

COMM385 Survey of Organizational Communication  
Spring 2006  
Tuesday and Thursday 2:00pm – 3:20pm  
ASC228

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**Required Reading:**

Cheney, G., Christensen, L. T., Zorn, T. E. J., & Ganesh, S. (2004). *Organizational communication in an age of globalization: Issues, reflections, practices*. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press.

Case study materials that will be handed out in class during the semester

**Course Philosophy and Objectives**

*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)

This course is designed as an **introductory** course in the area of organizational communication. It provides a fairly comprehensive review of major issues and topics in the field of organizational communication (e.g., organizational structure and process, leadership, conflict, organizational cultures, and new communication technologies). In this course, we will study how people communicate in organizations and how communication creates and sustains organizations. The course goals are fourfold:

- To develop a *meaningful vocabulary* for discussing organizational communication issues
- To develop a basic understanding of the range of communication issues in contemporary organizations
- To improve your **analytical skills** in examining common organizational communication problems and to make you a more effective member of organizations
- To promote **critical thinking** about communicating in contemporary organizations

(After completing this course, I hope that you could have some useful analytical tools for describing, critiquing, and improving organizational communication. You would leave the course thinking about work, organizations, and communication differently and more deeply than before)

**Course Format**

We will use a combination of lectures, case studies, discussions, classroom activities, and fieldwork. Your active participation is essential to the success of the class.

## Course Assignments

It is important that you **keep copies** of all the work you turn in. Also please keep all the assignments we return to you.

### ***Individual Assignments:*** (120 points in total)

- Assignment 1: You will be asked to write a **3-page** paper about a recent experience of working on a team. Describe and analyze: a) how did members of your team communicate with one another (e.g., how often, through what media), b) how did team members' characteristics (e.g., personality, task-related knowledge, and experience of working on a team) influence the way they communicate with one another, and c) how did team communication influence your team's performance and your satisfaction with that experience. (30 points)
- Assignment 2: You will be asked to write a **3-page** paper about a recent conflict that you have been involved in at an organization with which you are affiliated (e.g., work organization, school, and church) (e.g., work conflict due to cultural background differences). Using concepts from the textbook to describe and analyze: a) the context of the conflict (e.g., what gave rise to the conflict, what were the relationship between you and the other party involved in the conflict), and b) how you and the other party involved in the conflict interpreted and managed the conflict. (30 points)
- Assignment 3: You will be asked to write a **6-page** paper on the culture of an organization with which you are affiliated and how it enables and constrains communication within the organization. You are expected to integrate relevant concepts from the textbook into your analysis. You should at least use the following two sources of data in your paper: a) interviews, and b) your own experience. Make sure that you conduct at least three or four interviews with organizational members who play different roles in the organizations. You should ask them similar questions that would allow you to compare their perceptions and interpretations. You are also encouraged to use other sources of data in your paper (e.g., organizational documents like brochures, pamphlets, employee handbooks). A paper that is based solely on your own experiences will fetch a C at best. (60 points).

### ***Group Assignment:*** (30 points in total) (you **should** work in a team of **3 members**).

- Assignment 4: You and your teammates will be asked to bring to the class one video clip (up to 10 minutes in length each) that, in your opinion, is a good example of an organizational communication concept(s) (including a theory) covered in this class (any concept would be fine). You should explain to me and your classmates why you choose that video clip, what concept(s) that video clip illustrates, and how the concept is illustrated (analyzing the content of the clip and relating it to the concept(s)). You will be evaluated on your **oral presentation (10 to 15 minutes)** (15 points) and your **1-page** written analysis (using an outline format) (15points).

### ***Exams*** (200 points in total):

There will be one **midterm** and one **final** (non-cumulative) exam, each worth 100 points. Exams will be a combination of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions.

### ***Attendance and participation*** (50 points)

Includes – but not limited to attendance, promptness, evidence of preparation, quality of contributions to class (e.g., sharing additional video clips other than the required one with your classmates in class), in-class activities, etc. A written note, documenting a valid reason for the absence (such as personal illness or emergency), must be presented to me for the absence to be considered "excused"; otherwise, the absence will be considered "unexcused." *Missing one lecture session is acceptable.* Each **additional** unexcused absence will cost you **3 points**.

## Grading

A+	=	388- 400
A	=	376-387
A-	=	360-375
B+	=	348-359
B	=	336-347
B-	=	320-325
C+	=	308-319
C	=	296-307
C-	=	280-295
D+	=	268-279
D	=	256-267
D-	=	240-255
F	=	below 240

## Course Policies

- **Attendance and participation: Class attendance is required.** If you want to learn and do well in this course, there is no substitute for being in class. This course is structured so that those who attend and participate in class have a better chance of performing well. Assignments will be explained in class. Often I will cover materials in class that is not in your textbook --- these materials are subject to testing on the midterm and final exam. If you do miss class, it is your responsibility to get the notes and additional information presented on that day from a classmate.

Full participation in this course includes: reading the text carefully; completing all assignments on time; participating in class discussions and activities; listening to others; sharing current events that relate to our course content.

- **Due dates:** All assignments are due at the **beginning of the class on the due date**. Late assignments are strongly discouraged. There is a **10% penalty** for **each day** the assignment is late (*including weekends and holidays*). Makeup times can only be arranged for legitimate and verifiable absences. If the absence is known ahead of time, you must make arrangements with me before the day the assignment is due.
- **Written work:** All papers must be **typed, double-spaced, and in APA format** for citing sources. I expect your work to be *college quality*, which means proper spelling, grammar, and organization.
- **Unique academic needs:** If you have an academic need or learning disability that should be taken into account in either classroom activities or exams, you must provide us with the proper documentation detailing the accommodations necessary in the first two weeks of the semester.
- **Academic Integrity:** The School of Communication is committed to the highest standards of academic excellence and ethical support. It endorses and acts on the Scampus policies and procedures detailed in the section titled “University Student Conduct Code.” See especially Appendix A: “Academic Dishonesty Sanction Guidelines.” The policies, procedures, and guidelines will be assiduously upheld. They protect your rights, as well as those of the faculty.

It is particularly important that you are aware of and avoid plagiarism, cheating on exams, fabricating data for project, submitting a paper to more than one professor, or submitting a paper authored by anyone but yourself. If you have doubts about any of these practices, confer with a faculty member or the Director of Undergraduate Studies.

**Tentative Course Schedule: Subject to Change**

Week	Date	Topic	Assignment Due	Readings
1	1/10 1/12	Course Introduction Organization and Communication		Preface and Chapter 1
2	1/17 1/19	Organizational structure and process (cont.)		Chapter 2
3	1/24 1/26	Leadership (cont.)		Chapter 7
4	1/31 2/2	Participation, team, and democracy (cont.)		Chapter 8
5	2/7 2/9	Power and control Organizational identity		Chapter 9 Chapter 5
6	2/14 2/16	Networks (cont.)	<b>Assignment 1</b>	Chapter 6
7	2/21 2/23	Rationality (cont.)		Chapter 3
8	2/28 3/2	<b>Midterm</b> Conflict		Chapter 10
9	3/7 3/9	Conflict (cont.) Organizational communication technologies		Chapter 12
10	3/14 3/16	No Class—Spring recess (March 13-18)		
11	3/21 3/23	Organizational communication technologies (cont.) Organizational culture	<b>Assignment 2</b>	Chapter 11
12	3/28 3/30	Organizational culture (cont.) Organizational change		Chapter 4
13	4/4 4/6	Organizational change (cont.) Communicating in global and multicultural context	<b>Assignment 3</b>	Chapter 13
14	4/11 4/13	Communicating in global and multicultural context (cont.) Ethics and values		
15	4/18 4/20	No class Group presentation	<b>Assignment 4</b>	
16	4/25 4/27	Group presentation Review	<b>Assignment 4</b>	
17	5/4	<b>Final Exam</b> <b>(2:00pm-4:00pm)</b>		