

COMM 581
Applied Organizational Communication
Spring 2006

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COURSE OBJECTIVES

*In every instance of organizational malaise that comes to mind,
at some time and in some way, human communication behavior
has been significantly involved..
-W. Charles Redding*

In our complex and information-rich society, the key to organizational excellence is effective communication. Communication systems within organizations -- both human and technological -- are responsible for solving increasingly complex problems creatively. Organizations need competent communicators at all levels. With more complex decisions, rapid change, increased information, and high uncertainty regarding effectiveness of decisions, excellence in the information society depends on the abilities, commitment, and creativity of all organizational members.

The course in Applied Organizational Communication covers both a solid, contemporary, theoretical foundation in organizational communication, while improving your ability to apply this foundation to organizational situations, as both a functioning member and an observer. Specifically, this course aims to achieve the following objectives:

- Develop a communication approach to understanding organizations.
- Recognize the value of applied communication research.
- Explore the communication perspectives, principles, and pragmatics necessary to understand and succeed in organizations.
- Apply communication theories to actual organizational communication situations.
- Enhance your ability to assess and improve communication processes in various organizational situations.

REQUIRED READING:

Text:

Harris, T. E. (2002). *Applied Organizational Communication: Principles and Pragmatics for Future Practice* (2nd ed.). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Articles (COMM 581 Course Pack):

Becker-Beck, U., Wintermantel, M., & Borg, A. (2005). Principles of regulating interactions in teams practicing face-to-face communication versus teams practicing computer-mediated communication. *Small Group Research*, 36, 499-536.

Cheney, G. (1995). The rhetoric of identification and the study of organizational communication. In S.R. Corman, S. Banks, C. Bantz, and M. Mayer (Eds.). Foundations of Organizational Communication. White Plains, NY: Longman.

Cissna, K. N. (2000). Applied communication research in the 21st century. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 28, 169-173.

Cragan, J.F., & Shields, D.C. (1999). Translating scholarship into practice: Communication studies reflecting the value of theory-based research in everyday life. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 27, 92-106.

Dougherty, D.S. & Smythe, M.J. (2004). Sensemaking, organizational culture, and sexual harassment. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 32, 293-317.

Frey, L.R. (2000). To be applied or not to be applied, that isn't even the question; but wherefore art thou, applied communication researcher? Reclaiming applied communication research and redefining the role of the researcher. Journal of Applied Communication Research, 28(3), 178-182.

Goodell, A.L. (1992). Organizational climate: Current thinking on an important issue. In K.L. Hutchinson (Ed.) Readings in Organizational Communication. Dubuque, IA: Wm. C. Brown.

Jablin, F.M. (1995). Task/work relationships: A lifespan perspective. In S.R. Corman, S. Banks, C. Bantz, and M. Mayer (Eds.). Foundations of Organizational Communication. White Plains, NY: Longman.

Keyton, J. (2000). Applied communication research should be practical. Journal of Applied Communication Research, 28(3), 166-168.

Krone, K. (2005). Trends in organizational communication research: Sustaining the discipline, sustaining ourselves. *Communication Studies*, 56, 95-105.

Miller, K. (2006). Critical approaches. (pp. 119-142). In K. Miller *Organizational Communication: Approaches and Processes* (4th edition). Belmont, CA: Thomson-Wadsworth.

Miller, K. (2002). The experience of emotion in the workplace: Professing in the midst of tragedy. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 15, 571-600.

Tompkins, P.K. (1992). The functions of human communication in organizations. In K.L. Hutchinson (Ed.) Readings in Organizational Communication. Dubuque, IA: Wm. C. Brown.

MEETING DATES AND TIMES

This class meets on ITV on the following dates and times:

Friday, March 17 @ 5:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. (CST)
Friday, March 31 @ 5:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. (CST)
Saturday, April 1 @ 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. (CST)
Saturday, April 22 @ 9:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. (CST)
Friday, May 5 @ 5:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. (CST)
Saturday, May 6 @ 8:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. (CST)

If you have problems with the assigned meeting times, talk to me immediately about whether or not you should enroll in the class. I would like for the class to meet together in Bowling Green on Saturday, April 22 instead of meeting on ITV. This session will also allow you to have first-hand interactions with your working groups. The instructor will broadcast from Bowling Green when using ITV.

WEB-BASED INSTRUCTION

In addition to class meetings, this course will utilize web-based instruction. Each student must have easy access to the internet since a very significant portion of the work between class meetings will take place on that medium. When a student registers for this class, he/she automatically joins the BlackBoard website for COMM 581. Students should familiarize themselves with methods for accessing and using the various components of BlackBoard. The University provides help lines at (270) 745-7020 and the instructor will assist with this function as much as possible.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Examination 15%

There will be one essay examination. The exam will cover material from the textbook, course pack readings, and class lectures and discussions.

Group Research Discussions 15%

Students will be assigned to a group responsible for facilitating a review and discussion of research on an assigned current applied organizational communication topic. Each member will conduct research and select an article on the topic from a refereed communication journal to present to the class. The research article must apply relevant theory or theoretical approach to an actual real-life organization. It is the group's responsibility to ensure the appropriateness of members' selected articles (ie. Refereed research, organizational/applied focus, current, etc.). In presenting the research to the class you should:

- Present an abstract and review of the article (research focus/question, literature review, method, results, conclusion). Please prepare a handout as a guide.

- Prepare a list of questions to facilitate a class discussion on the topic and research. Questions should focus on the study, method and/or approach, and application of article's findings to other organizational scenarios, etc.
- Time Limits: Individual presentations should be a minimum of 25 minutes and no longer than 30 minutes. Penalties will be given to presentations which run under or over the time limits.

Written Literature Review 20%

Students will select an organizational communication theory or theoretical approach that will be applied to the final case study project. Conduct research on the theory and prepare a written literature review (5-6 pp.).

Case Study Paper 25%

Students are to prepare a **10-12 page case study paper** on a communication problem. The paper should incorporate theory and concepts discussed in your literature review. Potential topics include: change management, diversity, globalization, ethics, communication competence, organizational identification, job dissatisfaction, communication satisfaction, emotional labor, organizational culture, power, recruitment, socialization, identification, conflict, supervisor-subordinate communication, leadership, trust, feedback, peer and co-worker communication, organizational teams, decision-making, and new communication technologies in organizations.

Case Study Discussions 15%

Students will be assigned to discussion groups and participate in online case study discussions. All group members are expected to actively participate in discussions on Discussion Board. A written case study and discussion questions will be provided.

Class Participation 10%

It is expected students will attend all class meetings and come prepared to discuss assigned readings, and actively participate in class discussions.

Writing Expectations

Papers must be typewritten, double-spaced with 1" margins, American Psychological Association (APA) 4th edition style, and within the page limit. Grammar, spelling, and other typographical errors can seriously compromise a grade. Effective organization consisting of strong introductions and conclusions plus a well-structured body is expected. Transitions and other connectives should be used to ensure a smoothly written paper. See APA manual for guidelines and using different levels of headings.

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DATE

Friday, March 17

- Introductions
- Overview of course and assignments
- Introduction to Organizational Communication: Adopting a Perspective (Harris, CH. 1)

Friday, March 31

- Class Discussion: An Overview of Management and Organizational Theories (Harris, CH. 3; Tompkins, 1992)
- Class Discussion: Defining Applied Organizational Communication Research (*students are expected to prepare a 1-page response to the following questions based on reading of articles*):
 - (1).What constitutes applied organizational communication research?
 - (2).What is the value of applied communication research?(Cissna, 2000; Cragan & Shields, 1999; Frey, 2000; Keyton, 2000; Krone, 2005)

Saturday, April 1

- Class Discussion: - Dougherty & Smythe, 2004
- Group Research Presentation: Organizational Culture (William Bush, Yoke Yen Chong, Kasaporn Sukata, Larecia Denning-Bell)
- Class Discussion: Miller, 2006
- Group Research Presentation: Critical Approaches (Gerald Lundin, Kanit Inthuwannarat, Abigayle Terrett)
- Class Discussion: Cheney, 1995
- Group Research Presentation: Organizational Identification (Jennifer Cokljat, Donghuo Jiang, Chia An Wu)
- CASE STUDY: “Inside Microsoft” and “Microsoft Revisited”
- Class Discussion: Networks & Channels (Harris, CH. 6)

Saturday, April 22 (Bowling Green)

- Class Discussion: Interpersonal Communication (Harris, CH. 9; Jablin, 1995; Miller, 2002)
- Group Research Presentation: Work Relationships (Krissie Fields, Kulthida Komsawet, Wan Ling Wu, William Kuster)
- Group Research Presentation: Emotional Labor (Traci Rife, Tzu-Jung Liao, James Grant)
- CASE STUDY: “The Indictment: A Superior-Subordinate Confrontation”
- Class Discussion: Small Group and Team Communication (Harris, CH. 10; Becker-Beck, 2005)
- Group Research Presentation: Teamwork and Communication (Lydia Carrico, Eric Logan, Sally Harris)

Friday, May 5

- Group Research Presentation: Climate (Goodell, 1992) (Kimberly Kelly, Yu Jing Meng, Silas Matchem, Latoya Patterson-Smith)
- Class Discussion: Effective Leadership in Organizations (Harris, CH. 11)

Saturday, May 6

- Group Research Presentation: Leadership (Anirban M., Robert Wilkerson, Delora McKinney)
- Class Discussion: New Communication Technology (Harris, CH. 12)
- Group Research Presentation: New Communication Technology (Pam Wilson, Aleia Rambert, Jennifer Coogle)

Case Study Discussions (Blackboard Learning System)

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| CASE STUDY #1: “KCCB’s Missing Masterpiece” | April 3-9, 2006 |
| CASE STUDY #2: “Disciplining a Teammate: Control in Self Managing Teams” | April 10-16, 2006 |
| CASE STUDY #3: “Telemedicine in Kansas” | April 24-30, 2006 |

Course Requirement Due Dates

All assignments must be turned in via digital drop box through Blackboard Learning Center. If due date occurs on class meeting date, you should hand deliver (unless you are at extended site in which case you would submit via digital drop box).

Assignment

Examination
Literature Review
Case Study Paper

Due Date

April 22, 2006
April 14, 2006
April 30, 2006

Case Study Discussion Groups

Group #1

William Bush
Yoke Yen Chong
Kasaporn Sukata
Larecia Denning-Bell
Kanit Inthuwannarat
Abigayle Terrett
Jennifer Coogle

Group #2

Gerald Lundin
Jennifer Cokljat
Donghuo Jiang
Chia An Wu
Krissie Fields
Kuthida Komsawet

Group #3

Wan Ling Wu
William Kuster
Traci Rife
Tzu Jung Liao
James Grant
Lydia Carrico

Group #4

Eric Logan
Sally Harris
Kimberly Kelly
Yu Jing Meng
Silas Matchem
Heather Lashley

Group #5

Latoya Patterson-Smith
Anirban M.
Robert Wilkerson
Delora McKinney
Pam Wilson
Aleia Rambert

