

COMST 314: Organizational Communication
Spring 2015
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TEXTBOOKS:

Miller, K. (2006). *Organizational communication: Approaches and processes* (6th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Keyton, J., & Shockley-Zalabak, P. (2010). *Case studies for organizational communication: Understanding communication processes* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Oxford Press.

Additional articles posted on course website.

COURSE PURPOSE AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

Organizations are pervasive and impact our lives in powerful ways. From the schools we attend to the places we work, all of these experiences shape our understanding of organizations. In this course we will examine how communication creates, sustains, and sometimes even destroys organizations. The purpose of this class is to help you understand how organizations work so that you can change them in positive and meaningful ways. My goal is to help you go beyond taking organizations at face value and begin to ask why they operate in the ways that they do. We will additionally explore what can be done to make organizations and our experiences within them better.

In this class we will examine the ways that people communicate in different contexts and the ways in which communication creates and sustains organizations. The goals of this course are to:

- understand major concepts and theories of communication in organizational contexts
- learn the historical development of theory and research in organizational communication
- apply organizational communication theories and concepts to practical organizational communication situations
- think critically about the role of communication in organizational processes
- explore common organizational communication problems and develop recommendations for change

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1. Two examinations. There will be two examinations given in this course. Exam questions may include a variety of multiple choice, short answer, multiple choice, and essay questions. The midterm is worth 100 points. The final exam is also worth 100 points.

2. Case analysis papers. A main objective of this course is for you to develop the ability to apply theory to practical “real world” situations. The case study analysis papers are designed to give you scenarios in which to apply your knowledge of theory and practice by applying organizational communication concepts to a particularized situation. You will be completing three case analysis papers throughout the course of the semester each worth 25 points.

3. Organizational application journal. An objective of this course is for you to gain the ability to apply organizational communication theory to practical situations. The aim of this assignment is to provide you with the ability to apply what you are learning in class to your own experiences in an organization. You must first choose an organization to which you belong (i.e. place of employment, student organizations, your church). For each chapter we cover in class you should write a journal entry applying the concepts and theories of that chapter to your organization. You might ponder questions like: What key concepts or terms are relevant when studying your organization? What would an expert on each perspective conclude about your organization? How effective is your organization? What does your organization do well? What solutions do you have to make improvements in your organization? How relevant are the various models to your organization? Ultimately, your entries should explore what your organization does well and what areas could be improved upon. This assignment is worth 50 points.

4. Organizational consulting report. Using the insights you gained in your application journal, identify strengths and weaknesses in your organization. You will then create a report that highlights these strengths and weaknesses and provides solutions for how to improve communication in your organization. As you do this, though, you need to be sure that the way in which you “apply” your expertise remains true to the research and theory within organizational communication.

This assignment is worth 100 points.

5. Enron research paper. You will be required to write a paper connecting course concepts and theory to *Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room* which will be shown during class. This assignment is worth 50 points.

6. Participation. I expect you to come to class ready to participate in the on-going discussion of communication in and about organizations. Please come prepared to ask questions, share insights, and apply concepts. You will be evaluated for participation at the end of each class session.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE:

Week	Topic	Reading	Assignment
1	Syllabus and Introductions What is Organizational Communication?	Chapter 1 Miller	
2	Classical Approaches Human Relations and Human Resources Approaches	Chapter 2 Miller Case 18 Keyton Chapter 3 Miller Herzberg Article	
3	HR Approaches Continued... In-Class Application Activity		
4	Systems Approaches	Chapter 4 Miller	Case Paper 1 Systems

		Dvoskin Article Case 14 Keyton	
5	Cultural Approaches	Chapter 5 Miller Lucas et al Article	
6	Critical Approaches	Chapter 6 Miller Zoller Article Case 25 Keyton	Case Paper 2 Critical
7	Application Catch-Up and Exam Review Midterm		Midterm
8	Socialization Change and Leadership Processes	Chapter 7 Miller Case 27 Keyton Chapter 10 Miller Case 3 Keyton	Journal Entries Part 1
9	Organizational Diversity Processes Processes of Emotion in the Workplace	Chapter 12 Miller Case 36 Keyton Chapter 11 Meyerson Article	
10	Emotion Continued Work-Life Balance Processes	Case 38 Hewlett Article Kolhatkar Article Case 23 Keyton	Case Paper 3 Emotion
11	Conflict and Workplace Bullying In-Class Application	Chapter 9 Miller Tye-Williams & Krone Article Case 32	
12	The Changing Landscape of Organizations and Organizational Challenges	Chapter 14 Miller Williams Article Eidelson Article	Journal Entries Part 2
13	<i>Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room</i> Viewing and Discussion		

14	The Bad: Companies We Love to Hate The Ugly: Organizational Communication at Penn State	Spector Article and Walmart: The Bad? Conspiracy of Silence Article Penn State One Year Later	Enron Papers Due
15	The Good: Socially Responsible Organizations Project Presentations & Course Wrap Up and Review		Consulting Reports Due
16	Final Exam		Final Exam

Supplemental Articles in Order of Inclusion

- Herzberg, F. (1968/2003). One more time: How do you motivate employees? *Harvard Business Review*, 81(1), 1-16.
- Dwoskin, E. (2011). Why Americans won't do dirty jobs. *Businessweek*, pp. 70-78.
- Lucas, K., & Buzzanell, P. M. (2004). Blue-collar work, career, and success: Occupational narratives of sisu. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 32, 273-292.
- Zoller, H. M. (2003). Health on the line: Identity and disciplinary control in employee occupational health and safety discourse. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 31, 118-139.
- Eidelson, J. (2012). *Can you be fired for what you post on Facebook?* Retrieved from http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/jurisprudence/2012/07/getting_fired_for_what_you_post_on_factbook.html
- Meyerson, D. E. (2000). If emotions were honoured: A cultural analysis. In S. Fineman (Ed). *Emotion in Organizations* (pp. 167-183). London, England: Sage.
- Hewlett, S. A. (2002). Executive women and the myth of having it all. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 28, 68-88.
- Williams, R. (2009). Why are you not like me? The generational gap in the workplace. *Psychology Today* retrieved from <http://www.psychologytoday.com>.
- Spector, D. (2012). *The 15 most disliked companies in America*. Retrieved from <http://finance.yahoo.com/news/the-15-most-disliked-companies-in-america.html?page=1>
- Tye-Williams, S., & Krone, K. J. (2015). Chaos, reports, and quests: Narrative agency and co-workers in stories of workplace bullying. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 29, 3-27.