

**COMMUNICATION STUDIES 123**  
**ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION**

**Spring 2002**

Professor: Steve May  
Office: Bingham 201B  
Phone: 962-4945  
Email: skmay@email.unc.edu  
Office Hours: 11:00-12:00 T, Th (or by appointment)

Bingham 217  
9:30-10:45 T, Th

**Required Texts**

Gareth Morgan. *Images of Organization, 2nd Edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1997.

Gareth Morgan. *Creative Organization Theory*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1989.

Additional readings may be on reserve at the Undergraduate Library.

**Supplemental Text**

Paul Light. *Making Non-profits Work*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institute Press (for the Aspen Institute), 2000.

**Course Description**

This course is designed to show how we can better understand organizational communication through the medium of different images--or metaphors--of organizations. Each image or metaphor draws attention to unique features of organizational communication and provides a distinctive means of understanding diverse organizational situations that you may experience in the future. The course is designed to show how executives, managers, consultants, human resource personnel, or any other organizational members can use these images of organizational communication as tools for informing and guiding action.

The course has three primary objectives. First, the course should provide you with a systematic and critical understanding (e.g., both strengths and weaknesses) of organizational communication theory and research, and the factors involved in the functioning and analysis of today's complex organizations. Second, the course should also show how this understanding may be used as a practical tool for the analysis and management of organizational situations. Third, the course should help you understand the integration of micro and macro perspectives of organizational communication. That is, it should allow you to explore the ways in which organizations are simultaneously the medium and outcome for social, political, economic, technological, and ideological change in our culture.

The topics covered in the course have been selected to aid you in addressing these three objectives and in analyzing diverse organizational contexts within which you may find yourself, thereby providing an improved basis for personal and organizational action.

**Service Learning Course**

As a service learning course, Communication Studies 123, Communication in Organizations, will provide you with hands-on learning experiences in organizational communication consulting with "real world" organizations in the Triangle area. You will not only learn organizational communication theories, but will also apply that knowledge to solve actual organizational communication problems in 4-5 non-profit organizations. Working in project teams common to today's businesses, you will have the opportunity to establish business relationships, to develop networks in the business community, and to build work-related skills. In addition to regular in-class work, you will spend 3-5 hours per week working with a consulting client to: 1) assess and diagnose organizational communication

problems; 2) assimilate organizational communication theories relevant to the problems; and 3) propose organizational communication solutions to improve the client's performance. As a result, the course will be particularly relevant to students interested in consulting, training and development, and human resource or personnel management. Because of the additional workload, eligible Communication Studies majors may complete the departmental paperwork to register for an additional hour of internship credit (Communication Studies 90 for undergraduate students, Comm 390 for graduate students).

### **Course Objectives**

The purpose of this course is to provide you with a closer examination of the taken-for-granted nature of organizational life in our culture as you prepare for your chosen careers. For although we participate in numerous organizations throughout our lifetimes, we frequently overlook the ways in which they construct a "naturalized" way of life for us. We often assume that "this is just the way organizations are." Yet, over time, organizations have been created in and through discourses that have involved significant choices and, often, unintended consequences. That is, historically, organizations have been created in quite diverse ways. This organizational diversity will most likely continue as employers and employees attempt to adapt to the cultural changes of the future. As such, the course will explore not only what organizational communication "is," but also what organizational communication "might be." Through this exploration, the hope is that as you enter organizations in the future, you will make choices that will create not only more productive organizations, but also more humane ones.

In order to imagine the possibilities of what organizational life might be in the future, we first examine the various ways organizations have been studied and created to date. For instance, we will explore the influences of classical management, human relations, systems theory, cultural studies, critical theory, political theory, psychoanalytic theory, and chaos theory on organizational communication. We will also examine several case studies that raise important practical and ethical questions regarding organizational life. As such, the course is intended to integrate organizational theory and practice, thereby informing your own organizational decisions.

### **Course Enrollment**

Enrollment for Communication Studies 123 for Spring 2002 is limited to 20 students, by permission of the instructor. To be considered for the course, you will need to submit the following information in a manila folder to my mailbox in Bingham 105 by no later than November 1.

1. A copy of your academic transcript
2. A copy of a college paper or other writing sample
3. A 2-page typed explanation of your interest in the course
4. A resume (optional)

Particular attention will be paid to students who demonstrate: 1) the motivation to participate in a service learning course; 2) the past performance in academic and work settings to be successful with a business client; and 3) the desire to enter fields such as consulting, training and development, or human resource or personnel management

### **Teaching Philosophy**

All too often, I have overheard students in the buildings and on the sidewalks of universities describing courses in the following fashion: "It's a theory course" or "It's a practical course." On the one hand, students are dissatisfied when courses belabor what is common sense. On the other hand, they are even more dissatisfied when courses have no clear bearing on everyday life. One of the ways to bridge this dichotomy is to recognize that understanding is the joint product of theory and common sense. As Karl Weick aptly explains, "theory and research should focus on what people routinely overlook when they apply common sense. Theory should not be redundant with common sense; it should remind people of what they forget."

Ideally, then, my teaching philosophy for this course is to combine theory and practice as it relates to organizations. The assumption is that the two are mutually dependent. For instance, we all use implicit theories of the world around us to guide our behaviors. When those theories do not seem applicable to everyday life, then we adjust them accordingly. The same should hold true for the theories and practice of organizations. Through course readings, we

will examine various theories of organizations. Each theory should be judged according to its applicability to your organizational experiences. One of the ways this applicability will be tested is through a semester-long case study. By studying a specific organizational case throughout the semester, you should develop the critical thinking skills to determine which theories are applicable and which theories are not. You should also gain an appreciation for what "works" and what "doesn't work" in the organization.

To further understand the relationship between theory and practice, however, also requires class participation. We can further our understanding of the diverse nature of organizational life when we each contribute our own organizational experiences. In this respect, the course is a joint accomplishment. I will contribute my particular area of expertise and knowledge. By the same token, you are expected to contribute your own experience as a basis to critically examine theories from the readings. Choosing not to contribute, then, denies your fellow students the opportunity to learn from you. Because each of you should feel free to contribute to class discussions, respect for others' opinions is quite important. In the spirit of this idea, I would like the following quote by Milan Kundera to guide our discussions:

The stupidity of people comes from having an answer for everything.  
The wisdom of the novel comes from having a question for everything.

Please come to class with a questioning and tolerant attitude. Hopefully, the course will be interesting, challenging, fun, and directly relevant to your needs.

### **Performance Evaluation/Deliverables**

Midterm Exam	20%
Client Proposal	10%
Progress/Research Reports	20%
Final Client Report	20%
Final Client Presentation	20%
Reflection Journals; Participation; 360 Team Evaluation	10%

### **Operating Procedures**

To facilitate the overall success of the course and to develop a sense of professionalism, I will expect you to: 1) attend class sessions fully prepared to discuss the material corresponding to the date on the syllabus, 2) ask questions relevant to course materials, 3) engage in discussion about the material with other students and myself; 4) turn in all assigned work on time and in a professional form (e.g., word-processed, free of spelling and grammatical errors, and demonstrating use of creative intelligence); and 5) maintain a professional relationship with your client. As in a typical work setting, absences will be noted and will effect your performance evaluation. Each student will be allowed three absences, including both excused and unexcused. After the third absence, one letter grade will be deducted from the Attendance and Participation evaluation for each additional absence. In addition, tardiness will be noted as a lack of preparation and professionalism and will also negatively effect your performance evaluation. Finally, absences from team meetings will also be considered as a part of your overall course evaluation.

Full acknowledgment, using the American Psychological Association style manual (held in the library) must be made when you quote, paraphrase, or use the work of others. If plagiarism is detected in your writing (including unacknowledged use of Internet sources), the assignment will be returned unmarked with no grade. As in the "working world," you will be expected to meet assigned deadlines. As a result, no extensions on assignments will be given. There should be no requests for extensions nor any excuses if you plan ahead and begin assignments in a timely fashion to avoid last-minute problems. Doing so indicates a lack of professionalism and, similar to the working world, will negatively effect your performance evaluation.

It is the responsibility of the student to read and understand any policies, laws, rules, or procedures that could affect the students' final grade for this course which are not specifically outlined in this syllabus. These are contained in the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill Undergraduate Bulletin.

### **Performance Evaluation Standards**

Specific criteria for each assignment are included in the instructions in this syllabus. In addition, I will also use these general evaluation criteria:

#### A Performance

Excellent work. There is a clear focus on what the assignment should achieve and it is structured accordingly. The assignment is well-written and free of errors. There is clear evidence of a thoughtful and original approach. The student has developed opinions on the issues being considered and can explain and support those opinions persuasively. The relevant literature and class material have been considered and integrated into the assignment, with appropriate referencing. Where research has been carried out, the method used is appropriate and well-explained.

#### B Performance

Above average. The assignment is effectively planned, organized, and written. The student has a clear understanding of the topic and has read enough to be familiar with key concepts and/or theories from the course. There is evidence that the student has developed individual ideas, can explain them clearly, and can integrate them with course material.

#### C Performance

Average. The basic requirements of the assignment have been met. The student has a general understanding of the topic and has written the assignment so that it can be clearly understood. Use of relevant course material is made.

#### D Performance

Poor. The student has not met the basic requirements of the assignment. The topic is not well-understood and there is little evidence of understanding course materials. The assignment is poorly written and lacks logic and supporting evidence for ideas.

#### Performance Feedback abbreviations

In order to provide more extensive feedback on your assignments, I will use the following editing marks:

PREV	Preview main ideas
SUM	Summarize main ideas
Sentence underlined	Highlighting a point for my use in evaluating the writing
Word circled	Spelling error
CS	Comma splice, run on sentence
SF	Sentence fragment
AWK	Awkward phrasing or sentence structure
ORG	Organization, structure problems
?	Meaning unclear
TRANS	Need transition between ideas
	Delete
	Connect letters or words
EX	Need examples to justify or support your claim
JUST	Justify the claim
	Lower case letter
	Capitalize
WC	Questionable choice of words
INT	Integrate course concepts and/or theories

## **Schedule**

### **Tuesday, January 8**

Topic: Course Introduction - Service Learning Course

Reading:

### **Thursday, January 10**

Topic: Organizational Metaphors and Communication; Current Work Trends

Reading: Morgan, Chapter 1

### **Tuesday, January 15**

Topic: Discussion of Service Learning; Discussion of Client Organizations

Reading:

### **Thursday, January 17**

Topic: Machine Metaphor

Reading: Morgan, Chapter 2  
COT #76 - Eagle Smelting; COT #77 - A Visit to McDonald's

### **Submit Client Preferences**

### **Tuesday, January 22**

Topic: Developing and Maintaining Client Relationships; Client Proposals

### **Client Team Meeting**

### **Thursday, January 24**

Topic: Organism Metaphor

Reading: Morgan, Chapter 3  
COT #27 - From Bureaucracies to Networks; COT #79 - Acme and Omega

### **Tuesday, January 28**

Topic: Reflection Session 1; Consultation Models: Assessment/Recommendation/Implementation/Evaluation (ARIE)

Reading:

### **Report of Client Meeting Due**

### **Thursday, January 31**

Topic: Brain Metaphor

Reading: Morgan, Chapter 4

### **Tuesday, February 5**

Topic: Applications of Learning Organizations

Reading: COT #41 - The Challenger Disaster; COT #49 - Innovating Organizations: 3M

### **Client Proposal Due**

### **Thursday, February 7**

Topic: Work Plans; Benchmarking and Best Practices

Reading:

**Tuesday, February 12**

Topic: Culture Metaphor

Reading: Morgan, Chapter 5

**Client Team Meeting**

**Thursday, February 14**

Topic: Applications of Organizational Culture

Reading: COT #85 - Understanding the Culture...; COT #90 - Fortress Insurance

**Tuesday, February 19**

Topic: Reflection Session #2; Data-Gathering Methods – Part 1

Reading:

**Client Progress Report Due**

**Thursday, February 21**

Topic: Data Gathering Methods – Part 2

Reading:

**Tuesday, February 26**

Topic: Data Gathering Methods - Part 3

Reading:

**Client Team Meeting**

**Thursday, February 28**

Topic: Political System Metaphor

Reading: Morgan, Chapter 6

COT #57 - Apple Computer; COT #92 - The University as Political System

**Tuesday, March 5**

Topic: Mid-term Exam Review

**Client Team Meeting**

**Thursday, March 7**

**Midterm Exam**

**Tuesday, March 12 - Spring Break**

**Thursday, March 14 - Spring Break**

**Tuesday, March 19**

Topic: Psychic Prison Metaphor

Reading: Morgan, Chapter 7

**Thursday, March 21**

Topic: Applications of Psychoanalysis

Reading: COT #66 - Game Playing; COT #68 - Some Unconscious Aspects of Organization

**Tuesday, March 26**

Topic: Flux and Transformation Metaphor

Reading: Morgan, Chapter 8

COT #69 - Hooked on Work; COT #70 - The Destructive Side of Technological...

**Thursday, March 28**

Topic: Reflection Session #3

Reading:

**Client Research Report Due  
Client Team Meeting**

**Tuesday, April 2**

Topic: Domination Metaphor

Reading: Morgan, Chapter 9

**Thursday, April 4**

Topic: Applications of Organizational Domination

Reading: COT #72 - The Bhopal Disaster; COT #88 - Sink or Swim

**Tuesday, April 9**

Topic: Client Presentations

Reading:

**Thursday, April 11**

**Client Team Meeting**

**Tuesday, April 16**

Topic: Client Reports

Reading:

**Client Team Meeting**

**Thursday, April 18**

Topic: Consulting Presentations 1 & 2

Reading:

**Tuesday, April 23**

Topic: Consulting Presentations 3 & 4

Reading:

**Thursday, April 25**

Topic: Course Wrap-Up; Instructor Evaluations

**Saturday, May 4 at 9:00 a.m.**

Topic: Reflection Session #4

**Client Reports Due**

Assignment: Client Consulting Project (70%)

Objective:

The purpose of this assignment is to understand and apply organizational communication theory to a real-world organizational context, with an emphasis upon organizational assessment, recommendation, implementation, and evaluation.

Process:

The Client Consulting Project has several parts, including the following:

1. Report of client meeting
2. Client proposal (10%)
3. Progress Report; Research Report (20%)
4. Final client presentation (20%)
5. Final client report (20%)

Evaluation:

The evaluation criteria for each assignment of the client consulting project are described in the following pages.

## 1. Report of Client Meeting

Due: Tuesday, January 28

### Objective:

The purpose of this assignment is provide information on your client organization after you have met with your client contact person.

### Process:

After you are in your client teams, you should schedule a 60 minute meeting with your client, contingent on his or her schedule. This meeting must include all members of the client team and should be conducted at the client site. In advance of the meeting, the client liaison should contact the client and inform him or her how to prepare for the meeting. During the meeting, you should discuss the following information (at a minimum):

Purpose and mission of the organization

History of the organization

Preferred future direction of the organization

Organizational structure – including the roles and responsibilities of executives, administrative staff, board of directors, volunteers

Organizational needs

Client expectations of client team

If any additional persons should be included in the meeting besides your client contact person, be sure that they are contacted. In addition, make sure that the contact person at the client site has informed the members of the organization that you will be working with them for the Fall semester. In some cases, you may need to write a letter to the members of the organization describing your work. Ideally, though, this information will be communicated by the contact person.

In addition, you may find it helpful to obtain organizational documents that provide your client team with additional background information. Be aware that some documents may be sensitive in nature and may not be made available to you—or may require confidentiality on your part.

After the client meeting, your team should write a 2 page report describing the relevant information you have learned about the organization. All members of the team must initial the report, indicating their approval of it.

### Evaluation:

The client report will be evaluated according to its specificity and clarity, indicating a clear understanding of the client organization and its needs.

## 2. Client Proposal (10%)

Due: Tuesday, February 5

### Objective:

The purpose of the client proposal is to clarify expectations between the client and the client team.

### Process:

After you have completed your client meeting and any additional follow-up meetings, you must submit a draft proposal to me that will be revised and then later submitted to the client. In professional settings, proposals may be used to: 1) gain funding; 2) change or adopt new policies or procedures; 3) obtain new business or expand markets; and 4) make appropriate business decisions, among others. Proposals help you to focus on a topic, identify the situation, and explore information before you commit to a project. In effect, a proposal serves as an agreed-upon plan of action with a client that helps clarify mutual expectations, roles, and responsibilities. In some cases, a proposal allows clients to determine who has the best plan of action.

A proposal often has two primary goals. First, it serves to let the client know how you can assist them. Second, it should also convince your client to accept or act on your plan. As a result, the proposal is an important part of the “buy-in” process with your client and should be given very serious attention.

Your proposal should be approximately 2-3 pages describing how your team will be able to help your client meet its needs. Obviously, then, you must have a very clear understanding of the client’s needs in order to complete the proposal.

If the draft proposal is accepted by me, you can then submit it to the client to be negotiated with him or her. Once the proposal is agreed upon by the client, you may proceed with the next step of your consulting project. If it is not accepted, you will need to revise it until it is satisfactory.

### Proposal Norms

The proposal should be single-spaced and double-spaced between paragraphs. All members of the client team should initial the proposal, indicating their approval. The proposal should include the following items:

#### Cover sheet

Your cover sheet should include the name of the client organization, contact person, date, and the names and contact information for each member of the client team.

#### Table of contents

#### Introduction

The introduction of your proposal should identify the organization’s needs and why you have selected these to address. Second, you should explain why the client organization needs to address these needs. This section may take into account both the advantages of acting on the needs and the disadvantages of ignoring them.

#### Body

The initial section of the body should describe the history and mission of the organization and any other relevant background information. The second section identifies the organizational “issues” or concerns that may be explored by your team. The third section explains the methods you plan to use in order to assist the client organization in

meeting its needs. The fourth section displays a work schedule and timetable for completing the project. The final section notes the qualifications that your team brings to the consulting project.

### Conclusion

Begin the conclusion by restating how important it is for the client organization to address and resolve its needs. Finish your proposal by urging your client to respond to your proposal—ideally, by accepting it (or offering additional suggestions).

### Appendixes

The appendixes may include additional illustrations, charts, graphs, or data relevant to the proposal.

### Evaluation:

The client proposal will be evaluated according to its inclusion of the preceding items and its persuasiveness for the client.

### 3. Progress/Research Reports (20%)

Due: Tuesday, February 19; Thursday, March 28

#### Objective:

The purpose of this assignment is to provide reports on the client consulting project and to identify relevant research that may assist in assessment and recommendations for the client.

#### Process:

You are required to complete at least two reports during your consulting project. The first report should be no longer than 2 pages and written in memo format. Ideally, the memo should be three paragraphs long. In the first paragraph, briefly review the nature of your project. In the second paragraph, discuss in detail the work that has been completed. If any portions of the work are behind schedule or have changed, include a rationale. Finally, in the third paragraph, explain the work that is yet to be completed. You should provide a copy of this report to the client if he or she requests it.

The second report should be 2-3 pages and should include one paragraph summaries of at least 5 research articles that are relevant to the needs of your client organization. A full APA citation should precede each article summary. Contact me for more information regarding appropriate articles and academic journals.

#### Evaluation:

The progress/research reports will be evaluated according their clarity, thoroughness, and relevance to the client.

#### 4. Final Client Presentation (20%)

Due: Thursday, April 18 or Tuesday, April 23

##### Objective:

The purpose of this assignment is to prepare an informative, persuasive presentation to the client so that they may accept your team's assessment and recommendations.

##### Process:

As a team, use your knowledge of oral presentations to develop an informative and persuasive presentation directed to the client organization about its needs you addressed. For this portion of the consulting project, your team is to present--in 20 minutes--your analysis of the organization's problems to your client. In addition, you are also to present possible courses of action, or recommendations, that will help alleviate some of the organization's problems. Save the final 5 minutes for questions from the client and the rest of your audience.

Your presentation should be extemporaneous, well-organized, and well-articulated, in a manner that is professional.

Note: Your client contact person will be invited to this class session.

##### Evaluation:

**Content:** the degree to which assessment of the client organization offers insights into its needs and problems as they relate to course concepts, and the degree to which relevant and pragmatic recommendations are offered.

**Format:** the degree to which assessment of the client organization adheres to standards appropriate for university-level work, including specific connections to readings.

**Presentation:** the degree to which assessment of the client organization is orally presented in a well-organized, logical, and coherent fashion that addresses the most significant problems and solutions. In addition, the presentation will be evaluated for its structure and organization, support for arguments, style and tone, vocal quality, and use of visual aids (when appropriate).

## 5. Final Client Report (20%)

Due: Saturday, May 4 at 9:00 a.m.

### Objective:

The purpose of this assignment is to develop a written report that accurately assesses needs within the client organization and offers appropriate recommendations.

### Process:

For this portion of the client consulting project, your team is to prepare a written report that assesses the client organization's needs and offers possible recommendations to address them.

The report itself should have a clear introduction, body, and conclusion, with specific attention to analysis of the organization's needs and possible solutions. The report should also include specific references from course readings that are relevant to better understand the organization and its needs.

The final client report should include the following:

#### Front Matter

- Cover page
- Letter of transmittal
- Table of contents
- Executive summary of project

#### Body of Report

- Assessment, with supporting documentation
- Recommendations, with supporting documentation

#### Back Matter

- Appendixes – including final copies of proposal and progress reports
- Billing Details – including hours worked and billing rates

Make copies for all members of the client team, the client, and me. All copies should be bound in a professional form.

### Evaluation:

The assignment will be evaluated according to its relevance to the client, its persuasiveness, its thoroughness, its relevance to course content, and its professionalism in addressing the needs of the client.

## **Guidelines for Developing and Maintaining Relationships with Consulting Clients**

---

At all times, remember that you are not only creating a professional impression of yourself, but that you are also representatives of the Department of Communication Studies and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Therefore, you should present yourself, your team, and your work as professionally as possible. Consider these guidelines to serve as minimum expectations of professionalism:

Show interest and enthusiasm to members of the client organization.

Respect the other commitments and responsibilities of members of the client organization—particularly the contact person.

Communicate directly and explicitly with the contact person—in the mode preferred by him or her--via the client team liaison. Clients should not be inundated with multiple messages from various team members.

Make appointments in advance if you intend to visit the client site. Members of the client organization should not be surprised by your presence.

When in doubt, clarify your responsibilities by asking questions of the contact person.

Do not be overly critical of the client organization and its members, especially in the early stages of your consulting activities. Your job is to listen and learn first and to recommend later.

Meet deadlines. There should be no excuses for missing deadlines.

Dress “business casual” (at the minimum) when visiting the client site.

Submit only excellent work to the client.