COMM 2600-004
Organizational Communication
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:00 am–12:15 pm
RAMY N1B75

Instructor: Jamie McDonald
Email: j.mcdonald@colorado.edu
Office: Hellems 65
Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays from 12:30–2pm, and by appointment.

Course Goals & Objectives

Organizations affect our lives in incredible and powerful ways – and no one in our society is exempt from interacting with and within organizations. This course is designed to address the vital role of communication within these organizational contexts. Whatever your career goals, the knowledge you gain from this class will therefore help you think critically about the role that communication plays in organizational experience.

Organizational communication, as a field of study, analyzes how the actions of people inside and outside organizations are coordinated and controlled to achieve some collective outcomes. It is also concerned with the ways individuals are shaped by their interactions with the organizations around them. Therefore, rather than offer a set of skills that allow you to fit into the world of work, this course will attempt to show how communication is key to understanding how organizations function. Only when we understand how organizations work can we change them and consciously shape our own experiences with them.

In this course we will examine the ways people communicate in organizational contexts and the ways in which communication creates and sustains organizations. Specific course objectives include:

- Developing a thorough knowledge of key organizational communication perspectives, theories, and issues.
- Understanding the multiple paradigms through which we can understand and study organizational communication.
- Promoting active critical thinking about the role of communication in – and as constitutive of – organizations.
- Applying course material to a variety of situations, including to your organizational experiences, to current events, and to representations of organizations in popular culture.
- Integrating this knowledge into your everyday life and with concepts learned in your other classes so that you can critically assess the importance of communication in understanding how organizations work.
- Developing skills that clearly demonstrate your ability to analyze organizational phenomena through organizational communication perspectives, theories, and concepts.

In order to meet these objectives, the course is comprised of lectures, case studies, engagement with a research project, classroom activities, discussions, and student presentations. Our goal is to work together to bring our personal insights into the classroom and use class concepts and communication theories to understand and evaluate various organizational experiences.
Readings

Required text:

Additional readings available on Desire2Learn:


Course Schedule

**The course schedule is subject to change over the course of the semester.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Reading / Activity</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>WEEK 1:</strong> Introduction to Organizational Communication</td>
<td>Tuesday, January 15</td>
<td>Read the syllabus</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Thursday, January 17</td>
<td>Read Chapter 1 from Mumby (“Introducing Organizational Communication”)</td>
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<td><strong>WEEK 2:</strong> A Critical Approach to the Study of Organizational Communication</td>
<td>Tuesday, January 22</td>
<td>Read Chapter 2 from Mumby (“The Critical Approach”)</td>
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<td>Thursday, January 24</td>
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<td><strong>WEEK 3:</strong> Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Organizational Communication</td>
<td>Tuesday, January 29</td>
<td>Read Chapter 3 from Mumby (“Scientific Management, Bureaucracy, and the Emergence of the Modern Organization”)</td>
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<td>Thursday, January 31</td>
<td>Read Chapter 4 from Mumby (“The Human Relations School”)</td>
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<td>WEEK 4: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Organizational Communication</td>
<td>Tuesday, February 5</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Thursday, February 7</td>
<td>Read Chapter 5 from Mumby (“Organizations as Communication Systems”)</td>
<td>Public discourse group 1</td>
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<td>WEEK 5: Cultural Approaches to Organizational Communication</td>
<td>Tuesday, February 12</td>
<td>Read Chapter 6 from Mumby (“Communication, Culture, and Organizing”)</td>
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<td>Thursday, February 14</td>
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<td>Public discourse group 2 Submit Analysis Paper 1 (option 2)</td>
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<td>WEEK 6: Midterm Week</td>
<td>Tuesday, February 19</td>
<td>Midterm Review</td>
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<td>Thursday, February 21</td>
<td>MIDTERM EXAMINATION</td>
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<td>WEEK 7: Power and Resistance at Work</td>
<td>Tuesday, February 26</td>
<td>Read Chapter 7 from Mumby (“Power and Resistance at Work”)</td>
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<td>WEEK 8: The Postmodern Workplace</td>
<td>Tuesday, March 5</td>
<td>Read Chapter 8 from Mumby (“The Postmodern Workplace: Teams, Emotions, and No-Collar Work”)</td>
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<td>Thursday, March 7</td>
<td>Read Tracy, 2000, “Becoming a Character for Commerce”</td>
<td>Public discourse group 4</td>
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<td>WEEK 9: Feminist Approaches to Organizational Communication</td>
<td>Tuesday, March 12</td>
<td>Read Chapter 9 from Mumby (“Communicating Gender at Work”)</td>
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<td>Thursday, March 14</td>
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<td>Public discourse group 5</td>
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<td>WEEK 10: Identity and “Difference” at Work</td>
<td>Tuesday, March 19</td>
<td>Read Chapter 10 from Mumby (“Communicating Difference at Work”)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Thursday, March 21</td>
<td>Listen to Bradley-Hagerty, 2004, “Firms Turn to Religion to Keep Workers Happy” and “When faith clashes with corporate policy”</td>
<td>Public discourse group 6</td>
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<td>WEEK 11:</td>
<td>No Classes March 25-29: Spring Break!</td>
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<td>WEEK 12: Leadership and Bullying</td>
<td>Tuesday, April 2</td>
<td>Read Chapter 11 from Mumby (“Leadership Communication in the New Workplace”)</td>
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<td>Thursday, April 4</td>
<td>Read Lutgen-Sandvik, 2007, “How Employees Fight Back Against Workplace Bullying”</td>
<td>Public discourse group 7</td>
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<td><strong>WEEK 13: Branding, Consumption, and Identity</strong></td>
<td>Tuesday, April 9</td>
<td>Read Chapter 12 from Mumby (“Branding and Consumption”)</td>
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<td>Thursday, April 11</td>
<td>Read Ashcraft et al., 2012, “Professionalization as a branding activity”</td>
<td>Submit analysis paper 2 (option 2) Public discourse group 8</td>
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<td><strong>WEEK 14: Globalization and Democracy</strong></td>
<td>Tuesday, April 16</td>
<td>Read Chapter 13 from Mumby (“Organizational Communication, Globalization, and Democracy”)</td>
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<td>Thursday, April 18</td>
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<td>Submit research paper (option 1) Public discourse group 9</td>
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<td><strong>WEEK 15: Final Projects</strong></td>
<td>Tuesday, April 23</td>
<td><strong>Day 1 Presentations</strong></td>
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<td>Thursday, April 25</td>
<td><strong>Day 2 Presentations</strong></td>
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<td><strong>WEEK 16: Final Projects and Exam Review</strong></td>
<td>Tuesday, April 30</td>
<td><strong>Day 3 Presentations</strong></td>
<td>Final Exam Review</td>
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<td>Thursday, May 2</td>
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<td><strong>FINAL EXAM</strong></td>
<td>Tuesday, May 7th from 4:30 – 7:00 pm</td>
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**Course Evaluation Options and Grading Scheme**

I understand that you have different expectations about this course based on your varying professional and academic goals. I also understand that you all learn differently. For instance, you may prefer to write one final research paper as opposed to several shorter analysis papers, but you may prefer to write several analysis papers in lieu of a research paper. As a result, I am offering two different options on how your final grade will be calculated. On January 24th in class, you will sign a contract with me letting me know whether you have chosen “option 1” or “option 2”. Once you sign the contract, you cannot switch options. If you have questions about which option would be best for you, please don’t hesitate to talk with me.

**Option 1: Research Paper Based**

- Attendance and Participation - 10%
- Public Discourse Report - 15%
- Midterm - 20%
- Final Exam - 20%
- Reading Responses (1) - 5%
- Full Length Research Paper (1) - 25%
- Presentation of Research Paper - 5%

**Option 2: Case Study Based**

- Attendance and Participation - 10%
- Public Discourse Report - 15%
- Midterm - 20%
- Final Exam - 20%
- Reading Responses (3) - 15%
- Short Case Studies (2) - 20%
- Short Case Studies (3) - 20%
A = 100 – 93.3%  
A- = 90 – 93.2%  
B+ = 89.9 – 86.6%  
B = 86.5 – 83.3%  
B- = 83.2 – 80%  
C+ = 79.9 – 76.6%  
C = 76.5 – 73.6%  
C- = 73.2 – 70%  
D+ = 69.9 – 66.6%  
D = 66.5 – 63.3%  
D- = 63.2 – 60%  
F = < 60%  

Description of Course Assignments

Attendance and Participation  -  Options 1 & 2

Your attendance to class is essential to ensure your success in it, especially considering the discussion-based nature of this course. Attendance will be taken at the beginning class, either orally or through a sign-in sheet. Your participation grade reflects your attendance, as well as your active participation in class and your demonstration of the completion of all reading assignments. Your attendance and participation are worth 15% of your overall grade.

Public Discourse Reports  -  Options 1 & 2

Approximately once per week, class will begin with a discussion of how organizational communication is being discussed in public discourse. Your group of approximately 3 people will be assigned a presentation date to present how organizational communication is addressed in some type of mediated public discourse (e.g., a news article, a blog, a radio program, etc.). To find relevant topics to present on, I strongly suggest that you consult the blog “Organizational Communication in the News”:  http://orgcominthenews.com.

When preparing your report, you should reflect on questions such as: *What is being said about the organizational communication? What does this discourse imply about contemporary organizational life and what are the potential consequences of this discourse? What theoretical perspectives can be used to help us better understand this discourse?* To help prepare your presentation and discussion, please write a 2-3 page summary and analysis of the discourse that you have chosen to present on. The public discourse report is worth 15% of your final grade. One group member will be responsible for submitting your PowerPoint and your written summary/analysis to me via e-mail and will copy all other group members on the e-mail submission.

Examinations  -  Options 1 & 2

The midterm examination will contain multiple choice questions and short answer questions and will be worth 20% of your final grade. The format of the final examination will be explained at a later time. The final exam will be worth 20% of your final grade. The midterm exam is scheduled for Thursday, February 21st during class time and the final exam is scheduled for Tuesday, May 7th between 4:30 and 7:00 pm in our regular classroom.
Reading Responses - Option 1: Three responses required  
Option 2: One response required

In order to stimulate our class discussions, you will write insightful reflections on our class readings several times during the semester: 1 time for people who choose to do a more in-depth research paper (option 2), and 3 times for people who choose to do short case studies instead of the research paper (option 1). These reflections should be between two and three double-spaced pages in length. In your responses, please address the following questions:

- What is the author’s main argument and what examples does s/he used to support his/her argument?
- Why is this topic an important one for us to reflect on?
- What are some strengths and/or weaknesses with the author’s argument(s)?

You will choose the readings to which you will respond in a contract that you will give to me on Thursday, January 24th. Once you have chosen the readings to which you will respond, you may not switch readings. These responses will be submitted electronically via D2L.

Short Case Studies - Option 2 only

Two times during the semester, I will provide you with a prompt that will ask you to reflect upon material that you will have seen in class and in your reading assignments. You will also be asked to apply this material to a case study that I provide you with. The short case studies consist in a five to six page essay. You are not required to readings beyond the course material to complete the case studies. These writing assignments are designed to enable you to: (1) master the class material; (2) think critically about the course material; and (3) apply the course material to concrete situations. Each of your papers is worth 10% of your overall grade. These papers will only be accepted as hard copies – no electronic submissions.

Full Length Research Paper - Option 1 only

For this assignment, which may be done individually or collaboratively, you will be asked to write a comprehensive research paper (approximately 15 pages) that critically examines a topic or issue that pertains to organizational communication. You have three options for fulfilling this requirement:

Option 1: An ethnographic study

If you choose this option, you will choose and negotiate access to a site where you will study an organizational communication interview. You will be expected to engage in participant observation, conduct interviews, and/or collect documents. You will then analyze this data and discuss what it demonstrates about the issue that you are studying. Your paper will include a literature review, a discussion of your methods, the presentation of your results, and a discussion about how your results relate to the literature review that you conducted.
Option 2: A textual study

If you choose this option, you will choose a particular ‘text’ (e.g., a document, a film, a novel) that you will use to investigate an organizational communication issue. Your task is to demonstrate what we can learn about organizational communication from the text that you have chosen to analyze. Your paper will include a literature review, a discussion of your methods, the presentation of your results, and a discussion about how your results relate to the literature review that you conducted.

Option 3: A critical literature review

If you choose this option, you will engage in a literature review of an organizational communication issue. Your task will be to demonstrate what current research shows about the issue that you have chosen, to evaluate the findings of this research, and to propose avenues for future research on this issue. Your paper will include a literature review, a critique of the literature that you have examined, and a discussion of what can be done to enhance knowledge on this issue in future research.

In all cases, you will also prepare a presentation on your research that you will present to the class towards the end of the semester. The presentation is worth 5% of your final grade and your comprehensive research paper is worth 25% of your final grade. Your papers are due in class on April 18th. These papers will only be accepted as hard copies – no electronic submissions.

Course Policies

Readings: All readings from your textbook and from Desire2Learn are mandatory and vital to your success in this course. These readings must be done before each class because you will be unable to fully participate in our discussions if you have not done the readings beforehand. I will provide you with discussion questions for each of these readings to help guide you through them and to direct your attention to ideas that we will explore more thoroughly in class.

Late Work: Except in cases of true emergencies (such as hospitalization), late work will be subject to a penalty of 10% per day for each calendar day it is late, but will NOT be accepted after 3 days. Work is considered late when it is not available and ready at the start of class. This means that if you are 20 minutes late to class because you are trying to print off your paper at the last minute, your paper will be considered one day late.

Respect: Please remember to turn off your mobile phones and other portable electronic devices upon entering the classroom. Laptop computers may only be used for educational purposes. Please also arrive to class on time and ready to learn, engage in active listening, participate, and having a positive attitude. Additionally, please treat others as you would like to be treated and respect their right to be different. If you bring patience and a sense of humor, it will be a great gift to yourself as well as to those around you, and it will help you to get the most out of this class. Get to know me, get to know your classmates, have an open mind, and have fun.

Accessibility: My office hours are your hours! If you have a question, a concern, or want to chat about something, please e-mail me or stop in. If you are unable to attend my office hours, please send me an e-mail to set up another appointment. E-mail is the best way of contacting me outside of class and my office hours. If you send me an e-mail, I generally respond within 24 hours.
University of Colorado Boulder Policies

Classroom Behavior Policy: Students and faculty each have a responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Students who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Faculty members have the professional responsibility to treat all students with understanding, dignity, and respect; to guide classroom discussion; and to set reasonable limits on the manner in which they and their students express opinions. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender variances, and nationalities. See policies at: http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html and at http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student_code

Disabilities: If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to me a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner so that your needs may be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities (303-492-8671, Willard 322, http://www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices).

Discrimination and Harassment: The University of Colorado at Boulder policy on Discrimination and Harassment, the University of Colorado policy on Sexual Harassment and the University of Colorado policy on Amorous Relationships apply to all students, staff and faculty. Any student, staff or faculty member who believes s/he has been the subject of discrimination or harassment based upon race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status should contact the Office of Discrimination and Harassment (ODH) at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Judicial Affairs at 303-492-5550. Information about the ODH, the above referenced policies and the campus resources available to assist individuals regarding discrimination or harassment can be obtained at http://www.colorado.edu/odh

Honor Code: All UCB students are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council (honor@colorado.edu; 303-725-2273). Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty members and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). Other information on the Honor Code can be found at: http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html and at http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode

Academic dishonestly in the form of cheating or plagiarism in all its forms—from using the ideas, organization, supporting resources, or words of another (including other students) without giving credit to the original author, to allowing or paying another person to write a paper for one’s own benefit, to purchasing and using a pre-written paper for course credit, as well as using another person’s paper available on the internet—will result in a grade of “F” for the assignment, and “F” for the course, and referral to student judiciaries. Papers submitted by any student, written in part or in whole by someone other than the student, shall be considered to constitute fraud under the University Honor Code, and result in the assignment of a grade of “F” for the course. In addition, it is required that the work you complete for all course assignments be original. Unless you have my explicit permission, you are not allowed to submit work that you have completed or are completing for assignments in either this or any other course.
Maintain and Update Your E-mail Address: Each student is required to update and maintain a current CU-Boulder e-mail address (that ends in colorado.edu). You are expected to consult this e-mail regularly (at a minimum, 3 times per week), as I will be sending out important information to this address.

Observance of Religious Holidays: Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to reasonably and fairly deal with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. You should review the course schedule and notify me within the first three weeks of class if a religious observance will interfere with a course assignment or exam. See full details of this policy at http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html.