

Strategic Communication Consulting
CMGT 503
Rebecca Weintraub, Ph.D.
Fall 2016, Thursday 6:30-9:20 PM, ASC 204

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course focuses on the specific skills needed for strategic and organizational communication consulting.

Communication consulting is different from strategic or management consulting although communication consultants often work to support the implementation of the strategies of management consultants. Communication consulting often involves the actual writing of communication media, but it also includes such diverse elements as meeting design and facilitation, organizational communication, executive coaching, strategic communication analysis and messaging, large-scale communication event planning and execution, and training.

This class is designed to facilitate learning-by-doing. It is as much a workshop as it is a graduate class. While the professor will present material throughout the semester, much of your learning in this class will come from your consulting engagement. You will find at times that the work you are doing for your client will require you to read ahead in the text, do outside research, or meet with the professor. You will learn as much or more from your individual and group work as you do from your instructor.

Note: This class includes finals week class of Dec 8. You are expected to be in class that night – whether or not your group is presenting. Failure to attend class that night will severely impact your participation grade.

GOALS:

- To understand the consulting processes and skills for successful communication consulting.
- To understand and be able to use the basic communication consulting methodologies.
- To be able to use both academic and original research to create recommendations for a consulting engagement.
- To be able to design and conduct a strategic facilitation intervention.
- To understand how to assess the communication requirements for a specific engagement.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- There are six required texts. Other literature will be available on Blackboard as needed. Some of these will be optional, others required.
 - Required readings are to be prepared *prior* to class and will be the subject of short written assignments. While there will be opportunity for both question and discussion of the texts, ***the assigned reading material will not be the subject of lecture***. Reading the optional readings is highly recommended as they round off the required readings and aid in the understanding of the broader context.
 - Active participation in class is expected and, along with attendance, will be included in the final grade. **Students absent more than once must make an appointment with and provide an explanation to the course instructor in case of any further absence. Attendance will be taken every class session. If you are not going to be in class you are expected to email the instructor in advance.**

GRADING:

There are five components of the final grade:

• Final team consulting project	325 points
• Final project peer review evaluations	75 points
• Five 500-word reading reaction papers	125 points (25 points each including one rewrite)
• Applied research mid-term paper	150 points
• Short facilitation or training project	50 points
• Class participation	75 points

Total 800 points

Note: Class participation involves attendance, participation in discussions and contributions to in-class projects

GROUP PROJECTS:

The Group Project will be a complete consulting project providing consulting services to an organization. You will pick your own teams. Teams will be made up of no fewer than five and no more than six people. The client can be a for-profit or a non-profit entity. The professor will invite potential clients to pitch to the class on the second night of the semester. The consulting engagement will encompass all of the steps of a consulting engagement: problem identification, proposal, statement of work, budgeting (although no fees will be collected), assessment and engagement, research (including original research as well as academic literature), implementation plan, and final report binder. **Groups will turn in the proposal, statement of work and budget the 5th week of class, September 22. A 15 minute status presentation will be due November 3. The final report is due at the end of the semester. There will be both an oral**

presentation and a binder. All members of the project team must participate in every element of the consulting project. Between the status report and the final oral presentation, every member of the group must have participated in presenting. Each of these segments will be included in the grading of the final project deliverable.

Group Project **presentations** will be due during the last two weeks of the semester.

Each group will produce a **project binder** and a **20-minute presentation**. The binder will include:

- A 10 page engagement summary
- The initial proposal and any subsequent amendments
- Statement of work
- An estimated and actual final budget (this part is not given to the client)
- An assessment /research plan
- Time sheets
- Meeting notes (including teleconferences)
- Research materials and results (this will include summaries of the academic literature results from the individual mid-terms as well as the original research conducted by the team)
- All client communications, including emails
- Collateral materials produced for the client
- Any other material you deem necessary

Presentation dates will be assigned randomly the night of the status reports.

All students are expected to be in class for both presentation nights. Absence will be reflected in the participation grade.

Group Projects will be graded upon the proposal, problem analysis, engagement management, research, consulting skill application, final oral presentation, and presentation materials. Creativity is always a plus. Each member is expected to participate fully in all aspects of the project, including the final presentation.

Note: If a group is having difficulty with a member who is not participating fully, you are expected first to attempt to work the problem yourselves. If this is not successful, you are expected to bring the issue to professor immediately. Waiting to bring this to the instructor's attention until the end of the semester will impact the grades of the entire team.

LITERATURE APPLICATION PAPER—MIDTERM:

Due October 20 at 6:30 PM in hard copy.

This is an individual assignment based on your consulting team project. You will write a 5-page paper drawing from two or three (no more) peer-reviewed academic articles to address one of the research questions that need to be answered for your client engagement. The research question must be approved in advance by the professor. Basically, you are looking for theory, research, and evidence to inform your client recommendations.

The paper will be turned in (hard copy) the night it is due. No electronic submissions will be accepted.

The paper will utilize research from **peer reviewed academic journals only**. *The paper will be written in APA format and failure to follow APA style guidelines will result in a lowered grade.*

REACTION PAPERS:

Each reaction paper should be 500 words, Ariel 12 point type, and 1-inch margins, double-spaced. The paper must be **handed in (hard copy)** the night it is due. No electronic submissions will be accepted. You do not need to use full APA formatting (i.e., no title page required, no references necessary) but you must use APA style for in-text citations. If you need a quick reference guide for APA style citations, please use this website:

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

It is important that you do your in-text citations correctly as this may affect your reaction paper grade.

Do remember to put your name on the first page and staple the two pages together (500 words, double-spaced will be around two pages).

One reaction paper will be required to be re-written after you have received graded feedback from the professor. **You will turn in both the original paper and the revised paper—stapled together.**

Reaction paper 1 (DUE: Week 4, Sept. 15): Using chapters 5 & 6 from DeWine, how would you explain to a client the importance and the value of research for identifying communication issues and problems and for determining causes and potential solutions?

Reaction paper 2 (DUE: Week 7, Oct. 6): Using the Block Flawless Consulting Fieldbook & Companion, compare and contrast two approaches that could be used in the work you do for your client (NOTE: there must be variety among your team members). This means taking two different approaches in two different chapters and analyzing how this might be used (not that you will necessarily use it) to address your client's engagement issue.

Reaction paper 3 (DUE: Week 11, Nov. 3): Using the readings to date, what do you think have been the biggest challenges with your client engagement and how does this inform your perspective on consulting in general?

Reaction paper 4 (DUE: Week 13, Nov. 17): Consider the training or facilitation exercise in which you were a *participant* (NOT the trainer or facilitator) and discuss what

you believe makes for an effective exercise of this type. Use Arnold & McClure, Barrett & Fry, and DeWine as appropriate to support your discussion.

Reaction paper 5 Revision (Due no later than Week 15, Dec. 1: You may turn the paper in earlier, however.): Good writing requires the ability to revise based upon feedback. Choose one of your reaction papers and rewrite it taking into account the comments from the professor. You may choose any of your reaction. No papers will be accepted after December 1. **You must include the original paper with the revision. Staple the original paper behind the revision.**

BOOKS:

ALL BOOKS ARE AVAILABLE ON AMAZON

You may be able to find a number of them used.

Author: Sue DeWine

Title: The Consultant's Craft: Improving Organizational Communication, any edition

ISBN: 0312248245

This book is out of print, but is still available on Amazon used for under \$3.00

Author: Ingrid Bens

Title: Facilitation at a Glance

ISBN: 1576811379

Author: Frank J. Barrett and Ronald E. Fry

Title: Appreciative Inquiry: A Positive Approach to Building Cooperative Capacity

ISBN: 078802163X

Author: William E. Arnold and Lynne McClure

Title: Communication Training and Development 2nd Edition

ISBN 088133877X

Author: Peter Block

Title: Flawless Consulting

ISBN 0470620749

Author: Peter Block

Title: The Flawless Consulting Field Book & Companion

ISBN: 0787948047

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES:

♦ **Week 1, August 25—Consulting Basics and Class Overview**

Required Readings:

DeWine, Sue, *The Consultant's Craft: Improving Organizational Communication 2nd edition*, Part 1: Chapters 1 and 2, pp.2-35, Chapter 20, pp. 434-459

Block, Peter, *Flawless Consulting*, Preface to 3rd Edition, Chapters 1-2 (p. 2-35), 7 (p. 121-123—focus on the table)

NOTE: You should read these chapters *before* the first class.

♦ **Week 2, September 1 — Prospective Client Pitches**

Potential clients will be present in class (in person or via Skype) to pitch their projects to you. After the pitches, you will have a chance to speak with the clients and ask them questions. Please e-mail the professor the names of your group members along with your first choice for consulting projects **as soon as possible** so that assignments of groups and clients can be confirmed, and you can schedule meetings for the following week. Each group should have **no fewer than 4 and no more than 5 students**. As there is a limit to the size of each consulting team, please be aware that you may not be assigned to your first choice.

♦ **Week 3, September 8 — Getting the Work**

Required Readings:

Proposals and Problem Identification
DeWine, Chapters 3, 4 and 5, pp.36 - 82.

Arnold, William E., and McClure, Lynne, *Communication Training and Development 2nd Edition*, Chapter 5 pp. 65-80 and Appendix, pp. 167-186.

Block, *Flawless Consulting* Chapters 3, 4. 5. 6,11, 13, 14

Begin reading Block Field Book.

♦ **Week 4, September 15 — Human Capital Consulting**

♦ **Guest Lecturer: Megan Porter, Mercer Consulting**

♦ **First Reaction Paper Due in hard copy at 6:30 PM**

♦ **Week 5, September 22 — Strategic Communication**

♦ **Proposals Due 6:30 PM**

Required Readings:

De Wine, Chapters 6 and 7, pp. 83-141, and Chapter 9, pp. 187-205, Chapter 17, pp. 384-401, Chapter 19, pp. 418-433.

Arnold and McClure, Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, pp.1-107 and 10, 11, 12, pp. 135-166

Block, Chapter 19 pp. 327-342

- ◆ **Week 6, September 29 — Consulting Workshop**
- ◆ **Proposal meetings with each consulting team**
- ◆ **Team meetings in class**

- ◆ **Week 7, October 6 — Training, Development and Facilitation:
Critical Consulting Competencies**
- ◆ **Reaction Paper 2 due**

Assigned: Training and facilitation projects

Dr. Weintraub will lecture on critical consulting competencies, including training and facilitation. The lecture as well as the required readings will help you with your training and facilitation projects, which will be assigned in class tonight.

Required Readings:

Bens, Ingrid, *Facilitation at a Glance (Reference Text)*

Frank J. Barrett and Ronald E. Fry, *Appreciative Inquiry: A Positive Approach to Building Cooperative Capacity*

Block, Chapter 12

- ◆ **Week 8, October 13 — Writing as a Consulting Competency**
- Any readings will be posted on Blackboard.

- ◆ **Week 9, October 20 — Non-Profit Consulting**
- ◆ **Literature Application Paper Due**

Readings will be posted on Blackboard

Guest Lecturer: Prof. Gary Wexler will talk about non-profit marketing.

Required Readings

Any required readings will be posted on Blackboard.

♦ **Week 10, October 27 — Facilitation Teams Present**

Required Readings:

DeWine, Chapters 6 and 7, pp. 83-141, and Chapter 9, pp. 187-205, Chapter 17, pp. 384-401, Chapter 19, pp. 418-433.

Arnold and McClure, Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, pp.1-107 and 10, 11, 12, pp. 135-166

Block, Chapter 19 (ALL)

♦ **Week 11, November 3 — Training Teams Present**

♦ **Reaction Paper 3 Due at 6:30 PM**

♦ **Week 12, November 10 Consulting Team Status Reports**

Readings will be posted on Blackboard

Each team will present a 15-minute summary of their consulting engagement.

This must include:

- **Client problem statement**
- **Summary of literature application results**
- **Research plan and status (if completed, present results and implications)**
- **Successes**
- **Problems or Issues or Concerns**

♦ **Week 13, November 17 — Crisis Communication and Risk Mitigation**

Dr. Weintraub will lecture on crisis communication and risk mitigation.

Required Readings

Any required readings will be posted on Blackboard

♦ **Week 14, November 24 — Thanksgiving**

NO CLASS

Group Project Presentations

- ◆ **Week 15, December 1 — Group Project Presentations**
- ◆ **All students Must Attend**

- ◆ **Final Exam Week, December 8 — Group Project Presentations**
- ◆ **All Students Must Attend**

DUE: All groups will turn in their project binders

COURSE INSTRUCTOR:

Prof. Rebecca Weintraub Ph.D.

Office: ASCJ 324D

Office Hours: Thursday, 3:00 to 6:00 pm and by appointment

E-Mail: weintrau@usc.edu

Phone: (213) 821-0764

Class Time: Thursdays, 6:30 - 9:30 pm

Rebecca Weintraub has spent more than thirty-five years in the field of strategic communication, executive coaching, facilitation, change management, and organizational behavior. She began her career as an assistant professor at California State Polytechnic University at Pomona (Cal Poly Pomona) where she was also the Director of Forensics. She then joined the Hughes Aircraft company, which became Hughes Electronics, where over a fifteen-year period she held a number of positions in communication and total quality in the satellite manufacturing division before becoming Director of Corporate Communications for the Corporation, a position she held for five years. In that position she was responsible for communication strategy and tactics for the corporation as well as providing executive coaching for a variety of Hughes executives. She left Hughes Electronics to join the consulting firm of Towers Perrin where she focused on strategic organizational communication, health and welfare benefits communication strategy, and change management. Her clients included Northrop Grumman, MGM, Mazda, AstraZeneca Pharmaceuticals, WellPoint Health Systems, and the L.A. Times.

Dr. Weintraub is currently a Professor of Communication at USC in the Annenberg School for Communication where she is both the Director of the Communication Management Master's Degree Program and the Director of the Center for Corporate and Community Education. She teaches strategic organizational and corporate communication classes in that program. Her Strategic Corporate Communication course is Annenberg's only on-line course for which she was awarded the 2004 Best On-line Teaching award for higher education by the US Distance Learning Association. In

addition to her teaching, she provides strategic communication planning, presentation, executive coaching, management training, and facilitation consulting services to organizations in the public, private, and non-profit sectors. Her clients have included such organizations as Toyota Motor Sales, Fox Networks, the Dental Health Foundation, Mindjet, the County of Los Angeles, and the Redondo Beach Unified School District. In addition to her consulting work, she serves on the Board of Directors of The Wellness Community South Bay, a cancer support and education organization, the California Communication Council for the American Cancer Society and the Yellowstone Park Foundation Advisory Council.

Dr. Weintraub received her Bachelor's degree from UCLA and her Master's and Ph.D. degrees from USC. She roots for whoever is winning at halftime.

About Guest Lecturer Megan Porter

Megan started her career at NBC Universal where she worked her way from intern, through the Page Program and into executive assistant positions in both Alternative Programming and Development and Press and Publicity. Previously, Megan held leadership positions in a hotel and at a University radio and television station.

Currently, Megan is a Senior Associate in the Talent Communication business at Mercer, a global leader in Human Resources consulting. Megan develops and implements communication strategies addressing organizational and institutional change related to health and welfare, mergers and acquisitions, retirement, compensation, and talent management.

Megan's primary responsibilities include developing and executing communication strategies, developing communication deliverables, and overall project management. She has experience:

- Helping dozens of employers communicate change during and after mergers/acquisitions, on a national and an international level
- Managing and implementing over 40 benefit enrollment projects per year
- Facilitating focus groups, developing surveys and providing strategic stakeholder analysis for several organizations and municipalities
- Gathering data, analyzing and reporting research for large-scale innovation initiatives
- Analyzing, reviewing and drafting employee handbooks and human resources policy manuals
- Implementing incentive based change strategies at multiple companies.

Some of her clients include technology companies, municipalities, governments, universities, restaurants, retail chains, and automotive groups, among others.

Megan holds a Bachelor's degree in Business and Organizational Communication from the University of Akron, a Master's of Science in Global Media from the London School of Economics, and a Master's of Arts in Global Communication from the University of Southern California.