COM 3125 section 11HG

Special Topics in Organizational Communication

Instructor

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Credits: 3; Prereq: COM 1000 or equivalent. Good writing skills


Supplemental Reading:


4) Gareth Morgan, Images of Organization. Also available in my office.

5) Joann Keyton and Pamela Shockley-Zalabak, Case Studies for Organizational Communication, Roxbury. Available in my office and in the library.


7) Isaacson, Walter, Profiles in Leadership, WW Norton, NY publ, 978-0-393-34076-1

Course description

The purpose of this course is to explore the processes, practices and difficulties of communication between and among large groups of people engaged principally in the work environment. To say that the American workforce has changed significantly over the past two centuries is an understatement. Organizational structures, patterns of communication, task and social roles, extrinsic influences, and methods of producing intrinsic motivation and innovation have evolved into many different forms.
The goals of this course are to 1) understand the process of communicating with others in an organizational group, 2) formulate timely written opinions about the status of communication in organizational settings, 3) apply organizational communication research to a wide range of contexts from intrapersonal to societal and 4) to improve written and oral communication and presentation skills.

Three distinct modules will be covered by this course: Organizational structure - classic theories, communication processes - specific theories, and progressive theories - overcoming barriers to successful organizational communication. Your future career depends on the ability to interact successfully with people in an organizational culture as well as to write clearly.

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<th>Deadline</th>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Discussions</td>
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<td>50 each=20</td>
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<td>Midterm Exam</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Book report, speech report</td>
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<td>Final Presentation</td>
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A 450  B 400  C 350  D 325
B+ 440  C+ 380  D+ 340
All writing must have title and author of source (300 words per page). I am hoping for several guest speakers throughout the semester. Be prepared for organizational events that meet after hours and on the weekend.

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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Changing Face of Organizations</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Recruitment, Retention, New Members</td>
<td>7 and 8</td>
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<td>2,3</td>
<td>Organizational process, definitions, values</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Leadership and Management</td>
<td>13</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Theoretical Perspectives, culture and climate,</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Organizational Conflict and Groupthink</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Systems Theory</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Superior-Subordinate</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Individuals in Organizations &amp; Diversity</td>
<td>5 and 11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Ethics and Values</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Small Groups in Organizations</td>
<td>6 and 12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Presentations</td>
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**Notes**

Your research this term should include a variety of techniques. A mix of personal experiences, personal interviews, library sources (from journals), and critical analysis/synthesis will make you a more complete student. If you do not know how to use online databases for research, make an appointment with the reference librarian today or take the one credit library research course.

You must complete all assignments to pass this course – they are not optional. You must clear all extensions ahead of time unless there are serious physical or family circumstances.

**Attendance policy**

Obviously your attendance is required, especially for guest speakers. Plan on presenting some information once or twice this term. Towards the middle of the semester, we may not meet formally on one of the days to allow you to meet with me
individually. However, should you miss three sessions in a row without informing me as to the circumstances, I will assume you are intending to drop the course and a zero will be entered in the gradebook. Long term absences require your Dean’s or DSO approval.

You may miss up to two class sessions this term (Tuesday’s double session counts as two). After that, 25 points will be deducted from your grade per absence. Save your absences for when you need them, including official university business. If you miss six sessions during the term, you cannot pass the course. Please let me know about your schedule and I will work with you. If you fail to present when you are scheduled, you will drop a full letter grade. Missing a writing deadline will result in a 50 point drop.

Your responsibilities

I have provided an interesting semester of work for you. The guest speakers come from a variety of backgrounds and I will present some of my experiences and theories. Your responsibility is to come prepared with an article or experience we can discuss that represents something we should know about an organization and how communicate with people.

Nov 11       Veteran’s Day
Nov 23 to 25  Thanksgiving vacation

We will accommodate all DRC requests. Please submit your letters as soon as possible and before assignments. If your accommodations involve absences, you must meet with the instructor to have a plan approved and scheduled. All absences must still be certified with documentation.

Your well-being is important to the University of Florida. The U Matter, We Care initiative is committed to creating a culture of care on our campus by encouraging members of our community to look out for one another and to reach out for help if a member of our community is in need. If you or a friend is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu so that the U Matter, We Care Team can reach out to the student in distress. A nighttime and weekend crisis counselor is available by phone at 352-392-1575. The U Matter, We Care Team can help connect students to the many other helping resources available including, but not limited to, Victim Advocates, Housing staff, and the Counseling and Wellness Center. Please remember that asking for help is a sign of strength. In case of emergency, call 9-1-1. If you run into financial difficulties, please let them know.

If you do not attend class, you are still responsible for all deadlines and any changes that occur. Since this is a class on organizational communication, if you text or web surf in class, I will ask you to leave and not sign you in for the day. On the second offense, you will leave the class permanently. If you fail to participate in class
exercises, are disruptive, disrespectful, or fail to respond appropriately to corrective measures, you will be asked to leave the class permanently.

Here are a few journals in our field you can use for support:

Communication monographs, Communication Quarterly, Communication Research


Written Assignments

Précis – A précis is a type of summary. Generally a page or two, a précis summarizes the theme of the article, its main points, and its methods of research. The writer will also add a few sentences on the significance of the piece being summarized. Very little opinion is included in a précis. Your motivation article must be from one of these sources listed above or from a qualified academic source.

Your quizzes and your midterm exam will cover lectures and chapters to date. Focus on terminology and key points in the theories we discuss.

Your final assignment is a team presentation about a particular topic, current issue in the news, or organizational problem. You will make recommendations as to how we can overcome barriers to effective organizational communication, and tell us what this adds to our body of knowledge about your topic.

Discussion #1:

Many of us have already worked in some kind of organization, (paid, volunteer, athletic, academic or otherwise). Discussion #1 asks you to tell us what were you expecting when you signed up for the job, what happened on the job, and how different was that from what you were expecting. Focus on one or two interactions that symbolize what you believe has changed in the workplace. You may even want to talk to your parents or other older people about how the workforce has changed.

Two paragraphs of initial post and one paragraph of a response to someone else's post. Please be polite and supportive, especially if you disagree. This requires standard professional writing with appropriate spelling, punctuation, grammar, and expression.

Discussion #2:
By now, you are aware of how an organization's culture and climate affect the members of an organization. Recount an example of the best culture and climate you have experienced, and the worst you have experienced in an organization and what made it so. If it is too painful to post, you don't have to. But at least let's share some stories of "characters" we have worked with.

Two paragraphs of initial post and one paragraph of a response to someone else's post. Please be polite and supportive, especially if you disagree. This requires standard professional writing with appropriate spelling, punctuation, grammar, and expression. Use a quote from an article I have supplied in this module or from the textbook and cite it in a short bibliography.

Midterm exam – Oct 21

Book report – due anytime

One of the great books of the last 20 years is Barbara Eisenreich’s Nickel and Dimed: On Not Getting By in America. Barbara disguises her academic credentials and tries to exist on minimum wages in housecleaning, waitressing, and other industries. It’s an easy read and if you start early, you should finish your book report within time limits. Same with Caitlin Kelly who had to take a job at Northface at the mall and writes about organizational life very revealingly. If you find a book that fits in with our class, let me know.

Discussion #3:

In this discussion, let's explore strategies to fit into an organization but also to preserve our individuality. By now, you have read about classic theories, systems theory, individuality, recruitment and retention, and small group theories as well as seen Heartbreak Ridge. I've worked in rigid structured organizations but moved into teaching because I have a lot of autonomy in the classroom and enjoy the informness of our interactions. That was my strategy. My best friend opened his own law practice yet another old friend has been a lifer in the military. He just likes the structure.

Two paragraphs of initial post and one paragraph of a response to someone else's post. Please be polite and supportive, especially if you disagree. This requires standard professional writing with appropriate spelling, punctuation, grammar, and expression. Please include a quote from an article or the textbook that supports your position (list in a short biblio at the end).

Discussion #4:

For this discussion, I want you to write a letter or email of praise, suggestion, or complaint to an organization and see what kind of response you get. Then, post your letter/email and their response here. Tell me whether you think a “live” person answered it and whether you were satisfied with their response. This is an area called "external communication" and it is a measure of how responsive an organization is to their public and how permeable their boundaries are.
I’m going to open this up early so you can get a head start on this. Sometimes it takes an organization a long time to get to the right office.

Two paragraphs of initial post and one paragraph of a response to someone else’s post. Please be polite and supportive, especially if you disagree. This requires standard professional writing with appropriate spelling, punctuation, grammar, and expression.

**Final Team Presentation**

Three or four of you will be assigned to a group. Collect all names, phone numbers, and emails. Appoint a leader or at least a secretary to record notes of all meetings and coordinate the paperwork.

You will choose a “case” – a real world situation that needs to be acknowledged, communicated, analyzed, and solved. Each one of you will take a particular aspect of supervision or management and the group will present the report to a higher authority.

You can make a training educational presentation, informational presentation, or persuasive presentation. Clarify the situation so you all know what it is all about, discuss alternative solutions and select the best one, and organize a presentation that is clear as to what course of action your team is recommending whether the action involves company hierarchy, colleagues of equal status, or subordinate personnel (or a combination of the three).

Accompanying your oral presentation of three minutes each, you will submit an executive summary with all individual subreports in order. Each subreport will contain its own bibliography of at least three sources but you may use some common sources. Typical subheadings are: problem, cause, solution, best-alternative. You should write about three pages with a title page for the whole report and each individual subreport. Put your bibliography on the fourth page. Make it clean and free of errors. Here are some scenarios that people have presented on in the past.