**Organizational Communication – COM 329**

**Fall 2019**

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**Course Goal & Description**  
This senior seminar in organizational communication is designed to increase your critical thinking, understanding and skills in organizational communication processes and outcomes. We’ll use case studies to explore how organizational communication concepts apply to real life, ambiguous, organizational communication challenges. This course will provide you with a solid grounding in relevant theories and strategies of organizational communication relevant to your experiences, real-life settings, and potential situations. This course is divided into five modules based on what you are likely to experience as you enter, explore and manage organizational communication during your career out of university:

* Module 1 – Theoretical Overview. This module covers different theoretical approaches to organizational communication that you can use when analyzing cases. It also provided a grounding in how to work with case studies.
* Module 2 – Fitting Into an Organization. This module provides an overview and in-depth analysis of what fitting into an organization means.
* Module 3 – Organizational Change and Development. This module provides an overview and in-depth analysis of how organizational change works (or doesn’t work!).
* Module 4 – Organizational Conflict and Negotiation. This module covers differing understandings and approaches to organizational conflict and negotiation.
* Module 5 – Organizational Results. This module covers the importance of communication for organizational results like motivation, satisfaction, productivity and organizational development.
* **Course Objectives**
* To build on the knowledge gained in previous organizational communication and communication courses and apply it to real-life cases.
* To gain an in-depth understanding of communication issues that are likely to be experienced in the work-world: fitting into an organization, organizational change and development, organizational conflict and negotiation, and organizational outcomes.
* To develop as a competent communicator by learning to be an informed, reflective, critical thinker who demonstrates efficient and adaptive communicative behavior.
* To develop as a competent organizational communicator by applying concepts and skills to organizational communication challenges.

**Course Structure**  
This is a senior, case-based learning seminar. You’ll be provided with real-life organizational communication case studies that are ambiguous without clear solutions. Your job will be to analyse, present and discuss these cases, using course concepts. We’ll do that using lectures, small group work, in-class presentations, and on-line work. All course material and on-line interaction will be on ReggieNet.

**Course Materials**We’re using two books for this course:

-The textbook: ***Strategic Organizational Communication in a Global Economy*** by Conrad & Poole, 2012 (7th edition). It’s available at the ISU bookstore, and I’ve also put a copy on reserve at Milner. The good news is that it’s also available at Milner as an e-book – so you can access it online via your Milner library account for free (go here: <http://vufind.carli.illinois.edu/vf-isu/Record/isu_1536752>).  
-The case study book: ***Case Studies for Organizational Communication*** by Keyton and Shockley-Zalabak, Third Edition (2010). I’ve also asked that a copy of this be put on reserve at Milner.

All other course material will be available on ReggieNet (that includes the additional readings). On-line material will be available free to you, although you will likely spend some money on printing supplies if you prefer to read from paper than on a screen. Most course content will be in PDF, Word, and PPT, which should work for either PC or Mac. To view or print some of the documents, you will need either Microsoft PowerPoint or PowerPoint Viewer software installed on your computer. If you do not have either, the "Viewer" product is available for downloading **free** from the Microsoft Download Center website.

**My Expectations of You**

***Please speak up*.** If you have questions or need fuller explanations, I can be reached during office hours, by appointment, or e-mail. (Please note that it may take up to 48 hours for me to return your e-mail). If you have questions about the course that is covered by consulting the document posted on Reggienet about assignments in detail, evaluation procedures and course policies, I ask that you highlight the section of the document that’s unclear.

***Please be prepared***. This class is a case-based course. That means you’ll need to prepare for in-class case discussions ***before*** class.

***Problems? Please let me know right away.*** If you get in touch with me towards the end of the semester, it will likely be too late to adjust or effect change. This is also why I’ll be holding several classroom feedback sessions, one in the first month, to help identify any chronic issues that can be adjusted.

**Getting in Touch With Me**

Office hours are **your** time; it’s time set aside for your comments and questions regarding assignments, course content, and your progress in the course. Questions and comments mean that you’re engaging with the course, so please don’t be shy to drop by. If you can’t make my office hours but have questions or comments, please be in touch with e-mail or my office telephone. (If you need to get in touch with me about a personal emergency, please use my ilstu e-mail and/or the phone. Regular questions about course content should please use the Reggienet e-mail function). If I don’t answer the phone, please leave a message with your name and a number that I can reach you at. Please note that I’ll respond to you within 48 hours at the latest, and only during ‘regular’ business hours – so please plan accordingly. (For instance, I won’t respond on the weekend, or at 5am in the morning).

**Course Requirements:**

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| --- | --- |
| Assignment | Maximum Points |
| Exam 1 | 100 |
| Exam 2 | 100 |
| Case Study  Presentation and class activity Group Paper Group Brochure | 100 180 50 |
| Participation – Reading Responses and Case Prep | 75 |
| Participation – In Class | 75 |
| Professionalism Self-Assessment | 50 |
| Group Contribution Assessment | 50 |
| Graduate Student Project | 100 |
| Possible Extra Credit | 20 |
| Total |  |
|  | Undergrad=780 Graduate = 880 |

**Two Exams (200 total points):** The exams may include multiple choice, true/false, matching, or short answer questions. You will be responsible for readings, discussions, and all class materials. The final exam is NOT cumulative; it will only cover the second half of the course.

**Final Project (280 points) + Group Contribution Assessment (50 points):** This is a three-part project, using the case study that your group chooses to engage with.   
  
*Part A:* This will be a presentation where you lead the class in a discussion of the case you’ve chosen, as well as associated concepts. You’ll also lead the class in a learning activity (NOT Kahoot or Jeopardy).   
  
*Part B*: Pretending that you’re organizational communication consultants, you’ll be responsible for providing a group paper that analyzes the issues found in the case study, and providing two strategies, based on course concepts, that will help move the organization forward. You will need to use course concepts to argue why these are effective strategies, and to indicate which one your group would suggest as the most effective for the organization.   
  
*Part C:* Again, pretending that you’re organizational communication consultants, you’ll be responsible for producing a brochure for your organization that targets the organizational stakeholders to describe the strategy you think will help turn this organization around.

***A note on group conflict versus social loafing:***  
Groups always experience conflict, and this assignment gives you the opportunity to deal with differing viewpoints, perspectives and disagreements in a constructive manner. Succeeding as a group in your career means learning how to effectively manage conflict.

However, sometimes certain group members don’t equally contribute. If the group experiences problems with social loafers that can’t be resolved within the group, please let me know asap. Group members will complete peer evaluation forms evaluating group members’ reliability, productivity and communication. If the whole group identifies a member who fails to do their fair share, that member’s grade may be penalized, and/or they might be ‘fired’ from the group. Being ‘fired’ means that they would have to do the assignment themselves, without the benefit of their group’s assistance. For more info, please see the teamwork policy sheet on Regginet.

**Participation and Professionalism (195 pts.):**

Participation

Participation is assessed both in-class and outside of class.

Outside of class participation (75 points) will be assessed with reading response assignments*.* These responses are designed to encourage you to keep up with the readings and support your fellow students by being prepared for our class discussions and activities. They are due by midnight each day before class on Reggienet. This gives me time to review them the next day and identify issues that need more explanation in class. They will involve assignments such as: a) identify three key ideas from this reading; b) describe what you found confusing or difficult about the reading and describe what you found most interesting about the reading; and c) identify three questions you have about the readings. For the case studies, questions will help prepare you to analyse the case with the rest of the class. These responses will be evaluated based on effort and engagement with the readings, not whether the answers are correct or incorrect. For most of the course you’ll need to complete two Reading Assignment Responses per week. Your two worst scored Reading Assignment Responses will be dropped.

In-class participation (75 points) will be assessed through random grading of in-class activities and discussions. These opportunities CANNOT be made up for credit. Some areas where in-class participation might be graded include: (1) showing knowledge of readings and have given thought to what you have read, (2) providing discussion points from each of the readings, (3) articulating your ideas clearly and argue effectively for your position, (4) contributing to a lively interchange of ideas, (5) synthesizing ideas across various readings, (6) responding thoughtfully to the comments of others. Failure to contribute to class discussion, in a meaningful way, will negatively affect your participation. Physical presence is necessary, but not sufficient for participation.

Professionalism (50 points)

In this course, we’ll be discussing, debating and disagreeing about organizational communication. In doing so, we’ll be assessing the quality of arguments and evidence, and we’ll be doing so in a respectful manner. Please see ISU’s Student Code of Conduct for more information.

I encourage you to use electronic devices such as laptop or tablet computers to class, but only for learning and participation purposes. No earphones are allowed in class. Please TURN OFF all other electronic devices in class, as they detract from the participation needed to support other student’s learning. If your phone or pager goes off in class, or you’re using a device I haven’t approved for in-class use, you’ll automatically lose five points in class professionalism for **each** such occurrence. If you need to use your cellphone in class, please see me before class to let me know; you can only use such a device with my approval.

At the end of the semester, you’ll complete a professionalism self-assessment regarding your course engagement and participation.

If I think you aren’t meeting the course expectations (e.g., excessive absences, inadequate work, disrespect for others, etc.), I will let you know immediately, and a decision will be made concerning your need to drop the course.

**Graduate Students**

Case Study Presentation  
You will be responsible for prepping and presenting a case study of your choosing to accommodate course readings.

Final Project Expansion-Literature Review and Abstracts  
In addition to the course assignments (evaluated using standards appropriate for graduate level work), graduate students are to complete an expanded “literature review” that will accompany the semester assignment.

**Course Evaluation**  
The final letter grade for the course (and grades for the other assignments) will be based on a standard scale (90-100%=A; 80-89%=B; 70-79%=C; 60-69%=D; 0-59%=F). Grades will be available in ReggieNet. Your grade in this course will be determined by your performance on the course requirements listed above.

**Tentative Nature of this Syllabus**This is a *tentative* schedule for the semester. We may fall behind or move ahead from time to time, and modifications may occur. Changes will be announced in class and on the course web site. You are responsible to keep up on announced revisions.

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| Aug. 20-22 | Module 1 - “Get to know your syllabus” & “What is org comm: paradigms: | What is org comm: Conrad & Poole, ch. 1, p. 1-14.  Paradigms: Kramer & Bisel, ch. 1, p. 16-25 | ***Reading Responses and Case Prep: Due midnight night before*** |
| Aug. 27 + 29 | Module 1 - Org comm paradigms: systems and culture | Systems: Conrad & Poole, ch. 2, p. 32-42.  Culture: Conrad & Poole, ch. 5 | Reading Responses 1 & 2  ***Cases Assigned to Groups*** |
| Sept 3 + 5 | Module 1 - Case Learning: What we’ll be doing with cases and sample case presentation/discussion. | Case Learning: Keyton, Using Cases  Sample Case: TBD | Reading Response 3  Case Prep 1 |
| Sept 10 + 11 | Module 1 –Org comm paradigms continued: relational approaches and culture application. | Relational: Conrad & Poole, Ch. 4  Culture: Schein | Reading Responses 4 & 5 |
| Sept 17 + 19 | Module 2 – Fitting into organizations  Overview lecture and Case 1 | Overview: Kramer & Bisel, ch. 3  Case1: No Laughing Matter | Reading Response 6 & Case Prep 2 |
| Sept 24 + 26 | Module 2 – Fitting into organizations  Case 2  Midterm Review | Case2: Managing Multiple Roles  *Midterm Review* | Case Prep 3 |
| Oct 1 + 3 | Midterm Exam  Module 3 – Organizational Change and Development  Overview lecture | *Midterm Exam*  Overview: Conrad and Poole, ch. 9 | Reading Response 7 |
| Oct 8 + 10 | Module 3 – Organizational Change and Development  Case 1 and Case 2 | Case 1: For the Good of the Many.  Case2: TBD | Case Prep 4 & 5 |
| Oct 15 + 17 | Module 4 – Organizational Conflict and Negotiation  Overview lecture and Case 1 | Overview: Conrad & Poole, ch. 8, p. 316-334  Case 1: Conflict around performance review | Reading Response 8 & Case Prep 6 |
| Oct 22 + 24 | Module 4 – Organizational Conflict and Negotiation  Case 2  Module 5 – Organizational Outcomes  Overview lecture | Case 2: Submerging the Emergent Culture  Overview: Scandura, ch. 7 | Case Prep 7 & Reading Response 9 |
| Oct 29 + 31 | Module 5 – Organizational Outcomes  Cases 1 & 2 | Case 1: Your Attitude Determines Your Altitude  Case 2: There’s No Smile on Your Face, Brother John | Case Prep 8 & Case Prep 9 |
| Nov 5 + 7 | Workshop paper – group meetings |  |  |
| Nov 12 + 14 | Workshop paper – group meetings | *Final Paper Due* |  |
| Nov 19 + 21 | Thanksgiving Break – no class |  |  |
| Nov 26 + 28 | New Directions in Org Comm | TBD |  |
| Dec 3 + 5 | Class wrap-up and exam review |  |  |
|  | *Final exam* | ***TBD by the university*** |  |

**Frequently Asked Questions**

*I have a disability. What do I do?*

*What if I miss a class for a religious holiday or emergency?*

*When are assignments due? What if my work’s late?*

*Will you review my written work before I submit it?*

*How do I know what my grade is?*

*What’s your grading philosophy?*

*What if I have a technology problem with an assignment?*

*Can I get an incomplete?*

*I want to discuss my grade. How do I do that?*

*I want my grade re-evaluated. What do I do?*

*I’d like to discuss my overall grade and/or figure out what my grade currently is. How do I do that?*

*Can I earn extra credit?*

*Does school shut down if the weather’s bad?*

*I’m feeling stressed, overwhelmed, lost, anxious or depressed. What can I do?*

*I’d like to learn how to take better notes or manage my time better. Where can I learn about ways to do that?*

*I’m a first-generation student. What can I do to help myself navigate university?*

*How do I use the library?*

*What are the academic integrity expectations and how do they apply to this course?*

**I have a disability. What do I do?**

Please let me know as soon as possible after contacting Student Access and Accommodation Services, so that I can discuss strategies to fit the course to your needs. Student Access and Accommodation Services at 350 Fell Hall assists students with disabilities. You can also contact them at (309) 438-5853, or visit the website at [www.studentaccess.illinoissate.edu.](http://www.studentaccess.ilstu.edu/)

**What if I miss a class for a religious holiday or emergency?**

I excuse absences in accordance with University policy. This includes excusing absences for incapacitating illness, religious observance, service in the military, jury duty, participation in a university-sanctioned event, or the death of a family member (see University Policy and Procedures 2.1.27 Student Bereavement Policy).

These are the only circumstances I accept to reschedule an exam, assignment or to have your attendance count as excused. If one of these situations occurs, I’ll need a letter signed by a authoritative person attesting to the issue (i.e.: a doctor in case of incapacitating illness, a university official such as a coach regarding campus activities).

It is your responsibility to contact me as soon as possible about the absence, and within five days of the due date/exam date at the latest, or your grade will become a 0. In the case of absence due to religious observance, please notify me five days in advance. Please note: you must receive written or verbal confirmation from me that you’re excused, simply leaving me a message does not mean that you’re excused.

**When are assignments due? What if my work’s late?**

Assignments are due at the beginning of class on Reggienet. Late assignments result in one grade-step lower (for instance, from A to an A-) for each 24 hours they’re late (unless the criteria for excused absences applies to you).

**Will you review my written work before I submit it?**

I’ll answer question, discuss ideas and am happy to review outlines and up to one paragraph of written work. However, I won’t review or evaluate written work in its entirety. If you need one-on-one writing assistance, please contact the Julia N. Visor Academic Center, which offers one-on-one writing assistance by appointment. You can also attend drop-in writing assistance sessions at the library. You can find more information about these services here: <http://universitycollege.illinoisstate.edu/help/writing/>

**How do I know what my grade is?**

All grades will be posted on Reggienet throughout the semester. I’ll attempt to upload grades within a reasonable time after their submission. Assignment feedback will be delivered through Reggienet or in class. Please note that due to University regulations, I’m not allowed to communicate your grades to you over e-mail or the phone without your prior permission.

**What’s your grading philosophy?**

I grade assignments and exams based on the quality of the work, and assume that you start with 0 points. You don’t start with 100 points and ‘lose’ them for mistakes. Your final score for an assignment or exam represents what you earned, not the number of points ‘deducted’. I don’t curve grades.

**What if I have a technology problem with an assignment?**

You’re expected to keep computer files and/or photocopies of all assignments that you submit. This is good practice for your future career. When working on a computer, please frequently save your files, and always backup your work to somewhere besides the computer. I don’t accept late work due to technological issues.

**Can I get an incomplete?**

Incompletes are based on university policy, and are granted only *in extreme cases* when a documented emergency prevents you from completing the class, you have contacted the Dean of Students Office, and you have successfully completed approximately two-thirds (66%) of the course. **For graduating seniors, please note:** You must have any previous incompletes taken care of at least *six weeks prior to the semester you plan to graduate*. If a student takes this course with an incomplete, and plans to graduate, you’ll need to finish the incomplete grade by midterm so that you meet the graduation/completed credit-hours deadline.

**I want to discuss my grade. How do I do that?**

Please see me during office hours, make an appointment or send me an e-mail.

**I want my grade re-evaluated. What do I do?**

You can appeal your grade if you feel it doesn’t adequately reflect your performance on an exam or assignment. To do so, please submit a one-page written statement (a formal e-mail is fine) within one week after the assignment or exam was first returned to the class. The statement should include documentation about why you feel the grade doesn’t reflect your performance. This policy means that your concerns are addressed quickly. I’ll review the document and decide to move ahead with a regrade or not. Documentation such as ‘I worked really hard’ or “I need a better grade for my GPA’ aren’t adequate because I’m grading your output, not your effort. If I decide to regrade, the whole assignment or exam is regraded. This means that it’s possible for your mark to go down rather than up if mistakes in your favor are found when the assignment or exam is regraded.

Please note that the timeframe to send in written documentation starts when the exam or assignment is returned to class, not when you actually obtain it. If you miss the timeframe to submit a written statement, you forfeit your right to appeal the grade.

**I’d like to discuss my overall grade and/or figure out what my grade currently is. How do I do that?**

If you’re having trouble figuring out your grade, please schedule a meeting.

**Can I earn extra credit?**

You can earn up to 20 points of extra credit in this course. One way to do this is through the Department’s Research Pool. This will allow you to participate in research conducted by department members, and the extra credit points from your participation will be added to your final grade. (Please note that they may not necessarily appear right away in the grade-book as it takes some time to coordinate them). You aren’t guaranteed opportunities for extra credit through the research pool (for example, some studies may be limited to specific genders or an age group) so it’s your responsibility to check out and take advantage of opportunities as they arise throughout the semester. The Research Pool is updated as research studies are open and closed, and can be accessed at:

[**https://sites.google.com/site/ilstusocstudies/**](https://sites.google.com/site/ilstusocstudies/)

Two .5 research credits from the Research Pool will earn you 10 points of extra credit. You can earn up to four .5 research credits in this class, which means a total of 20 points extra credit.

Once you’ve participated in the pool, the researchers who administer the study will send me evidence that you participated and the time you did so. You are responsible to ensure that the researchers who administer the study have the evidence they need to prove your participation. Before participating in a study, **please be sure to have your name, ULID** (i.e., the part of your email before @ilstu.edu)**, instructor name, and course and section number ready**, as you will need to provide these to receive credit. Research Credit can only be applied to one course for each study, unless specified otherwise in the Research Pool. All extra credit must be completed by the last day of classes.

Please also be aware that federal guidelines indicate that instructors offering extra credit for research participation must offer a reasonable alternative (such as a research paper) for students who want to earn extra credit but don’t want to participate in a research study. If this describes you, please see me for an alternative assignment.

**Does school shut down if the weather’s bad?**

No, unless the university closes. If that happens, I’ll be in touch about making up the class.

**I’m feeling stressed, overwhelmed, lost, anxious or depressed. What can I do?**

Life at college can get complicated. Don’t hesitate to call or visit [Student Counseling Services](https://counseling.illinoisstate.edu/) (SCS). These services are free and completely confidential. SCS is located at 320 Student Services Building, 309-438-3655.

**I’d like to learn how to take better notes or manage my time better. Where can I learn about ways to do that?**

The University offers workshops in areas such as study skills, writing, reading and time management. For more information see: <http://universitycollege.illinoisstate.edu/help/workshops/>

**I’m an under-represented student, like a first-generation student. What can I do to help myself navigate university?**TRiO/Student Support Services at ISU provides services to traditionally underrepresented students in post-secondary education. Services offered include advising, counselling and workshops. To see if you’re eligible and apply, please visit http://universitycollege.illinoisstate.edu/communities/trio/

**How do I use the library?**

Sharon Van Der Laan is the Communication subject librarian (that’s right, we have our very own subject librarian). You can contact Sharon to investigate what library resources might help you with an assignment, and figure out a research strategy. More information on Sharon and Communication Subject Resources are available here: <http://guides.library.illinoisstate.edu/COM>

**What are the academic integrity expectations and how do they apply to this course?**

You are expected to be honest in all academic work, consistent with the academic integrity policy as outlined in the [Code of Student Conduct](https://deanofstudents.illinoisstate.edu/conflict/conduct/code/). Plagarism can result in a failing grade and university disciplinary action, so please don’t do it. Plagarism includes things like unauthorized collaborative work on individual assignments, failing to quote work appropriately, or having someone else fulfil your assignment. If you have **any** questions about what plagiarism constitutes, please see me before or after class, during office hours, or send me an e-mail. Plagarism will be reported to Communication Rights and Responsibilities and the student will schedule an in-person meeting with me to address it. In certain circumstances, I may be required to refer violations to the [Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution](https://deanofstudents.illinoisstate.edu/conflict/). In this spirit, I would like to acknowledge the following people whose work has inspired this syllabus and/or whose work I have adapted: Joshua Barbour, Anthony Dudo, Jeff Courtright, Becky Hayes, Lance Lippert, Katherine McComas, Jeff Neiderdeppe, Meghnaa Tallapragada, Lindsey Thomas.