

COMM 2600: Introduction to Organizational Communication Spring 2001

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Required Reading

- Cheney, G., Christensen, L.T., Zorn, T.E. Jr., & Ganesh, S. (2004). *Organizational communication in age of globalization: Issues, reflections, and practices*. Illinois: Waveland Press, Inc.; available at the UMC bookstore.
- You will also be responsible for reading several case studies that will be distributed over the course of the semester.

Course Description and Objectives

The great end of education is to discipline rather than furnish the mind; to train it in the use of its own powers rather than fill it with the accumulations of others.
- Tryon Edwards

No man can reveal to you aught but that which already lies half asleep in the dawning of our knowledge. The teacher who walks in the shadow of the temple, among his followers, gives not of his wisdom but rather of his faith and his lovingness. If he is indeed wise he does not bid you enter the house of his wisdom, but rather leads you to the threshold of your own mind.

-Kahlil Gibran

Communication is the lifeblood of the organization's functions, the thread that ties the system together, the force that pervades the organization, and the building agent that cements all relationships.

- Gerald Goldhaber (1986)

COMM 2600 is a course about participating in the process of organizing. Whatever your career goal, the knowledge you gain from this class will help you make sense of how communication is central to the organizational experience. Organizational communication, as a field of study, analyzes how the actions of people inside and outside organizations are coordinated and controlled to achieve some collective outcomes; it is also concerned with the ways individuals are shaped by their interactions with the organizations around them. Therefore, rather than offer a set of skills that allow you to fit into the world of work, this course will attempt to show how communication is key to understanding how organizations work; this sort of understanding can enhance your ability to engage with all sorts of organizations. Only when we understand how organizations work can we attempt to change them and control our own experiences with them.

In this course, we will examine the ways people communicate in organizational contexts and the ways in which communication creates and sustains organizations. More specifically, the goals of this course are:

- to promote active critical thinking about the role of communication in—and as constitutive of—organizations
- to improve your ability to analyze organizing activity and to make you a more effective member of organizations
- to explore common organizational communication problems and their solutions

- to integrate theoretical perspectives of organizational communication with current research and contemporary organizational life
- to investigate the knowledge, attitudes, and skills that underlie effective communication in and around organizations

The course is comprised of lectures, case studies, field work, classroom activities, discussions, and student presentations. Students are encouraged to bring their personal insights into the classroom and to use class concepts to understand and evaluate their own organizational experiences.

Course Prerequisites

The Department of Communication requires completion of COMM 1300 (Public Speaking) and COMM 1600 (Interaction Skills) prior to enrolling in this course. Students will need to know the basics of public speaking, writing, reasoning, collaborating with others, and APA style. If you have not yet taken these courses, you will experience challenges in this class that other students will not. For further information please visit <http://comm.colorado.edu/undergrad/precomm.htm>.

Teaching Philosophy

My mission this semester is to help you construct an engaging, challenging, and entertaining environment in which you learn how to discuss intelligently and to assess critically the prominent issues of organizational communication. I am committed to creating an environment that thrives on collaboration and mutual respect. I need your help to reach this goal. I promise to be both critical and respectful of the approaches about which we are learning, and I expect nothing less from you. This expectation involves being open-minded enough to engage new ideas thoughtfully and honestly. By open-minded, however, I do not mean that you do not have the right to disagree with each other, particular approaches, or me. Although we may not always agree (and it would be boring if we did!), I expect that you will respect, listen to, and learn from the experiences and contributions of each and every member of the class.

I am here to help you learn and succeed; I take that responsibility very seriously. If you are having difficulty with any aspect of the course or would like to delve more deeply into the topics, always feel free to visit me during office hours or to set up an appointment.

Student Responsibilities

As a member of this class, you have several responsibilities beyond simply showing up:

- 1) **Come to class prepared:** have the readings done, be **ready to discuss** the topic of the day.
- 2) **Ask any and all questions** you have regarding the text, lecture material, or assignments. Don't wait until the day of a quiz or a test: at that point, it's too late. Don't ask about the requirements for an assignment on the day it's due (or, even worse, afterwards); these must be clarified in advance.
- 3) **Understand that communication is a process**, not an object, and that we are trying to understand this process in order to improve the way we live our lives both inside and outside the classroom.
- 4) **Demonstrate your communication skills** on a regular basis. This means preparing for and giving effective oral presentations, writing with clarity and purpose, working productively in small groups, actively listening to the contributions of other members of the class, and thinking critically about central issues related to communication and society.
- 5) **Work to establish a cooperative climate**, which means supporting your peers, giving constructive criticism, being open to new ways of thinking, and being considerate of others when discussing different ideas.
- 6) **Realize that your opinions are valuable.** You have something important to say that others will benefit from hearing. Silencing yourself is the best way to avoid learning.
- 7) **Most importantly, you must have a desire to learn.** I think it's generally true that what you get out of an experience depends on what you put into it; so be ready to offer your insights, to study the convergence of organization and communication, and to have fun doing it.

Course Policies

- 1) **Attendance and Participation:** You're an adult and can decide for yourself if you need to miss class. As such, class attendance is expected, though not required. If you want to learn and do well in this course, there is no substitute for being in class. This course is structured so that those who both attend and participate in class have a greater chance of performing well. Assignments will be explained in class, and often we will cover material in class that is not in your textbook or readings—this material is subject to testing on the midterm and final exam. If you do miss class, it is *your responsibility* to get the notes and additional information presented on that day from a classmate.

Full participation in this course includes the following: reading the text and accompanying assignments carefully; completing all assignments on time; participating in discussions and activities by asking and answering questions and providing opinions thoughtfully; listening to others; and watching for and sharing current events which relate to course content.

- 2) **Due Dates:** All assignments are due at the beginning of the class on the due date. Late assignments will receive a **10% penalty for each day** the assignment is late (including weekends and holidays). Makeup times can be arranged for legitimate and verifiable absences (health condition, participation in University-sponsored activities, serious family emergencies, religious observance, etc.). If the absence is known ahead of time, you must make arrangements with me *before* the day the assignment is due.

Exams and presentations will be given on the dates indicated and cannot be made up. If you miss an exam or presentation, you will receive a zero—unless you have the best, most documented, iron clad excuse I've ever heard.

- 3) **Written Work:** All papers must be typed, double-spaced, and in APA format for citing sources. Please do not email me your papers unless absolutely necessary. I expect your work to be college quality—that means proper spelling, grammar, and organization. For your protection, please keep a backup copy of your work.
- 4) **Incomplete Grades:** Incompletes will be granted only in cases of extreme extenuating circumstances. Please see me ASAP if you are in such a situation.
- 5) **Complaints/Grade Appeals:** I will not discuss specific grades on any assignment the day it is returned. I will consider only *written* appeals for grade changes on assignments or exams, and we will schedule a meeting about the change you propose. In this meeting, we will discuss your written appeal and your understanding of the concepts involved. Please do not contest grades via email; if you cannot talk to me in person about your grade, then I am not interested in what you have to say about it. This policy is not intended to provide obstacles to appeals, but rather is designed to ensure justice to all concerned and to allow you to demonstrate mastery over the topics covered. Finally, all grade appeals must be made *no later than one week* following the return of the assignment.
- 6) **Class Email List:** I have set up an email listserv for students of this class so that I can communicate with you about assignments, activities, schedule changes and the like. I will use this list to provide further guidelines and instructions for class assignments, so it is imperative that you subscribe to the list and check your email regularly. In addition, students can post messages to the email list to ask questions and discuss items relevant to the course.

If you don't already have an email account, please set one up with the university (free of charge) during the first two weeks of class. I will provide you with instructions for subscribing to the class email list. It is **your** responsibility to subscribe yourself to the list.

- 7) **Unique Academic Needs:** If you have an academic need or learning disability that should be taken into account in either classroom activities or testing, you must provide me with a letter detailing the accommodations necessary in the first two weeks of the semester.

- 8) **Academic Integrity:** You're too smart to cheat. If you are thinking about it, please familiarize yourself with the proper university policies (see pp. 41-42 of the current *University of Colorado Catalog*). At the minimum, you will receive a failing grade for the assignment on which you've lowered your standards.
- 9) **Grading Standards:** Perfect attendance and completing the minimum requirements of assignments does not guarantee you an "A" in this course. If you meet only the minimum requirements, you can expect a grade of "C." Although I'll be looking for specific requirements for each assignment (to be discussed in class), the following criteria generally guide my evaluation:

The average (C) assignment meets the following criteria:

- Meets the minimum requirements of the assignment
- Is ready on the assigned date
- Is well-organized and easy to follow
- Demonstrates a solid understanding of the relevant course material
- Demonstrates competency in oral and written communication skills

The above average (B) assignment meets all of the above criteria AND:

- Deals with an interesting topic that is appropriate to the assignment
- Fully develops main ideas with supporting facts, details, narratives, and examples
- Demonstrates a command of the relevant course material by incorporating sources, evidence, and examples beyond the required course reading
- Demonstrates excellent oral and written communication skills

The superior assignment (A) meets all of the above criteria AND:

- Deals with a thought-provoking topic that is especially relevant to the class
- Approaches the assignment from an original or inventive perspective, while still meeting the minimum requirements
- Demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of course material by identifying common issues, questions, and themes the course material has with other areas of study, social issues, and current events
- Written and oral communication is polished, descriptive, vivid, and exceptionally clear

Remember that grades are the result, not the objective, of your efforts!

Course Assignments

Organizational Case Study (OCS)

250 points (50%)

OCS #1: Description	25 points
OCS #2: Analysis	75 points
OCS #3: Analysis	75 points
OCS #4: Recommendations	50 points
Presentation of OCS	25 points

Examinations

200 points (40%)

Midterm	100 points
Final	100 points

Participation

50 points (10%)

50 points

Includes—but is not limited to—
attendance, promptness, evidence of
preparation, quality of contributions to
class, in-class activities, journals,
homework, unannounced quizzes, etc.
*Not all of these assignments will be announced
in advance.*

Total 500 points**Scale to be Used in Determining Final Grades:**

A	=	463-500	(Superior/excellent)
A-	=	450-462	
B+	=	433-449	
B	=	418-432	(Good/goes beyond minimum requirements)
B-	=	400-417	
C+	=	383-399	
C	=	368-382	(Competent/meets minimum requirements)
C-	=	350-367	
D	=	300-349	(Unsatisfactory/does not meet some requirements)
F	=	0-299	(Failing/does not meet course requirements)

COMM 2600 SCHEDULE FALL 2003
subject to change per announcements in class

GCZG refers to the textbook. All other readings (such as the Case Studies) will be provided throughout the semester.

OCS refers to your Organization Case Study.

Week	Topics	Monday		Wednesday		Friday	
1	Theory and Practice	8/25	Introduction to the course.	8/27	Chapter 1	8/29	Chapter 15
2	Organizational Structure	9/1	Labor Day No Class ☺	9/3	Chapter 15/Chapter 2	9/5	
3	Rationality	9/8	Chapter 3	9/10		9/12	OCS Organizations & contact info. due
4	Organizational Culture	9/15	Chapter 4	9/17		9/19	
5	Organizational Identity	9/22	Chapter 5	9/24		9/26	OCS #1 due
6	Networks	9/29	Chapter 6	10/1		10/3	Fall Break No Class
7	Networks/ Leadership	10/6	Workshop for OCS #2	10/8		10/10	OCS #2 due
8	Participation and Democracy	10/13	Chapter 9	10/15		10/17	
9	Power and Control	10/20	Midterm Exam	10/22		10/24	
10	Conflict	10/27	Chapter 11	10/29		10/31	
11	Organizational Change	11/3	Chapter 12	11/5		11/7	
12	Technology and Organizations	11/10	Chapter 13	11/12		11/14	OCS #3 due
13	Global and Multicultural Contexts	11/17	Chapter 14	11/19	National Communication Conference – No Class	11/21	NCA -- No Class
14	Ethics	11/24	Chapter 14	11/26		11/28	Thanksgiving No Class ☺
15	Ethics/OCS Presentations	12/1	OCS #4 due	12/3	Presentations	12/5	Presentations
16	OCS Presentations	12/8	Presentations	12/10	Presentations	12/12	No Class

Final Exam

12:00 class: Monday, December 13, 1:30 pm - 4:00 pm

2:00 class: Wednesday, December 17, 7:30 am - 10:00 am