

SYLLABUS

Survey of Organizational Communication
COM 335
Fall, 2003
Instructor: McMillan

Instructor Information

Office: Carswell 313 Telephone: 758-5407
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Office Hours: Mon. & Wed.: 5:00-6:00 p.m.; also 12:15-1:15 *after* Oct. 27; also all semester: Thurs.: 2:00-3:00 p.m.
And by Appointment

Textbook

Required: George Cheney, Lars Thøger Christensen, Theodore E. Zorn, Jr. and Shiv Ganesh. *Organizational Communication in an Age of Globalization*, Prospect Heights, Illinois: Waveland Press, Inc., 2004.

Required reading packets are available at the BSC copy center for \$11.

Course Objectives:

1. To improve your understanding of organizations in general and to enhance your personal organizational experience.
2. To identify and to describe the various functions of communication within an organization.
3. To integrate the notions of communication and organizing, especially in relationship to organizational problem-solving.

Course Requirements:

1. Attendance and Participation—Because our best learning venue is *in class* and *from each other*, I expect us all to be present unless dire circumstances prevent. Attendance will be taken each time and will count toward each student's participation grade. Students are allowed two *free* absences, unless, of course, they don't coincide with a major responsibility, such as an exam or a class report for which you are responsible. It is also the case, however, that no absences, should you be so disciplined and lucky to make such a record, bodes well in your final grade, if participation is also strong. Because you are enrolled in an upper-level Communication class, you can expect the class to be communication intensive; we will read, write, and speak a great deal. So please attend all class sessions having read the material and being prepared to discuss it; having done the journal work discussed below; being fully prepared and practiced when it's your turn to be responsible for the class discussion; and turning in all required work on time and in first rate form.
2. Organizational Communication Journal—Each student will choose a focal organization: one that he/she is a current member of; works for; interns with; volunteers at—in short, knows intimately and will interact with throughout this semester. (I prefer no duplicates please; each student should have his/her own organization to study.) After clearing that choice with me, the

student should start a journal about life in that org—looking especially for the ways in which communication is transpiring there and how the concepts we are studying in class are evident. I will regularly suggest questions/probes for the student to address concerning his/her org, and these questions should be addressed *prior to* our class discussion so that the student has given some thought to the connection between what we are learning in class and what is happening in his/her org. This journal is critical and must be kept up to date for several reasons: a) it serves as your preparation and repository for class discussion; b) it gives us real life examples instead of just “book ones” to consider; c) it will eventually become the data for your final exam; and d) I will grade it at various intervals and at the end. I would very much prefer that this journal be *typed*. However, if your hand-writing is extremely legible and BIG, it is okay to do it by hand. Please note carefully on the syllabus the dates when the journal will be turned in for feedback and evaluation. Especially remember that a **copy** of your journal notes—not the original—will be turned in. The copy is required so that you can continue to journal as I read and construct feedback for you.

3. Mid-term exam—This test will be a traditional examination over the basics of organizational communication from the first half of the term. Exact format will be announced later.
4. Class report or BOP (*Bizarre Organizational Phenomenon*) exercise—In the course of the term we will supplement our new text with some interesting readings (all contained in the reading packet that accompanies the course) that often present a different perspective on the subject that we are studying. Each student will work with another student/s on leading the class discussion on one of these supplemental readings. That responsibility will include two elements: a) a not-to-exceed 1 page written hand-out to be copied for each class member and the professor; and b) an oral presentation and leading of discussion of approximately 25-30 minutes. As these BOP’s will be spread throughout the semester, you will learn early when your turn will come and you should mark it on your calendar and be fully prepared. Specific guidelines will follow.
5. Final Exam—This will be a take-home final given to you on the last week of classes, to be turned in to my departmental post office box or beneath my office door (typed and stapled, proofread thoroughly, free from typos, grammatical and punctuation errors) by 5 p.m. on Dec. 8, our scheduled exam day. The best way to prepare for this test from the start is to journal thoroughly and well, because that material, along with the text, class readings, and BOP hand-outs will constitute the data for the final exam. The proficiency with which you understand the material as it evolves and have processed it will determine your success on the exam. So contrary to some other course experiences for which you might go back and cram at the end, this one is dependent on **keeping the organizational journal up to date**; it won’t be possible to answer the questions otherwise.

Course Evaluation

Attendance and Participation-----	15%
Organizational Communication Journal-----	20%
Interim checks-----	10%
Completed journal-----	10%
Mid-term exam-----	20%
Class report or BOP exercise-----	20%
Final Exam-----	25%

Grading Scale:

A = 100-90% (A+:99-98; A:97-93; A-:92-90, etc.)
 B = 89-80%
 C = 79-70%

D = 69-60%
F = Below 60%

ADA Statement: It is our desire that all of our students fully participate in the curriculum of the Communication Department. But we need your assistance. If you have a disability or condition that compromises your ability to complete the requirements of a course, you must notify the instructor immediately. The Americans with Disabilities Act requires that reasonable accommodations be provided for students with physical, sensory, cognitive, systems, learning, and psychiatric disabilities. Please contact Dr. McMillan at the *beginning* of the semester to discuss any such accommodations for this course.

USE OF THE HONOR CODE

- I. Violation of the honor system shall consist of any deliberate attempt by a student to make personal gain at the expense of another member of the University community.
- II. No student shall cheat—take and present work that is not his/her own—on any work, pledged or unpledged.
- III. Plagiarism shall be defined as wrongfully offering as one's own any ideas, words, paragraphs, or phraseology obtained from another source.
- IV. Wrongfully obtaining or attempting to obtain prior information about exams constitutes cheating; giving information to other students concerning upcoming exams is also viewed as cheating. Upon completion of an exam, students are not permitted to talk about the exam to other students who have not yet taken the exam.

Tentative Course Outline

(**Please note that assignments are listed on the syllabus on the day *before* they are due.)

- Aug. 28 (Th) **Introduction and Orientation to the course**
 Assignment for next class:
- 1) Be sure to buy your textbook and packet and bring them to class each time; we may use them in class.
 - 2) Begin to think of potential “lab” organizations, one of which could serve as your focal organization for the term. We will firm up your choice in the next couple of weeks.
 - 3) Recall a list of descriptors—adjectives, metaphors, messages—that you have heard that have constructed your perceptions of orgs and work, and use as many as you can to complete this sentence: “Work is like.....”
 - 4) Read Chap. 1.
- Sept. 2 (T) **Organizational communication: our expectations/a working definition/future trends**
 Assignment for next class:
- 1) Read Cheney, et.al, Chapter 2
 - 2) Answer study questions so that you will be ready to contribute to class discussion.
- Sept. 4 (Th) **Organizational Structure and Process**
 No formal assignment for next class; we will view the film together.
- Sept. 9 (T) **Office Space**
 Assignment for next class:
- 1) Fill out discussion questions on *Office Space* and be prepared to discuss.
 - 2) Also we will define a BOP and tell you how to prepare for one.
- Sept. 11 (Th) **Office Space discussion: Applying Structure and Process to OS**
 Assignment for next class:
- 1) Read Cheney, et.al, Chapter 15
 - 2) Use Class Handout “Gathering and analyzing organizational communication data” to prepare for class discussion.
 - 3) If you have time, read Eisenberg BOP “Strategic Ambiguity”.
- Sept. 16 (T) **Finding and Managing Organizational Communication**
 BOP Eisenberg and Strategic Ambiguity
 Assignment for next class:
- 1) Decide on your focal organization.
 - 2) Fill out the profile on your focal organization to turn in, and be prepared to share some aspects of your choice with the class.
- Sept. 18 (Th) **Choosing the focal organization**
 Assignment for next class:
- 1) Read Cheney, et.al, Chapter 3
 - 2) Complete your first journal entry on your organization, especially focusing on how your focal organization makes decisions and uses or (ab)uses information.

- Sept. 23 (T) **Rationality, Decision Making and (Ab)Uses of Information**
 Assignment for next class:
 1) Read BOP: Weick and “An Introduction to Organizing”
 2) Reflect on how the unusual explanations of organizing that Weick tells about remind you of experiences you have had or of other communication theories/concepts you have encountered.
- Sept. 25 (Th) **Rationality continued.....and Weick “Intro. To Organizing” BOP**
 Assignment for next class:
 1) Read Cheney, et.al, Chapter 4
 2) Continue journaling, seeking to describe this week the unique culture of your organization and how others are socialized into it.
- Sept. 30 (T) **Culture, Subcultures, and Organizational Socialization**
 Assignment for next class:
 1) Read BOP: Roy and “Banana Time”
 2) Be prepared to turn in *copies* of your journal for review and feedback.
- Oct. 2 (Th) **Culture continued.....and Roy BOP**
First journal review; journals turned in today.
 Assignment for next class:
 1) Read Cheney, et.al, Chapter 7
 2) Continue journaling, reflecting this week on what you think it takes to make a good leader; great leaders whom you have known; and how leadership is working in your org.
 3) Read BOP: Weick and “Leadership as Eloquence”
- Oct. 7 (T) **Leadership Old and New: Direction, Coordination, Facilitation, and Inspiration, plus Weick BOP on Leadership**
- Oct. 9 (Th) **Mid-term Exam**
 Assignment for next class:
 1) Read Cheney, et.al, Chapter 5
 2) Consider in your journaling this week how your focal org seems to want to be publicly identified and also what sort of individual identity the org offers to its members.
- Oct. 14 (T) **Communicating Identity: Individually and Collectively**
 Assignment for next class:
 1) Read BOP: Tompkins & Cheney and “Unobtrusive Control”
- Oct. 16 (Th.) **Identity continued.....and Tompkins & Cheney BOP**
 Assignment for next class:
 1) Read Cheney, et.al, Chapter 6
 2) Consider in your journaling how your org facilitates or obstructs interpersonal relationships within and wider connections with orgs outside its own boundaries. Especially be observant of the kinds of communication that “bridge” or separate.

- Oct. 21 (T) **Connecting through Social Relationships and Networks**
 Assignment for next class:
 1) Read BOP: Putnam and “Thinking about social change in America”
- Oct. 23 (TH) **Social relationships continued....and Putnam BOP**
 Assignment for next class:
 1) Read Cheney, et.al, Chapter 8
 2) Journal about participation in your focal org, especially the degree to which democratic principles operate there or do not.
- Oct. 28 (T) **Participation, Teams, and Democracy at Work**
 Assignment for next class:
 1) Read BOP: McMillan and “The Potential for Civic Training in Higher Education: ‘Teaching Democracy by being Democratic’”
 2) Be prepared next class to copy and turn in journals for review and evaluation.
- Oct. 30(TH) **Participation continues....and McMillan BOP on Civic Training**
****Second journal review; Turn in journals today**
 Assignment for next class:
 1) Read Cheney, et.al, Chapter 11
 2) Journal about how change occurs in your focal organization, and what sorts of communication facilitates or impedes the change process.
- Nov. 4 (T) **Organizational Change and Change-Related Communication**
 Assignment for next class:
 1) Read BOP: Gladwell and “The Tipping Point”
- Nov. 6 (TH) **Change continued....plus Gladwell BOP**
 Assignment for next class:
 1) Read Cheney, et.al, Chapter 9
 2) Focus in your journaling this week on who has power in your focal organization; how you know; and what kinds of communication and symbols “speak” power.
- Nov. 11(T) **Power and Control in Organizational Life**
 Assignment for next class:
 1) Read BOP: McMillan and “Power Reciprocity”
- Nov. 13(TH) **Power continued....and McMillan BOP on Power Reciprocity**
 Assignment for next class:
 1) Read Cheney, et.al. Chapter 13
 2) Journal for next Tuesday about the degree to which your focal org handles diversity; whether or not it has regular interactions with multicultural groups unlike itself; and, if so, how such interactions are handled.

- Nov. 18 (T) **Communicating in Global and Multicultural Contexts**
Assignment for next class:
1) Read Cheney, et.al Chapter 14
2) Consider in this journal entry the values that your focal organization espouses and the degree to which they demonstrate an ethical code at work among them. Can you envision any future Enron or Worldcom executives among the membership?
- Nov. 20 (Th) **Speaking of Ethics and Values in Organizations**
Assignment for next class:
1) Read BOP: McMillan, et.al, “The Surrogate Voice”
- Nov. 25 (T) **Ethics continued....and McMillan BOP on the Surrogate Voice**
****Final journal review : Turn in a copy of completed journal today**
- Nov. 27 (TH) **Thanksgiving Holiday**
- Dec. 2 (T) **Wrap-up and Handing out of Take-home final exam**
- Dec. 4 (TH) **No Class—Work on Exam**
- Dec. 8 (Mon) **Take home exam should be turned in to Dr. McMillan’s Com. Dept. post office box or slid under her door by 5 pm sharp. Any exams submitted after that hour will incur a late penalty.**