

COMMUNICATION 2913
Organizations and Society
Spring 2005 – OH 141 MWF 9:00 – 9:50 am

Instructor: Matthew V. Brown, Ph. D.
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Course Description:

Communication 2913 introduces students to the study of organizational communication—through its various forms, functions, challenges, and consequences. The course is designed to be an active learning experience that helps students understand organizational life by critically examining communication behaviors, structures, and linkages with the external environment, all toward developing competencies that enhance understanding. In this course, students also explore ways to make sense of organizational experiences through recognizing and analyzing organizational patterns, barriers, and common dilemmas that often enable, constrain, or complicate communication processes.

Each of us lives in an increasingly complex and turbulent world, and nowhere is the turbulence felt more than in our contemporary organizations. Today's fast-paced, "informed" environment bears little resemblance to conditions of just a few years ago. Many of the organizational solutions and work practices of the past no longer work, mainly because the rate of change--in global economics, competitive markets, consumer preferences, and emerging technologies—has become so breathtakingly fast that it is a continual challenge for each of us to learn and adapt.

Therefore, the emphasis in this course will be how to ask good questions about how communication processes work within contemporary organizations. However, good questions and answers often change because organizations are continually evolving. Each of us gives shape and meaning to these questions and answers through the understanding we bring to organizational activity. When the semester ends, students will not have secured all the *correct* answers regarding how to effectively communicate within an organization, but will have gained the knowledge to continue to ask good questions about effective communication within any organizational context. Student understanding will further develop as they reflect and synthesize the shared insights about organizational activity gained through course readings, what they share during active participation in our class discussions, and what they write in course assignments.

Required Text:

Eisenberg, E. & Goodall, H. (2004). *Organizational Communication: Balancing Creativity and Constraint* (4th Ed.). Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's (EG on syllabus)

Class Handouts - designated as (CH) on syllabus

Core Assignments and Grading:

1. <i>Field Experience Portfolio</i> (35%)	350 points
a. 3 Field Reports @ 10% each	
b. Field Experience Assessment (5%) & Final Portfolio Analysis	
2. <i>Group Project</i> (Organizational Case Study) (20%)	200 points
a. Group Presentation (100 pts.)	
b. Group Analysis Paper (100 pts.)	
3. <i>Examinations</i> (3 exams, @ 10% each)	300 points
Exams will be a combination of true/false, multiple choice, and short answer/short essays.	
4. <i>Active Class Participation</i> (15%)	<u>150 points</u>
a. Five short essays (20 points each)	
b. Seven scores-minus two lowest (10 pts. each)	
Total	1000 points

You will receive numerical scores on all assignments that will be converted to a letter grade for final grade computation. A 1000-point scale will be used to determine assignment values. Follow assignment guidelines and complete each assignment on time to maximize your score.

Final course grades are typically based on the following percentages or some other similar scale out to two decimal places:

A	90.00% or above	B	80.00 - 89.99%	C	70.00 – 79.99%
D	60.00 – 69.99%	F	Below 60%		

The professor/instructor reserves the right to give “pop” quizzes should I feel that you are not keeping up with the reading and/or coming prepared to class. Should these quizzes be necessary, they will be included as a component of your class participation grade.

Class Procedures:

First Week Attendance Policy: The professor reserves the right to drop any student who misses the first two days of class without notifying me in advance. If you were present to receive this syllabus then you probably have nothing to worry about. However, if you have a friend who is registered for the class but has not attended – you may want to let him/her know about this policy.

Class Attendance. I realize that everyone has multiple obligations in their lives that can occasionally impact your ability to attend class. Therefore, you may miss two class periods with no excuse or penalty to your participation grade. Please keep in mind that I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences (except in the event of hospitalization or need for an “extended” excused absence). However, please remember that I do not accept written assignments from those who are not in class on the date they are due. Also, I reserve the right to lower final grades due to excessive absence (more than five).

All written assignments should be typed (12-point font, Times New Roman or similar, 1-inch margins, numbered and stapled (if necessary), and turned in at the beginning of class on the assigned day.

All work must be completed and/or turned in at the beginning of class on the assigned day. I will accept absolutely no late assignments without a written medical- or emergency excuse provided within one week of the absence. In addition, I will not accept assignments if you are not present in class to turn them in (unless you have arranged to do so in advance).

Students are responsible for any class material missed due to an absence. This means you will be relying on the generosity of your classmates to allow you to copy class notes and handouts. Please do not approach me with requests for missed notes. Of course, if you have a legitimately excused absence, you may visit me during office hours for a briefing and missed handouts. I will do my best to return assignments within two class periods. If you are not there to receive them, it is your responsibility to look through the folder where I keep graded assignments and handouts.

Your class participation grade will be an “aggregate” score you receive for in-class participation. Participation scores will be assigned by discretion of instructor on chosen discussion days. At the end of the semester I will average seven scores of equal value, dropping the two lowest. That average score will then account for 10% of your final grade. A perfect ten would be a student that attends class, shows evidence of completing reading assignments, actively participates in discussion when appropriate, offers comments, insights, and personal experiences, and contributes professionally to class activities and/or assignments. Please keep in mind that quality is more important than quantity in the summative evaluation of your participation.

I will be happy to review drafts of papers and assignments before they are due. However, the purpose of these meetings is for me to review your ideas, your pattern of organization, etc. I will not spend this time proofreading your drafts. No email submissions please. In order to take advantage of this offer, you must come to my office hours or make other arrangements. Please feel free to meet with me at any agreed upon time to discuss your writing and/or ideas about the class.

Plagiarism: I cannot tolerate plagiarism or cheating, in any form, in this class. I expect each of you to do your own, original work. Please refer to the UT student handbook for the definition of plagiarism, academic dishonesty and the consequences or penalties for each.

Note: Having specified the ground rules, I want you to know that I am empathize with the difficulties and role conflicts that ensue from acting simultaneously as students, employees, group members, partners, family members, etc. Should you have any problems with field experiences, including access, confidentiality, or meeting course deadlines or completing assignments, please come talk to me at any time and we will work together to develop an appropriate solution. However, I cannot help you if you do not notify me **in advance**.

Tentative Course Schedule for Spring Term - 2005

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topics/Assignments Due</u>	<u>Assigned Readings</u>
<u>Week 1</u>		
Mon. 01/10	Introductions/syllabus	
Wed. 01/12	The New World of Work	Chap. 1 5-18 (EG)
Fri. 01/14	New Social Contract (Short Essay assignment #1)	Chap. 1 (EG) (Due 01/21)
<u>Week 2</u>		
Mon. 01/17	Martin Luther King Day- No Class	
Wed. 01/19	Organizational Communication Studies Review	Chap. 2, 22-42 (EG)
Fri. 01/21	Activity: Organization Communication Conundrum	<i>Pop Quiz?</i>

Week 3

Mon. 01/24	Theories of Organizations and Communication –Classical Mgmt.	Chap. 3, 57-82(EG)
Wed. 01/26	Theories of Orgs. Comm. Part 2 Human Relations & Resources	CH Reading # 2
Fri. 01/28	Systems Approaches to Organizational Exploration -- Field Report Briefing --	Chap. 4, 93-104 (EG) (Short Essay #2 Due 01/31)

Week 4

Mon. 01/31	Systems Perspectives (cont.)	Chap. 4 (EG)
Wed. 02/02	Learning & Sensemaking Approaches	(pp. 105-115)
Fri. 02/04	Integrative Approaches ***** Field Experience Report #1 Due *****	(cont.)

Week 5

Mon. 02/07	Cultural Approaches to Organizational Communication	Chap. 5, 117-138 (EG)
Wed. 02/09	Organizational Culture & Review	Review Sheet posted On WebCT
Fri. 02/11	Examination #1	

Week 6

Mon. 02/14	Critical Theory & Org Comm.	Chap 6, 148-171
Wed. 02/16	Power & Ideology (Short Essay #3 Due 02/20)	(153-159) <i>pop quiz?</i>
Fri. 02/18	Feminist Theory Alternatives to Hierarchy	Chap. 6 (160) Chap. 7, 181-190

Part 2

Levels of Analysis

Week 7

Mon. 02/21	Experience of Work (individual)	Chap. 8, 197-207 (EG)
Wed. 02/23	Stress & Burnout	(cont.)
Fri. 02/25	Activity ***** Group Project Logistics *****	(cont.)

Week 8

Mon. 02/28	Interpersonal Relationships	Chap. 9, 233-252 <i>Pop quiz?</i>
Wed. 03/02	Communicating w/supervision	CH - Activity
Fri. 03/04	Communicating w/peers (Short Essay #4 Due 03/08) ***** Group Project Updates1 *****	CH - Activity

Week 9

Mon. 03/07	Interpersonal Leadership Skills Field Dialogue Discussion	Chap. 9, 253-256
Wed. 03/09	Organizational Boundaries & Dialectics (review)	Chap. 9, 258-273
Fri. 03/11	Examination #2 ***** Group Project Updates2 ***** ***** Field Report #2 Due *****	

Week 10

SPRING BREAK

Week 11

Mon. 03/21	Teams and Networks	Chap. 10, 276-294
Wed. 03/23	Networks	(296-309) <i>pop quiz?</i>
Fri. 03/25	Team building Activity	

Week 12

Mon. 03/28	Strategic Change	Chap. 11, 311-324
Wed. 03/30	Organizational Learning	Chap. 11, 325-336
Fri. 04/01	Organizational Development ***** Field Experience Report #3 Due *****	Handout

Week 13

Mon. 04/04	Applications of Org. Comm.	Chap. 12, 347-357
Wed. 04/06	Moral and Ethical Dimensions	Chap. 11, 337-342 <i>Pop quiz?</i>
Fri. 04/08	IN-class Essay (#5) *****Group Project Logistics*****	Handout

Week 14

Mon. 04/11	Examination #3	In-class
Wed. 04/13	Group Presentation Workshop	
Fri. 04/15	Group Presentation 1	

Week 15

Mon. 04/18	Group Presentations 2	None
Wed. 04/20	Group Presentations 3	None
Fri. 04/22	Group Presentations 4 ***** Field Experience Assessment & Final Portfolio Due *****	None

Week 16

Mon. 04/25	Wrapping it all Up: Course summary and final discussions	
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FIELD EXPERIENCE PORTFOLIO (35 percent of total grade)

The field experience assignment is designed to enhance your understanding of organizational communication through a series of field explorations. Your mission is to create a field experience portfolio by doing the following:

Part I: Field Experience Reports (Three 3-5 page reports, typed, double-spaced)

Over the course of the semester you will complete three field experiments. After conducting each experiment, you will then write a 3-5 page report about the experience according to the following instructions:

Each report should have an introduction (including a thesis), a body and a conclusion.

As a main point of your discussion, you should integrate at least one idea from our course readings and/or discussion. Be specific in citing the idea by using the language from the text (be sure to cite the source if you quote directly).

The questions included in each assignment are meant to guide your thinking about the topic, not your organizational pattern. You are not expected to answer all of them in succession, but be sure you address the general ideas suggested.

Your field experience reports should be original. I do not mind you working together to conduct your experiments, but each paper should be the product of your individual critical thinking, reflection and writing. Please do not collaborate with one another on the actual writing of your field reports.

Several of these experiments ask you to examine other resources (e.g. books, internet sites etc.) and provide a summary. Please remember when using other sources in your writing that it is NOT acceptable to copy words or series of words from these sources for your paper without quoting and citing them directly.

Each field report should be typed, double-spaced with no more than one-inch margins.

Hint: 3-5 pages does not mean 3 pages of text plus one or two lines on the fourth page and a reference fifth page. You are certainly welcome to write more than 5 full pages if necessary. Create an intriguing title for each report, centered on the top of the first page

Part II: Field Experience Assessment (One 2-3 page report)

After completing your last field experience report, reread all three reports and write a 2-3 page assessment of what you have learned about organizational communication from your field experiences. Do not simply summarize all of your reports (remember I have already read them), but think critically about what you have learned from them as a whole. How will you take the information you have learned in this class and apply it in the “real world?” In addition, you could address how your perspective on organizational communication has changed since the beginning of the session. Be sure to integrate connections to our course readings or any other appropriate sources.

Part III: Field Experience Portfolio

At the end of the semester compile your previously graded Field Experience Reports and the Field Experience Assessment into a portfolio of your own design (for example, you might want to organize them into a three-ring binder and include an intriguing title and cover page). Include a copy of your group analysis paper. Your assessment will not be accepted without a completed portfolio (which includes a copy of each of the three field reports). DUE: April 22th.

FIELD EXPERIENCE REPORT OPTIONS

*****Complete one of the following options for each field experience report*****

Field Report #1:

Option 1. Browse a local bookstore. Locate the business/management section of any bookstore (Barnes & Noble, Bookstop, Borders, etc.). Browse the books in the business and leadership sections for books that discuss a system’s theory approach to organizing (you can ask me for suggestions). Locate at least four books and peruse them carefully (do not just read the book jackets), noting similarities or differences to the information presented in the text. Feature one book in your report, but be sure to include information from the other three that you find relevant. At the end of your report (the bottom of the last page is fine) include bibliographic information from all four books.

Option 2. Describing the Uses of an Organizational Communication. Interview a person who occupies a managerial position in any local organization. Before your interview, develop a brief list of questions you would like answered about their experiences of work etc. In essence, these questions should ask them to describe in detail some communication experience, etc. (Ask Matt for guidance). In your report include:

1) provide a brief summary of what they told you, indicating for example, problems they encountered, what they found most helpful or effective and why; and

2) provide a brief analysis of how (what frame) they explained communication as either a process, people, messages, meaning, or purpose or some combination.

Please include as an appendix to your report the list of questions you asked and the name of the person interviewed, organization they work for and telephone number where they can be reached if necessary. Be sure to address at least one concept from Chapter 3 in your analysis of this interview. (Chapter 3, EG)

Field Experience Report #2

Option 1. Portraying Work Life in T.V. and Film. Watch media portrayals of work life either in films (e.g. Wall Street; Disclosure; Baby Boom; 9 to 5; Working Girl; Mr. Mom) or on current TV shows (e.g. Friends, Spin City, Sex in the City, NYPD Blue, ER, The Practice, etc. If you choose to examine the organizational culture of a television show, you should choose a show you are familiar with and plan to watch at least 3 episodes before writing your paper. Examine the organizational culture as it is represented on screen. Be sure to look for all the “clues” to the culture represented in these shows (See Matt). Begin your report with a brief definition of culture and in introduction to the show/movie. Be sure to identify which view of organizational culture (e.g. comparative management, corporate culture, etc.) you feel is represented. Be sure not to spend too much time describing or summarizing. The point of this assignment is to ANALYZE the text and explain how culture is created and reinforced. (Chapter 5-6 and Handouts).

Option 2. Becoming an Organizational Communication Detective. Choose an organization to which you have some access. Some good examples are restaurants, bars, the public library, the corner supermarket, department of motor vehicles, an emergency room, the city airport, or the place that you work. Spend some time (at least one hour) observing this place. Look for clues as “metaphors” of this organization. What are the symbols that represent this organization? Do employees wear uniforms, or use a particular kind of jargon? How are the workspaces arranged? Do they bring in personal items from home? How do employees talk to one another? How do they talk to customers or “outsiders?” Take rigorous notes and turn those in with your report. Feel free to ask questions of people at your site to check your interpretations. Because this paper is fairly short, you will only be able to discuss two or three elements of organizational culture and how it is created or sustained in this organization. (Chapter 5, EG)

Field Experience Report #3

Option 1. Surfing the Internet. Surf the Internet and investigate three different organizations where you could see yourself working. Provide a brief description of each of the companies. Be sure to look for information that would assist you in interviewing or applying for a job at that organization/company. Then, choose one organization to feature. Why did you select this company? What are the opportunities for growth at this company? What can you determine about the culture of this organization from your research? What benefits do they offer their employees? Feel free to select another concept from the text that you can apply to this organization. How would you target this organization in your job search? What qualities do you have that you would want to emphasize in an interview? What skills do you need to learn before you would qualify to work at this organization? (Chapter 10, EG).

Option 2. Staying on Top of the Game. Look through recent issues of business magazines (Fortune, Forbes, Inc., Business Week, Money, Smart Money, etc.) to find out how innovative companies are staying on top of their game (e.g., strategy, technology, learning). Companies that typically are praised for their technological innovation include IBM, Microsoft, Cisco, Hewlett Packard, and Intel. Be creative. Investigate companies that have been praised for their organizational innovations as well. In your report, describe the overall strategies of these three companies and determine which strategy you would argue is the best and why. (Chapter 11, EG).

GROUP ASSIGNMENT (ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION CASE STUDY)

Over the course of the semester you will be given the opportunity to read several case studies from both your textbook and other sources. These cases offer relevant examples of the topics covered in this course. They are intended to stimulate thinking and provide you with an opportunity to apply course concepts to real life work scenarios. This assignment requires both individual analysis and small group work.

You should select a group of 3-4 members that you would like to work with on this assignment. You will not be given class time to work on this assignment so be sure to consider issues of availability and scheduling when creating your group. Your group should identify the organizational setting or “case study” that you would like to present to the class by no later than February 25th. The assignments are made first come, first serve – so sign up quickly! Your group will lead the class in a 20-minute discussion of your case on the date assigned (see further explanation of group presentation below).

Group Analysis Paper

In addition to the group presentation, you will collaborate on this case, offering analysis and conclusions to the questions posed in the case. In addition, you should identify at least one reputable outside source to assist you in your case analysis (please note: each member of your group should reference a different outside source). This is a short analysis (6-8 double-spaced typed pages) adhering to the standards of good writing with an introduction (introduce the case and offer a thesis that will guide the rest of the paper), a body (which includes your analysis and discussion), and a conclusion (summarizing your main thoughts and/or recommendations). Be sure that you proofread your work eliminating any spelling, grammatical, and formatting errors.

Here are some quick suggestions for the group analysis paper:

1. **Prepare early:** Read the case and the chapter it relates to early in the semester so that you can begin your paper and group discussion. **DO NOT WAIT** until I cover the chapter with the rest of the class. In some cases, your presentation and paper are due the following day and this will not give you enough time to prepare properly. Feel free to come see me during my office hours (or by appointment) if you have questions about material in the chapter.

2. **Identify topics:** After reading the case and the chapter, identify the topic(s) that you think are important to discuss and analyze in your paper and/or class discussion. Take a trip to the library to find a reputable outside resource (e.g. journal article, book) to support/explain your analysis of the case. You may use the Internet to identify outside sources, however, for this assignment, a website alone is not considered a sufficient source.

3. **Introduce the case:** Your introductory paragraph should include a brief explanation of the case, but should focus primarily on introducing the main topic of analysis. Be sure to include a thesis statement that orients the reader to the rest of your paper. If you are unsure about what a thesis is or how to write one – come see me!

4. **Analysis:** Indicate your critical thinking and in-depth analysis of the case (not just quick fix, simple answers) by connecting your ideas specifically to text and outside source material (i.e., information presented in the chapter should assist you in analyzing the case and in answering the questions posed in at the conclusion of the case).

Please note: These questions are meant to stimulate your thinking about the case and to guide your analysis. I do not want you to simply answer the questions – I want you to integrate your responses to the questions into a more thorough analysis of the case.

5. **Conclude:** Be sure to wrap up your paper with a summary of your discussion and possibly some suggestions, implications, or recommendations (if it is appropriate to the case).

6. References: Be sure to include a reference page that cites your sources including your textbook. Please follow APA style guidelines (see guidelines on electronic reserve).

Your Group Analysis Paper will be evaluated on the quality of your analysis, your writing and your adherence to the guidelines above. It is worth ten percent of your final grade.

Group Presentations

Your team should meet outside of class to discuss the case and develop a 30-minute discussion/presentation of the case. Your objectives are:

1. To stimulate class discussion of the case. Try to get as many students in the class to participate as possible. Be creative!
2. To direct the discussion in such a way that the class learns how the case is tied directly to the ideas presented in the text and/or discussed in class. You could also include material from the outside resources used in your analysis papers if you like. Be careful not to fall into the trap of lecturing the class. Your presentation should include some elements of lecture, but should focus primarily on active learning and participation from the whole class. Feel free to incorporate exercises or activities that illustrate your main points.

Also, you should prepare, copy, and distribute an agenda for your presentation. This should be a fairly detailed agenda. Be specific in what you will cover, the questions you will ask, and your procedures for conducting any activities. Do not just list what you plan to do. Show me (and the rest of the class) that you put some thought into your agenda!

You will be evaluated on the quality of your presentation and agenda, how well you stimulate class discussion, creativity, and participation (every member of your group should play some part in the presentation). Have fun with this presentation, but realize that this is an important learning opportunity for the class as well as the group presenting the case.

THERE IS NO FINAL EXAMINATION FOR THIS COURSE.

Full Value Contract

As the instructor of this class, I will do my best to facilitate a supportive learning environment. I promise to do my best to make this class interesting, fun and practical, but I cannot do it without your support. That means there is real work involved. Learning is an active process in which we will all need to participate fully to experience the “full value” this course offers. I expect each student to come to class prepared to discuss the assigned readings and share relevant examples from your own life. In return for your active attendance, preparation, participation and support for one another, you can expect me to return your work in a timely manner, come prepared to class, and to do my best to inform and educate each of you in fun and innovative ways.

Please feel free to contact me by email or office phone 631-3466 at any time if you have suggestions or concerns about the course.