

Interviewing/COM 340 (3 Credits)

University of Hawaii, Hilo

Instructor: Dr. Catherine Becker, Associate Professor
Course Meets: T & R 2:00-3:15 p.m. in K 128
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Introduction:

Interviews are face-to-face meetings that involve the use of *carefully considered questions* that have been designed to generate information about a *specific* topic or topics. In an interview, the need for dialogue, acceptance, sensitivity, and empathic response is as great as in any interpersonal relationship. This doesn't mean that an interviewer has to agree with-or become emotionally involved with-the interviewee; it does mean that there must be effective listening and clarifying.

Many people regard the interview as either a chore to be accomplished mechanically and systematically as possible or as an unpleasant interrogation with participants often feeling distrustful, fearful, and competitive. I consider the interviewing situation as a concentrated attempt to understand another person (and/or the information they provide) through direct and immediate communication. Ideally, an interview is an opportunity for dialogue. Consequently, interviewing is a communication skill that's practical for every communication professional, including journalists, managers, trainers, teachers, advertising executives, and public relations consultants. It is also critical in the fields of law, criminal justice, medicine, and counseling.

Objectives:

By studying interviewing, you will gain an increased ability to listen to diverse voices and deeply consider other perspectives. You will gain valuable skills that will help you improve your communication in the workplace, at home, and in public life.

Text:

Ron Anderson and George M. Killenberg, *Interviewing: Speaking, Listening, and Learning for Professional Life* (Mountain View, CA: Mayfield, 1999).

Other Supplies:

You will need a cassette or min-cassette recorder and tapes. If you cannot purchase the recorder, the UH Hilo library has them available. You must reserve them 48 hours in advance of use and get my signature on the request.

Grades:

Class Participation.....	10
Exams 3 & Interview Excerpt (lowest dropped)	30
Peer interview.....	5
Peer interview class report.....	5
Professional Interview.....	5
Professional class report.....	5
Resume and cover letter.....	10
Recommendation class report.....	5
Outside interview series.....	15
Outside interview report.....	5

Class Participation:

I expect you to attend each session and participate actively in class activities. This is especially important because this is an experienced-based class, not primarily a lecture course. If you aren't here or choose not to participate, you aren't likely to get much out of it.

Participation is important. Many of the skills you will be developing in this course cannot be learned from books. They require communicating with others. You will have the opportunity to participate in a variety of simulations and exercises designed to help improve your interview skills in different contexts. Therefore, it is essential that you come to class and participate fully. Your communication behavior should help to create a supportive communication environment. This means that you listen to others and respect their right to their feelings and opinions, even if you disagree with them.

Attendance will be taken at the start of each class. Please be aware that there may be material on the quizzes presented in class that is not in the text and you will be expected to know it. Therefore, it is important that you attend class as often as possible or get the notes from one of your peers if you have missed a class. You are allowed three unexcused absences; additional absences will lower your class participation grade by 5 points each. If you are late coming to class, be sure that you are not counted as absent by checking in with your instructor after *that* class. Arriving late or leaving early will count as ½ an absence.

Exams

Three exams will cover text readings, lectures, handouts, and interviews that are presented in class. Exams may be comprised of true/false, multiple-choice, and/or short answer questions. Make-ups will only be offered in cases of documented emergencies.

Peer Interviews:

You will be required to work with two of your classmates to complete a series of three 15-30 minute interviews. For these interviews, each of you will have the opportunity to be an interviewer, interviewee, and observer.

Interviewers should focus on a single aspect of the interviewee's experience, attitudes, values and so on; or provide a general profile of the person; or what a "typical" day is like for them; or on talents they have; or...use your imagination. Prepare your questions in advance. A file of personal interest inventories of class members will be available for your reference prior to the interviews. Use them as research for the preparation of a reasonable schedule of questions and topics.

Interviewees should avoid "acting" in the interviews. You should be responding to the interviewer personally, right there in that moment. Maintain a professional style that you can transfer your style other interviewing situations you will face in the future.

Observers will provide interviewers a feedback sheet and comments about the interviewer's performance.

After the interviews are completed, you will write a 3-5 page, typed, double-spaced paper about the interview in which you were the interviewer. The part of this paper will be comprised of an article about the interviewee and the information they provided. You will share this part of the paper in a class session where you will be able to introduce the interviewee. Conclude the paper with 2-3 paragraphs reflecting upon your performance as an interviewer. Include in your discussion what you did well and need to improve upon. Develop a short list of goals for improving as an interviewer this semester. ***Please note that each section of this paper comprises 50% of your grade, so do not omit either part.***

Resume and Cover Letter:

Make a resume and cover letter applying for a real or hypothetical job. Be sure that your letter and resume are perfect and contain no grammar or spelling errors. **Each error will result in lowering your grade on this assignment by five points.**

Outside Interview Series:

Conduct a minimum of three face-to-face interviews with someone in the community who has provided their consent to be interviewed. **It should be someone you did not know personally, prior to this assignment.** Each interview must be a minimum of ½ hour in length and should be conducted in a setting where there is minimal chance of interruption. I suggest you start early in the term identifying potential interviewees and arranging for meetings. You will be required to record your interviews; this will aid you in writing a 5-7 page paper about the interview and the process of interviewing. In addition to the suggestions offered by the text, I'll provide more information to help you plan and conduct these interviews.

There are two alternative ways to approach this assignment. The first is to interview a minimum of three different individuals about a specific topic. You may do these interviews about a topic that interests you or to participate in an actual study. Another possible approach is to interview someone you do know about a sensitive subject.

You must have approval of your instructor before beginning this assignment.

Papers are to be typed, double-spaced, and include the contact information, a record of the times and places of your meetings, and the interviewee's consent. Develop the information gained by the interviews into article about the interviewee or topic of discussion. Introduce the paper with by discussing why you choose to interview this particular individual, how you gained their compliance, established rapport and developed the interview protocol. Conclude with a reflection on your performance as an interviewer, the interview process and what you learned about interviewing from doing this assignment. Be sure to include relevant course concepts, definitions and a discussion of how they inform your analysis. Conclude by reflecting on how well you achieved the goals you established at the end of your paper on your peer interviews. **Please note that each of the three sections of this paper comprises a significant part of your grade on this assignment, so do not omit any of the three parts.**

General Grading criteria for reports:

1. Is the article interesting?
2. Is it easy to follow and clear?
3. Does it provide a clear picture of the person being interviewed?
4. Does it provide a clear sense of the topic being discussed?
5. Does it reflect informed reading, accurate understanding, and serious consideration of interviewing concepts?
6. Does it satisfy the criteria of the assignment?
7. Is the paper on time? Late papers will be lowered five points per business day.

Special Needs:

Any student with a documented disability who would like to request accommodations should contact the University Disability Services Office - Hale Kauano'e A Wing Lounge, 933-0816 (V), 933-3334 (TTY), shirachi@hawaii.edu - as early in the semester as possible.

A Reminder about Advising:

Advising is a very important resource designed to help students complete the requirements of the University and their individual majors. Students should consult with their advisor at least once a semester to decide on courses, check progress towards graduation, and

discuss career options and other educational opportunities provided by UH-Hilo. Advising is a shared responsibility, but students have final responsibility for meeting degree requirements.