

COMM 362: Organizational Communication

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Course Description

Organizations are an integral part of our daily life (e.g., schools, businesses, governments, healthcare systems, nonprofits, churches, etc.). All of these organizations are created, sustained, changed, and sometimes destroyed by communication processes. Therefore, whatever your career goal, communication will be central to the organizational experience.

The purpose of an organizational communication course is to increase your awareness of the ways in which individuals shape and are shaped by their interactions with the organizations around them. This course surveys various theoretical approaches to management and the study of communication processes in organizations. From a variety of perspectives, you will analyze how communicative processes are utilized, coordinated, and controlled to achieve collective organizational outcomes. Communication is critical to understanding how organizations work, and a better understanding of organizational communication processes will enhance your ability to engage with all kinds of organizations.

The course is comprised of lectures, discussions, case studies, classroom activities, application exercises, and oral 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.

“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)

Course Objectives

The goals of this course are the following:

1. To examine and critique the role of communication in contemporary organizations
2. To explore, understand and apply the major concepts and theories relevant to communication in organizational contexts
3. To develop critical thinking skills in the process of understanding, analyzing, and evaluating communication processes
4. To encourage respect for diversity of peoples, ideas, and cultures within organizational contexts.*
5. To identify, analyze and propose solutions to problematic organizational communication systems, structures, and processes
6. To enhance students’ research, writing, analytical, and presentational skills for more effective performance in organizational contexts
7. To discuss how knowledge about organizational communication can be put to work to address relevant concerns in the community and society*
8. To cultivate awareness of opportunities of responsible citizens living and working in a global society.*

* These course objectives integrate student learning outcomes outlined in WKU’s Quality Enhancement Plan. See <http://www.wku.edu/qep/QEPprimer.pdf> for more details.

Required Course Materials

- An active email account (WKU account or any other web-based account) updated on TopNet
- Textbook: Miller, K. (2015). *Organizational communication: Approaches and processes (7th Ed.)*
- Any supplemental readings placed on Blackboard throughout the semester
- Regular computer access including high-speed Internet, sound capability, Adobe PDF reader, Microsoft Word, and Microsoft PowerPoint

Technical Assistance

If you are experiencing technical difficulties with Blackboard, call WKU's IT Help Desk (270-745-7000). You may also visit the online IT [Help Desk](#). If the issue is not resolved and may affect your ability to complete an assignment, email me immediately to explain your situation.

Teaching Philosophy

I believe that a teacher's responsibility is not to prepare the path for the child, but to prepare the child for the path. Today's students will embark on numerous life and career paths, none of which can be mapped or predicted in a world where perhaps the only constant is change. Success that was once ensured by the mastery of a set body of knowledge now rests upon one's ability to continuously learn and relearn the skills required for increasingly diverse, changing, and challenging environments. As such, my goal as a teacher is not merely to impart content knowledge, but to construct an engaging learning environment in which students can enhance their critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, and presentational skills.

POLICIES AND EXPECTATIONS

Attendance

Attendance and participation are necessary to accomplish course goals. You are expected to attend every class and to be on time. Attendance is defined as being in class **within 5 minutes of the start of class through the completion of the class session**. If you cannot attend the class regularly, you should withdraw and re-enroll when conditions for learning are more favorable. Like an organization you have vacation, personal, and sick days.

- Vacation days: The University builds in your vacation and holidays for you (Labor Day, Fall Break, Thanksgiving, Spring Break).
- Personal days: You are allowed two unexcused, personal days. You **cannot** make up exams or work missed for unexcused absences—you simply receive a zero. ***Your final semester grade will be reduced 2 percentage points for each unexcused absence over two.*** For example, if your final grade was a 92, and you had 4 unexcused absences, your final grade would be reduced to an 88. Therefore, attendance is important!
- Sick days: These are official excused absences. An *excused* absence is defined as: 1) Illness of the student or serious illness of a member of the student's immediate family, 2) The death of a member of the student's immediate family, 3) Trips for members of student organizations sponsored by an academic unit, trips for University classes, and trips for participation in intercollegiate athletic events, and 4) Major religious holidays.

For any absence to be excused, students must complete an **Excused Absence Request Form** (see Blackboard) for my review and decision. This form must accompany **official written documentation** for the absence. For university-sponsored absences, this notification is to be given **prior to** the absence; for other excused absences, this documentation must be presented at the next class meeting. Failure to provide prior notification and/or written documentation will automatically result in an unexcused absence.

Arrangements for due dates and make-up work/exams will be made as necessary. Students are responsible for getting any missed notes, handouts, or other information from a classmate.

Note: Coming to class late and leaving class early will also be counted as absences and are subject to the designation of excused or unexcused as outlined above.

In the event that the University cancels classes, such as for severe weather, you are expected to continue with readings as originally scheduled. Any assignments scheduled during those missed classes, such as an exam or paper, are due at the next class meeting unless you receive other instructions.

If you have absences in excess of one-fifth of the class contact hours, you need to withdraw from the class or you will be assigned a failing grade for the course.

Class Environment

In order to build an open, professional, and collaborative classroom atmosphere that is conducive to student participation, everyone should follow certain ground rules. These rules of civility include but are not limited to:

1. Displaying respect for all members of the classroom community, both your instructor and fellow students.
2. Paying attention to and participating in lectures, group activities, presentations, and other classroom exercises.
3. Avoiding unnecessary disruptions during class such as ringing cell phones (turn them off before class), text messaging, having private conversations, reading newspapers, and doing work for other classes.
4. Avoiding racist, sexist, homophobic, or other negative language that may unnecessarily exclude members of our campus and classroom community.
5. Supporting your peers, being open to new ways of thinking, and being considerate of others when discussing different ideas.

Written Assignment Guidelines

All assignments prepared outside of class must be typewritten and submitted in hard copy, unless instructed otherwise. You may also be asked to submit an electronic copy to Safe Assign, plagiarism detection software available through Blackboard.

Written work should be in a standard Microsoft Word format including 12 point font, double spacing, and 1 inch margins. In the case of multiple pages, the paper must include a footer located in the bottom right corner with a page number and your name on every page. Multiple pages should be stapled, NOT paper clipped. Written assignments must adhere to APA style guidelines. For help with APA style, see online sources such as <http://owl.english.purdue.edu>. Errors in APA, as well as spelling and grammar, will result in point deductions.

Assignment Deadlines

Deadlines are imposed to allow a reasonable amount of time to complete assignments and to give and receive feedback in a timely manner. Assignments may be turned in any time before the due date and must be turned in no later than the class meeting in which they are due (unless other arrangements have been made due to an excused absence). **Note that any assignment turned in more than 15 minutes after the class period begins is considered late.** Late papers MAY be accepted at my discretion but only when arrangements are made in advance. IF accepted, late papers will be penalized one letter grade per weekday the assignment is late. Oral presentations cannot be made up.

Cell Phones and Other Electronics

The standard departmental policy regarding cell phones is as follows:

Cell phones shall not be used for any purpose during class time. Any student with a cell phone in hand or on his or her desk during class time will be asked to leave class and will be counted absent for that day. This policy applies during student presentations as well as during lecture and discussion. Any student using a cell phone during an exam will receive a zero on that exam and may be subject to other university discipline.

Use of laptop computers will be allowed in class only with prior permission. Please make an appointment outside of class to discuss your request. It is my expectation that students wishing to use a laptop will sit in the front of the class and will never use the laptop for purposes other than taking notes during class time. In-class laptop activity is always subject for review without notification. Students abusing this privilege will not be allowed to use a laptop.

Teacher Communication

The best way to contact me is via email (rather than phone). Be sure to include the two dots in my email address – jennifer.mize.smith@wku.edu. I will make every effort to respond to your email in a timely (not necessarily immediate) manner. However, email may not be checked after 5 pm each day, so plan accordingly.

Academic Integrity

Western Kentucky University maintains a “zero tolerance” policy on plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty. As a student at Western Kentucky University, you are expected to demonstrate academic integrity, as outlined in the University Statement on Student Rights and Responsibilities (WKU Catalog, 260) in all coursework. Violations of this code of conduct include but are not limited to cheating (by giving or receiving unauthorized information before or during an exam or assignment), dishonesty (including misrepresentation and/or lying), and plagiarism.

Plagiarism consists of presenting work that is not your own without proper acknowledgment of its origin. This includes quoting or paraphrasing material (orally or written), copying from a book, and pasting text from web pages without proper citation. It also includes using an Internet source to obtain a full paper or part of a paper.

In short, **YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE** for telling your audience or reader whether you are:

1. directly quoting from a source
2. paraphrasing closely from a source, which means using significant portions of another source's sentences or language
3. using the ideas advanced by a different source

In addition to plagiarism, other forms of academic dishonesty include falsified medical excuses, presenting another student's work as your own, using the same work for assignments in different classes, or sharing exam information.

Student work will be checked using Safe Assign, the plagiarism detection software available through Blackboard.

Penalty for Academic Dishonesty

Western Kentucky University and the Department of Communication are committed to the highest standards of ethical conduct and academic excellence. Any student found guilty of plagiarism, fabrication, cheating on an exam, or purchasing papers, speeches, or other assignments will immediately receive a failing grade on the assignment and in the course, and will be reported for disciplinary action. As you can see, these are extreme measures for academic offenses that we believe are serious. If you have any questions, please contact me well in advance of the due date for your assignment.

Student Disability Services

In compliance with University policy, students with disabilities who require academic and/or auxiliary accommodations for this course must contact the Student Accessibility Resource Center located in Downing Student Union, 1074. SARC can be reached by phone number at 270-745-5004 [270-745-3030 TTY] or via email at sarc.connect@wku.edu. Please do not request accommodations directly from the professor or instructor without a Faculty Notification Letter (FNL) from The Student Accessibility Resource Center.

COURSE ACTIVITIES AND REQUIREMENTS

Chapter Quizzes

Purpose: To encourage students to read the textbook and other assigned readings prior to engaging course material through online discussions and related assignments

Ten open-book quizzes will be made available under Quizzes on Blackboard. Each quiz includes 10 multiple choice or T/F questions covering the textbook chapter and/or any other assigned readings for that week. Please note that quizzes will be timed. Once you open the quiz, you must complete it within 30 minutes. You will have one attempt. You may not re-open the quiz once it is closed. Questions must be completed in the order given, and responses may not be changed after submission. Specific dates and times are available on the course schedule.

NOTE: Quizzes must be completed independently. Sharing questions and/or answers with another student is cheating. Anyone suspected of cheating will be required to take the remaining quizzes/exams at the WKU Testing Center, no exceptions.

In-Class Activities

Purpose: To engage students in the course material and with each other by applying organizational communication concepts and theories

A collaborative learning environment will be both more interesting and beneficial for everyone. In-class activities provide an opportunity for you to interact with your classmates as you offer your ideas, stories, and examples related to our course topics. Therefore, you are expected to participate fully in the course by engaging in conversation and critical thinking. The comments you contribute to group and class discussions should reflect your knowledge and understanding of the week's readings. Therefore, you will need to have read and thought about the week's topic so that you can offer insightful responses and suggest appropriate examples. ***In other words, in-class activity responses should integrate course concepts.*** NOTE: *Because in-class discussions cannot be replicated, in-class activity points cannot be made up if you are absent.*

Application Exercises

Purpose: To engage students in the course material and with each other by applying organizational communication concepts and theories to their own organizational experiences and to the organizations which we visit

A series of application exercises will be assigned throughout the semester to help you better understand and apply course concepts to "real" organizational contexts, often your own organizational experiences or observations. Application exercises will be located under Assignments on Blackboard. The instructions for each exercise will be at the top of the Microsoft Word document. Please read carefully and follow the instructions. Specific due dates and times are available on the course schedule.

Exams

Purpose: To assess student comprehension and application of course concepts and theories

Three exams including two regular exams and one comprehensive final exam will be comprised of multiple choice, matching, and/or true/false questions covering material from lectures, readings, online discussions, and other assignments. Chapters covered on each exam are listed on the course schedule. Exam questions are application-based. You will have one attempt.

Pre-Test and Post-Test

Purpose: To objectively measure student comprehension of course concepts before and after the course

In order to assess student learning in this course, you are asked to complete a pre- and post-test reviewing the major theoretical perspectives covered during the semester. The pre- and post-tests are multiple choice and structured in the same manner as the regular exams.

The pre-test will establish a base line of your knowledge PRIOR TO being exposed to the course material. These are for participation points only and WILL NOT BE GRADED. The full 20 points will be awarded if you simply complete the pre-test assessment.

The post-test, however, WILL be part of your final exam and WILL be graded the same as other exam questions.

Assignments and Point Distribution

	Points Possible	Your Score <i>Track your scores here.</i>
Pre-test	20	
Chapter Quizzes (10 x 10 pts. each)	100	
In Class Activities	100	
Application Exercises (5 x 40 pts. each)	200	
Exams (2 x 100 pts. each)	200	
Final Exam (includes post-test)	130	
TOTAL	750	

Grade Distribution (in Total Points Earned)

A = 675-750 B = 600-674 C = 525-599
D = 450-524 F = 449 and below

A FEW NOTES ABOUT GRADES:

- Final grades will be distributed according to the above scale. Do not expect final grades to be curved, and do not ask to be awarded those couple of extra points needed to reach the next letter grade.
- It is your responsibility to keep up with your point totals. If you have a question about a grade, it should be addressed within one week of receiving the grade. Grades will not be reassessed or changed after that time. Therefore, do not wait until the end of the semester to look at or question the points you have earned.
- Grades will NOT be provided to students via e-mail.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE/RESOURCES

- If you have serious problems with writing (and many people do), I advise you go to the Writing Center. The **WKU Writing Center** has locations in Cherry Hall 123 and in the Commons at Cravens Library on the Bowling Green campus. The Glasgow Writing Center is located in room 231 on the Glasgow campus. The Writing Center also offers online consultations for students who live at a distance or who cannot visit during our operating hours. Writing tutors have been trained to provide helpful feedback to students at all phases of a writing project: they can *help you* brainstorm ideas, structure your essay, clarify your purpose, strengthen your support, and edit for clarity and correctness. But they will not revise or edit the paper *for you*. See instructions on the website (www.wku.edu/writingcenter) for making online or face-to-face appointments, or call (270) 745-5719 to schedule an appointment. More information about the Glasgow Writing Center hours can be found at the website: <http://www.wku.edu/glasgow/writingcenter.php>
- **The Learning Center (TLC)** Should you require academic assistance with your WKU courses, The Learning Center (located in the Downing Student Union, 2141) provides free supplemental education programs for all currently enrolled WKU students. The Learning Center at Downing Student Union offers certified, one-on-one tutoring in over 200 subjects and eight academic skill areas by appointment or walk in. Online tutoring is offered to distance learners. TLC is also a quiet study area (with side rooms designated for peer-to-peer tutoring) and a computer lab to complete academic coursework. Please call TLC in the Downing Student Union at (270) 745-5065 for more information or to schedule a tutoring appointment. www.wku.edu/tlc
- The **WKU Center for Literacy** is available for all WKU students who would benefit from assistance with reading college-level materials. In addition to a quiet study area, we can also offer small group and one-on-one assistance for reading and writing needs. A weekly study skills seminar series called College Reading Success takes place every Wednesday at 12:45 in GRH 2064. A Blackboard organizational site is available for any distance learners or other interested students who may not be able to physically attend. Please call the Center for Literacy at 270-745-2207, visit us in Gary A. Ransdell Hall 2066, or email at jeremy.logsdon@wku.edu with any questions. More information can be found at www.wku.edu/literacycenter
- **Purdue Online Writing Lab** – Online assistance with APA formatting and other writing/grammar. Located online at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu>
- WKU is committed to supporting faculty, staff and students by upholding WKU's **Title IX Sexual Misconduct/Assault Policy** (#0.2070) at <https://wku.edu/eoo/documents/titleix/wkutitleixpolicyandgrievanceprocedure.pdf> and Discrimination and Harassment Policy (#0.2040) at https://wku.edu/policies/hr_policies/2040_discrimination_harassment_policy.pdf.

Under these policies, discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct based on sex/gender are prohibited. If you experience an incident of sex/gender-based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator, Andrea Anderson, 270-745-5398 or Title IX Investigators, Michael Crowe, 270-745-5429 or Joshua Hayes, 270-745-5121.

Please note that while you may report an incident of sex/gender based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct to a faculty member, WKU faculty are "Responsible Employees" of the University and **MUST** report what you share to WKU's Title IX Coordinator or Title IX Investigator. If you would like to speak with someone who may be able to afford you confidentiality, you may contact WKU's Counseling and Testing Center at 270-745-3159.

NOTE: The procedures and schedule in this course are subject to change as needed.

COMM 362 Course Schedule (subject to change as necessary)

Date	Class Topic	Reading Assignment	Assignment Due
Mon 1/22	Introduction to Course	Course Syllabus	
Wed 1/24	The Challenge of Organizational Communication	Chapter 1	QUIZ 1 – Syllabus Due by 2:45 pm
Mon 1/29	Classical Approaches	Chapter 2	QUIZ 2 by 2:45 pm
Wed 1/31	Classical Approaches	Chapter 2	In Class Activity (5 pts)
Mon 2/5	In-class Activity – Movie Clip		In Class Activity (10 pts)
Wed 2/7	In-class Group Presentation		In Class Activity, cont.
Mon 2/12	Human Relations Approach	Chapter 3	QUIZ 3 by 2:45 pm In Class Activity (10 pts)
Wed 2/14	Employee Assistance Programs Guest Speaker	Chapter 3	
Mon 2/19	Human Resources Approach	Chapter 3	
Wed 2/21	Synthesizing the Traditional Approaches	Roy (1959) Banana Time Article (posted under Course Documents on Blackboard)	Application Exercise #1
Mon 2/26	Review 1		In Class Activity (10 pts)
Wed 2/28	First Exam (100 pts.) Chapters 1, 2, 3, and Banana Time article		
Mon 3/5	Systems Approaches	Chapter 4	QUIZ 4A by 2:45 pm In Class Activity (10 pts)
Wed 3/7	Systems Approaches	Chapter 4	Application Exercise #2
Mon 3/12	SPRING BREAK – No Class		
Wed 3/14	SPRING BREAK – No Class		
Mon 3/19	Cultural Approaches	Chapter 4	QUIZ 4B by 2:45 pm In Class Activity (10 pts)
Wed 3/21	Cultural Approaches	Chapter 4	Application Exercise #3
Mon 3/26	Critical Approaches	Chapter 6	QUIZ 6 by 2:45 pm
Wed 3/28	Critical Approaches – Case Study	Barker (1997) (posted under Course Documents on Blackboard)	Application Exercise #4
Mon 4/2	Review 2		In Class Activity (10 pts)
Wed 4/4	Second Exam (100 pts.) Chapters 4, 6, and Barker case study		

Date	Class Topic	Reading Assignment	Assignment Due
Mon 4/9	Socialization Processes	Chapter 7	QUIZ 7 by 2:45 pm
Wed 4/11	Socialization Processes	Chapter 7	Application Exercise #5
Mon 4/16	Emotion in the Workplace	Chapter 11	QUIZ 11 by 2:45 pm
Wed 4/18	Emotion in the Workplace	Chapter 11	In Class Activity (10 pts)
Mon 4/23	Technological Processes	Chapter 13	QUIZ 13 by 2:45 pm
Wed 4/25	Technological Processes	Chapter 13	In Class Activity (10 pts)
Mon 4/30	Course Wrap Up The Changing Landscape of Organizations	Chapter 14	QUIZ 14 by 2:45 pm In Class Activity (5 pts)
Wed 5/2	Review 3		In Class Activity (10 pts)
Fri 5/11	FINAL EXAM (130 pts.) 1:00 – 3:00 pm Chapters 7, 11, and 13 (94 pts.) Chapters 2, 3, 4, and 6 (36 pts.)		