

*University of Southern California*

*Annenberg School for Communication*

COMM 638: Communication in Global Organizations

Fall 2008, Monday: 2-5 pm, ASC 328

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Office Hours, Tuesdays 1:00 – 2:00 pm, and by appointment

### **Course Description**

Processes of globalization have been developing for a considerable period of time. Some scholars, like Wallerstein, trace the beginnings back as early as the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Yet the last fifty years has witnessed a number of dramatic changes in technology, finance, and politics, which have significantly accelerated the rate of globalization. There can be little doubt that globalization affects communication and many other aspects of human life around the world such as culture, consumption, work, politics, quality of life and the environment. An essential part of this experience is communicating and organizing in a context of global interdependence leading to the emergence of much larger, diverse and dominant global organizations.

This graduate seminar uses coevolutionary (community ecology) theory to explore the role of communication in creating and sustaining global organizations and to learn how they operate in the economic, political, social, and environmental dimensions of the world. Global organizations should be understood broadly to refer to those organizations that aspire to operating throughout the world, such as the United Nations (and its sponsored organizations), International Nongovernmental Organizations, multinational corporations, religions, transnational criminal enterprises, and government empires. Community ecology theory explores how different populations of organizations, such as those just mentioned, develop, exist and dissolve in various resource environments, interacting among themselves in mutual and competitive ways to survive. Further, the course will examine the role of communication and other technologies in influencing, and being influenced by, globalization processes. The theoretical and technological perspectives will then be applied to better understand and evaluate the impacts of globalization on global organizations, the labor force, cultural issues, human rights and governance. In each case our energies will be devoted to understanding the role or communication in the mutual influences that are exerted between global organizations and globalization processes. We will also focus on assessing the positive and negative aspects of globalization and on exploring alternatives worthy of consideration.

## **Class Readings and Discussion**

The class has several assigned texts:

Aldrich, H., & Reuf, M. (2006). *Organizations evolving* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Held, D., McGrew, A., Goldblatt, D., & Perraton, J. (1999). *Global transformation: Politics, Economics, and Culture*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Scholte, J. (2000). *Globalization, An Introduction*. New York: St Martin's Press.

An additional set of class readings will be available in the "Course Documents" folder on the course home page. The instructor will provide the password required to open each of the readings. The readings are in PDF format and require the use of an Adobe Acrobat Reader. (Click [here](#) to download the software.) These readings can be printed (using the browser's print function) or saved to your disk (point your cursor to the link, right click your mouse and select the Save Link As ...option in Netscape or Save Target As ... option with Internet Explorer).

Each week one or two students will be responsible for helping to organize the readings and discussion. All students in the class will be expected to post questions and thoughts about the readings to the course discussion board no later than noon on Monday. The student organizers for that week will review the discussion threads and bring questions and issues for discussion to the class. Creativity, imagination, and insight are all welcome features of the discussion organizers' role.

## **Course Evaluation**

Your final course grade will be based on two items:

Semester Group Project: 40 points

Individual Research paper: 60 points

## **Semester Group Project**

The purpose of this project is to extend our understanding of the complex relationship between globalization and organizations in a specific population of organizations. These are often called organizational domains or industries. Class readings, discussions, and resources on the WWW and the library should be used to complete the research. You will each be a member of a team that has chosen a particular organizational domain. Your team will produce a white paper on the community ecology of globalization in that particular domain. The paper should include background information, analysis,

recommendations and conclusions that high-level corporate actors and academics interested in that particular domain can refer to as a blueprint for globalization. The final product should be a Web-based multimedia (including audio, video, animation, graphics, links to other web resources, and text) document with at least 10-15 pages of narrative describing your domain from the perspective of the community ecology of globalization. Your team report will be incrementally submitted and reviewed in three parts. Please include separate sections that deal with each of the following three parts:

Semester Group Project - Part I (Due on February 11): History and background of the domain vis-à-vis the community ecology of globalization.

Semester Group Project - Part II: (Due on March 3): Critical issues (labor, marketing, human and other resources, community density, symbiotic relations, etc.) that positively and negatively impact the globalization of the domain. These issues must include, but are not restricted to, implications for communication within and among domains.

Semester Group Project - Part III: (Due on March 31): Offer predictions and recommend strategies for the future. What should this domain do to operate effectively in the ecology of the global community? What constraints and future issues will it face? In addition to the final web-based report, your group should make a fifteen-minute multimedia presentation to the class on March 31.

Your evaluation will be based on: (i) your critical analysis of the above mentioned topics vis-à-vis your domain, (ii) your use of relevant academic, corporate, and popular materials from the Web and the library, (iii) your ability to inform this analysis based on class readings, class presentations, and class discussions regarding community ecology and globalization, and (iv) the quality of your arguments, evidence, conclusions, recommendations, and the bibliographic resources cited within your report. For details on how to cite information on the Internet and the Web, please see: <http://www.apa.org/journals/webref.html>

### **Individual Research Paper**

The semester individual project is a scholarly paper on a theory, topic, concept, or idea that is relevant to communication processes in the ecological community of global organizations. The paper should be prepared in a style similar to an academic article or conference paper. For instance your paper could (i) introduce a new concept, (ii) offer a re-conceptualization of a traditional concept in light of the community ecology of globalization, (iii) develop a new or integrative theoretical model related to some aspects of communication and globalization, (iv) propose a research study that examines certain research questions or tests specific hypotheses, (v) present the results of such a research study. You are free to use this as an opportunity to develop a thesis/dissertation or extend ideas you have worked on in other courses. A proposal for your paper should be submitted on or before February 25. This 2 to 3 page proposal should include a representative bibliography. A presentation on the research paper is due on the final day

of class, April 28. The final draft of the research paper will be due on the exam day, May 12th.

### **Schedule**

- Jan. 14 Introduction to the course
- Jan 21 Martin Luther King Day
- Jan 28 Global Organizations
- Feb 4 Globalization processes
- Feb 11 Coevolutionary theory
- Feb 18 President's Day
- Feb 25 Community Ecology
- Mar 3 Global Communication Networks and the Network Society
- Mar 10 Classical Economic and Dependency Theories
- Mar 17 Spring Break. Enjoy!
- Mar 24 Multinational Corporations
- Mar 31 Global Cartels, Criminal, and Terrorist Organizations
- Apr 7 Class Project Presentations
- Apr 14 Religions and Nongovernmental Organizations
- Apr 21 The United Nations and Government
- Apr. 2 Last Day of Class: Presentations of Final Paper Due
- May 12 Final Paper Due

### **USC Academic Integrity Statement**

The School of Communication is committed to the highest standards of academic excellence and ethical conduct among all its students. The current issue of *SCampus*

provides USC's "Guidelines for Academic Integrity," which the School of Communication fully endorses. You are fully accountable for having read this entire document and for abiding by all of the guidelines it contains. Faculty who discover violations of these Guidelines are required by the university to report them to the appropriate campus committees and will do so in every case. Violations of academic integrity include, but are not limited to, plagiarism, cheating on exams, fabricating data for a project, and submitting the same paper to more than one class without the express coordinated approval of both professors. Penalties for violations of academic integrity guidelines are severe, typically lead at a minimum to a failing grade in the class, and often to expulsion from the school and/or the university. If you have any doubts or questions as to whether some action you are contemplating might be interpreted as academic misconduct, you are strongly encouraged to discuss the matter in advance with the professor. If a faculty member accuses you of academic misconduct, your rights and the procedures that will govern the review of your case are located in *SCampus*. Please, help the school attain the highest possible level of academic integrity by refraining from any form of inappropriate behavior and by reporting any instances of misconduct on the part of other students that you might discover.