

COMS 3500: Introduction to Organizational Communication
Spring 2014
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Ohio University

TEXTBOOK:

Miller, K. (2015). *Organizational communication: Approaches and processes* (7th ed.). Boston, MA: Wadsworth/Cengage Learning.

Additional readings:

Peterson, B. L., & McNamee, L. G. Managing the involuntary: The communicative construction of a different kind of member. Manuscript under review at *Management Communication Quarterly*.

McNamee, L. G., & Peterson, B. L. (2015). High-stakes volunteer commitment: A qualitative analysis. *Nonprofit Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 1-20. Advanced publication online. Doi. 10.1177/0899764015581055

McPhee, R. D., & Zaug, P. (2009). The communicative constitution of organizations; A framework for explanation. In L. L. Putnam & A. M. Nicotera (Eds.), *Building theories of organization: The constitutive role of communication* (pp. 21-47).

Veil, S. R., Sellnow, T. L., & Petrun, E. L. (2012). Hoaxes and the paradoxical challenges of restoring legitimacy: Dominos' response to its YouTube crisis. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 26, 322-345. doi. 10.1177/0893318911426685

COURSE PURPOSE AND LEARNING OUTCOMES:

It is through organizations that members of a society achieve their collective goals—from making laws and building bridges to the local and international trade of goods and services. Organizational communication is the study of how persons accomplish these goals via the ongoing, mutual exchange of verbal and nonverbal messages.

To provide students with a firm grounding in organizational communication theory, while at the same time highlighting the very practical nature of this endeavor, this course is built around the following objectives. Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

After successfully completing this course, you will be able to:

1. Differentiate between the major schools of thought and basic concepts in organizational theory
2. Compare the usefulness of various theoretical perspectives in organizational settings and situations
3. Interpret the role that communication plays in our organizational lives
4. Identify communication problems in a variety of organizational contexts
5. Critique theory to further our understanding of organizational phenomena
6. Reflectively apply organizational theory to practice

7. Improve academic writing skills using outlining and revision processes

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

This class is comprised of four grading elements. First, your participation in this course will be enacted both in the classroom and online. You will be expected to (1) speak up in class discussions as well as actively participate in any course activities. In addition, you will be expected to tweet insights and organizational news story links weekly. Second, four times during the term, you will write (2) reflection papers that answer a prompt and engage course material while paying attention to a specific writing challenge. Third, you will be required to submit several different building blocks (i.e., idea submission, outline, draft, peer review) that will culminate in your (3) final paper submission. Fourth, you will have a (4) final essay exam in this course. Below you will find a brief description of each assignment.

In class discussion @ 30 points + Tweets @ 70 points = 100 total points

In Class Discussion (30 points)

I firmly believe in the concept of an engaged learning environment. As such, part of your participation grade will be determined based on your actual contributions (quantitative and qualitative) to the class discussions. I learn more from the students each time I teach this course and everyone's learning is enhanced when students contribute to the classroom discussion. You always should come to class prepared to talk about the chapter readings, article readings, and news stories. I expect students to be involved throughout the term.

Weekly Tweets (70 points)

In addition to in class discussion, you will participate digitally by tweeting 2-3 times weekly. Each week you will need to tweet or retweet at least one article link that is related to organizational communication. In addition, you will need to tweet one comment, concern, reflection, or idea in advance of the daily reading. Be sure to use the hashtag #COMS3500 on each tweet to earn credit. You can follow me @PetersonBritt

Attendance

Your attendance is expected. We will cover a great deal of material during class periods and it will be very easy to fall behind. Additionally, this class is designed around a discussion-based format. Low attendance will result in less productive conversations and a stunted learning environment for all students. Attendance will be taken in each class and will be used to determine borderline participation grades. Missing more than 3 days will result in your final class grade being lowered one full letter grade for each additional absence (e.g., if you miss 4 classes during the semester and earn an "A" for a final grade, you will receive a "B").

Reflection Papers: 4 papers @ 25 points each = 100 total points

Four times during the term you will be asked to write a 1-2 page reflection paper. These papers will address a specific prompt about the chapter material covered in each course unit. In addition, for each individual reflection paper, students will be asked to focus their attention on improving a specific writing skill (e.g., passive vs. active voice, topic sentences/thesis statements, etc.)

Final Application Paper (50 points)

You will be required to write a 5 page final paper for the course. In this paper, you will provide a brief overview of an organization you currently are (or recently have been) a part of; pick one chapter in the text book and apply at least 3 course concepts/theories to your organization; based on these theories/concepts, explain/analyze what the organization is doing well and poorly; and offer suggestions to improve the situation, justify these suggestions with course concepts.

In order to produce the best possible product, this assignment is broken down into 5 separate phases: *Idea Submission* (credit/no credit 5 pts), *Outline* (15 pts), *Completed Draft of Paper* (credit/no credit 5 pts), *Peer Review* (25 pts), *Final Paper* (100 pts).

Essay Exam (50 pts.)

The only exam you will take this term will be the final exam. It is a cumulative, in class, essay exam. We will talk about this more as the term progresses. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Cheating on examinations or plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the exam, potentially the course, and initiation of academic misconduct proceedings.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE:

Week	Date	Scheduled Topic	Reading/Assignment DUE
Unit 1: Organizational Communication Perspectives & Approaches			
1		Class Introduction & Intro to Org Com	Purchase Book Sign up for Twitter Chapter 1
		Communicative Constitution of Organizations	McPhee & Zaug (2009)
2		Classical Management Approaches	Chapter 2
			News story TBA
3		Human Relations & Human Resources Approaches	Chapter 3
			News story TBA
4		Critical Approaches	Chapter 6 Due: Reflection 1
		League of Denial (PBS special on NFL Concussion Crisis)	News story TBA

Unit 2: New Forms of Organization & Organizing			
5		Non-Profit & Volunteer Organizations	McNamee & Peterson (2015)
			News story TBA
6		Involuntary Organizations	Peterson, B. L., & McNamee, L. G. (under review)
			Due: Idea submission for final paper News story TBA
7		Good Works Visit	News story TBA
		Darryl Graves Visit	News story TBA
8		Technology in Organizations & Telecommuting	Chapter 13 Due: Reflection 2
			Due: Outline of Final Paper
Unit 3: Organizational Processes, Practices, and Intersections			
9		Socialization Processes	Chapter 7
			News story TBA
10		Processes of Emotion in the Workplace	Chapter 11
			News story TBA
11		Organizational Culture	Chapter 5 Due: Reflection 3
		Work Shop Peer Review & Org Com in the news	Due: Draft of Final Paper News story TBA
12		Crisis Communication	Veil, Sellnow, & Petrun (2012)
			News story TBA
13		Conflict Management Processes	Chapter 9 Due: Peer Review Feedback
			TBA

14		Organizational Diversity Processes	Chapter 12 Due: Reflection 4
15		Final Reflections, Questions, and Synthesis	News story TBA
		Final Exam	
Final paper due at final exam time slot			