

Syllabus: Communication 335 F01
Organizational Communication – Oral Intensive
University of Alaska Fairbanks, MWF 9:15-10:15, GRUE 307
Fall 2009

Instructor: Karen Taylor

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Work Phone: 474-6818

Office Hours: MWF 12:30-2:00 (or by appointment)

Office Location: 503C Gruening Bldg.

Required Texts: 1) Cheney, Christensen, Zorn & Ganesh (2006). Organizational Communication in an Age of Globalization. Waveland Press
2) additional readings listed on syllabus, available on Blackboard (BB)

Course Description

Organizations are one of the hallmarks of humanity, and they are important for us to study both as participants and as interested observers. This course has two goals: to improve your ability to observe and analyze organizations, and to improve your understanding and performance of your own role within organizations. It is designed to help you learn to apply theory regarding organizational communication to actual participation. We will have a primary focus on work-related organizations, with a secondary focus on civic participation organizations. The goals are that you will become more critical in your observation of organizations and hopefully more strategic in your participation in organizations through a series of in-class activities, readings and related quizzes, and a twelve-page research paper.

IMPORTANT: The research paper is an independent project. You will select an organization of your choice for research and analysis, and each organization is sufficiently unique that little general guidance can be given in advance. You are expected to consult on a regular basis with the instructor and with experts in the field of choice. This demands that you manage your own time and have the self-discipline to know when and how to get feedback early enough. Because you will also be dependent for your research on members of the organization you select, you'll need to plan that much further in advance, because their schedules are often not as flexible as yours.

Course Assignments

Mini-debates: 5%

Organizational Analysis Paper: 20%

Briefing Report (Oral): 5%

Final Exam: 15%

Daily chapter quizzes: 22% (12 quizzes @ 2% each, with lowest 1 dropped)

Activities and Participation: 15%

Case Study Presentation: 18%

Statement of Policies for this Class

Student Responsibilities:

A: ATTENDANCE. All students are expected to attend every class and the final exam. Attendance is a graded element of this course. You are also responsible for in-class activities (which cannot be made up). There are some circumstances for which absence is unavoidable, such as illness or family emergency. I must be notified of an absence before or on the day it occurs either through a phone message or via e-mail, and receive documentation of the reason as soon as possible thereafter. A student with an unexcused absence on the day of their presentation will receive a **zero** for that presentation. There will be no accommodation for students who are absent on the day of the scheduled final exam.

B: PARTICIPATION: This is a skills development course, requiring student participation. Participation in discussions and activities is required. Each class period provides the opportunity to earn up to four participation points, with one for contributing through listening, two for contributing relevant comments, and three four good questions. Written contributions on Blackboard count. Negative participation points can also be earned, for any behavior deemed disruptive (cell phones, talking while others speak, arriving late, etc.).

C: TIME. Each student must be prepared to spend time in class and outside of class. Readings are expected to have been completed prior to the day they are listed on the syllabus. Quizzes can begin at any time during the class period, and additional time on the quizzes will not be granted. Quizzes cannot be made up without **written** documentation of justifiable absence.

D: ETHICAL STANDARDS. All interaction in the classroom is to be consistent with the Credo for Ethical Communication of the National Communication Association, which has been adopted by the Department of Communication. Any suspected plagiarism will be penalized, as laid out in the university policy. You are expected to be familiar with the university's regulations as laid out in the Student Code of Conduct.

E: STUDENT SUPPORT: All students are eligible to use the services at the Student Health Center, and are encouraged to go (and get documentation). Students with special needs or concerns need to contact Student Support Services (474-6844) for documentation to present to Instructor. The Office of Disability Services (474-7043) provides accommodations to students with disabilities. The instructor will also attempt to make reasonable accommodations for students with alternate learning styles/needs, whether documented or not, if the student raises these concerns as early as possible.

TENTATIVE Course Schedule

Date	Topic	Assignment
Sept 4	Org.Comm. overview	Review syllabus
Sept 7	What is Communication?	Chpt. 1 quiz
9	What is an organization?	
11	internal vs. external	example presentation—slides on BB
Sept 14	Do organizations “have” ethics?	Chpt. 14 quiz
16	research methods and human subjects	UAF policy—quiz on BB
18	non-profit presentation	
Sept 21	Structuration lecture	Chpt. 2 quiz
23	keyboard activity	Rogers piece on BB
25	structure, change presentation	
Sept 28	Decision-making in organizations	Chpt. 3 quiz
30	Muddy Children	
Oct 2	decisions presentation	selection of organization DUE
Oct 5	Symbols in and of orgs	Chpt. 15 quiz
7	Vision Statement activity	
9	symbols presentation	
Oct 12	Researching organizations	MEET IN LIBRARY
14	Culture and Communication	Chpt 4. quiz
16	comparison presentation	
Oct 19	rituals & socialization	Trice & Beyer article on BB
21	identification activity	Chpt. 5 quiz
23	identification presentation	
Oct 26	networks & analysis	Chpt. 6 quiz
28	seven degrees activity	Shirky on BB
30 last day drop	network presentation	Org. Description DUE
Nov 2	Leadership (& myths)	Chpt. 7 quiz
4	styles activity	
6	leadership presentation	
Nov 9	Stakeholders analysis, activity	bridge readings on BB
11—15	no class, instructor at NCA	
Nov 16	conflict lecture	chpt. 10 quiz
18	conflict presentation	
20	diversity, law hire activity	Chpt. 8 quiz
Nov 23	diversity presentation	reflections on texts DUE
25--27	no class Thanksgiving	
Nov 31	Power (& myths)	Chpt. 9 quiz
Dec 2	red-green activity	read Tragedy of Commons on BB
4	power presentation	

Dec 7	class meeting via BB	Chpt. 11 quiz
9		briefings reports
11	technology presentation	Chpt. 13 quiz
Dec. 14	globalization presentation	Final Paper DUE

FINAL EXAM, Wednesday Dec. 16 8:00-10:00 am

Descriptions of Assignments

The final paper asks you to analyze an organization that you are part of or have knowledge of, either directly or indirectly. The central question the paper addresses is: **“How does the particular interaction between internal and external communication function to create this specific organization?”** To answer this question requires first an accurate and insightful description of the organization, secondly a substantial body of evidence about what the communication practices (internal and external) of the organization are, and thirdly an ability to link theory about the social construction of organizations to demonstrate how the organization is created, maintained, and changed through the communication practices of its constituent members. It might be of interest to add a final step to this analysis by then drawing some conclusions regarding potential future applications based on your insights. An alternate way of thinking about what you are doing in this paper is to view the analysis as researching both macro- and micro-elements of the organization and then illustrating how you can shuttle back and forth between these levels in order to gain new ways of understanding and acting with the organization.

The analysis will be structured into parts throughout the course of the semester. The advantage for you is that it can provide feedback at regular intervals throughout the process, and should prevent the usual pattern of procrastination-then-crunch that is particularly damaging. The major disadvantage to you is that it will be tempting, for the final paper, to simply cut-and-paste the earlier stages together, rather than creating a cohesive, coherent, logically sound final product. The other potential disadvantage for you is that the individual parts are not in fact graded: no weight is attached, no letter will be assigned. Some students might find themselves tempted to therefore blow off the intermediate deadlines, and I’m not going to enforce them. If you choose not to submit one of the stages, or do a sloppy or incomplete job of it, then you don’t get feedback, and if you then get a lousy grade on the final project, you have only yourself to blame.

Stage 1 = description of organization (approx. four pages)

Stage 2 = communication texts (interviews, documents, observation)

Stage 2.5 = reflections on communication texts (approx. four pages)

Stage 3 = textual analysis of how communication texts structure organization and create, maintain, change the characteristics noted in the description (approx. four pages)

Stage 4 = final analysis of organization, with thesis and conclusion, grammatically correct, including bibliography

An “F” means the paper is incomplete, or is an accusation of plagiarism. Cite and document all of your sources.

A “D” means the paper is poorly linked, insufficiently supported with valid evidence, or inaccurate regarding the organization or communication theory.

A “C” means each part of the paper satisfies the assignment, but the analysis provides no new insight into either the communication or the organization. Typically what this grade means is that you’ve illustrated that it is possible to conduct this type of organizational analysis but without showing any use or reason to engage in such analysis. It is not enough to demonstrate that yes indeed organizations are constructed through communication, it must be shown what this means for the specific case study you have selected.

A “B” means the paper demonstrates solid understanding of communication concepts and organization structuration, and shows independence of thought and ability to use and adapt theory to specific case under study.

An “A” means the paper provides an analysis that is of immediate value to either the field of communication or to the organization in question, and should therefore be pursued further.

The chapter quizzes will be short answer. The final exam will have a matching section and a short answer section.

Participation is graded on a daily basis: one point for nonverbal support (showing up, not sleeping or reading or talking over anyone), one point for a comment, two points for a good question (not mechanical, like “can you repeat that?” which will eventually get you negative points), and three points for a pivotal remark, with a maximum of five points possible for a day. If you’re worried about your participation grade, keep track of it for yourself, because I won’t provide regular updates unless you ask me. Negative participation points can and will be assigned for behaviors that are disruptive to the overall class dynamic.

The case study exercise is conducted orally, with your speaking notes turned in after presentation. There will be a sign-up sheet on the first day of class determining who will speak on which aspect of the case study (also simultaneously determining when your presentation is scheduled). The case study we will use will be the University of Alaska-Fairbanks or some sub-unit thereof, because it is the one organization with which I can be certain all of us share common experience. The presentation should be approximately fifteen minutes (anywhere between 12-18 minutes allowed, over or under that results in a letter grade reduction), and should engage material from the chapter explicitly, but need not be exclusively related to chapter material. Because the case study exercise is an oral presentation, grading will be based on both content and delivery. On the date you are scheduled to speak, you will turn in an outline, copies of any handouts or slides used, and a bibliography in APA format. The bibliography will include interviews and institutional materials. The APA style guide is available online at www.apastyle.org, and given the unusual nature of materials being used in this case study, when in doubt simply include enough information about your sources that they can be double-checked if necessary.

SIGN-UP SHEET

Sign on the line underneath the topic for which you will take responsibility. There are options on both sides of this paper. Once you have signed up for a topic, immediately begin reading through the chapter on the syllabus for that date, to make sure that as you do your research you will keep its relevance in mind.

Sept. 11--What kinds of communication can be observed at UAF, both internal and external?

Sept. 15--What changes have you observed during your time at UAF? Or, alternately, what changes do you think are going to happen next, and how will they occur?

Sept. 18--What are the ethical implications for UAF being listed as a non-profit organization?

Sept. 25--What is the structure of UAF?

Oct. 2--What are the decision-making mechanisms at UAF?

Oct. 9—What key symbols represent UAF, and what is their significance?

Oct. 16--How does UAF's culture differ from that of other universities?

Oct. 23--What does it mean to be a UAF student?

Oct. 30--Can you illustrate the communication network of the Communication department?

Nov. 6--Whose leadership do you follow at UAF? How would you characterize their leadership?

Nov. 18--What are some examples of institutional conflict management that you observe at UAF? Would you evaluate the conflict management as effective or ineffective?

Nov. ??—What would you say is the best example of teamwork at UAF? What was your worst experience of teamwork here? Consider that teamwork can be experienced as a member or as an interested constituent.

Dec. 4--Where is the power at UAF? What sources of power do you observe?

Dec. 11--What are the advantages and disadvantages of communication technologies that enable “distance learning”? How fundamental are the changes wrought by such technologies?

Dec. 14--What evidence is there that UAF is engaging with globalization?
