

Organizational Communication

Course Syllabus

University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
Comm 525.001 – Fall 2015
Tuesday & Thursday: 5:00 – 6:15pm
Location: Bingham - Rm 0108

Professor

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Office Hours: Tuesday 2:30-3:30pm or by appt.

Course Description

This course will explore theoretical and empirical approaches to understanding organizations and organizational communication. While organizations may be constituted in large part through communicative practices, they also profoundly shape communicative possibilities, individual and group identities, and life chances. Organizations are heterogeneous social creations that take on a wide variety of forms and perform many different functions. They can include things like corporations, government agencies, humanitarian groups, labor unions, churches, terrorist networks, social movements, social-networking sites, and much more. We are all embedded within a complex network of organizations that affect our lives in deep ways, determining—for instance—what our jobs are like, whether our neighborhoods are polluted, how we access public services, or whether we can communicate meaningfully with friends.

Rather than being isolated units, organizations are nested within larger social systems and operate as political entities. All organizations are imbued with *ideologies*, or hidden belief systems, that provide scripts for decision-making and action. These ideologies also bleed into wider society, influencing what people value and what they see as possible. *The goals of this course will be to foster a social-science approach to understanding organizations in their larger social and cultural contexts.* The emphasis will be on analyzing the ideologies, cultures, interdependencies, and communicative practices of organizations in society. The learning objectives are for students to develop the skills necessary to perform such analyses and communicate critical insights verbally and through writing. (Note: COMM 120 and 325 are prerequisites for this course.)

Texts

1. Electronic Reserve Articles (+ readings on Sakai)
2. Ross, Andrew. 2009. *Nice work if you can get it: Life and labor in precarious times*. New York: New York University Press. [Recommended]

Grading

Midterm Exam	30%
Final Exam	30%
Critical Reaction Essays	30%
Participation	10%

[Grading Scale: A =93-100, A- =90-92, B+ =87-89, B =83-86, B- =80-82, C+ =77-79, C =73-76, C- =70-72, D+ =67-69, D =63-66, D- =60-62]

Course Expectations

Attendance: This class will be conducted with a focus on in-class discussions and activities. Because of this format, you are expected to attend all classes for the full scheduled time. Excessive tardiness will be counted as an absence. You can miss up to 2 classes throughout the semester without penalty, but you must turn in assignments ahead of time and arrange to get notes from a colleague. Your final grade will go down by 3 points (out of 100) for each additional class missed above these 2. Finally, if you fail to show up for a scheduled meeting with the instructor without canceling 24 hours in advance, your participation grade will be docked 3 points.

Reading: Complete all readings (and other assignments) prior to the class meeting for which they are scheduled. Most of the readings will be drawn from articles posted to Sakai. You must bring readings (or copies of them) to class for the dates they are assigned. In some cases, I may distribute photocopied readings to you in class. See the course outline below for details.

Participation: Through communication, ideas are formed, revised, borrowed, and developed. It is through argument, description, explanation, and improvisation – within a community – that individual learning flourishes. This course requires full participation (including active listening, facilitating, note-taking, and question-asking) to create an environment of open and shared learning. An effective participant is not someone who simply talks frequently, but someone who reliably offers thoughtful insights that help others to learn.

Technology: Laptop computers and other portable technologies should be used in class only as learning-facilitation tools. During class, it is not acceptable to play games, send email, surf the web, answer cell phones, text message, tweet, or engage in other non-class-related activities. Your participation grade will be penalized if you break this rule. Why? Not only do these practices negatively affect your learning and participation, but they also distract others and create an environment of disrespect.

Course Assignments

1. Critical Reaction Essays:

There will be **three** “critical reaction” essays (5-6 pages each) required in the course. These should analyze the reading for two or more weeks, aiming at comparison and integration across texts, leading to the development of a clear normative position on your part. The three essays are due no later than the following dates: (1) September 17; (2) October 29; (3) December 1. You are encouraged to submit them earlier if you'd like.

2. Midterm Exam

There will be a midterm exam on October 13. This exam will focus on the course's key concepts and themes, with an emphasis on the required readings. The format will be short-answer, multiple-choice, and essay questions. No makeup exams will be given. If you miss the exam due to an absence or tardiness, you will receive 0 points.

3. Final Exam:

There will be a final exam on December 8 at 4PM. This exam will focus on the course's key concepts and themes, with an emphasis on the required readings. The format will be short-answer, multiple-choice, and essay questions. This exam will not be cumulative; it will only cover material assigned since the midterm exam. No makeup exams will be given. If you miss the exam due to an absence or tardiness, you will receive 0 points.

I reserve the right to distribute unannounced quizzes on the reading or lecture material. Any missed points on these quizzes will be deducted from your participation grade. Quizzes may not be made-up if you are absent.

Writing Guidelines

Please use 12-point Times New Roman font, 1" margins, double-spaced lines, and one line space between paragraphs. Do not use cover pages or folders of any kind unless necessary to preserve your presentation (e.g., sketches or photographs). All papers must be stapled or they will not be accepted. No late or emailed papers will be accepted.

Academic Honesty

In order to avoid plagiarism, your assignments must provide full citations for all references: direct quotes, summaries, or ideas. Make sure you put all quotes in quotation marks and include references. While you are encouraged to develop your thinking with your peers, you cannot use their material without citing it. Work from other courses will not be accepted in this course. Allowing your writing to be copied by another student is also considered cheating. Please review the Honor Code for complete guidelines on academic honesty: <http://studentconduct.unc.edu/>. If you have any questions about how to avoid plagiarism, do not hesitate to get in touch with me.

Gender-Fair Language

Language structures thought and action. Biases in language can (and do) naturalize inequalities. Imprecise language also signifies un-interrogated values and sloppy thinking. For all of these reasons, the use of gender-fair language is expected in this course. For example, do not use words like “mankind” or “men” when referring to people in general; alternate between “she” and “he” instead of always using “he,” or construct sentences in the plural instead of the singular so you can use “they” or “them” and avoid the problem altogether.

ESL/LD Students

Course requirements can be adjusted to serve the needs and capabilities of ESL and LD students. Please speak with the professor during the first two weeks of class to make arrangements. Students may be advised to attend additional sessions during the professor’s office hours so they can draw comparable value from the course.

Course Schedule (subject to revision)

Week One: Introductions

Tuesday, August 18: Introductory Discussion

Thursday, August 20:

Readings:

- Mumby, Dennis K. 2015. Organizing Power. *The Review of Communication* 15 (1):19-38.

UNIT 1: WORKPLACE SURVEILLANCE & RESISTANCE

Week Two: Managerial Visions

Tuesday, August 25:

Readings:

- Lune, Howard. 2010. *Understanding organizations*. Cambridge, U.K.: Polity Press. (Cht.3, pp.40-60)
- Taylor, Frederick Winslow. 1911. *The Principles of Scientific Management*. (8-page excerpt)
- Ford, Henry. 1929. *My Life and Work*. (5-page excerpt)

Thursday, August 27:

Readings:

- Gilliom, John, and Torin Monahan. 2013. Watching you work. In *SuperVision: An Introduction to the Surveillance Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Cht.5, pp.89-107)

Week Three: Dangers of Data

Tuesday, September 1:

Readings:

- Roderick, Leanne. 2014. Discipline and Power in the Digital Age: The Case of the US Consumer Data Broker Industry. *Critical Sociology* 40 (5):729-746

Thursday, September 3:

Readings:

- Kuchler, Hannah. 2014. Data pioneers watching us work. *Financial Times*, February 17. (3 pages)
- Leonard, Andrew. 2014. Sensors and Sensibilities: Companies and insurers love fitness trackers. Should you? *Medium*. (14 pages)
- Morozov, Evgeny. 2013. Is Smart Making Us Dumb? *The Wall Street Journal*, February 23. (5 pages)

Week Four: Resisting Control

Tuesday, September 8:

Readings:

- Mumby, Dennis K. 2005. Theorizing Resistance in Organization Studies: A Dialectical Approach. *Management Communication Quarterly* 19 (1):19-44

Thursday, September 10:

Readings:

- Smith, Gavin J.D. 2004. Behind the Screens: Examining Constructions of Deviance and Informal Practices among CCTV Control Room Operators in the UK. *Surveillance & Society* 2 (2/3):376-395
- Sharrock, Justine. 2014. Office Role-Play? Meet the People who Pretend to Work at an Office Together. *Fast Company*, October 9. (8 pages)

UNIT 2: GENDER, SPACE, & POWER

Week Five: Constructing Gendered Jobs

Tuesday, September 15:

Readings:

- Horowitz, Roger. 1997. "Where Men Will Not Work": Gender, Power, Space, and the Sexual Division of Labor in America's Meatpacking Industry, 1890-1990. *Technology and Culture* 38 (1):187-213.

- Raja, Tasneem. 2013. The Secret History of CIA Women. *Mother Jones*, November 4. (6 pages).

Thursday, September 17:

Readings:

- Goldstein, Carolyn M. 1997. From Service to Sales: Home Economics in Light and Power, 1920-1940. *Technology and Culture* 38 (1):121-152.
- **Critical Reaction Essay #1 Due.**

Week Six: Feminized Work

Tuesday, September 22:

Readings:

- Wajcman, Judy. 2006. The Feminization of Work in the Information Age. In *Women, Gender, and Technology*, edited by M. F. Fox, D. G. Johnson and S. V. Rosser. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 80-97.
- Hardill, Irene, and Anne Green. 2003. Remote working—altering the spatial contours of work and home in the new economy. *New Technology, Work and Employment* 18 (3):212-222

Thursday, September 24:

Readings:

- Cameron, Deborah. 2000. Styling the worker: Gender and the commodification of language in the globalized service economy. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 4 (3):323-347.

Week Seven: Gender as a Problematic Resource

Tuesday, September 29:

Readings:

- Fleming, Peter. 2007. Sexuality, power and resistance in the workplace. *Organization Studies* 28:239-256

Thursday, October 1:

Readings:

- Ashcraft, Karen Lee. 2005. Resistance Through Consent?: Occupational Identity, Organizational Form, and the Maintenance of Masculinity Among Commercial Airline Pilots. *Management Communication Quarterly* 19 (1):67-90.

UNIT 3: ORGANIZATIONS as/of SOCIOTECHNICAL SYSTEMS

Week Eight: Total Institutions

Tuesday, October 6:

Readings:

- Braverman, Irus. 2011. Looking at Zoos. *Cultural Studies* 25 (6):809-842

Thursday, October 8:

Readings:

- Tracy, Sarah J. 2000. Becoming a Character for Commerce: Emotion Labor, Self-Subordination, and Discursive Construction of Identity in a Total Institution. *Management Communication Quarterly* 14 (1):90-128

Week Nine: Exam and Break

Tuesday, October 13:

Midterm Exam

No Readings

Thursday, October 15:

Fall Break – No Class or Readings

Week Ten: Contexts of Technological Change

Tuesday, October 20:

- Saxenian, AnnaLee. 1994. Introduction: Local Industrial Systems. In *Regional advantage: Culture and competition in Silicon Valley and Route 128*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1-10.
- Pellow, David N., and Lisa Sun-Hee Park. 2002. The Core: Work and the Struggle to Make a Living without Dying. In *The Silicon Valley of dreams: Environmental injustice, immigrant workers, and the high-tech global economy*. New York: New York University Press, 112-136.

Tuesday, October 22:

- Schor, Juliet. 2014. Debating the sharing economy. Great Transition Initiative, October. (14 pages)
- Olma, Sebastian. 2014. Never Mind the Sharing Economy: Here's Platform Capitalism. *MyCreativity*, October 16. (9 pages)
- Konczal, Mike, and Bryce Covert. 2014. Socialize Uber. *The Nation*, December 10. (3 pages)

Week Eleven: Shaping Identities and Loyalties

Tuesday, October 27:

Readings:

- Martin, Emily. 1994. *Educating and Training at Work. In Flexible Bodies: The role of Immunity in American Culture from the Days of Polio to the Age of AIDS*. Boston: Beacon Press, 207-225.
- Kunda, Gideon. 2006. *Engineering Culture: Control and commitment in a high-tech corporation*. Rev. ed. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press. (19-page excerpt)

Thursday, October 29:

Readings:

- Brannan, Matthew J., Elizabeth Parsons, and Vincenza Priola. 2014. Brands at Work: The Search for Meaning in Mundane Work. *Organization Studies* 36 (1):29-53.
- **Critical Reaction Essay #2 Due.**

UNIT 4: PRECARITY

Week Twelve: Economic Instability and Insecurity

Tuesday, November 3:

Readings:

- Kalleberg, Arne L. 2009. Precarious work, insecure workers: Employment relations in transition. *American Sociological Review* 74:1-22.

Thursday, November 5:

Readings:

- Ross, Andrew. 2009. *Nice work if you can get it: Life and labor in precarious times*. New York: New York University Press. (Cht.1, pp.15-52)

Week Thirteen: Cultivating Employability (or Exploitability)?

Tuesday, November 10:

Readings:

- Neff, Gina. 2012. *Venture labor: Work and the burden of risk in innovative industries*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press. (Cht.1, pp.1-31)

Thursday, November 12:

Readings:

- Gregg, Melissa. 2011. *Work's Intimacy*. Malden, MA: Polity Press. (Cht.3, pp.56-69)
- Smith, Vicki. 2010. Review article: Enhancing employability: Human, cultural, and social capital in an era of turbulent unpredictability. *Human Relations* 63 (2):279-300.

Week Fourteen: Film

Tuesday, November 17:

No Readings

Thursday, November 19:

No Readings

Week Fifteen: Agency of the Precarious

Tuesday, November 24:

Readings:

- Monahan, Torin, and Jill A. Fisher. (under review) "I'm Still a Hustler": Entrepreneurial Responses to Precarity by Participants in Phase I Clinical Trials.
- Alberti, Gabriella. 2014. Mobility strategies, 'mobility differentials' and 'transnational exit': the experiences of precarious migrants in London's hospitality jobs. *Work, Employment & Society* 28 (6):865-881.

Thursday, November 26:

Thanksgiving Break – No Class or Readings

Week Sixteen: Conclusions

Tuesday, December 1:

No Readings

- **Critical Reaction Essay #3 Due.**

FINAL EXAM: December 8 @ 4PM