

FALL 2011	CSS 4301: Organizational Communication	
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	<i>(email is the most effective channel of communication)</i>	

OVERVIEW Consider the following:

- Whether as a volunteer, employee, customer, or other form of membership, we encounter and are profoundly affected by organizations throughout our lives.
- Communication is the means whereby organizations are created, sustained, changed, and even destroyed. Yes, buildings, money, and other physical resources matter a great deal to organizations, but the means by which all of these are gained/lost, valued/stigmatized, and otherwise transformed is *communication*.

As such, it's important to examine how we shape organizational structures, goals, cultures, policies, problems, membership, ethics, etc. through communication. This course will increase your knowledge in this vein and challenge you to explore how communication processes may be engaged to improve the lives of members and stakeholders.

#### COURSE GOALS

The overarching goal of this course is to critically examine the centrality of organizational communication in our lives. Sub-goals in line with this aim include:

- A. Understanding organizations as complex *systems* with situated, multi-layered *cultures*;
- B. Analyzing the nature and consequences of organizational messages – including their in(formal), (non)strategic, relational, instrumental, symbolic, and ideological dimensions;
- C. Analyzing and evaluating organizations based on this systemic-cultural view.
- D. Assessing the organizational communication practices of ourselves and others.

#### COURSE OBJECTIVES

To accomplish the aforementioned goals, you will engage in the following activities:

1. Read major works in organizational communication and demonstrate understanding of ideas in these readings by taking *short, objective quizzes* and participating in *student-led (teacher-facilitated) roundtable discussions* (Goals A & B).
2. Write weekly *2-minute papers* during class applying course concept(s) to assess successes/failures of specific contemporary organizations (Goal C).
3. Select an organization in your life and write *4 reflection essays* using course concepts to evaluate members' communication practices (including yours) (Goal D).
4. Demonstrate abilities to critically analyze organizational communication processes by participating in *weekly group activities and case studies* (Goals B, C, D).
5. Read a case study and summarize its pertinent cultural/systemic organizational elements and messages in a *15-minute group presentation* (Goals A, B, C).
6. Take *two major exams* over the course units, the first being objective-based (Goals A, B) and the second being essay-based (Goals C, D).

**MATERIALS  
AND  
RESOURCES**Required reading materials:

There is no assigned textbook in this course. Rather, a digital course packet of select chapters and articles will be assigned. These readings may be accessed via Blackboard (see below for more information). Specific due dates for readings will be announced in class.

Blackboard:

Blackboard will be used to access assigned readings, supplemental learning resources (including PowerPoints), and grading/attendance records. Some assignments may also be submitted via Blackboard. Specifically, we will use the following Blackboard tools:

- *“Course Documents”* - There are folders containing “Assigned Readings”, “Assignment Prompts,” and “Writing Resources” to help with written assignments.
- *“Tools”* - There are links to your grade book (“My Grades”) and attendance (“Online Attendance”) located under this tab. Grades/attendance are posted in a timely manner so that you can monitor your own success in the course. You can also email your professor and classmates using the “Send Email” link.

Writing resources:

All written assignments must be formatted according to standards of the American Psychological Association’s (APA) 6th edition manual. Copies are available in Moody Library or you may consult Purdue’s “Owl” Online Writing Lab for formatting guidance/examples at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>.

Need help with written assignments? Here’s some options for assistance:

- (a) The “Writing Resources” folder on Blackboard (under Course Documents) has information on crafting, editing, and formatting your written work.
- (b) I will review an assignment if you’ll submit it at least 1 class day before it’s due.
- (c) The English Department’s Writing Center offers daily tutoring sessions to assist students of all majors in crafting, formatting, and proofreading written assignments. Call 254-710-4849 to schedule an appointment.

Learning accommodations & resources

BU offers assistance in many aspects of your learning process including:

- *Documented Disabilities:* The Office of Access and Learning Accommodations (OALA) in the Paul L. Foster Success Center is an excellent resource for students who experience learning/physical disabilities (e.g., dyslexia, visual impairment). I am happy to accommodate any disabilities documented through OALA.

- *Physical/Mental Wellbeing:* The Baylor Counseling Center provides a variety of services designed to help student with stress management, relaxation, depression, anxiety, and other aspects of mind/body wellbeing. See the Center's website ([http://www.baylor.edu/counseling\\_center/](http://www.baylor.edu/counseling_center/)) for further information.

## POLICIES

### Attendance, Participation, & Absences

Per BU's College of Arts & Sciences policy, your presence is required in at least 75% of the scheduled class dates listed on your course calendar (i.e., failure on the 11<sup>th</sup> absence).

Students who fail to meet this attendance requirement will receive an F in the course.

[Excused absences still count toward your 75% requirement; thus, I only mark "A" (absent) or "P" (present) on Blackboard attendance.]

Beyond the minimum attendance requirement, you are expected to come prepared to class and actively participate. This level of participation accounts for 15% of your grade in this course (NOTE: participation during student-led discussions, presentations, and group activities are particularly crucial to this grade).

### General Grade Policies:

General assignment descriptions are included in this syllabus, and specific expectations for each assignment will be provided at a later date. Success hinges on your personal responsibility to complete assignments fully and adhere to the following standards:

1. *Submission Format* – hardcopies due in class (unless otherwise instructed; NOTE: I do not accept assignments via email).
2. *Late Assignments* – Because this is a 4000-level course and many of you are about to enter the "real world," I expect you will adhere to deadlines. Thus, I do not accept late assignments (unless the absence is excused for reasons listed below).
3. *Missed Assignments* – I do not allow make-ups unless they are due to university excused absence (i.e., documented illness, university-sponsored travel, or family emergency). In the event of university sponsored travel, please provide documented notice 1 week prior to the travel date. In the event of illness or family emergency, provide documentation (e.g., doctor's note) within 1 week following the absence. Upon returning to class you have 1 week to reschedule the exam and/or submit the assignment.
4. *Grading Disputes* – You may discuss a grade within 1 week of it being posted on Blackboard. You must arrange a time outside of class to visit about a grade.

5. *Extra Credit* – While this is not guaranteed, opportunities may be announced periodically. If extra credit is awarded during an in-class activity that you miss, you are not eligible to earn this credit.

### Written Assignments

Unless otherwise instructed, written assignments adhere to the following requirements:

- Length: 2-3 double spaced pages (not including references)
- Type in 12-point Times New Roman font with 1-inch margins.
- Staple document and include a header (with your name) on all pages.
- Any citations/references should be formatted in APA style.

### Ethical Integrity

- *Respect*: We may discuss sensitive topics (e.g., sexual harassment) throughout the course. During these and any class discussion, I encourage you to voice your opinions and disagreement, but I ask you to do so with a tone of civility and respect.
- *Academic dishonesty*: You will be expected to incorporate scholarly research into your work and properly cite any such material in your speaking and writing. Also, all assignments are to be completed individually unless otherwise indicated by your professor. Unauthorized collaboration (i.e., cheating) and failure to cite proprietary information (i.e., plagiarism) will be considered a violation of Baylor's Honor Code Policy and reported to the Office of Academic Integrity. Students who commit academic dishonesty are subject to sanctions including (1) assignment penalty/failure, (2) course failure, or (3) probation, suspension, or expulsion from the university. See <http://www.baylor.edu/honorcode/index.php?id=44060> for a complete description of the Honor Code Policy & Procedures.

GRADING SCALE	A	90-100%	Superior (exceeds all standards)
	B+	87-89%	Excellent (exceeds most standards)
	B	80-86%	Strong (exceeds some standards)
	C+	77-79%	Above average (meets all standards)
	C	70-76%	Average (meets standards)
	D	60-69%	Below Average (does not meet some standards)
	F	Below 59.5%	Failing (does not meet minimum standards)

GRADING CRITERIA	Exams (Unit 1 & 2)	10% & 15% (respectively)
	Quizzes	25% (no dropped quizzes)
	Reading Discussion Facilitation	13%
	Case Study Presentation	11%
	Written Assignments	12% (3% each)
	Participation	15%

### EXAMS

Two exams will be administered, collectively worth 25% of your final grade. The first exam will be comprised of objective questions (e.g., multiple choice, T/F, matching), and the second exam will be essay-based. Further details about the format, length, and scope of each exam will be announced in class prior to the exam. Tentative dates for these exams are listed on your course calendar.

### QUIZZES & READING DISCUSSION FACILITATION

Short comprehension quizzes will be administered on the date that an assigned reading is due. These quizzes collectively comprise 25% of your grade (all quizzes will be averaged and then weighted at this percentage). Additionally, you (along with several classmates) will facilitate a discussion for one of the assigned readings for Unit 2. Specific expectations for this assignment will be provided at the semester's mid-point. This will be a group grade and comprise 13% of your course evaluation.

### CASE STUDY PRESENTATION

During Unit 2, you will be assigned to a group and provide an introductory 15-minute presentation of a case study that will be used for an in-class discussion. Though this is a group presentation, you will be evaluated individually by your professor and your group members. Specific requirements and guidelines for this assignment will be provided during the first weeks of class.

### WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

There will be 4 written assignments requiring you to apply knowledge of course material to reflect on your own organizational experiences. Writing must conform to the guidelines set forth in this syllabus; specific requirements for assignments will be announced throughout the semester. Each is worth 3% of your grade.

### PARTICIPATION

Beyond minimum attendance requirements, I expect you to participate in classroom discussions and activities that will require you to exhibit understanding of readings and collaboratively engage in tasks. Participation in activities, discussions, and presentations is particularly crucial to this 15% grading component.

*My hope is that this course will challenge you to view, evaluate, and participate in the organizations in new and unique ways, both now and in the future. So long as you attend class regularly and are conscientious about completing your assignments, our time together should be enjoyable and insightful.*

## COURSE CALENDAR

UNIT 1: UNDERSTANDING & INVESTIGATING ORGANIZATIONS		Tentative Schedule of Readings, Assignments, & Activities
<u>Weeks 1 &amp; 2 (Aug 22- Sept 2):</u> What is organizational communication (OC) & why do we study it?	Reading: Introduction to Org. Comm. (Cheney) Lists and Stories (Browning)	
<u>Weeks 3, 4, &amp; 5 (Sept 5-23):</u> How do we study OC? ( <i>Mon. Sept 5 - Labor Day holiday</i> )	Readings: The Concept of Organizational Culture (Schein) Deeper Cultural Assumptions (Schein) Deciphering Organizational Cultures (Schein) Systems, Structures, and Processes (Cheney et al.) Organizing and Sensemaking (Weick et al.) Using & Analyzing Case Studies (Keyton, Davenport)  Writing assignment #1	
<u>Weeks 6 &amp; 7 (Sept 26 - Oct 7):</u> Concepts in action & demonstrating your knowledge ( <i>no class Fri. Sept 30</i> ) ( <i>no class Mon. Oct 3</i> )	<i>"Smartest Guys in the Room" documentary (no readings)</i> <b>Unit 1 EXAM (in-class &amp; take-home components)</b>	
UNIT 2: TOPICS / ISSUES IN OC		Tentative Schedule of Readings, Assignments, & Activities
<u>Weeks 8-15 (Oct 10 - Dec 2):</u> TBD (we will cover 4-5 major topics/issues in OC)  <u>Class cancellations / holidays:</u> <i>Fri. Oct 14 (Fall Break holiday)</i> <i>Fri. Nov. 18 (NCA convention)</i> <i>Wed. Nov 23 - Fri. 25th (Thanksgiving)</i>	<i>TBD: Course schedule for Unit 2 will be forthcoming...</i>  <i>* Readings/quizzes will continue as they did in Unit 1</i>  <i>** Your group "Reading Discussion Facilitation" and "Case Study Presentation" will be completed during this unit</i>	

Monday, December 5 - Last day of class (final exam review)

**FINAL EXAM: 12:20 class** - Tuesday, December 13, 9-11 a.m.

**1:25 class** - Friday, December 9, 9-11 a.m.