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)

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

**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/](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:**

**UNIT 1: WORKPLACE SURVEILLANCE & RESISTANCE**

**Week Two: Managerial Visions**

Tuesday, August 25:

**Readings:**
Thursday, August 27:

Readings:

Week Three: Dangers of Data

Tuesday, September 1:

Readings:

Thursday, September 3:

Readings:
- Kuchler, Hannah. 2014. Data pioneers watching us work. Financial Times, February 17. (3 pages)

Week Four: Resisting Control

Tuesday, September 8:

Readings:

Thursday, September 10:

Readings:

UNIT 2: GENDER, SPACE, & POWER

Week Five: Constructing Gendered Jobs

Tuesday, September 15:

Readings:

Thursday, September 17:
**Readings:**
• **Critical Reaction Essay #1 Due.**

**Week Six: Feminized Work**

Tuesday, September 22:
**Readings:**

Thursday, September 24:
**Readings:**

**Week Seven: Gender as a Problematic Resource**

Tuesday, September 29:
**Readings:**

Thursday, October 1:
**Readings:**

**UNIT 3: ORGANIZATIONS as/of SOCIOTECHNICAL SYSTEMS**

**Week Eight: Total Institutions**

Tuesday, October 6:
**Readings:**

Thursday, October 8:
**Readings:**
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:


Tuesday, October 22:

- Schor, Juliet. 2014. Debating the sharing economy. Great Transition Initiative, October. (14 pages)

Week Eleven: Shaping Identities and Loyalties

Tuesday, October 27:

**Readings:**


Thursday, October 29:

**Readings:**

- **Critical Reaction Essay #2 Due.**

UNIT 4: PRECARITY

Week Twelve: Economic Instability and Insecurity

Tuesday, November 3:

**Readings:**

Thursday, November 5:

**Readings:**

**Week Thirteen: Cultivating Employability (or Exploitability)?**

Tuesday, November 10:

**Readings:**

Thursday, November 12:

**Readings:**

**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.

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**