



**COMS 3309-001: Organizational Communication**  
Fall 2013

**Instructor:** Rachel Stohr, Ph.D.

**Office Number:** Fine Arts Building 2113

**Email Address:** [stohr@uta.edu](mailto:stohr@uta.edu)

**Faculty Profile:** <https://www.uta.edu/mentis/profile/?12238>

**Office Hours:** TR 12:30-2:00 or by appointment

**Time and Place of Class Meetings:** TR 11:00-12:20 in COBA 141

**Description of Course Content:** This course introduces you to the field of organizational communication; it is designed to expand your understanding of the processes, prospects, and difficulties of communicating and organizing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Toward that end, we will learn about organizational communication theories and concepts as well as develop the necessary tools to critically examine and improve organizational communication. We will explore how communication shapes organizing across a variety of contexts, including governmental and non-governmental organizations, for-profit and nonprofit organizations, and global corporations. In addition, we will theorize the role of organizational communication in addressing today's consequential social problems. Throughout the semester, we will complicate our understanding of both "communication" and "organization" to gain a more intellectually-sophisticated understanding of each.

**Student Learning Outcomes:** After completing this course, you should be able to:

- Articulate and differentiate between the major approaches to studying organizational communication
- Understand and critically evaluate common organizational communication processes
- Apply organizational communication concepts to analyze "real life" cases
- Make educated judgments about the quality of communication and organization relevant to your own life

**Required Textbooks and Other Course Materials:**

Eisenberg, E.M., Goodall Jr., H.L. & Trethewey, A. (2010). *Organizational communication: Balancing creativity and constraint*. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's.

\*Additional required readings for our discussion days will be made available to you electronically on Blackboard.

**Descriptions of major assignments and exams:**

Exams (200 points)

Two 100-point exams will be used to assess your understanding of course material. Both exams will consist of 50 multiple choice questions.

In-Class Reflections (30 points)

You will complete two 15-point reflection essays in which you demonstrate your ability to integrate and apply course material. For these essays, you may use your textbook and notes to assist you in developing a response to your choice of one of three possible essay questions.

### Case Study Analysis & Presentation (50 points)

You will read and analyze a case in which you examine overlapping and complex issues within organizational contexts. Assignment details, guidelines for how to read a case, a list of possible cases for analysis, and the assignment evaluation sheet are attached to the end of this syllabus. This assignment is your opportunity to apply what you have learned about communication and organization to a “real life” case and to demonstrate an integrative and nuanced understanding of organizational communication. You will present the insights of your analysis to the class.

### Class Discussion Facilitation (20 points)

Throughout the semester, we will read and discuss five scholarly pieces that illuminate some of the organizational communication theories and concepts discussed by the authors of our textbook. On one of these days, your group will lead the class-wide discussion of an article. This is a chance for the class to delve more deeply into organizational communication scholarship and to think about its usefulness in addressing some of the problems we face in the contemporary world. The class period on this day is yours; you are the teachers. As such, your job is to facilitate understanding and discussion in an interesting, thought provoking, and interactive way. Be creative and have fun with this assignment! I trust in your ability to develop a meaningful learning experience for your peers and instructor. The assignment evaluation sheet is attached to the end of this syllabus.

### *Discussion Day Requirements:*

*\*For the group:* One PowerPoint presentation in which each group member participates equally. The presentation should guide our class discussion and include the following:

- A brief summary the article and its major theoretical and/or practical contributions
- Your group’s impressions of/reactions to/confusion about/problems with the ideas in the article
- A relevant film/audio clip, game, mock (scholarly) debate, skit, or activity to be completed by the class
- 6-8 thoughtful, open-ended questions for your classmates to discuss

*\*For the individual:* Your attention and participation in all of our class discussions is vital, even on days that your group is not tasked with facilitating discussion. On these days, you will be evaluated by your ability to demonstrate respect for your peers by having read the article before class, asking/answering questions, listening attentively to others, and actively participating in discussion.

**Attendance:** You are expected to attend every class meeting, be on time, and stay throughout the entire period. However, should you have to miss a class, please contact a reliable classmate from whom you can get notes and insights on that day’s class discussion/activities. In the rare case that you miss more than two classes, you should schedule an appointment with me to discuss your ability to meet course requirements. You will need official documentation (e.g. doctor’s or University note) to make up any missed assignments and/or exams. In-class presentations cannot be made up; if you miss an in-class presentation, you will be given an alternative essay assignment to complete. All other late work will be penalized one letter grade for every 24 hours past the due date.

**Other Requirements:** Prerequisites for this course are COMM 2315, COMS 1301, COMS 2304, and 3 hours of Math.

**Grading:** You may earn a total of 300 points in this class. The grading scale is as follows:

<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Minimum points</i>	<i>Grade</i>
93-100	279	A
90-92	270	A-
87-89	261	B+
83-86	249	B
80-82	240	B-

77-79	231	C+
73-76	219	C
70-72	210	C-
67-69	201	D+
63-66	189	D
60-62	180	D-
Lower than 60%	179 or fewer	F

**Drop Policy:** Students may drop or swap (adding and dropping a class concurrently) classes through self-service in MyMav from the beginning of the registration period through the late registration period. After the late registration period, students must see their academic advisor to drop a class or withdraw. Undeclared students must see an advisor in the University Advising Center. Drops can continue through a point two-thirds of the way through the term or session. It is the student's responsibility to officially withdraw if they do not plan to attend after registering. **Students will not be automatically dropped for non-attendance.** Repayment of certain types of financial aid administered through the University may be required as the result of dropping classes or withdrawing. For more information, contact the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships (<http://www.uta.edu/aao/fao/>).

**Americans with Disabilities Act:** The University of Texas at Arlington is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of all federal equal opportunity legislation, including the *Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)*. All instructors at UT Arlington are required by law to provide "reasonable accommodations" to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. Any student requiring an accommodation for this course must provide the instructor with official documentation in the form of a letter certified by the staff in the Office for Students with Disabilities, University Hall 102. Only those students who have officially documented a need for an accommodation will have their request honored. Information regarding diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining disability-based academic accommodations can be found at [www.uta.edu/disability](http://www.uta.edu/disability) or by calling the Office for Students with Disabilities at (817) 272-3364.

**Academic Integrity:** Students enrolled in this course are expected to adhere to the UT Arlington Honor Code:

*I pledge, on my honor, to uphold UT Arlington's tradition of academic integrity, a tradition that values hard work and honest effort in the pursuit of academic excellence.*

*I promise that I will submit only work that I personally create or contribute to group collaborations, and I will appropriately reference any work from other sources. I will follow the highest standards of integrity and uphold the spirit of the Honor Code.*

UT Arlington faculty members may employ the Honor Code as they see fit in their courses, including (but not limited to) having students acknowledge the honor code as part of an examination or requiring students to incorporate the honor code into any work submitted. Per UT System *Regents' Rule* 50101, §2.2, suspected violations of university's standards for academic integrity (including the Honor Code) will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. Violators will be disciplined in accordance with University policy, which may result in the student's suspension or expulsion from the University.

**Student Support Services:** UT Arlington provides a variety of resources and programs designed to help students develop academic skills, deal with personal situations, and better understand concepts and information related to their courses. Resources include tutoring, major-based learning centers, developmental education, advising and mentoring, personal counseling, and federally funded programs. For individualized referrals, students may visit the reception desk at University College (Ransom Hall), call the Maverick Resource Hotline at 817-272-6107, send a message to [resources@uta.edu](mailto:resources@uta.edu), or view the information at [www.uta.edu/resources](http://www.uta.edu/resources).

**Electronic Communication:** UT Arlington has adopted MavMail as its official means to communicate with students about important deadlines and events, as well as to transact university-related business regarding financial aid, tuition, grades, graduation, etc. All students are assigned a MavMail account and are responsible

for checking the inbox regularly. There is no additional charge to students for using this account, which remains active even after graduation. Information about activating and using MavMail is available at <http://www.uta.edu/oit/cs/email/mavmail.php>.

**Student Feedback Survey:** At the end of each term, students enrolled in classes categorized as “lecture,” “seminar,” or “laboratory” shall be directed to complete an online Student Feedback Survey (SFS). Instructions on how to access the SFS for this course will be sent directly to each student through MavMail approximately 10 days before the end of the term. Each student’s feedback enters the SFS database anonymously and is aggregated with that of other students enrolled in the course. UT Arlington’s effort to solicit, gather, tabulate, and publish student feedback is required by state law; students are strongly urged to participate. For more information, visit <http://www.uta.edu/sfs>.

**Final Review Week:** A period of five class days prior to the first day of final examinations in the long sessions shall be designated as Final Review Week. The purpose of this week is to allow students sufficient time to prepare for final examinations. During this week, there shall be no scheduled activities such as required field trips or performances; and no instructor shall assign any themes, research problems or exercises of similar scope that have a completion date during or following this week *unless specified in the class syllabus*. During Final Review Week, an instructor shall not give any examinations constituting 10% or more of the final grade, except makeup tests and laboratory examinations. In addition, no instructor shall give any portion of the final examination during Final Review Week. During this week, classes are held as scheduled. In addition, instructors are not required to limit content to topics that have been previously covered; they may introduce new concepts as appropriate.

**Emergency Exit Procedures:** Should we experience an emergency event that requires us to vacate the building, students should exit the room and move toward the nearest exit, which your instructor will show you on the first day of class. When exiting the building during an emergency, one should never take an elevator but should use the stairwells. Faculty members and instructional staff will assist students in selecting the safest route for evacuation and will make arrangements to assist handicapped individuals.

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### Tentative Course Schedule

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R 8/22 Welcome & Introduction to the Course

T 8/27 In-class Film & Discussion

R 8/29 Ch 1: Communication and the Changing World of Work; Choose Discussion Day groups

T 9/3 Ch 2: Defining Organizational Communication

R 9/5 Ch 3: Four Perspectives on Organizations and Communication

T 9/10 Ch 4: Cultural Studies of Organizations and Communication

**R 9/12 Discussion Day 1:** Harter, L. (2004). Masculinity(s), the agrarian frontier myth, and cooperative ways of organizing: Contradictions and tensions in the experience and enactment of democracy. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 32, 89-118.

T 9/17 Review for Exam 1

**R 9/19 Exam 1 (Chapters 1-4)**

T 9/24 Ch 5: Critical Approaches to Organizations and Communication

**R 9/26 Discussion Day 2:** Deetz, S. (2007). Corporate governance, corporate social responsibility, and communication. In S. May, G. Cheney & J. Roper (Eds.), *The debate over corporate social responsibility* (pp. 267-278). New York: Oxford University Press.

T 10/1 In-class Reflection #1

R 10/3 Ch 6: Identity and Difference in Organizational Life

**T 10/8 Discussion Day 3:** Allen, B.J. (2007). Theorizing communication and race. *Communication Monographs*, 7, 259-264.

R 10/10 Ch 7: Teams and Networks: Collaboration in the Workplace

**T 10/15 Discussion Day 4:** Heath, R.G. (2007). Rethinking community collaboration through a dialogic lens: Creativity, democracy, and diversity in community organizing. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 21, 145-171.

R 10/17 Guest Presentation: Dr. Renee Heath

T 10/22 Ch 8: Communicating Leadership

**R 10/24 Discussion Day 5:** Lutgen-Sandvik, P. (2003). The communicative cycle of employee emotional abuse: Generation and regeneration of workplace mistreatment. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 16, 471-501.

T 10/29 In-class Reflection #2

R 10/31 Ch 9: Organizational Alignment: Managing the Total Enterprise; COMMUNICATION DAY at UTA!

T 11/5 Review for Exam 2

**R 11/7 Exam 2 (Chapters 5-9)**

**T 11/12 Case Study Presentations**

**R 11/14 Case Study Presentations**

**T 11/19 Case Study Presentations**

R 11/21 NO CLASS: NCA—use this time to finalize your case study papers.

**T 11/26 Case Study Papers due**

R 11/28 NO CLASS: Happy Thanksgiving! ☺

**T 12/3 Last day of class: Course Wrap Up & Evaluation**

## Case Study Analysis Assignment

The purpose of this assignment is to apply what you have learned about the relationship between communication and organization to a “real life” case. Whereas it is relatively straightforward to talk about and analyze issues when they are artificially segmented for the purposes of our class discussions, it is much more challenging to examine these issues when they overlap in complex ways within organizational contexts. Therefore, this assignment will give you the opportunity to showcase an integrative and nuanced understanding of organizational communication.

### How to Read a Case

*Note: Simply following these steps does not constitute a case study analysis. Rather, you should use these guidelines to develop your ideas in preparation for writing your analysis.*

#### **Step 1:** Read the case:

- Pay particular attention to how the key characters communicate and the nature of the relationships the key characters have with each other
- Identify the salient problems and issues of the case (what are the symptoms of the communication problem? What is the cause of the communication problem? Remember that when identifying the problems of the case, you should also discuss the elements of communication that were effective; doing so will help you to contrast effective and ineffective organizational communication)
- Summarize what happens in the case (describe the key characters and key events)

**Step 2:** After having read the case, reflect on it and identify the character(s) with whom you most closely identify and the character(s) from whom you are different; doing so will help you to acknowledge your perspective and challenge/test your “solutions” to the case

**Step 3:** Develop a list of questions you have about the case (what does the case reveal about communication that is especially interesting to you or unique?)

**Step 4:** Develop a list of claims about the case that you can defend (these assertions should be supported with data from the case that you will use as “evidence” of your claims, so for each claim on your list, note the information from the case that you will use to support it)

**Step 5:** Identify the organizational communication theories, concepts, perspectives and/or other research that support your conclusions and challenge what is presented in the case

### Case Study Analysis Requirements

You will choose and analyze one case study from the list of possible cases for analysis below. Your analysis should be 6-8 pages of total text (double-spaced, 12 pt Times New Roman font, 1” margins).

The first half of your paper will be a 3-4 page summary of the case (the problem at hand).

- Identify key organization (or pseudonym)
- Identify key actors (or pseudonyms)
- Describe event(s) and timeline in adequate detail
- Explain organizational responses, if possible

The second half of your paper will be a 3-4 page **analysis** of the case (your analysis should be equal to or longer than the summary! In other words, this is the more important part of your paper). Remember that an analysis moves beyond describing the case to making claims and educated judgments about the case.

- Intelligently analyze the communication problem within the situation, using course theories and concepts
- Provide your recommendations for addressing this situation

### **Possible Cases for Analysis**

*Note:* Each of the below case studies will be made available for download on Blackboard and is included in J. Keyton & P. Shockley-Zalabk (Eds.) *Case studies for organizational communication: Understanding communication processes*. Los Angeles: Roxbury Publishing.

#### Organizational Culture

Contemplating My First Year by Joy L. Hart

How Do You Get Anything Done Around Here? by Marian L. Houser and Astrid Sheil

#### Virtual Communication in Organizations

Where Do We Go From Here? by Edward C. Brewer

Caught in the Intranet by Jensen Chung

#### Teamwork & Group Processes

The Fun Team by Carolyn M. Anderson and Heather L. Walter

Engineering Difference by Patrice M. Buzzanell, Edward J. Coyle, Leah H. Jamieson, and William C. Oakes

#### Decision-making & Problem Solving

T Link Enterprises by Trudy A. Milburn

A Matter of Perspective by Paaige K. Turner and Robert L. Krizek

#### The Individual & the Organization

Bob's Dilemma by Erika L. Kirby

Corporate Counseling by Steven K. May

#### Diversity in Organizational Communication

A Case of Mistreatment at Work? by Mary M. Meares and John G. Oetzel

The Penis People by Diane K. Sloan

Navigating the Limits of a Smile by Sarah J. Tracy

## **Case Study Analysis & Presentation Evaluation Sheet**

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### **\*PAPER REQUIREMENTS:**

The student chose & analyzed one case study from the list of possible cases for analysis

The analysis is between 6-8 pages of total text

The paper is double-spaced, 12 pt Times New Roman font, 1" margins

The first half of the paper is a 3-4 page summary of the case/the communication problem(s) in which the student:

- Identifies the key organization (or pseudonym)
- Identifies key actors (or pseudonyms)
- Describes event(s) and timeline in adequate detail
- Explains organizational responses, if possible

The second half of the paper is a 3-4 page analysis of the case in which the student:

- Makes/defends claims, cites data from the case as support, renders educated judgments about the case
- Intelligently identifies and analyzes the communication problem(s) in the case
- Uses/discusses relevant course theories and concepts
- Provides her/his recommendations for addressing the communication problem(s) in the case

### **\*ORAL PRESENTATION REQUIREMENTS:**

The oral presentation met the time requirements

During the oral presentation, the student:

- Provides an accurate summary of the case
- Identifies the communication problem(s) in the case
- Offers her/his own claims and judgments about the case
- Provides her/his recommendations for addressing the problem(s) in the case
- Effectively responds to questions from her/his peers and instructor

**Instructor Feedback:**

**Grade:** \_\_\_\_\_



**Class Discussion Facilitation  
Evaluation Sheet**

**Group #** \_\_\_\_\_

**Members:**

The group developed a creative and informative PowerPoint presentation during which:

- Group members participated equally
- The group accurately summarized the reading
- Group members provided their own reactions to/impressions of the reading, connecting them to course material
- The group identified the major theoretical and/or practical contributions of the reading
- The group included a required film/audio clip, game, skit, debate, or class activity that effectively illuminated the reading's key ideas
- The group developed 6-8 discussion questions
- The group facilitated a lively class discussion about/debate over these questions in an invitational and respectful way

**Instructor Feedback:**

**Grade:** \_\_\_\_\_