

CST 308: Strategies in Organizational Communication
Monday 5:30-8:20 Curry 204

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Office Hours: Monday 4-5:30; Thursday 1-2:30; & by appointment

Communication Studies Program Mission Statement

To teach students the study of the strategic and ethical uses of communication to build relationships and communities.

Course Purpose

The vast majority of people spend a huge portion of their lives pursuing various goals by participating in organizations. Arguably, we lead *organizational* lives more than any other.

This course will introduce theoretical and practical communication issues relevant to contemporary organizations so that we may become more adept at critically analyzing what we often take for granted. Importantly, we will consider how the construction of meaning through organizational communication shapes personal attitudes and actions, cultural beliefs and practices, and societal institutions. This meaning construction occurs in a variety of organizations: businesses, not-for-profit corporations, government agencies, educational institutions, religious groups.

As we engage the relationship between theory and practice we will discuss a variety of topics, including bureaucracy, culture, power and politics, and questions of diversity. Individual classes will be structured around a number of activities, including brief lectures and discussions, group activities, and analyses of case studies. Course assignments and classes will allow you to explore and reflect on topics in organizational communication as well as your own organization experiences. Ultimately, I have shaped the course to provide you with the knowledge and ability to reflect on and improve organizational communication processes and experiences.

The mission of the department is “to teach students the study of strategic and ethical uses of communication to build relationships and communities.” This course engages this mission statement in the context of organizations. We will particularly focus on the strategic choices we may make as we engage in the ongoing process of organizing.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course you should be able to:

- Define *organizational communication* and discuss the relationship between the processes of *communicating* and *organizing*;
- Articulate the reciprocal relationship between organizations, and societies and cultures.
- Ask good questions and investigate possible answers regarding how people choose to organize resources to achieve some end, how people naturalize these choices, and, finally, how people then adapt to these choices rather than making new choices.

Readings

Conrad, C. & Poole, M. S. (2005). *Strategic organizational communication in a global economy* (6th ed). Fort Worth, TX: Wadsworth.

Deetz, S. (1995). *Transforming communication, transforming business: Building responsive and responsible workplaces*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton.

Hamper, B. (1991). Chs. 3 & 4. In *Rivthead: Tales from the assembly line* (pp. 26-67). New York: Warner. [Reserve]

Tompkins, P. K. (2005). *Apollo, Challenger, Columbia: The decline of the space program*. Los Angeles: Roxbury.

Academic Integrity

I want to engage and assess your work and your ideas. As a member of the UNCG academic community, you should know, understand, and uphold the Academic Integrity Policy. You should familiarize yourself with the Academic Integrity Policy by reading the appropriate sections of the *2006-2007 UNCG Undergraduate Bulletin* and the *UNCG Policies for Students*. Violation of the Academic Integrity Policy will result in full and appropriate penalty. *Please include the Academic Integrity Pledge on your written work.*

Students with Disabilities

If you have specific physical, psychiatric, or learning disabilities and require accommodations, please let me know early in the semester so that your learning needs may be appropriately met. You may need to provide documentation of your disability to the UNCG Office of Disability Services (334-5440; Suite 208 EUC).

Course requirements & grading**Course Requirements**

Assessment	Points
Participation	150
Case analysis paper	250
Topic of interest: Group presentation	200
Examinations (2 @ 200 points each)	400
Total	1000

Participation

I consider class participation a valuable teaching strategy for two reasons: 1) your participation helps me assess your engagement of course material and identify where we should focus our time and energy, and 2) your participation in class discussions helps us learn from one another.

First, your participation grade in this course encompasses your class attendance and your

contributions to small- and large-group discussions. You should attend every class session. You may miss one class for any reason. For subsequent absences I will deduct 10 points from your final course point total. Arriving late to class and leaving early from class will also result in a loss of points. Please speak with me if you encounter schedule difficulties so that we may make appropriate arrangements.

Second, learning the material in this course requires full participation from all students. You should be prepared to be called upon and to speak up at your own initiative during our class discussions. Full participation means that you come to class on time and leave after we have finished for the day. Full participation also means you attend class having completed and thought about the readings. Finally, full participation means that you contribute thoughtfully to our discussions, add quality comments, and listen to, engage, and respect others.

Case Analysis (Adapted from Professor George Cheney, University of Utah)

In this paper you will use conceptual material to understand an example of organization, work, or management. The instance may be drawn from your own experiences (e.g. a work encounter, an experience as a customer, etc.) or from the experiences of others (e.g. drawn from news accounts or documentary sources). The paper should be about 1500 words in length and should include the following elements: 1) introduction with case background, 2) rationale for the importance of the case and its analysis, 3) discussion concepts relevant to the case (no more than three concepts), 4) analysis of the case using the concepts, and 5) conclusion that contains practical implications stemming from the analysis. You should write the paper using APA style.

Topic of interest: Group presentation (Adapted from George Cheney)

In this assignment you will explore in greater depth a topic of interest to you. You might investigate a particular career or industry (e.g. organization consulting), a specific concept or theory (e.g. identification), or an issue (e.g. outsourcing). Do not shy from developing creative topics (e.g., communication in the virtual work group)!

The group presentation should be 15-20 minutes in length. Along with the presentation you will distribute a 3-page handout which contains main ideas, relevant facts of interest, resources for further information, references, and so on. You must cite at least 10 sources (in APA style), though this may include both scholarly and popular materials. Groups should have 4-6 members.

The presentation should begin with an introduction to the topic, definition of key terms/concepts, a discussion of the primary issues about the topic in relation to organizational communication, and a conclusion in which you discuss the implications for us as we lead organizational lives.

Examinations

I will administer two examinations in this course, each using a variety of question formats.

Grading guidelines

I will use the following definitions from the *2006- 2007 UNCG Undergraduate Bulletin* in evaluating your work.

- **A:** Excellent—indicates achievement of distinction and excellence in several if not all of the following aspects: 1) completeness and accuracy of knowledge; 2) intelligent use of

knowledge; 3) independence of work; 4) originality.

- **B: Good**—indicates general achievement superior to the acceptable standard defined as C. It involves excellence in some aspects of the work, as indicated in the definition of A.
- **C: Average**—indicates the acceptable standard for graduation from UNCG. It involves such quality and quantity of work as may fairly be expected of a student of normal ability who gives to the course a reasonable amount of time, effort, and attention. Such acceptable standards should include the following factors: 1) familiarity with the content of the course; 2) familiarity with the methods of study of the course; 3) full participation in the work of the class; 4) ability to write about the subject in intelligible English.
- **D: Lowest Passing Grade**—indicates work which falls below the acceptable standards defined as C but which is of sufficient quality and quantity to be counted in the hours of graduation if balanced by superior work in other courses.

In general, I assume that you enter this course with experiences in public speaking, conducting library research, writing analysis papers, using the American Psychological Association style guidelines in your scholarly work, and reflecting on your own personal experiences. I do not expect you to be expert in all of these areas, however, and I encourage you to use me as a resource when you need any assistance on course assignments.

Grade distribution

A 1000-940	B+ 899-870	C+ 799-770	D+ 699-670	F 599-0
A- 939-900	B 869-840	C 769-740	D 669-640	
	B- 839-800	C- 739-700	D- 639-600	

Tentative Course Plan

Week	Date	Topic	Assignment
Week 1	January 8	Setting the stage	C&P 1 & 2
Unit 1: Strategies of Organizing			
Week 2	January 22	Traditional strategies	C&P 3; Hamper
Week 3	January 29	Relational strategies	C&P 4
Week 4	February 5	Cultural strategies	C&P 5
Week 5	February 12	Network & Alternative strategies	C&P 6-7
Week 6	February 19		Exam 1
Week 7	February 26	Strategies case study: NASA	Tompkins 1-5
Week 8	March 5	Strategies case study: NASA	Tompkins 6-9
Unit 2: Challenges in the 21st Century			
Week 9	March 19	Power and politics	C&P 8 Case analysis due
Week 10	March 26	Decision making and conflict	C&P 9
Week 11	April 2	Diverse workplaces	C&P 10
Week 12	April 9	Globalization & Ethics	C&P 11 & 12
Unit 3: An Alternative Model of the Corporation			
Week 13	April 16	Transforming comm. & business	Deetz 1-4
Week 14	April 23	Transforming comm. & business	Deetz 5-8
Week 15	April 30	Transforming comm. & business Course conclusion	Deetz 9-12
	May 7	5:30 – 8:20 pm	Exam 2