

# COMM 528: Communication in the Nonprofit Sector

## Spring 2011

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### Dr. Jennifer Mize Smith

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E-Mail: [jennifer.mize.smith@wku.edu](mailto:jennifer.mize.smith@wku.edu) Office Hours: T/R 10 am – noon  
R 3:45 - 4:45 pm  
And by appointment

### Course Description

This graduate seminar is designed to provide students with an overview of organizational communication issues and the ways in which they are uniquely situated in and applied to nonprofit organizations and philanthropy. Readings and discussions will explore communication processes at individual and organizational levels, as well as the blurred boundaries between internal and external communication. Unit I is organized around various nonprofit stakeholders and representative issues that are salient to each group. Unit II examines larger organizational issues and trends in the philanthropic sector. You will find that not all readings are written from a communicative perspective. However, throughout the course, we will foreground communication, question the role of discourse, and explore the theoretical and pragmatic implications a communicative lens brings to bear on nonprofit and philanthropic issues.

### Course Objectives

- To introduce you to a range of topics related to the study and practice of organizational communication in nonprofit organizations and the philanthropic sector.
- To broaden your thinking of organizational communication research and its application to nuanced contexts.
- To facilitate your understanding of and ability to critique nonprofit communication processes that are both similar and different to those in other kinds of organizations.
- To enhance your research, analysis, writing, and presentation skills.

### Course Materials

**Required** No textbook – weekly readings will be posted on Blackboard

**Optional** If you find you need some background reading on the structure, functions, processes, and issues of nonprofit organizations and/or the philanthropic sector, the following books will provide a good foundation and may be placed on reserve in the library upon request.

Herman, R.D., & Associates. (1994). *The Jossey-Bass handbook of nonprofit leadership and management*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Salamon, L.M. (Ed.) (2002). *The state of nonprofit America*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.

Smith, Bucklin, & Associates. (2000). *The complete guide to nonprofit management* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.).

New York: John Wiley & Sons.

## **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**

You are expected to attend every class for the entire length of time scheduled. You are also expected to be on time for each class meeting. If you have a problem, you should contact me before class begins. If you miss two or more classes, you will be asked to withdraw from the course.

**Arriving Late/Leaving Early.** You are expected to be on time for class. Attendance is defined as being present no later than 5 minutes after the start of class and includes being present until the end of the class session. Tardiness will be considered an absence if you are not present when the attendance is taken—no exceptions. Leaving early will also be considered an absence if you have not gained prior approval.

### **Assignment Due Dates**

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. It is not acceptable to miss class and email your assignment. Late papers will NOT be accepted unless other arrangements have been made due to an excused absence. Oral presentations and in-class activities cannot be made up.

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.

### **Class Environment**

To ensure we create an atmosphere conducive to student participation, you are expected to show the utmost respect for all class members. This includes paying attention to others, participating in group activities, and avoiding disruptive behaviors. Establishing a cooperative climate also means supporting your peers, being open to new ways of thinking, and being considerate of others when discussing different ideas.

## **Writing Expectations**

You are expected to have developed the writing skills that are appropriate to graduate level study. At a minimum, this includes grammatically correct sentences, well-developed paragraphs, and organized, coherent patterns of thought. Papers must be typewritten in 12 point font, double-spaced with 1" margins, and adhere to the APA (6<sup>th</sup> edition) Publication Manual. Papers must also be within the page length indicated. Grammar, spelling, and other typographical errors will compromise your grade. See APA manual for guidelines on organization and the use of various levels of headings. Finally, papers must be submitted in hard copy unless requested otherwise.

## **Cell Phone 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 not be allowed in class without prior permission from the professor. Any student seeking permission should make an appointment with me outside of class time.

## **Course Assignments/Requirements**

### **Participation**

**100 pts.**

A collaborative learning environment will be both more interesting and beneficial for everyone. This course is designed in a seminar format such that students should be fully engaged in the teaching and learning process. Therefore, you are expected to participate fully in the course. This includes reading assigned materials before class and being prepared to summarize, discuss, question, debate and critique those readings. *You may find the reading list in this course to be challenging, so plan your time accordingly.* Participation also includes being prepared for class by bringing any assigned materials, participating in class activities, and interacting with guest speakers.

At the end of the semester, participation will be evaluated using letter grades that translate into the following points: A= 95 pts, B= 85 pts, C= 75 pts, D or F= 0 pts. Throughout the semester, if you are wondering how your participation rate is being viewed, just ask for my feedback.

### **Class Discussion Leader (Week of your choice)**

**100 pts.**

A collaborative learning environment means that students not only participate in, but also lead and facilitate, class discussions. Students will be partnered with 1 or 2 classmates and may choose a week in which they would like to lead discussion. Discussion leaders will be responsible for developing their own discussion questions and facilitating in-class discussion on the required readings.

More specifically, discussion leaders should do the following:

- 1) Prior to class: prepare 3 or 4 critical questions per article and post them on the Blackboard discussion board. These questions should be posted at least two days before the class meeting (i.e., by SUNDAY evening).
- 2) Day of class: provide a discussion outline to the class including key points from each reading
- 3) Day of class: begin by giving a brief overview of the topic/construct and open the discussion with the posted questions
- 4) Day of class: facilitate discussion, ask additional questions, and explicitly relate the week's topic/readings to communication theory and to previous readings or discussions
- 5) Day of class: suggest 2-3 new nonprofit/philanthropy-related topics that might benefit from further research; pose 2-3 related research questions and discuss what those studies might look like from a communication-centered perspective

Every student is expected to have thought about the questions and have points prepared for class discussion. Ideally, discussions will aid students' understanding of material and their ability to utilize the content in both a practical and academic way.

Discussion leaders will be evaluated on their overall delivery, content covered, discussion questions, and participation of others, as well as the application of communication theory/concepts. See grading rubric for more details.

### **Book Review/Critique and Presentation**

**100 pts.**

Choose a book related to communication in the nonprofit sector and prepare a 5 page (double-spaced) review following the guidelines provided. (Feel free to select a book that will relate to your final paper topic.)

- Get book approved in advance.
- Make a 10-minute oral presentation reviewing your book and its relation to class readings/discussions.
- Provide a presentation handout for the class that includes main thesis, important points, for whom it might be useful, ways in which it might be applied, and your overall recommendation.

### **Peer Critique**

**100 pts.**

Students will be partnered and given a draft of each other's final paper. You will then provide a written and oral critique of the other student's paper. The write up should be 4-5 pages (double-spaced) and include strengths, areas for improvement, suggestions, and ideas for additional sources. Make two copies – one for me and one for your classmate.

**Annotated Bibliography****50 pts.**

To ensure you are working timely on your final paper literature review, you will complete an annotated bibliography of at least 10 academic sources that you plan to cite in your final paper. Each source should include an APA citation followed by a 1-2 paragraph summary. See guidelines for further details.

**Final Paper****200 pts.**

Each student OR pair of students will prepare a conference-style paper of 15-20 pages in length adhering to APA guidelines. (Note: If you choose to work with a partner, both students will receive the same grade.) You should adopt a communicative perspective of a nonprofit or philanthropy-related issue. You are required to get the topic approved in advance (see course schedule for exact date).

The paper should apply communication theory/concepts to explore, explain, and/or critique a practice found in the nonprofit/philanthropic sector. The paper should also include a literature review and incorporate some of the course readings. Some examples of paper topics include conducting a textual analysis of some form of nonprofit organization communication; comparing or contrasting the ways in which a communication theory applies to for-profit vs. nonprofit organizations; or writing a rhetorical critique of a specific nonprofit organization's communicative messages/actions. You might also conduct a case study of a nonprofit organizational problem/challenge/communication patterns. NOTE: If you want to collect original data for your research (i.e., surveys, focus groups, or interviews), *please notify me as soon as possible to begin the IRB process.*

**Final Paper Presentation****50 pts.**

To conclude the semester, you will make a 10-15 minute conference-style, oral presentation of your final paper, including your research question(s), interpretations, and theoretical and pragmatic implications.

**Assignments and Grading**

Class Participation	100
Discussion Leader	100
Book Review/Critique and Presentation	100
Peer Critique Paper	100
Annotated Bibliography	50
Final Paper	200
Final Paper Presentation	50

**Total****700 points****Grade Distribution (in Points Earned)**

A = 630-700	C = 490-559
B = 560-629	D = 420-489

F = 419 and below

#### 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. Remember throughout the semester that every point counts!
- It is your responsibility to keep up with your point totals. If at any time 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 period. In other words, 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.

#### **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--including quoting or paraphrasing material (orally or written) and not crediting the original author through a citation, copying from a book, pasting text from web pages, or using an Internet source to obtain a full paper or part of a paper. Student work may be checked using plagiarism detection software.

Sanctions include but are not limited to assigning a failing grade for the course without possibility of withdrawal, as well as presenting the case to the Office of the Dean of Student Life for disciplinary sanctions (WKU Catalog, 27).

#### **Student Disability Services**

In compliance with university policy, students with disabilities who require accommodations (academic adjustments and/or auxiliary aids or services) for this course must contact the Office for Student Disability Services in DUC A-200 of the Student Success Center in Downing University Center.

Please DO NOT request accommodations directly from the professor or instructor without a letter of accommodation from the Office for Student Disability Services.

***NOTE: The procedures and schedule in this course are subject to change as needed. Please check the course Blackboard site regularly.***

## **Discussion Board Question Suggestions**

Discussion leaders will post 3-4 questions/comments per article on Blackboard prior to class meeting. Following is a list of suggestions to ensure you construct the kind of questions that will enhance class discussion and understanding of our readings.

- Trace an overarching theme that runs through the readings for the week, and comment about differences or similarities in the way the theme is presented across readings.
- Compare and contrast different perspectives taken or arguments made, and discuss what each simultaneously illuminates and makes invisible.
- Discuss how something is uniquely a nonprofit or philanthropic issue, highlighting what may be the same or different in the for-profit sector.
- Discuss how communication researchers might use the material and the pragmatic implications of its application.
- Discuss how nonprofit practitioners might use the material in their everyday work.
- Take issue with a particular statement or idea, and make a case for why it should be questioned or further examined.

## **Book Review Guidelines**

Your book review should address the following:

### I. Description

- Discuss the book in context (perspective from which it is written, intended audience).
- Summarize the overall thesis or argument.
- Provide an overview of the content.

### II. Evaluation

- Critique the overall thesis, as well as claims made and sources used to support it.
- Discuss the unique theoretical and/or pragmatic contributions it makes.
- Discuss the explicit and implicit communication issues that arise and how they are or are not addressed by the author.
- Explore how the book might be different if written from a communicative perspective.
- Discuss its limitations and potential impact of those shortcomings.

### III. Recommendation

- Discuss the book's potential appeal to its intended audience.
- Identify any other audiences who might find it useful and why.

## **Book Review Suggestions**

Below is a list of books you might want (but are not required) to consider for your book review.

De Pree, M. (1997). *Leading without power: Finding hope in serving community*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Forward, D. C. (1994). *Heroes after hours: Extraordinary acts of employee volunteerism*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

*Harvard Business Review on corporate responsibility*. Boston: Harvard Business School Publishing.

Hollander, J., & Fenichell, S. (2004). *What matters most: How a small group of pioneers is teaching social responsibility to big business, and why big business is listening*. New York: Basic Books.

Karoff, H. P. (Ed.). (2004). *Just money: A critique of contemporary American philanthropy*. Boston: TPI Editions.

Letts, C. W., Ryan, W. P., & Grossman, A. (1999). *High performance nonprofit organizations: Managing upstream for greater impact*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Palmer, S. (Ed.). (2005). *Challenges for nonprofits and philanthropy*. Medford, MA: Tufts University Press.

Schneewing, J. B. (1996). *Giving: Western ideas of philanthropy*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

## **Annotated Bibliography Guidelines**

**(Source: Cornell University retrieved from <http://www.library.cornell.edu/olinuris/ref/research/skill28.htm#process>)**

An annotated bibliography is a list of citations to books, articles, and documents. Each citation is followed by a brief (usually about 150 words) descriptive and evaluative paragraph, the annotation. The purpose of the annotation is to inform the reader of the relevance, accuracy, and quality of the sources cited.

Creating an annotated bibliography calls for the application of a variety of intellectual skills: concise exposition, succinct analysis, and informed library research.

First, locate and record citations to books, periodicals, and documents that may contain useful information and ideas on your topic. Briefly examine and review the actual items. Then choose those works that provide a variety of perspectives on your topic.

Cite the book, article, or document using APA.

Write a concise annotation that summarizes the central theme and scope of the book or article. Include one or more sentences that (a) evaluate the authority or background of the author, (b) comment on the intended audience, (c) compare or contrast this work with another you have cited, or (d) explain how this work illuminates your bibliography topic.

### **SAMPLE ENTRY FOR A JOURNAL ARTICLE**

**Waite, L.J., Goldschneider, F.K., & Witsberger, C. (1986). Nonfamily living and the erosion of traditional family orientations among young adults. *American Sociological Review*, 51, 541-554.**

The authors, researchers at the Rand Corporation and Brown University, use data from the National Longitudinal Surveys of Young Women and Young Men to test their hypothesis that nonfamily living by young adults alters their attitudes, values, plans, and expectations, moving them away from their belief in traditional sex roles. They find their hypothesis strongly supported in young females, while the effects were fewer in studies of young males. Increasing the time away from parents before marrying increased individualism, self-sufficiency, and changes in attitudes about families. In contrast, an earlier study by Williams cited below shows no significant gender differences in sex role attitudes as a result of nonfamily living.

## Course Schedule

### **Week 1 1/25            Introductions and Course Overview The Nonprofit Sector and Communication Research**

Koschmann, M. (2010, November). *Developing a communicative theory of the nonprofit*. Unpublished paper presented at the National Communication Association Pre-conference, San Francisco, CA.

Lewis, L. (2005). The civil society sector: A review of critical issues and research agenda for organizational communication scholars. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 19, 238-267.

### **UNIT I:                    Communication Issues Facing Nonprofit Stakeholders**

#### **Week 2 2/1                Overview of the Third Sector in the U.S.: Historical development, contemporary giving and volunteering trends**

Hammack, D. (2002). Nonprofit organizations in American history. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 45, 1638-1674.

Independent Sector (2002). *Giving and volunteering in the United States: Key findings*. Washington, DC: Author.

The Urban Institute (2008). *The nonprofit sector in brief: Facts and figures from the Nonprofit Almanac 2008: Public charities, giving and volunteering*. Washington, DC: Author.

Schervish, P.G. (1998). Philanthropy. In R. Wuthnow (Ed.), *The encyclopedia of politics and religion* (pp. 600-602). Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly.

#### **Week 3 2/8                Nonprofit Leaders: Transformational leadership, social capital, and governance**

Jaskyte, K. (2004). Transformational leadership, organizational culture, and innovativeness in nonprofit organizations. *Nonprofit Management & Leadership*, 15, 153-168.

King, N.K. (2004). Social capital and nonprofit leaders. *Nonprofit Management & Leadership*, 14, 471-486.

Bradshaw, P. (2002). Reframing board-staff relations: Exploring the governance function using a storytelling metaphor. *Nonprofit Management & Leadership*, 12, 471-481.

**Week 4 2/15                    Boards of Directors: Discourse, challenges, and identification**

Daley, J.M., Netting, E.F., Angulo, J. (1996). Languages, ideologies, and cultures in nonprofit boards. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, 6, 227-240.

Mize Smith, J. (2004, November). *Identification among nonprofit board members: Exploring and managing multiple targets*. Paper presented at the meeting of the National Communication Association, Chicago, IL.

Castor, T. (2010, November). *Governing board meetings and their communication dilemmas: Negotiating leadership and knowledge*. Unpublished paper presented at the National Communication Association Pre-conference, San Francisco, CA.

**Week 5 2/22                    Nonprofit Staff: Careers and job satisfaction**

Brown, W.A., & Yoshioka, C.F. (2003). Mission attachment and satisfaction as factors in employee retention. *Nonprofit Management & Leadership*, 14, 5-18.

Onyx, J., & Maclean, M. (1996). Careers in the third sector. *Nonprofit Management & Leadership*, 6, 331-345.

Mize Smith, J., Arendt, C., Lahman, J.B., Settle, G., Duff, A. (2006). Framing the work of art: Spirituality and career discourse in the nonprofit arts sector. *Communication Studies*, 57, 25-46.

**Week 6 3/1                    Donors: Identification and relationship building**

Mael, F., & Ashforth, B.E. (1992). Alumni and their alma mater: a partial test of the reformulated model of organizational identification. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 13(2), 103-123.

Sargeant, A. (2001). Relationship fundraising: How to keep donors loyal. *Nonprofit Management & Leadership*, 12, 177-192.

Schervish, P.G., & Havens, J.J. (1998, May). Why do people give? *The Not-for-profit CEO Monthly Letter* (5)7, 1-3.

**Week 7 3/8                    SPRING BREAK**

**Week 8 3/15                    BOOK REVIEWS AND PRESENTATIONS**

**Week 9 3/22**                      **Volunteers: Identification and organizational support**

Ashcraft, K.L., & Kedrowicz, A. (2002). Self direction or social support? Nonprofit empowerment and the tacit employment contract of organizational communication studies. *Communication Monographs*, 69, 88-111.

Tidwell, M.V. (2005). A social identity model of prosocial behaviors within nonprofit organizations. *Nonprofit Management & Leadership*, 15, 449-467.

**Week 10 3/29**                      **Service Recipients: Roles, relationships, and resistance**  
**ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE**

Bhattacharya, C.B., Rao, H., & Glynn, M.A. (1995). Understanding the bond of identification: An investigation of its correlates among art museum members. *Journal of Marketing*, 59(4), 46-57.

Trethewey, A. (1997). Resistance, identity, and empowerment: A postmodern feminist analysis of clients in a human service organization. *Communication Monographs*, 64, 281-301.

**UNIT II:                      Issues and Trends in the Nonprofit Sector**

**Week 11 4/5**                      **Corporate Philanthropy: Discourse and employee sensemaking**

Mize Smith, J., & Sypher, B. D. (2010). Philanthropy in the workplace: How a financial institution communicates charitable giving values. *Southern Communication Journal*, 75, 370-391.

Mize Smith, J. (2010). *All good works are not created equal: Employees' sensemaking and the social construction of corporate philanthropy*. Manuscript submitted for publication.

Mize Smith, J. (2005, November). *Institutionalizing philanthropy in the workplace: A critical examination of management's construction of giving*. Manuscript submitted for publication.

**Week 12 4/12**                      **Organizational Discourse and Identity: Mission, boards, and culture**

**DRAFT OF RESEARCH PAPER DUE (2 copies)**

Golden-Biddle, K., & Rao, H. (1997). Breaches in the boardroom: Organizational identity and conflicts of commitment in a nonprofit organization. *Organization Science*, 8, 593-611.

Ruud, G. (1995). The symbolic construction of organizational identities and community in a regional symphony. *Communication Studies*, 46, 201-221.



**Week 13 4/19**

**Role of Technology  
PEER CRITIQUE DUE**

Saidel, J.R., & Cour, S. (2003). Information technology and the voluntary sector workplace. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 32, 5-24.

Branston, K., & Bush, L. (2010). The nature of online social good networks and their impact on non-profit organisations and users. *PRism*, 7(2), 1-14.

Waters, R.D., Burnett, E., Lamm, A., & Lucas, J. (2009). Engaging stakeholders through social networking: How *nonprofit* organizations are using Facebook. *Public Relations Review*, 35, 102-106.

**Week 14 4/26**

**Marketization of the nonprofit sector: Trends and implications**

Eikenberry, A.M., & Kluver, J.D. (2004). The marketization of the nonprofit sector: Civil society at risk? *Public Administration Review*, 64, 132-140.

Dempsey, S.E., & Sanders, M.L. (2010). Meaningful work? Nonprofit marketization and work/life imbalance in popular autobiographies of social entrepreneurship. *Organization* 17, 457-459.

Sanders, M.L. (2010, November). *Theorizing nonprofit organizations as contradictory enterprises: Examining the inherent tensions of nonprofit marketization*. Unpublished paper presented at the National Communication Association Pre-conference, San Francisco, CA.

**Week 15 5/3**

**FINAL PAPERS DUE  
ORAL PRESENTATIONS**

**Week 16 5/10**

**FINAL EXAM WEEK  
Course Wrap Up**

Lewis, L.K. (2010, November). *Becoming useful: Using engaged scholarship as a means to move NPO scholarship forward*. Unpublished paper presented at the National Communication Association Pre-conference, San Francisco, CA.