

**Comm 482: Organizational Communication Capstone Syllabus
Spring 2012, TTH 11-12:15am, #7524, Minard 210**

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Office Hours: 10-11am TTH, or by appointment

The purpose of this course is to further develop your understanding of organizational communication and the practical and ethical aspects of communication in contemporary organizations. This course builds upon the knowledge you gained in Organizational Communication (COMM 383), which serves as a prerequisite for this course. In order to accomplish this goal, the course will combine case study analysis with text readings. At the end of this semester you will understand:

1. The relationship between communication and organizational structures such as power, change, conflict, culture, and management style.
2. Different contemporary cases of organizational communication and the relationship of such cases to organizational perspectives and ethics.
3. Identify your own organizational ethical perspective and its relationship to decision making
4. Offer insightful and thoughtful critique of contemporary organizational practices that includes solutions for change and innovation
5. Identify the major organizational ethical perspectives and their theoretical roots.
6. Articulate, orally and in writing, your belief about the role of the organization in society

This is an interactive, discussion-based course. It is seminar-based and requires a learning community willing to explore ideas and perspectives that we may not fully understand or agree with. We will explore ideas and perspectives together in a thorough, thoughtful, and respectful manner. Being able to communicate your viewpoint is important. However, being a considerate listener and having a willingness to consider the “other” is paramount. The readings are designed to facilitate both a theoretical and a practical approach to organizational communication. The discussions and activities will strive to integrate lectures, readings, videos, and current events with our own past and future organizational experiences.

As organizational members and leaders, we are responsible for communicating and evaluating preferences, ideas, and perspectives. Consequently, it is important to develop skills in creative, critical, and analytical thinking. Course assignments have been designed to foster these cognitive processes. Along those lines, I expect all students to listen respectfully to the viewpoints of the classmates, conduct themselves in a professional manner, seek to understand

different viewpoints, and allow classmates the opportunity to share their ideas and questions in a safe, supportive, educational environment.

COURSE OBJECTIVE:

Students will demonstrate critical thinking skills when generating, consuming, and evaluating messages in negotiation and conflict communication contexts.

REQUIRED READINGS:

Hamper, B. (1992). *Rivthead: Tales from the assembly line*. Grand Central Publishing.

Keyton, J., & Shockley-Zalabak, P. (2010). *Case studies for organizational communication: Understanding communication processes*, 3rd edition. Oxford University Press.

May, S.K. (Ed.), (2006). *Case studies in organizational communication: Ethical perspectives and practices*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Perlow, L.A. (1997). *Finding Time: How corporations, individuals, and families can benefit from new work practices*. Cornell University Press.

General Class Policies

1. Attendance and participation is required for this course. Due to the interactive nature of this course, consistent attendance and participation is a pre-requisite for doing well. It is assumed, you will attend all classes unless otherwise arranged with the instructor. You will earn points based on your class participation and contribution to discussion. It is up to you to monitor your own attendance and any negative impact on absences on your learning community grade. The following applies 3 absences = 10-point deduction, 4-5 absences = 20-point deduction grade, 6+ absences forfeit all participation points. Only in extreme circumstances (e.g. flood, hospitalization) will any absences not adversely affect your learning community grade or participation grade. I have intentionally given you some freebies as I know that you may need to miss class for important reasons. But don't waste them; if you sleep in 2 days, and then miss a 3rd because of a job interview, then you will still receive the point deduction.
2. Assignments: Modeling the high professional standards demanded in the workplace, timeliness, accurateness, and originality are required of all assignments submitted in this course. Specifically:
 - a. Please keep a back-up copy of all your assignments—just in case.
 - b. All assignments are due at the beginning of class. No late assignments will be accepted.
 - c. No revisions are available. I am happy to discuss all assignments with you before they are due. I will not, however, read and comment on drafts.

- d. Make-up exams, incompletes, deferred grades, and late papers are available only in the case of documented emergencies. It is your responsibility to provide documentation and make the necessary arrangements with me within one week of the absence.
 - e. I do not foresee any extra credit in this course.
 - f. If you have a concern about a grade you earn, it is your responsibility to see me within 5 days of the assignment being returned. After that time, all grades are final.
 - g. It is your responsibility to know when assignments are due and turn them in on time. If you miss class, then it is your responsibility to figure out what you have missed and to make deadlines.
3. Laptops and cell phones: Cell phones are to be turned off during class time. Computers are to be used for note taking ONLY. If you chose to bring your computer to class, I ask that you sit in the back of the room. Finally, if your computer use becomes a distraction to me or others in the class I will ask you not to bring it to class again. It is your responsibility to make sure you are using technology for class rather than checking email, facebook, etc.

4. **Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism:**

I take this issue very seriously and believe deviation from principles of honesty and integrity are a violation to all our learning experiences. Therefore, you are reminded that all work in this course must be completed in a manner consistent with NDSU University Senate Policy, Section 335: Code of Academic Responsibility and Conduct. Please refer to <http://www.ndsu.nodak.edu/policy/335.htm>

It is my policy that any student choosing to engage in academic dishonesty and/or plagiarism will result in you earning a failing grade in this course. I do not deviate from this policy. Academic dishonesty and plagiarism includes putting your name on work that is not yours, turning in work that was not originally done for this class, writing paper for another student, using aids during an exam or copying from another student, not properly citing your work.

5. **Learning Accommodations:**

Any student who needs special accommodations for learning or who have special needs are invited to share these concerns or requests with me as soon as possible.

Veterans and student soldiers with special circumstances or who are activated are encouraged to notify the instructor in advance.

Course Assignments and grading

Participation:

You are expected to be an active participant in class. This is your primary responsibility as a student in this class. Specifically, your comments should be on topic, relevant to material that has come before, demonstrate understanding of the case, and help our learning group move into critical thinking.

- An “A” grade is earned for students that consistently demonstrate they understand the material and can offer critical thought and ideas, and bring in outside class material that adds to our discussion.
- A “B” grade is earned when students show above average understanding of the concepts and have a consistent level of above average participation.
- A “C” grade is earned for average performance, students can repeat the information but do not advance new applications or ideas.
- A “D” grade is earned for students that exhibit a below average understanding of the concepts and participation does not relate to the discussion points.
- An “F” grade is earned for students who choose not to attend class and when present not participate. Please note: You cannot earn any participation for days that you are absent. See attendance requirements.

I will evaluate you periodically throughout the semester, so that you have an idea of your participation point totals. Final decisions on your participation points are the responsibility of the instructor, although classmates will weigh in on your group contributions.

Case and Reading Discussion as participation:

Class discussion will use the case/reading information, questions at the end of the case (you need to be able to respond to them all) or questions posed in the course schedule, and outside material to generate meaningful and provocative discussions. For each case/reading assignment there will be assigned discussion questions. These questions will form the basis for our class discussion and thus be part of your participation evaluation.

“This I Believe” paper:

You will write one short essay paper for this class. The paper will use the National Public Radio, This I believe format. Grading rubric and helpful hints can be found on BB. This is your final paper, and it will be very, very hard to write well.

Discussion Leader:

You will be assigned a 3 days to lead the class discussion. In this role, you are responsible for providing discussion questions, lead the class in discussion, and facilitate a strong and productive class session. A rubric for grading can be found on BB.

Case questions:

You will be assigned 4 cases in which you are responsible for handing in written answers to the four questions posed about the case as well as a 10-12 sentence summary of the case. No late or

hand written answers will be accepted. Your answers should be detailed, thoughtful, and designed to move our discussion.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

*****Changes to the schedule will be made in-class and are the student's responsibility***

PART I: Work in Contemporary America

Week 1 (Jan. 10, 12) Welcome & History of Work

You should be reading Rivethead Ch. 1-6. This will serve as our content Week 1 and 2 of class.

- ◆ How does Ben Hamper's job fit within Smith's idea of work in a capitalist economy?
- ◆ What are some positives and negatives about the industrial revolution?
- ◆ How does factory work fit within the modern economy?

Week 2 (Jan. 17, 19) "Just a Job?"

- ◆ How does the term "real job" fit with Smith's discussion of work in a capitalist economy?
- ◆ Does Ben Hamper have a "real job"? Why or why not?
- ◆ Are certain jobs more legitimate than others? Why? List 3 jobs that you feel are legitimized and 3 others that are delegitimized.

Week 3 (Jan. 24, 26) Socialization Theory & Role Identity

Reading for this week: Rivethead Ch. 7-end

TUESDAY:

- How have you been socialized by family & friends about careers? Have those expectations changed since the recession?
- How does work construct identity?
- Do you think the reality of Ben's work is shared by others?
- How is Ben's anticipatory socialization realized or not on the shop floor? (pg. 75-76, 83)

THURSDAY:

- How is organizational reality communicatively constructed in layoffs?
- If communication is interactive – what form does it take on the shop floor? What is the importance of the interactions?

- How did Ben's socialization process influence his "exit" from GM?
- Has Ben "exited" GM? Why or why not? (233)

Part II: The link between theory and practice

All readings are in the Keyton & Shockely-Zalabak text.

Questions for the cases will be posted on BB.

Week 4 (Jan. 31, Feb. 2) Organizational Culture

Tuesday: Student introduction to case studies (1-12) in Keyton
Chapter 1, 2 in Keyton

Thursday: Chapter 5, 7 in Keyton

Week 5 (Feb. 7, 9) Organizational Technology

Tuesday: Ch. 9, 10

Thursday: Ch. 11

Week 6 (Feb. 14, 16) Team Work and Group Processes

Tuesday: Ch. 14, 15

Thursday: Ch. 16

Week 7 (Feb. 21, 23) Decision Making and Problem Solving

Tuesday: Ch. 19, 20

Thursday: Ch. 22

Week 8 (Feb. 28, Mar. 1) The Individual and the Organization

Tuesday Ch. 27, 28

Thursday: Ch. 31

Week 9 (Mar. 6, 8) Organizational Diversity

Tuesday: Ch. 38, 39

Thursday: Ch. 41

Spring Break

Part III: Ethics in Organizations

For this section, all readings are found in the May text.

Questions for each case are found at the end of each case.

Week 10 (Mar. 20, 22)

Chapter 2 in May book. Lightly read Ch. 1 in May.

- ◆ What ethical perspective you think different organizations operate under? Give examples.
- ◆ If you were a CEO what ethical framework you would put forth for your company?
- ◆ Plot yourself on the graph, explain your position
- ◆ How does your perspective influence your descriptions/communication of values?

THURSDAY:

- ◆ Compare and contrast the different perspectives. What are the strengths and weaknesses of each?

Week 12 (Mar. 27, 29) Alignment & Dialogic Communication

Tuesday: Case Study 2 & 3

Thursday: Case Study 6 & 7

Week 13 (Apr. 3, 5) Participation & Transparency

Tuesday: Case study 8 & 9:

Thursday: Case study 12 & 13

Week 14 (Apr. 10, 12) Accountability & Courage

Video (T): Smartest Guys in the Room

Handout with discussion questions will be given during class

Part IV: Practical application

For this part of the class, you will act as a consultant for a high tech company. We will brainstorm solutions and develop a recommendation BEFORE reading what Perlow proposed. For this exercise to be successful, you need to read ONLY the pages noted! No reading ahead



Week 15 (Apr. 17, 19) Finding Time

Tuesday: Part I (pages 9-55)

Thursday: Part II and part of Part III (pages 56-114)

Week 16 (Apr. 24, 26) Finding Time

Solution paper due. Discuss in class.

Week 17 (May 1, 3) Finding Time

Perlow's solution. Class critique and compliments (Read p. 115-139)

Week 18: Final Exam This I believe – essay presentations.
Monday, May 7, 1:00-3:00

Points available:

Case questions	200 pts. (50 per case)
Participation	150 pts (75 instructor/75 classmate)
Discussion Leader	100 pts (3 cases)
Solution Paper	50 pts
Final paper	100

TOTAL POINTS: 600

Course Grading:

600-540	A
539-480	B
479-420	C
419-360	D
359 and below	F