

COMM 385
Organizational Communication
Fall 2018

Instructor: Sonia Jawaid Shaikh

Office Hours: Tuesdays 2.30 – 3.30PM and by appointment

Location: ASC Suite G6

Email: Soniajas@usc.edu

Overview

The course is designed to introduce and engage the participants with concepts and ideas that are essential to the study of organizational communication and related processes. There is a special emphasis on technology and decision-making in the context of organizational communication. In terms of content, the purpose of this course is threefold:

- Introduction to the key concepts in organizational communication
- Discussion of theories and current ideas in technology and decision making that interact with organizational outcomes in contemporary and future settings.
- Exploration of how power, networks, groups and cultures shape organizational endeavors and behaviors.

The approach of this discussion section is a combination of Socratic and tutorial methods. The instructor will lead the session but expects the students to be ready to ask or answer questions and/or share their opinions. The most important outcome for students in this course is to have an accurate understanding of concepts and an active employment of critical thinking.

There are three main expectations from the participants in this course:

- Developing an accurate and thorough understanding of concepts and ideas in organizational communication as a sub-discipline in communication.
- Engaging with the course and assignments critically.
- Applying analytical skills for approaching and unpacking communication processes in organizational settings as well as problem solving.

Presence of Mind and Person

In the past decade, productivity loss due to attention issues have not only hurt the economy but affected everyday performance and memory. **I encourage and expect learners to not only attend the section but also be present. I suggest avoiding any forms of multitasking during class as ample research shows its negative consequences.** If you use laptops, it is highly recommended that you stick to one note taking tab.

Please note that participation and attention are two different constructs although the former can be a product of the latter. If you are continually disengaged and inattentive from the class proceedings, the instructor may give you a warning concerning the matter.

Class Rules

- Use of cell phones within the classroom is strictly prohibited. For every use, the instructor will penalize the student for 2 points.
- If you do wish to use your cell phone, please excuse yourself from the classroom.
- Please be on time. The instructor reserves the right to close the door after 5 minutes.
- For any late arrival 2 minutes after the start of class, the student will be penalized for 2 points. If for some reason you do expect to be late, please inform the instructor via email.
- If you email the instructor and do not hear back after 48 hours, please send a reminder.

Course Requirements

Required Textbook

Miller, K. (2015). *Organizational communication: Processes and approaches*. (7th edition). Stamford, CT: Cengage

Reading Materials

All other readings, assignments, powerpoints, etc. will be made available on Blackboard. The instructor expects that the participants read the assigned readings before coming to class.

Attendance

I will take attendance for my records, but this will not go toward credit. You are expected to come to class prepared. If you miss a class, then it is your responsibility to find relevant information/material. Experience shows students who come to class regularly perform much better and remain less stressed than those who do not.

Exams

There are two in class exams. These will feature short answers and a few multiple-choice questions and/or other types of question format. The purpose of administering the exams is

simply to elicit evidence of reading and critical thinking/learning from the participants. Exams are not cumulative.

Assignments

There are three main assignments: Course Project, Leading a Discussion, Final Presentation. These assignments will be divided into chunks across the semester.

Course Project

You are required to do a course project for this class. This should be done in twos – with partners of your choosing. If you cannot decide on partners, please talk to me and I will help you in figuring it out. You could also choose to do this by yourself, but you will need to consult with me before you proceed. Please note that all participants will be required to evaluate self and teammate on the course project. No free-riding. There will be more discussion on that in the sessions. You have two options for the course project:

Option A is to complete a 12-15 page (text, excluding references, etc.) research paper on a topic mutually agreed upon by you (or your team) and the instructor. This paper will require you to research academic journals and other sources. This research paper will be a combination of literature review on the subject, your critical appraisal and proposed recommendations on a phenomenon/construct/process of your choice. For instance, you could choose to study gender-based discrimination in organizations and its impact on communication patterns. The expectation is that by the end of this project, you should be an “expert” of sorts on the subject you investigate.

Option B is to complete a research project by collecting data and prepare a 12-15-page write-up. For example, you might be interested in how social media strategies can help small businesses/groups grow clientele or support online. You will need to collect original data on the issue. You could get creative and look into projects concerning different organizations on campus such as coffee shops, your sports clubs, and any other associations you may be member of. By the end of this project, you should be able to understand the phenomenon of your choice in its setting like an “expert”.

We will talk more on these options as the class progresses.

Leading the Discussion

At least two individuals will be leading a reading or two every week. We will continue this practice until the end of the semester. You are expected to read the material of your choosing critically, evaluate the content and moderate a discussion with your peers.

Assignments

This class will also feature small in-class and take-home assignments.

Final Project Presentation

At the end of the course, you and your team are expected to share your findings with your course mates. This requires a presentation. Your presentation will be evaluated. We will discuss this more.

Please note that all readings in red and green are NON-TEXTBOOK assigned readings for that week and must be read before coming to class on Tuesdays. If in a PDF, I have made them available on Blackboard and they are marked as green with a BB note. If in red, please copy and paste the link in your browser. All red and green readings count for Lead a Discussion Assignment.

All Exams are ALWAYS on Thursdays (unless noted or changed)

All Assignments are ALWAYS due on Tuesdays (unless noted or changed)

Semester Program

(19-25 Aug) Week 1 – Introduction to Organizations, Communication

Chapter 1

The future of work <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/employment-and-growth/technology-jobs-and-the-future-of-work>

Chapter 2

(26 Aug-1 Sept) Week 2 – Theory and Research in Organizational Communication: A Primer

Chapter 3

Chapter 4

BB. Wiltermuth, S. S. (2011). Cheating more when the spoils are split. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 115(2), 157-168.

Exercise: How to read a journal article

Introduction to APA style

(2-8 Sept) Week 3 - Theory and Research Continued (Lead a Discussion Begins)

Chapter 5

<https://www.wired.com/story/group-text-reactions/>

Guest Speaker: TBD

Exercise: How to find resources on the web

APA assignment due

(9-15 Sept) Week 4 – Decision Making

Chapter 8 (EXCLUDE pp. 143 – 146)

BB: Over, D. (2004). Rationality and the normative/descriptive distinction. In D. J. Koehler & N. Harvey (Eds.), *Blackwell handbook of judgment and decision making* (pp. 3-18). Malden, : Blackwell Publishing.

BB: Talhelm, T., Zhang, X., Oishi, S., Shimin, C., Duan, D., Lan, X., & Kitayama, S. (2014). Large-scale psychological differences within China explained by rice versus wheat agriculture. *Science*, *344*(6184), 603-608.

Exercise: Exam Prep

Project Proposal Due

(16-22 Sept) Week 5 – Decision Making

BB: Oliver, N., Calvard, T., & Potočnik, K. (2017). Cognition, technology, and organizational limits: Lessons from the Air France 447 disaster. *Organization Science*, *28*(4), 729-743.

BB: Snowden, D. J., & Boone, M. E. (2007). A leader's framework for decision making. *Harvard Business Review*, *85*(11), 68.

Exercise: How to Do Research: Primer on Methods

Exam 1 – Includes material until week 4

(23-29 Sept) Week 6 – Technology in Organizations

Chapter 13

Helping or surveilling workers? <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/01/technology/amazon-wristband-tracking-privacy.html>

Dr Alexa: AI & Health: <https://www.usatoday.com/story/tech/2017/10/28/dr-alexa-what-amazon-might-do-health-care/806945001/>

<https://hbr.org/2018/05/how-to-actually-start-the-task-youve-been-avoiding>

Exercise: Meet up to discuss outline.

(30 Sept – 06 Oct) Week 7 – Technology in Organizations

New technologies won't reduce scarcity but here is something that might.

<https://hbr.org/2018/06/new-technologies-wont-reduce-scarcity-but-heres-something-that-might>

Honest signals? http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/26/business/26novelties.html?_r=1
Guest Speaker: TBD

Project Outline Due

(7-13 Oct) Week 8 – Culture, conflict & organizations

Chapter 9

BB: Fong, T., & Nourbakhsh, I. (2005). Interaction challenges in human-robot space exploration.

(14-20 Oct) Week 9 – Leadership, communication & organizations

Chapter 10

BB: Kaiser, R. B., Hogan, R., & Craig, S. B. (2008). Leadership and the fate of organizations. *American Psychologist*, 63(2), 96.

Exam 2 (Material up to and including week 8 covered)

(21-27 Oct) Week 10 – Communication, Groups, Teams and Networks

Chapter 7

BB: Myers, K. K., & McPhee, R. D. (2006). Influences on member assimilation in workgroups in high-reliability organizations: A multilevel analysis. *Human Communication Research*, 32(4), 440-468.

The Role of Networks: <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/the-role-of-networks-in-organizational-change>

Chapter 8 (pp. 143 – 146)

BB Stasser, G., Stewart, D. (1992). Discovery of hidden profiles by decision-making groups: Solving a problem versus making a judgment. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 63, 426-434. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.63.3.426

(28Oct – 03 Nov) Week 11 – Emotions in Organization

Chapter 11

BB Simon, H. A. (1987). Making management decisions: The role of intuition and emotion. *The Academy of Management Executive (1987-1989)*, 57-64.

BB Salas, E., Rosen, M. A., & Diaz Granados, D. (2010). Expertise-based intuition and decision making in organizations. *Journal of management*, 36(4), 941-973.

<https://www.wired.com/story/social-media-fear/>

(04-10 Nov) Week 12 Class Projects

Peer Feedback

Meetings with Teams – Class Projects

No class on November 08 – NCA Conference

(11-17 Nov) Week 13 – Gender & Diversity in Organizations

Chapter 6 (101-107)

Chapter 12

BB Oakley, J. G. (2000). Gender-based barriers to senior management positions: Understanding the scarcity of female CEOs. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 27(4), 321-334.

(18-24 Nov) Week 14 – Organization of the Future

Chapter 14

The Organization of the Future: <https://www2.deloitte.com/insights/us/en/focus/human-capital-trends/2017/organization-of-the-future.html>

No class on Nov 22nd - Thanksgiving Holiday

Week 15 – Presentations

In class presentations – No Final Exam

Week 16 Final Paper Due

Dec 06 or earlier. No exceptions. Must be submitted by Blackboard and by email. Late papers are not accepted.

Assignment/Exam Time Line

Week 4 – Project Proposal

Week 5 – Exam 1

Week 7– Course Project Outline

Week 9 – Exam 2

Week 15 – Presentation

Dec 06 - Week 16 – Final Paper (due by email and Blackboard)

Point Distribution & Grades

Assignments/Extra Credit – Will be announced

Exam 1 – 100 points

Project Proposal – 50 points

Exam 2 – 100 points

Project Outline – 100 points

Leading the Discussion - 50 points

Presentation – 100 points

Final Paper – 200 points

| Total Percentage Points | Grade |
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| 93-100 | A |
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| 90-92.5 | A- |
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| 87-89.5 | B+ |
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| 83-86.5 | B |
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| 80-82.5 | B- |
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| 77-79.5 | C+ |
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| 73-76.5 | C |
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| 70-72.5 | C- |
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| 67-69.5 | D+ |
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| 63-66.5 | D |
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| 60-62.5 | D- |
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| Below 60 | F |
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Course Policies

Academic Integrity Policy

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles.

It is assumed that the work you submit for this course is work you have produced entirely by yourself, and has not been previously produced by you for submission in another course or Learning Lab, without approval of the instructor. Please see the following resources:

"Guide to Avoiding Plagiarism" (<http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/forms/tig.pdf>)

"Understanding and Avoiding Academic Dishonesty" (<http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/forms/tio.pdf>)

SCampus, the Student Guidebook, (www.usc.edu/scampus or <http://scampus.usc.edu>) contains the University Student Conduct Code (see University Governance, Section 11.00), while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A.

All academic integrity violations will be reported to the office of Student Judicial Affairs & Community Standards (SJACS), as per university policy, as well as Communication school administrators.

Students with Learning Disabilities

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. **A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible.** DSP is located in GFS 120 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Website and contact information for DSP:

http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html,

(213) 740-0776 (Phone), (213) 740-6948 (TDD only), (213) 740-8216 (FAX) ability@usc.edu.