Film Analysis: Interpersonal Communication
“When Harry Met Sally”

*When Harry Met Sally* (1989) was directed by Rob Reiner. The film is a romantic comedy set in New York starring Billy Crystal and Meg Ryan. It follows the two main characters over a twelve year period raising the question "Can men and women ever just be friends?" exploring many interpersonal communication concepts such as attraction, intimacy, and the stages of relationships.

**PURPOSE:** Apply communication theories and concepts of relationship development, relationship dissolution, and marital conflict. In your paper, you will analyze how communication theory can be applied in the case of Harry and Sally. To support your analysis, incorporate quotes and examples from the film, our textbook, and other credible communication sources. Be sure to define the communication terms you use.

**REQUIREMENTS:** This paper should be approximately three to five pages in length, typewritten, 12 point font size, 1 inch margins, double spaced, proofread, and your own work. Make sure to include traditional essay components such as an introduction paragraph and a conclusion paragraph.

**TOPIC:** Your paper should address the following three subjects.

A. Learn about Mark Knapp’s Relationship Development (pg. 188) and Dissolution (pgs. 192-193) theory and apply the theory to Harry and Sally’s Relationship development and dissolution throughout the film.

   1. Select one of the key scenes in the film, in which Harry and Sally’s relationship has entered at least one of Knapp’s stages. Please note, that the couple does experience all 10 stages. After you identify the scene in which Harry and Sally have entered a specific stage, provide substantial evidence that their communication matches the communication associated with that particular stage. Make sure to cite your textbook and quotes/examples from the movie.

      a. The 5 Stages of Development: Initiating, Experimenting, Intensifying, Integrating, Bonding
      b. The 5 Stages of Dissolution: Differentiating, Circumscribing, Stagnating, Avoiding, Terminating

   2. Reflect and analyze Harry and Sally’s progression through the Knapp’s stages of Relationship Development and Dissolution. Apply what you learned from analyzing their relationship to what you have observed about romantic couples. Do all couples move through each stage? Do all couples go through the stages in the specific order presented in “Communication Matters?” What impact does the way Harry and Sally communicate with each other have on the formation of their relationship?

B. At what point did Harry and Sally’s relationship become romantic? Describe the turning
point. Does the moment include each of the four characteristics described on pgs. 184-185? Why or why not?

C. On page, 189-190, your textbook discusses how couples communicate when experiencing conflict. Please review John Gottman’s study of marital couples and their communication with each other to solve a conflict. Each couple can be classified into one of four groups. After learning more about Gottman’s theory, analyze how Harry and Sally communicate with each other when they experience a conflict. What category (Validating, Volatile, Conflict-avoiding, or Hostile) would you place Harry and Sally within? Why? What advice would you give Harry and Sally to improve how they communicate in their intimate relationship?

FORMAT
1. With the final draft of the paper, you will need to turn in a typed bibliography (reference list) of your sources written in APA format (pg. 299).
2. Your paper should be well organized and easy for your readers to follow.
3. You must research your topic well. It is important to be ethical in your writing. Part of this will involve using accurate and current information that is well researched.
4. For this paper you will need at least 3 credible sources, and they must be cited in-text with attributive tags, and cited in your bibliography. Because this is a college paper, you may not receive credit for questionable sources (Wikipedia, .com websites, blogs, etc.), so be sure to check their credibility; when in doubt, email me and ask.
5. Your paper is due in a traditional, college-level essay structure. Please include:
   a) an introduction with a thesis statement,
   b) body paragraphs that elaborate on your main ideas,
   c) a conclusion with a thoughtful reflection on your main points as well as any insights you gained as a result of your analysis.

RESOURCES FOR WRITING
1) Refer to Chapters 7 & 8 in Communication Matters for communication concepts and theories as a foundation for your analysis.
2) Refer to Chapter 12, pg. 299 and the Purdue OWL for APA format. The Purdue OWL APA website is at http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/.
3) Refer to DACC library websites and free-access databases, grouped by academic division and subject to begin your research. To access, visit the website: http://dabcewwww.nmsu.edu/library/best_web/index.shtm

EVALUATION
Rubric for Film Analysis Paper “WHMS” (200 points) Total pts earned:_________

i. Organization and Development—50 points Points Earned:______
   a. Does the paper have a clear introduction that includes the thesis and a preview of the main ideas to be discussed? (15 points)
   b. Does the paper have a conclusion that summarizes the main ideas and provides
appropriate closure? (15 points)

c. Is the thesis adequately developed through elaboration and supporting material in the paper’s body? (10 points)

d. Do the paragraphs have clear topic sentences that are adequately developed? (10 points)

ii. Content—100 points

a. Does the paper focus on the assigned topic? (10 points)

b. Does the paper adequately provide relevant, clear responses to each of the directions stated in the guidelines? (70 pts total)

A) Knapp’s Stages of Relationship Development & Dissolution:
   1) Identify and Explain a scene from the film according to Knapp’s theory: 15pts
   2) Reflection and Analysis of the relationship development: 15pts

B) Identification and Analysis of the couple’s romantic turning point: 20 pts

C) Applying and Analyzing John Gottman’s study of marital couples in the case of Harry and Sally: 20 pts

c. Are the communication theories and concepts thoughtfully explained, defined, and applied, thereby demonstrating an understanding of them? (10 points)

d. Does the student use direct quotes from the film, textbook, and other academic sources to support his or her analysis? (10 pts)

iii. Mechanics and Style—50 points

a. Is the paper mechanically sound? (spelling, punctuation, etc)? (10 points)

b. Does the paper abide by the assigned standards for font size, margins, etc.? (10 points)

c. Is the paper well written with complete sentences and clear expression? (10 points)

C. Does the author appropriately cite at least three sources (the textbook, the film, and other academic sources) within the paper? (10 points)

e. Is the bibliography written in APA format? Does it include at least three sources (the textbook, the film, and other academic sources)? Are all the sources in the bibliography also cited within the paper? (10 points)