Do the Right Thing*. This boxed feature encourages students to consider the ethical implications of the key topics in the chapter and to apply the ethical systems presented in Chapter 1.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Lynn Turner and **Rich West** have been best friends and writing colleagues since the mid-1980s. They met at a conference in Ohio and immediately found one another compatible and were struck by their similar senses of humor. What they didn't imagine was that they would spend so much time together writing books about the communication field and, in doing so, find a shared passion for bringing research to life for their students.

Lynn received her Ph.D. from Northwestern University, and she and her husband, Ted, recently celebrated 50 years of marriage. She is a Professor in Communication Studies at Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Rich received his Ph.D. from Ohio University in Athens and is the partner of Chris, with whom he has shared his life for over 12 years. He is a Professor in Communication Studies at Emerson College in Boston.

Lynn and Rich have both served as presidents of their respective regional communication associations (Lynn, for the Central States Communication Association, and Rich, for the Eastern Communication Association). And both of them have served as President of the National Communication Association (NCA), the oldest and largest professional communication association in the world.

Together they have also co-authored five books, resulting in 18 multiple editions. In addition, they have co-edited two anthologies, *The Sage Handbook of Family Communication* and *The Family Communication Sourcebook*, the latter receiving NCA's Distinguished Book Award. They are the co-recipients of the Bernard J. Brommel Distinguished Scholarship in Family Communication Award and have served together as guest co-editors of the *Journal of Family Communication* upon several different occasions.

When Lynn is not busy writing and teaching, she enjoys discovering great restaurants, learning about new cultures through international travel, and volunteering at the art museum. She also loves spending time with her grandchildren, Sophie, Will, Ely, and Lucas who are among her greatest teachers. Rich, during his down time, loves to garden and spend time in his century-old summer home on the coast of Maine. He also keeps up with politics because he's a political science junkie.

TO THE STUDENT

Our philosophy centers on our belief that effective communication requires knowledge, skills, motivation, ethics, and patience. All of us possess communication skills that have been acquired from observing and interacting with others as well as from being a consumer of popular culture. However, personal experiences often lead us to rely too much on what we have seen and heard without understanding theoretical explanations for communication processes and outcomes, or applying a critical lens to our experiences.

Are some people “born communicators”? Perhaps. But most of us communicate poorly at one time or another, which can result in disappointment and dissatisfaction as well as limit our potential for success and growth.

We believe that while communication may be a source of division for some, careful and thoughtful communication – based in the fundamentals of the field – also serves to unify diverse people. In the process, we are introduced to issues and experiences allowing us to appreciate how we are both different and similar.

This book represents our ongoing commitment to the study and practice of effective communication. We offer students and instructors an opportunity to enter into a dialogue with each other – and with us – to explore this exciting and essential topic. We believe that as you read this text, your interest and skills in communication will increase, resulting in new skills and insights into this compelling field of study.

Acknowledgements

Like every book, this one owes much to the efforts of others in addition to our own work as authors. We wish to thank the entire Cambridge team, including Rosemary Crawley and, especially, Andrew Winnard, whose belief in us is what inspired and sustained the project. Additionally, we're indebted to the scholars whose work we drew upon to present the information within the book. Most importantly, we remain appreciative of the thousands of students who have studied with us over the past 30 years and whose questions and insights influenced our approach to the field of communication.

Lynn would like to thank her entire family, especially her husband Ted, for a lifetime of lessons in the magical intricacies of communication. And, as always, Lynn is grateful for the memory of her loving parents whose steadfast support and encouragement of her scholarship, and all her interests, sustain her in everything she undertakes.

As in every book he writes, Rich would like to acknowledge his mother for her continual focus on what matters in life: integrity and a commitment to being the best. He remains grateful for her continued positive influence. Rich would also like to thank his life partner, Chris, who knows precisely when to make things less intense and more relaxing.

Finally, both of us give special thanks to Holly Allen, a senior editor at Wiley, who was the first to believe, in 1994, that we would make a productive author team. We began writing textbooks because of Holly and with her guidance and continued friendship we have grown and matured as scholars and authors. Thanks, Holly!