

SYLLABUS

COM 317: Organizational Communication

CURRENT STUDENTS: THIS IS A SAMPLE SYLLABUS. REFER TO CANVAS FOR THE CURRENT SYLLABUS.



COURSE INFORMATION

Organizations encompass our lives in powerful ways – and no one in our society is exempt from interacting with and within organizations. This course is designed to address the vital role of communication within these organizational contexts. Whatever your career goals, the knowledge you gain from this class will prepare you to think critically about the role that communication plays in organizations, and in turn, the role that organizations play in human experience.

Organizational communication, as a field of study, analyzes how the actions of people inside and outside organizations are coordinated and controlled to achieve some collective outcomes. It is also concerned with the ways that individuals are shaped by those organizational interactions. Therefore, rather than offer a set of skills that allow you to fit into the world of work, this course will attempt to show how communication is key to understanding how organizations function. Only when we understand how organizations work can we change them and consciously shape our own experiences within them.

LEARNING GOALS

We will build on the following 3 primary learning goals throughout the term:

- Students will demonstrate an understanding of different paradigms for understanding organizational communication, as demonstrated by reading responses and the midterm and final exams.
- Students will develop skills that clearly demonstrate the ability to analyze organizational phenomena through organizational communication perspectives, theories, and concepts in their case study final paper.
- Students will integrate understandings of organizational communication theory into their daily life, and be able to apply these understandings to their own organizational experiences, as demonstrated by reading responses and in-class discussion.

TEXTBOOKS AND MATERIALS

The textbook for this course is:

Mumby, D. K. (2013). *Organizational communication: A critical approach*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage. (\$22 to rent on Amazon, also available as an eBook).

The following additional readings will be available on our Canvas website:

Allen, B. J. (1995). "Diversity"; and organizational communication. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 23(2), 143–155.

Bean, H., & Buikema, R. J. (2015). Deconstituting al-Qa'ida: CCO Theory and the Decline and Dissolution of Hidden Organizations. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 29(4), 512–538.

Mumby, D. K., & Stohl, C. (1996). Disciplining Organizational Communication Studies. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 10(1), 50–72.

Trethewey, A. (1999). Disciplined bodies: Women's embodied identities at work. *Organization Studies*, 20(3), 423–450.

Van Maanen, J. (1991). The smile factory: Work at Disneyland. In P. J. Frost, L. F. Moore, M. R. Louis, C. C. Lundberg, & J. Martin (Eds.), *Reframing organizational culture* (pp. 58–76). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

GENERAL POLICIES

1. All class members are expected to constructively engage in class discussions and to display respect for one another. Due to the subject matter of this course, students can reveal a lot about their personal experiences as a way to apply theories to everyday life; in fact, personal application is encouraged. Therefore, you are expected to help create a supportive, respectful, safe environment in our classroom.
2. If you must miss class due to an extenuating circumstance, inform me before you miss class and present documentation. If you arrive late on a consistent basis, I will count your late arrivals as absences. If you need to leave class early for a specific reason, please let me know at the beginning of class and then sit by the door so you will be able to exit quietly. Missed classes and late arrivals **past 4 unexcused absences** will negatively impact your participation grade.
3. Please silence and put away your cell phone. Abuse of technology will result in a reduced participation grade. Bring your textbook or reading notes to class.
4. Except in cases of true emergencies, late work will be subject to a penalty of 25% per day for each calendar day it is late, and will not be accepted more than 3 days late.
5. If you miss an exam due to extenuating circumstances, you will be expected to complete a make-up exam (which will be different from the original exam) at a time determined by me. You will be expected to provide adequate documentation for your absence.
6. If you require exam accommodations, you must contact me at least two weeks prior to *both* exams in order to arrange for extra time or a reduced distraction environment.
7. Check your UNLV email and our Canvas website on a regular basis.

ASSIGNMENTS

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS (400 POINTS)

This course concludes with a case study assignment. The case study requires you to illustrate and analyze an organizational communication perspective or theory by conducting a case study of a real life example. These examples may come from a film, novel, personal experience, news article, or another relevant source. The objective is to develop your capacity to apply an organizational communication perspective or theory to a concrete organizational context and to analyze the communication processes in this context. The Case Study is a semester project that will include three parts: (1) A proposal; (2) Theoretical lens (Paper #2); and (3) Critical Analysis (Paper #3). Paper #3 will serve as the final paper for the course and will include much of the work from Paper #1 and 2. Each of the three assignments will be described in more detail during

the semester, and resources will be available on Canvas. A breakdown of this grade is as follows:

- Proposal: 50 points
- Theoretical lens paper: 150 points
- Critical analysis paper: 200 points

EXAMS (2 x 200 POINTS)

Exams are designed to give you an extended opportunity to demonstrate your careful thinking about the issues discussed in class. They also help you to synthesize information across several course topics. You are responsible for all course material, including in-class discussions, even if we have not discussed a particular assignment in class. Exams will include a combination of multiple choice and essay questions. The midterm exam will focus on materials from the first half of the semester (Ch. 1–6), and the final exam will focus on materials from the second (Ch. 7–14).

PARTICIPATION AND ATTENDANCE (200 POINTS)

Your course engagement grade is based upon your ability to contribute thoughtfully throughout the duration of the course. This requires arriving at class prepared for the discussions. You are allowed 4 absences throughout the semester without any penalty. Excused absences will be granted for religious observance, athletic travel with UNLV teams, emergencies and illness, and some family/community commitments. You will need to provide *documentation* in order to have an excused absence. For religious observance and athletic travel, you will need to provide notice in advance of absences. Please speak with me if you have concerns about attendance.

Discussion leaders: During the semester, you will be asked to start our in-class discussion of the day's readings once. In order to complete this assignment, you will come to class with 2 discussion questions that you will pose to the class. A sign-up sheet will be distributed the first week of class. Discussion questions are worth 20 points.

Quizzes: In addition to general in-class activities, this class includes occasional reading quizzes. Reading quizzes are worth 10 points each, ask 1 question, and are answered within the first 10 minutes of class. Potential reading quiz questions are found on the weekly reading guides on Canvas. You do not have to complete the reading guides, but they are meant to help focus your reading on key concepts. However, if you *do* complete a reading guide (or take any notes) you are welcome to use those during the quiz.

POINT DISTRIBUTION:

MIDTERM EXAM, 200 POINTS (20%)

FINAL EXAM, 200 POINTS (20%)

CASE STUDY PAPER, 400 POINTS (40%)

PARTICIPATION, 200 POINTS (20%)

TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS= 1000

GRADING

Grades are best discussed in an environment that is relaxed and private. If you wish to discuss a grade, please email me to set up an appointment at least 24 hours after the grade is posted. I do not discuss grades over email or in front of the rest of the class.

Here are what letter grades mean to me:

“A” is an extremely good grade. It means you have demonstrated excellent mastery of the material; your work and performance were consistently better than nearly everyone else in the class.

“B” is a very good grade. It means you did all of the required work and performed in class at a level that is noticeably and demonstrably superior to many of your classmates.

“C” is a good grade. It means that you met all of the expectations for students noted in the syllabus, and you did all of the required work at a level that was competent.

Anything below a “C” means you did not master the material adequately. A grade below C should prompt you to assess your study/classroom habits and visit office hours so you can diagnose what you need to do differently in your studying, assignment preparation, etc.

For grades to be meaningful (to you, me, or anyone else) they have to reflect differences in mastery. If an “A” means that you merely did what you were asked to do, it is no different than a “C,” and it therefore means nothing at all.

COURSE CALENDAR

****Readings and assignments are listed on their due dates****

WEEK 1, INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

Monday, 8/26: Course overview

Wednesday, 8/28: Mumby, Chapter 1

WEEK 2, DEFINING ORGANIZATIONS

Monday, 9/2: **No class, Labor Day**

Wednesday, 9/4: Mumby and Stohl, "Disciplining Org Comm"

WEEK 3, THE CRITICAL APPROACH TO ORGANIZATIONS

Monday, 9/9: Mumby, Chapter 2

Wednesday, 9/11: The Managerial Perspective on Organizations

WEEK 4, SCIENTIFIC MANAGEMENT

Monday, 9/16: Mumby, Chapter 3

Wednesday, 9/18: Scientific management and the critical approach continued

WEEK 5, THE HUMAN RELATIONS SCHOOL

Monday, 9/23: "Digital Taylorism," *Assign case study Paper 1*

Wednesday, 9/25: Mumby, Chapter 4

WEEK 6, SYSTEMS THEORY

Monday, 9/30: Mumby, Chapter 5

Wednesday, 10/1: Systems and reliability continued

WEEK 7, CULTURAL VIEWS OF ORGANIZING

Monday, 10/7: Mumby, Chapter 6, **Case study paper 1 proposal due**

Wednesday, 10/9: Van Maanen, "The Smile Factory", *Assign case study paper 2*

WEEK 8, MIDTERM

Monday, 10/14: Midterm review in class

Wednesday, 10/16: **Midterm exam in class**

WEEK 9, IDENTITY AND DIFFERENCE

Monday, 10/21: Mumby, Chapter 9

Wednesday, 10/23: Allen, "Diversity and Organizational Communication"

WEEK 10, IDENTITY AND DIFFERENCE

Monday, 10/28: Mumby, Chapter 10

Wednesday, 10/30: Trethewey, "Disciplined Bodies", ***Case Study Paper 2 due***

WEEK 11, EMOTIONS AT WORK

Monday, 11/4: Mumby, Chapter 8, *Assign Case Study Paper 3*

Wednesday, 11/6: "In Praise of Doing Nothing: Work Life Balance"

WEEK 12

Monday, 11/11: **No Class, Veteran's Day**

Wednesday, 11/13: **No Class, National Communication Association Conference**

WEEK 13, IDENTITY AND WORK

Monday, 11/18: Mumby, Chapter 14

Wednesday, 11/20: A virtual tour of Epic

WEEK 14, CONSTITUTING ORGANIZATIONS

Monday, 11/25: Bean and Buikema, "De-constituting al-Qaeda"

Wednesday, 11/27: **No Class, Thanksgiving travel day**

WEEK 15, FINAL PRESENTATIONS

Monday, 12/2: Final paper roundtable presentations in class

Wednesday, 12/4: Roundtable discussion continues, ***Case Study Paper 3 Due***

WEEK 16, FINAL EXAM WEEK

Date TBD: In-class final exam

