



COMM 385 (20590R, 4 units) Organizational Communication

Fall 2019
M/W 3:30-4:50p ANN L115

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Office Hours: M/W 4:50-5:20p,
in classroom

Course Description

This course is designed as an introduction to communication processes *within* and *between* organizations. You will study how individuals and groups communicate in organizations, how communication creates and sustains organizations, and how organizations communicate with each other. The goals of this course are to 1) introduce you to basic concepts you need in order to understand communication processes in contemporary organizations, 2) encourage you to think critically and analytically about the roles that communication technologies can play in contemporary organizations, and 3) help you to develop skills at observing and analyzing communication processes in the workplace.

Learning Objectives

Organizational communication processes are *difficult* to grasp just from reading a textbook; people need some opportunity to see the processes in action. Also, critical analytical capabilities must be developed through application of theoretical principles to realistic contexts. Thus, this course will focus on activities that will give you the opportunity to apply textbook principles to real and contemporary organizations. As a class and/or in small groups, we will analyze case examples of real-life situations that exemplify the textual material. You will apply your analytical skills and judgments to reach decisions and recommendations as if you were a real participant in the case. You can also try out new skills through role-play exercises. And, films will show learning in action in real-life organizations.

Textbook

Conrad, C. & Poole, M.S. (2012). Strategic organizational communication in a global economy (7th ed.). Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell. ISBN 978-1-4443-3863-8.
(Other supplemental readings will be posted on Blackboard.)

Exams

There will be a *midterm* and a *final* exam. Each exam will cover half of the course and will not be cumulative. Exams will consist mostly of multiple-choice, short answer items and case analysis tasks. If you have to miss an exam for medical or other serious reasons, you are expected to contact the instructor before the exam. If you miss an exam without prior permission, you will not be allowed to take a make-up exam, and you will receive a grade of 0 on the missed exam. Class discussions will be only as good as your preparation and participation make them. Class discussions are some of the most important ways that we learn the material. Your best preparation for exams is to attend class, since material discussed in class will be on the exams, including some material that is not in the textbook. If you do not attend for whatever reason, you are still responsible for the material covered in class, even if it is not covered in the readings.

Course Project

You will work in a *team*, at your choice, to complete a project for the course. It is a good idea to keep the team relatively small (3-4 persons) to facilitate coordination. The project is to complete a 10- to 12-page (text, excluding references, etc.) research paper on a topic mutually agreed upon by your team and the instructor. The topic should be related to organizational communication in general but should also inform your career path. For the paper you will need to consult both academic research journals and practitioner sources of information, so that you can illustrate how the research findings translate into practice. You will make two short oral presentations, one for your selected topic around midterm and one for the entire project at the end of the semester. Each person should have some part in the actual presentations, even if the project itself is done in team format. More information about course project will be posted on Blackboard.

Homework

There are *four* homework assignments. Their due dates are listed on the schedule as well as on each individual assignment. Each homework assignment due date corresponds to when the topic is discussed in class. Thus, homework assignments are intricately tied to class participation. Bring a copy of your homework to class so that we can discuss your work. If a student does not bring the hard copy of the assignment to class, the student will receive a score of 0 for the entire assignment. You will submit your homework by handing in the hardcopy at the end of the class. No late assignment will be accepted. Note that the assignments for homework 2 and 3 are somewhat more complex and require more time than the other homework assignments, so plan accordingly.

Participation

Class participation is a critical part of the effectiveness of this course. This is a seminar course, where we collectively grapple with issues and challenges to organizational communication today. Each individual is expected to be *actively* involved in class discussion during each class period. The primary assessment will be the quality of those contributions to the group effort. Good contributions are thoughtful, analytical, constructive to the group effort, topically relevant, and linked to the readings assigned for that day.

Grading

Midterm Exam	100
Final Exam	100
Course Project	100 (15 for final presentation)
Homework	80
Participation	20

Total	400

<i>Points</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Grade</i>	<i>Points</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Grade</i>
372-400	93-100	A	292-307	73-76	C
360-371	90-92	A-	280-291	70-72	C-
348-359	87-89	B+	268-279	67-69	D+
332-347	83-86	B	252-267	63-66	D
320-331	80-82	B-	240-251	60-62	D-
308-319	77-79	C+	0-239	59 and below	F

Academic Integrity

The Annenberg School for Communication is committed to upholding the University's Academic Integrity code as detailed in the SCampus Guide. It is the policy of the School of Communication to report all violations of the code. Any serious violation or pattern of violations of the Academic Integrity Code will result in the student's expulsion from the Communication major or minor. It is particularly important that you are aware of and avoid plagiarism, cheating on exams, fabricating data for a project, submitting a paper to more than one professor, or submitting a paper authored by anyone other than yourself. If you have doubts about any of these practices, confer with a faculty member. Resources on academic honesty can be found on the [Student Judicial Affairs website](#).

Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability and need accommodations for this class, please contact [Disability Services and Programs \(DSP\)](#). You need to make a request with DSP for each academic term that accommodations are desired. To avoid any delay in the receipt of your accommodations, you are encouraged to do this during the first week of class. Students taking courses in the Annenberg School of Communication will need to share and discuss their letters with their Instructor and forward a letter to the Office of the Director (ATTN: DSP). Please note that accommodations are not retroactive, and that accommodations based upon disability cannot be provided until you have presented your Instructor with an accommodation letter from DSP.

Student-Athlete Travel Letters

Prior to a university-sponsored away competition, Student-Athletes are responsible for providing their Instructor with a Competition Excuse Letter (provided by their academic counselor) for the classes missed while on the road (i.e., excused absence). It is the responsibility of the Student-Athlete to provide the letter prior to leaving on their trip and to make arrangements for a make-up of any missed assignments or exams.

Incomplete Work

A mark of incomplete (IN) is used to reflect work not completed because of documented illness or some other emergency occurring after the twelfth week of the semester; arrangements for the IN and its completion should be initiated by the student and agreed by the Instructor prior to the final exam. Incompletes will be given only when all University requirements pertaining to them are met. Marks of IN must be completed within one year from the date of the assignment of the IN ([USC Catalogue, 2018-2019](#)).

Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity in a Crisis

In case of a declared emergency if travel to campus is not feasible, USC executive leadership will announce an electronic way for instructors to teach students in their residence halls or homes using a combination of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technologies. Check the website of [Campus Safety and Emergency Preparedness](#) for more information.

Course Schedule

Date	Topic	Assignment
August 26	Introduction	
August 28	What is strategic organizational communication?	Chapter 1, pp. 3-26
September 2	Labor Day	No class
<i>Module 1: History of the Role of Communication in Organizing</i>		
September 4	Traditional strategies of organizing	Chapter 3, pp. 73-89 Prepare discussion questions for case 3.1. Note: questions 3 and 4 require some extra research.
September 9	Human relations and systems strategies	Chapter 2, pp. 30-43 Prepare discussion questions for case 2.1. Note that question 3 requires some outside research <i>Homework 1 Due</i>
September 11	Contingency and information processing strategies	Chapter 6, pp. 193-205
September 16	Historical strategies of motivation and control	Chapter 3, pp. 89-107 Prepare discussion questions for Case 3.3.
September 18	Course project consultation	Complete the Academic Integrity tutorial available at: https://libraries.usc.edu/tutorial/academic-dishonesty Consult with instructor on course projects
<i>Module 2: Contemporary Strategies of Organizing</i>		
September 23	Relational strategies of organizing: Groups and teams	Chapter 4, pp.129-135; Chapter 8, pp. 286-298 <i>Course Project Outline Due</i>



September 25	Group and teams, cont.	Stasser, G., & Titus, W. (2003). Hidden profiles: A brief history. <i>Psychological Inquiry</i> , 14, 304-313. Available on course blackboard. Midterm Exam Review Session
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September 30	Midterm Exam
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October 2	Network strategies	Hanneman, R. & Riddle, (2005). <i>Introduction to social network methods</i> , Chapter 3: Using graphs to represent social relations. Riverside, CA: University of California, Riverside. Available at: http://faculty.ucr.edu/~hanneman/nettext/C3'Graphs.html
October 7	Network strategies, cont.	Chapter 4, pp. 205-222 Prepare discussion questions for Case 6.1
October 9	Interorganizational networks	Homework 2 Due
October 14	Collecting and analyzing communication network data	
October 16	Cultural strategies of organizing	Chapter 5, pp. 155-178; 183-184 Prepare discussion questions for Case 5.2

<i>Module 3: Contemporary Organizational Communication Challenges</i>
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October 21	Leadership	Chapter 4, pp. 136-149 and Chapter 5, pp. 178-181
October 23	Conflict	Chapter 8, pp. 317-335 Prepare to discuss Case 8.3
October 28	Conflict styles	Homework 3 Due
October 30	Innovation and change	Chapter 9, pp. 343-360;364-367 Prepare to discuss Case 9.1

November 4	Diversity	Chapter 10, pp. 380-417 Prepare to discuss Case 10.3
November 6	Organizational Ethics	Chapter 12: pp. 447-488 <i>Homework 4 Due</i>
November 11	Individual Ethics in Organizations	Prepare to role play and discuss ethics cases
November 13	Team meetings	Team project meeting time; no formal class meeting
November 18	Course Project Consultation	Class time to discuss course project/presentation with instructor; attendance optional
November 20	Course Project Consultation	Class time to discuss course project/presentation with instructor; attendance optional
November 25	No class	
November 27	Thanksgiving Holiday	 No class 
December 2	Course Project Presentations	
December 4	No class	<i>Final Course Project Due 11:59pm</i>
December 9	Final Exam Review	Final Exam Review Session, Q&A
December 11	Final Exam	3:30-4:50p, ANN L115