

**CMST 4111: Listening**  
**Spring 2015**  
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**Louisiana State University**

**TEXTBOOK:**

There is no textbook for the course. Full bibliographic information of all reading material is provided at the end of the syllabus. All materials will be posted on the course Moodle page.

**COURSE PURPOSE AND LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

Listening is important. At least that is what we are told by nearly everyone we encounter – parents, guardians, friends, romantic interests, teachers, and bosses, just to name a few. Popular phrases such as “Look at me while I am talking to you!” and “Are you listening?” as well as the need to be “a listening ear” suggest a universal recognition of the importance of listening. We are told that planes crash and governments fall due to a failure to listen to instructions or constituents. Politicians love to go on “listening tours.” Several professions are built on listening – therapists, social workers, customer service specialists, and healthcare providers come easily to mind. Pick up a self-help book on effective management or sales and you will find listening is a key contributor to putative success. If you desire to be a parent one day, a key to your success? Ability to listen to your child. Good listeners are said to be good leaders, good parents, good healthcare providers, and good sales people. Good listening is perhaps THE quintessential positive interpersonal communication behavior.

But **what is listening**? That is, what are the defining features of listening, and what are the behaviors that signal good listening? Are these attributes and behaviors universal? If not, what are the boundary conditions that specify the important attributes and behaviors? Is good listening situational? Cultural? Relational? Personal? Can we really tell if someone is listening to us? If so, how? And what are the specific advantages of being a good listener, ensuring that you will have success in personal and professional life when you become one? Can good listening ever be detrimental to success? Is it always in our best interests to listen well? Do all cultures place this much emphasis on listening? What are the costs of being a good listener?

Questions like these constitute my existence as a student of human communication, and I hope they will intrigue you enough to stay in this course. **A thorough understanding of listening can assist you irrespective of your future career trajectory.**

CMST 4111 is intended to provide you with an overview of listening and an appreciation of its complexity and importance in everyday life. **This course seeks to provide you with a strong theoretical foundation for being able to make informed decisions regarding how and why to listen in particular ways in specified contexts.** If you put sufficient time and effort into the material, you will come away with increased ability to listen with respect and with an increased ethical attunement that should allow you to be a better friend, romantic partner, student, manager ... ultimately, a better human. Your increased knowledge of the listening literature and of relevant theories will guide that way.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

### **I. Participation (15% of course grade)**

This course will rely on a “seminar” style of teaching that emphasizes discussion over lecture. Students should come to class prepared to ask questions about and critique relevant readings. I reserve the right to give quizzes on a daily basis.

Quizzes can:

- test you on the reading you were supposed to do prior to class,
- test you on the material covered in a particular class (including the current one),
- test you on the material we have covered to date, and/or
- test your retention of information presented by a classmate.

For each class day you will earn a letter grade based on your score on any quiz given that day and on your participation in class discussion and activities. Grades for class discussion are assigned as:

- F = not coming to class
- D = coming to class and dozing off, attending IN ANY WAY to an electronic device, reading the paper, or otherwise doing something that is not directly relevant to class; if group work, not fully participating as a group member (expect me to walk around and look at computer screens on a regular basis and for cell phones in laps or under desks)
- C = coming to class and sitting quietly, taking notes and seeming to pay attention; if group work, being a participant but more of the silent type than of the “I have an opinion” type
- B = coming to class and fully participating in any group related activities
- A = coming to class and saying ONE interesting thing or asking ONE interesting question; if group work, presenting at least one of the ideas of the group when called upon, critiquing other groups’ ideas, and/or asking questions of other groups

The participation grade used to calculate your final course grade is the arithmetic average of all your daily participation grades ( $\sum \text{daily grades} / \# \text{days}$ ). At any point in the semester if you have questions about where you stand with regard to participation, please see me.

### **II. Journal Entries (10%)**

You are required to keep a listening journal. Your journal can be handwritten or typed, and you are required to produce three journal entries per week. In addition to filling out a “Daily Listening Journal Form” (see Moodle), each journal entry should also include 500 to 1000 words that show a serious reflection on how you have behaved as a listener and what your predispositions seem to be.

Good journal entries will begin by reflecting on a specific event (like a conversation), detailing that event including the sights, sounds, smells, and other aspects of the environment. For example, after a conversation with your roommate, reflect on that conversation and how each of you enacted the “listening role.”

- What was the setting?
- Were there any potential obstacles to “efficient and effective” listening?
- What happened immediately prior to that conversation that may have limited your ability to be “fully attuned?”
- What happened during the event that may have placed a barrier to effective listening?
- Could you be fully “in the moment?” Why (not)?
- What impact do you think your listening had on the other?

Then, your entry should reflect on concepts discussed in class that can help to explain the event and how you listened (or how the other listened). After you define the concept and illustrate your understanding of that concept, you can move on to a reflection of how you can you improve.

Journal entries may also reflect on your trying out a new listening technique. Entries of this type should start by defining the technique then commenting on why you thought the technique would prove successful in the particular setting you applied it.

- What is the technique and why did you think it would help your listening in this particular situation?
- What was the situation?
- Who were the characters?
- What was the setting?
- What were the sights, smells, sounds, etc. that defined the situation?

Finally, you should comment on how the technique seemed to work.

- Did it improve your listening?
- Why did it fail?
- Will it always work/fail to work?
- Why (not)?

Journal entries run Monday through Sunday. You are required to have three entries per week for a minimum total of 45 (15 \* 3). Hard copies (photocopies in the case of handwritten entries) of all journal entries are required for each reflection paper (see below). Each entry should include a “Daily Listening Journal Form” followed by your handwritten or typed commentary/reflection. You will receive a separate grade for journal entries at three points in the semester (see below). They will be graded for on-time completion and thoroughness.

### III. Reflection Papers (25%)

Based on your journal entries, you will write three, 3-5 page papers that integrate the content of your journal entries in light of extant theory and research in listening. The purpose of each paper is to bring the research to bear on helping you figure out how to listen better:

- What does listening mean in the particular events that you covered?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- What can you do to improve?

For each essay, please include a cover page that includes your name and a title for the assignment. Start the content of your assignment on the next page, line one. Double space your paper, use 12-point Times New Roman font, and set your margins to 1-inch.

Each paper requires a minimum of TWO (2) academic citations, one of which can be a reading from class material. All citations should be formatted according to the 6th edition of the style guide published by the American Psychological Association and included on a separate page from the text with the title “References.” A quick guide to APA can be found here: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

For each paper, you need to include an “appendix” that contains copies of all journal entries relevant for that paper. You should reference specific entries in your essay clearly so that I can find them and be able to tell how and why that entry is being referenced. There is no need to reference all 15 entries in a single paper, but your paper should reference at least 5 entries. The point here is to find commonalities across entries, so **“A” papers will be more synergistic than laundry-list.** I am not looking for separate paragraphs for each entry; rather, you should seek to find themes that cut across entries. **What do the entries AS A WHOLE teach you?** Use specific entries to illustrate these lessons. Staple your pages together. Unstapled assignments will not be accepted.

Paper 1 is worth 5% of your course grade; Papers 2 and 3 are each worth 10%.

### IV. Abstract and Presentation of an Empirically Based Article (5%)

Each student is required to present to the class (4-8 minutes) the content of an empirically-based article on listening. This article needs to be something that you have found on your own and should be published in an academic journal. Along with your presentation, you should turn in an “abstract” of the article along with a photocopy of the article (see “The Good Abstract”).

### V. Examinations (15%)

Two examinations will be given, one approximately at the midpoint of the semester and one during the designated final exam period. Each will be a mix of “objective” questions, short answer, and practical scenarios that call for your theoretical knowledge to explain what to do.

The first exam will be worth 5% of your course grade. The second exam will be worth 10% of your course grade and will include material that spans the entire semester. Students can choose to retain their grade up to the final if they do not wish to take the final. In these cases, the final GPA will be divided by 90% and used to post a final Moodle letter grade.

## VI. Final Project (30%)

For your final project, you may choose to work alone or in groups of up to 5. There are several options to fulfil this requirement.

- Develop the proposal for an empirical study, collect and analyze data, and write up your results;
- Conduct a comprehensive literature review on listening in a particular setting or within a particular domain of interest;
- Write the introductory chapter and outline the remainder of a textbook or self-help book on listening (each chapter after the first will include a one page explanation of its proposed content and an outline of key concepts and theories to be covered);
- Review a book or program of research and write up a traditional “book review” for an academic journal;
- Propose a comprehensive training program on a specific type of listening for a specific type of audience;
- Write a series of blog posts or “self-help” entries for another medium on a particular subject; or
- Create an explanatory video of one or more concepts we discussed in class.

Because this final assignment will differ based on our initial and subsequent conversations, your specific requirements will likely differ from some of your classmates’. In general, **the final product should consist of 8-10 pages of text and include no fewer than five academic sources.** The look and feel of your specific final product will be negotiated throughout the semester to fit your needs. **Students will present their projects during the last week of classes.** Failure to attend presentation days will result in a penalty over-and-above the hit you will take for participation. The first hour of the final exam period will be reserved for any additional presentations.

**TENTATIVE SCHEDULE:****Week Topics (readings)**

- 1 **Course Overview, Class Expectations** (Syllabus)
- 2 **How to Read Academic Articles**  
 Structure of academic articles (Schroeder, Johnson, & Jensen, 1985)  
 Working through an example (Beatty & Payne, 1984)
- 3 **Approaches to Studying Listening**  
 “Quantitative” approaches (Bodie & Fitch-Hauser, 2010)  
 “Qualitative” approaches (Purdy, 2010)  
 The false dichotomy of the “two approaches” (Bavelas, 1995)
- 4 **What is listening? Implicit Theory Perspectives**  
 General Dimensions of Listening (Halone, Cunconan, Coakley, & Wolvin, 1998)  
 What’s Inside Your Head (Bodie, St. Cyr, Pence, Rold, & Honeycutt, 2012)
- 5 **What is listening? Scholarly Definitions**  
 Listening as a Hypothetical Construct (Barker, Barker, & Fitch-Hauser, 1987)  
 Listening vs. Hearing I (Lipari, 2010)  
 Listening vs. Hearing II (Bodie & Crick, 2014)
- 6 **Listening Presage**  
 Listening Concepts and Goals (Imhof & Janusik, 2006; Gearhart, Denham, & Bodie, in press)  
 Listening Anxiety (Fitch-Hauser, Barker, & Hughes, 1990)
- 7 **Listening Process – Cognition**  
 Cognitive Psychology of Listening (Imhof, 2010)

Message Interpretation (Edwards, 2011)

Constructivism (Burlison, 2011)

8 **Midterm Exam Period**

9 **Listening Process – Behavioral**

Listening Skills Perspective (Ridge, 1993)

What Listeners Do (Bavelas & Gerwing, 2011)

Behavior in Context, Parenting (Pistrang, Picciotto, & Barker, 2001)

10 **Listening Product**

Feeling Better (Bodie et al., in press)

Feeling Worse (Perrine, 1993)

Inability to Listen (Villaume & Reid, 1990)

11 **Listening Product (cont.)**

On not Being Heard (Dutta, 2014)

**Theorizing Listening**

Early Attempts for “A” Definition (Glenn, 1989)

Power of “Good Theory” (read Purdy, 2011 THEN Bodie, 2011)

12 **Theorizing Listening (continued)**

Defining Listening Take 2, It’s a Theoretical Construct (Bodie, 2012)

Exemplar I, No Joke about Affection (Floyd, 2014)

Exemplar II, Neuroscience and Listening (Spunt, 2013)

13 **Listening in the Workplace**

Managers Listening (Brownell, 1985)

Who Get to Judge Whom? (Cooper & Husband, 1993)

Listening in Sales (Comer & Drollinger, 1999)

14 **Spring Break, No Class, No Readings**

15 **From the Past to the Future of Listening Scholarship**

What We've Learned

A Brief History and Future of Listening Research (Beard & Bodie, 2014)

16 **FINAL PROJECT PRESENTATIONS**



## Full Bibliographic Information for all Assigned Readings

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